



## Clasax Victoria Podcast

### **Episode 3 - Paul Champion Online Virtuoso/Orchestra Victoria Show notes**

Orchestra Victoria - <https://www.orchestravictoria.com.au/>

Online Virtuoso - <https://www.onlinevirtuoso.com/>

Yamaha Australia - <https://au.yamaha.com/en/artists/p/paulchampion.html>

Mark Walton - [https://au.yamaha.com/en/artists/m/mark\\_walton.html](https://au.yamaha.com/en/artists/m/mark_walton.html)

Frank Celata - <https://www.sydneysymphony.com/musicians/francesco-celata>

Phil Green - <https://opera.org.au/artist/philip-green/>

Jonas Kauffman concert review (2014) - <https://simonparrismaninchair.com/2014/08/14/jonas-kauffmann-in-concert-review/>

Jonas Kauffman concert review (2014) - <https://classicmelbourne.com.au/jonas-kauffman/>

Guillaume Tourniaire conducts Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin review (2014) -

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/opera/eugene-onegin-review-star-power-delivers-all-round-20140417-36un6.html>

David Thomas - <https://www.mso.com.au/behind-the-music/meet-the-musicians/david-thomas>

Dean Newcomb - <https://www.aso.com.au/profiles/dean-newcomb/>

Kate Travers - <https://qso.com.au/about/artists/kate-travers>

Richard Rourke - <https://opera.org.au/artist/richard-rourke/>

Brian Catchlove - <https://qso.com.au/about/artists/brian-catchlove>

**Please note all recordings used in this video are not of Paul Champion or Orchestra Victoria playing!**

#### **Interview Transcript between Brendan Toohey and Paul Champion:**

BT: Hello, you're listening to the third episode of the Clasax Victoria podcast.

I'm your host Brendan Toohey, and I'm very fortunate today to be sitting down with an incredible clarinetist, someone who I've admired for a very long time.

He wears many hats, he's the principal clarinetist of Orchestra Victoria, he's the co-founder of Online Virtuoso. He's also one of the first Australian clarinetists to be sponsored by Yamaha Australia and he's an all-round great guy. I'm very happy to be chatting today with Paul Champion. Paul, welcome! Thanks for coming on the podcast.

PC: Pleasure, thanks for asking me.

BT: How is everything going, how are you?

PC: Really good, really good.

BT: Keeping busy?

PC: Yeah, very busy. Very busy, not too many dull moments, which is good.

BT: I'm going to ask you to put your Online Virtuoso hat on first.

PC: Yep, sure.

BT: And just because we'll talk about how Online Virtuoso has helped Clasax.

PC: Yep.

BT: And I'll talk a little bit, but it's better to come from yourself. But just so everyone knows, recently Online Virtuoso generously donated two six-month online subscription passes to our mid-year concert raffle and two 12-month passes to our annual performance competition as a prize. So, thank you on behalf of Clasax for that. That's very generous. So, for those people watching or listening who perhaps don't know what Online Virtuoso is, how would you kind of describe it?

PC: Okay, so it's an online resource. On demand videos, on all things instrumental. So, for clarinet, we've got lots of videos on articulation and intonation, warm ups, excerpts. So the idea is that there's experts from around the country who generously give their time as well to kind of be involved in the process. To have their content up so that people you know, can view their things, not just once. So it's not just like a masterclass, but it's always there and you can get back to it. And just get tips and insights from these amazing players and teachers without having any geographical or major financial hurdles. And that's one of the reasons that I kind of set the thing up was how to remove some of those barriers and how to have all these people who have so much to say and not necessarily putting their hand up saying I want to be up there and recording and filming my ideas. So most people need to be pushed a little bit but then are so happy that their contents up and that it's helping people. As a compliment of course to what they do with their own teachers.

BT: Fantastic so it's really about making it more accessible to as many people as possible.

PC: Absolutely, absolutely and we found that it's not just students but a lot of teachers who maybe teach multiple instruments who particularly in the woodwind area, our area, who you know maybe aren't so solid in flute or oboe or they're in a regional town and there's not the access and they haven't studied it full time at university and so that they can have you know some like Virginia Taylor or Vernon Hill give them ideas on sound and support and articulation which is extraordinary.

BT: I'll be the first to admit I've got a confession to make ... I am guilty of that. So as a woodwind doubler I've often found that I jump on and just watch a video on, you know it could be anything, it could be high register flute playing or proper breathing technique on saxophone or oboe or anything. And it's not just woodwinds on there either you've expanded and there's some brass things on there.

PC: So we've got some brass, some percussion, there's a little bit of strings, a little bit of piano but that's the next, that's the next big push. But I'm sure as you can imagine how, what a massive project it is and if I had have of known at the start how big it was, I can definitely honestly say I think I would have continued. It's monumental but we're up to I think we're almost at 600 resources online now which is amazing. Predominantly yes woodwind, brass but as I said we're starting to branch out we've got some harp. We got a few bits and pieces but that's the area that we're now kind of really wanting to push. But yeah, as I said there's a lot of teachers who write to me and say oh you know this is incredible and I hadn't thought about doing it in this way and even some of the virtuosos, you have come back and said I've really enjoyed checking out someone else's ideas and it's kind of helped me in a different way teach those things. So it's not necessarily better, but it's a resource. So that kind of, that really warms my heart that there's even the people who are at the top of their field, use the resource and get something out of it. And that's amazing.

BT: Fantastic. Oh, it's so good. I'm so glad because there's so much stuff on there. And I don't think people realize just how much is on there. And such incredible content and guys, if you're watching this, listening to this, there's no ads. It's ad free. It's like the most incredible resource and it's fairly cheap as well, what's the subscription?

PC: It is. Oh look we're still on a, we haven't actually changed the price. It's still \$9.99 a month.

BT: Amazing.

PC: Yeah, very flexible.

BT: Guys, that's cheaper than, you know, a YouTube premium subscription per month, probably cheaper than your Netflix. So yeah, highly recommended.

PC: Almost cheaper than a flat white on a public holiday Sunday.

BT: Fantastic. Well, I'm so glad. Thank you again for your sponsoring of Clasax and those events.

PC: Our pleasure, our pleasure.

BT: So, lets back up a step. I'll ask you to take your Online Virtuoso hat off now.

PC: Yep.

BT: Let's just talk about your sort of journey, your path as a clarinetist. Cause I think your story is quite interesting, I'll let you talk about it. So, you're a young kid, how did you get into music and clarinet.

PC: So, my mum was a piano teacher, my sisters and I learnt piano around 4 or 5. And, I think I would've been about 8 and my uncle from Melbourne, I grew up in Sydney but my uncle who lived in Camberwell had a stall at the Camberwell Market. Antiques for like 30 years or something and he'd bought some clarinets from the market. So, like second-hand, they'd sat in the cupboard and I pestered my parents that much that I wanted to, you know I wanted to try and learn this thing. So, eventually I think it was about 8, 8 and half and they relented and organised some lessons from a teacher at Newington College in Sydney and I turned up to the first lesson, I don't have my reed on but I had the clarinet around the wrong way, so I had that and I had my hands around the wrong way. And he looked at my mum and he said I really don't think this is going to work.

BT: Laughter

PC: I have subsequently, when I won my job with OV, I did contact him and say hey, it kind of did work out. But anyway, I started having clarinet lessons, loved it, did piano for a little bit but then, yeah the clarinet was the one that kind of really grabbed me. And then I started learning from Mark Walton when I was about 12. I'd been to some of his big summer schools with nearly 100 clarinet players which was amazing. And yeah, I was so motivated and so I just loved the clarinet, everything clarinet. Even though we spent most of our lessons talking about cars and other things but I was so like, just so you know, in awe of him as a player and a teacher. And then got to year 12 and wasn't sure, do I do music? Do I do something else? In the end I did something else I studied commerce and then at the start of, by the start of first year I'd started learning from Frank Celata. And that kind of, I'd been with Mark for 6-7 years and he said look you know, I'm happy to keep teaching you but I think you know, you'd get a great buzz out of having lessons from someone else and so I went to Frank. And then somewhere within the first twelve months or eighteen months of learning from Frank I went oh, do I really want to be doing commerce? So, I dropped out of, well I deferred commerce and I

think I did my FMusA, the fellowship and just did a recital and just started like massive practice. Up to the, kind of, you know four hours a day and went yeah, I think this is it. Kept doing commerce but then, was going to go to the con and then thought no, I'll just, I was motivated, I'll just keep practicing by myself. And you know, organising recitals and organising anything that had a competition, I was there. So, I kind of kept myself busy and active and motivated. And then I started getting freelance work with the SSO (Sydney Symphony Orchestra) and the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, now Opera Australia Orchestra and you know, freelance gigs around and I kind of got the bug and went yeah, I think this is, this is it. Then I was freelancing, teaching loads. I remember talking to Phil Green at one point, he went away and I taught some of his students. And I think I had something like 55 or 60 students a week. Like, maybe half an hour but like still it was a lot and then gigging. And you know, as you know that's quite difficult to balance. And then kept getting phone calls more often to come in because someone's sick. And then having to call in sick at the school. And then I got caught, I won't say which school it was, but a symphonia program and Friday morning and I'd called in sick, which is terrible, and in walked the first class and the first person who walked in the room was the head of music that I had ...

BT: Oh, no way

PC: So, if you're watching this now, apologies again.

BT: Oh no!

PC: So, yeah then I was doing that for a long time and then I thought oh, I don't know maybe I won't end up getting a job, you know who knows what's going to happen? So, then I started studying through a friend, financial planning. His dad was a financial planner. And he actually jumped in to do it as well and we gave that a go for a while. And then about twelve months, well it must of been maybe 2 years into that? Eighteen months into that, I had been doing a couple of auditions and then I auditioned for OV and ended up winning the job. So, I thought I'll do it for a while and then I'll just fly back to Sydney and keep my clients and do all this stuff and it was too hard. So, ended up throwing that in and thought maybe I'll go back but 21 years later, clearly not.

BT: I was going to say, what's the kind of timeline so when did you win the Orchestra Victoria audition?

PC: So, 2004 I started.

BT: Ok.

PC: And I think it was March, the audition was in March. So, March 2004.

BT: 2004 and that was quite a while after you'd stopped doing commerce and teaching and things like that. So how long were you kind of in that teaching/freelancing zone?

PC: So, teaching I started pretty much when I finished uni, ah when I finished high school sorry which was 94. So, I started 95, I went to Sydney Boys and then I started teaching there the next year which was kind of cool.

BT: So, about 10 years of sort of freelancing/teaching and then OV.

PC: Uh, so it would've been 94, yeah exactly.

BT: 94 to 2004. Amazing.

PC: Yeah, so yeah there was, wow 10 years, feels like longer and shorter in different ways. But yeah 10 years.

BT: And then now, 21 years later.

PC: I know, I still feel like one of the newbies but clearly not. I think I'm now the longest serving member of the wind section. So, yes.

BT: Ok, excellent. So, yeah let's take the, that hat off and let's put the Orchestra Victoria hat on now. So, 21 years you've been in the section what are some of your highlights? What are the great gigs that you've played?

PC: Ok, so the first one that pops into my head would have to be a Kauffman, Jonas Kauffman spectacular at Hamer Hall and doing the Force of Destiny.

BT: Ah, yes. Amazing.

PC: The big solo.

BT: Just the overture? Or did you do the whole thing?

PC: So, we actually did the overture and then into the solo and then into the aria that follows.

BT: The big clarinet solo?

PC: Yeah, the massive one-page solo and then the aria that follows afterwards. And so, like we actually did the Force of Destiny overture recently and my markings are in there 'change to Bb' and I was like what? Why would you change to Bb? There's the last note, I was like oh, yes that's right.

BT: Cause you had to change for the other thing!

PC: Kauffman! So, I had to jump so you know little bit choppy and there was a whole lot of numbers. I can't remember if it was first half or second half, I should remember. But I think it was first half and then the big solo. And because Kauffman being Kauffman and touring the world, I didn't actually rehearse the aria so kind of got through the overture which is nice and I've done that before, thank god. But there's enough in that to kind of make sure that you're, I wouldn't say nervous, but you want to be super prepared and (good) reed, and then you've got the full page (solo) and then into an aria. So, I kind of got to the end and it was, fortunately it all went well, exactly how I wanted it to go. Which was great. and then started getting slightly nervy thinking, oh god we haven't done (it), cause in rehearsal he turned up and sang about four notes and then oh, you know you guys will be great. See you tonight, kind of thing. So, we didn't actually play that with him. And it was call/response and yeah that was, and it was beautiful, it was amazing. So, in Hamer (Hall), had a good reed, everything went how I wanted and then as an encore there was Tosca as well.

BT: Oh! \*Laughter\*

PC: So, it was like Tosca was, oh yeah that's just the fun, little bit at the end after all of that.

BT: Oh my gosh.

PC: So, that would definitely be a highlight. And actually another one just before that, I think it was the gig before that. So, it was a golden time, and Onegin, Eugene Onegin the Tchaikovsky. Which I'd not, I knew a couple of arias but that was it and it's just filled with clarinet. It's unbelievable music,

just extraordinary. And we had Guillaume Tourniaire conducting, who I love and it was just beautiful. The space he gave the music, lots of freedom. He must like me because he gave me lots of space and every now and then would be like ok, that's a bit much just reign it in a little bit. But he did really allow me to do a lot and it just, it's extraordinary music. So, I mentioned Tosca before, I've done that, I literally don't know but it must be more than 20-30 times minimum. I actually couldn't work it out, it's just so automatic now. But every time I still love it.

BT: I was going to say, is that one of your favourite sort of pieces or is it kind of, the novelty wearing off a bit now?

PC: No, look we did a full season last year around May. No, definitely not worn off. And it's not just that solo, there's so many amazing, amazing bits. That's the one indulgent one. And I've been lucky, all the conductors that I've worked with, you know you often get 'no, no it's your solo you do it but I might just say this, this, this, this, this.' And I've been fortunate that the ones that I've had, they've had maybe a little bit of buffering here and there but actually just allowed you to play and it's fantastic. Like it is, every time that harp finishes right to the top, the goosebumps start. I've got goosebumps now. It's beautiful, it's absolutely divine. (La) Traviata is the other one, the Violetta, it's so nice and if you've got a conductor who, again allows you that space around the corners. Yeah and look, Verdi there's so many good moments. There's beautiful bits in Aida, ballet repertoire you know, I'm never going to get sick of playing Romeo and Juliette. Cinderella is incredible, Prokofiev. There's this solo on the second page that if I don't see that again, it's still too soon.

BT: I remember once, I was talking to Phil Arkininstall and I think you'd asked him to fill in for you and he said 'oh my god, never again!'

PC: Well, actually I'm not sure if he explained but I said oh it's Cinderella and he said yeah, yeah I know it, it's all good. And then he texted me saying 'yeah, different one!'

BT: You stitched him up pretty good.

PC: No, I gave him full warning but he, yeah I probably still owe him a few beers for that one. I'm sure he was all over it. But yeah that one is incredible. Look, I've been lucky to do a couple of solo pieces with the orchestra. Rossini Introduction, Theme and Variations, Weber Concertino, Mozart and so I've, yeah it's been fantastic.

BT: Excellent.

PC: So those would be definitely the highlights, and I'm sure there's things that I've, I'm missing. But, yeah.

BT: What about if I throw one in the mix, Wagner's Ring Cycle.

PC: Oh! Yeah, there you go. \*Laughs\*

BT: How does that rank on your list?

PC: Oh, absolutely.

BT: You've done it twice now?

PC: We did 2 full cycles. There's some solos in Walkure that are just extraordinary. Third Act where the orchestra just literally cuts out and it's just clarinet and the writing is sublime, it's all in the right register it's all mysterious and so you can play soft.

BT: Yeah, lots of bass solos too.

PC: Oh, that bass solo is just, that's extraordinary. And yeah Siegfried, the forest murmurs scene which is really confusing and I didn't know and I made a meal of it in the first rehearsal. I didn't realise it was different, it's in different time signatures so you've gotta space out your beats over and you're looking at the conductor and it's absolutely not what you want and I just kind of looked up and he got a bit shirty and just said alright we'll do it later. So, I fixed that up but that scene and then there's a whole lot of solos after that, it's just the most beautiful writing for clarinet. And people say, 'oh it must be so hard to get through and it's so long', it just, it doesn't feel it. The rehearsal process was long, that felt like it was never going to end. But actually, once you're playing it, it's the most divine music. See, I told you I'd forget something. \*Laughter\*

BT: Well I know exactly what you mean because I was lucky enough to play it two years ago with Melbourne Opera. We did 3 full cycles but they weren't kind of like back-to-back. You know? There was one opera one night and then the next opera the next night but then the next opera was the week after or something so that was kind of broken up. But yeah like 3 acts and they're 2 and half hours each at least you know it's hectic.

PC: I think Gotterdammerung is 7, 7 and a half hours.

BT: 7 hours?

PC: From start to finish.

BT: Yeah.

PC: Siegfried was around 6, 6 and a half.

BT: and there's 2 intervals and it's just hectic.

PC: Yeah, it's crazy. And I think we did 3 cycles but it was kind of every second night. So it was like Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Monday or something like that. And it just, it went on and yeah 2 seasons.

BT: And I think sometimes they'll even have 2 sort of orchestras going like in Germany if they're going to do them back-to-back or something you know? They need to rotate players out so they can get some sleep and eat food and sub in the next orchestra. Yeah, it's amazing. Crazy, I love it. So, let's talk a little bit more about just your playing in general. Obviously, you do a lot of lyrical, expressive, operatic style playing, and I assume that you know, you've obviously listened to countless hours of vocal music and your favourite tenors and sopranos and what have you, so how does that influence sort of your playing or approach to teaching and playing?

PC: It's probably, I'd have to say it's listening to the emotion and the colour that someone gets out of their voice. So, it's not just the pure beauty but the colour changes. And when students come to play, for example the Tosca solo I say don't listen to clarinet players, there's some great recordings out there but listen to the tenor and the way they change their voice. You know, they don't sing DAH-dee-dum, it's ahh-dee-dah, so trying to get that characteristic into your playing. And I think I say that a million times and any of my students will be watching this going 'oh, here he goes again.' But just trying to match the way the voice would do something. And in a sentence you DON'T suddenly accent the wrong words it leads to a certain point and then (subsides), so with phrasing, with all those general things that you, if you just listen to the voice and I mean, not just any voice, I mean like a really, really good voice and the way they use their colour and the way they use their breathing and

the way they will make a sentence fly off the page, that kind of thing. And so that's exactly what I try and do on the clarinet. So, I yeah in terms of, I don't have particular favourites. I listen to a lot. There's you know, it might be Pavarotti for a certain thing, it might be Kraus(?) for something else, it might be Kauffman but it's in that moment you hear a good recording and it's this something that happens in the colour of the sound that's just so magical and not clarinety. You know? So that's the thing with my playing that I've always tried to do with the solos is, it sounds so cliché but not to sound like the voice but have that characteristic. So, you're not hearing fingers, you're not hearing good reed or whatever you're just, it's the phrasing. And that, yeah being in an opera orchestra you know and hearing those amazing singers like just above your head, it's beautiful.

BT: So, is a lot of that kind of philosophy kind of pre-prepared before you go into a rehearsal? Or are you kind of picking that up from listening?

PC: No, just picking it up.

BT: It's more creative, in the moment kind of thing?

PC: I try not to be, and this is my excuse for not being, for over-practicing, but I actually honestly, I always have tried not to be too determined before I walk in about this is how I'm going to do it. Because the big thing particularly (in an) opera and ballet orchestra is you have to be free, you can't play your solo the same way every night unless it's you know, I mean there are exceptions. But if there's a singer who's running out of breath or a dancer that needs something sped up then you don't get to do it so the more inflexible you are, in your practice because you practiced something up so well that it's absolutely neat and tidy and in that.

BT: It just can't be that way.

PC: It can't be that way. And like I'm sure it's very similar for symphonic players but you've got a little bit more scope, particularly if you're a demonstrative player who's going to stand their ground and kind of just say this is how I'm going to play that solo or that cadenza. We have to be free so I don't like being too, I try even not to make my mind up about where I might do things in terms of rubato or set dynamics. And because we do a long run, you know we might do 9 Toscas, 11 Toscas, I don't want to play it the same way every-time. I'll have my ideas and without being a smart-alec and trying to just do things different for the sake of it, although that does happen every now and then. You just need to break up the, not for the Tosca solo but it might be something else you just throw in a little sneaky echo or something like that just to keep things fun and to keep your colleagues amused. But I do like to be open to very different ways of doing it. So, I don't like to be too set in terms of speed either. Like practicing, you don't want to be able to just play a certain solo at a certain speed because then if it's slightly slower or slightly faster. So, like, the variation in practice and the variation in mindset for me, that makes my job way easier. And looking back over 21 years, thankfully that's the way I've approached it cause I think it would've been a whole lot harder to get through than it has been.

BT: That's incredible, it's really just about being super flexible in all aspects of your musicianship. And is that what you try to teach your students as well?

PC: Oh, absolutely. So, flexible in terms of sound, flexible in terms of colour, so that you can play with, not just play with the flute but play with different flute players. You know, someone comes in, different player, you know someone's sick, casual you know and then all of a sudden you don't get to say well no, that's how I practiced it and that's my sound. You need to be able to blend and change and colour and you know, reeds move and all that stuff so I try and teach that being flexible, well first of all hearing it which is the hard one but then trying to be flexible with sound. Articulation, having lots of options so not, so breath attack, without the tongue, really light tongue, tongue close to the

reed, heavy you know like it's not just playing, for example, Midsummer Nights Dream. Every clarinetist's favourite excerpt. Just being able to play that one way at a certain speed, what if it's gotta be lighter? What if it's gotta be with a little bit more attack? What if the rest of the wind section are like really punchy? You can't just say well now I can't do it. You need to be able to do it in different ways.

BT: What if the conductor wants it to go faster?

PC: Exactly.

BT: Then you're really in trouble.

PC: Exactly, although as Frank Celata says, the rehearsals are for the conductor and the performances are for you.

BT: Yep, you're in control in that moment.

PC: But no, you do, you need to be flexible. So again, if you just practice Midsummer Night's Dream at 92 (bpm), for an audition that's great, go in there and play it exactly at 92 and knock their socks off. But what if it's at 90, what if it's at, or it starts at 92 and by the end of the 8 bars it's at 88 or whatever. Whatever it is you need to be prepared for that and if you are absolutely set in your ways and you can't move around that, not only are you making life hard for yourself, you're also bringing unnecessary attention and you know, you're going to annoy your colleagues real quick. So, that flexibility in articulation, tempo, colour, dynamics, you know, if you can play something really soft, say you can play Pines (of Rome) and you can play it almost inaudible and a conductor will still say it's too loud. So, you need to be able to play and find a softer. So in practice, it's always pushing boundaries. Always, always, always. So I make my students do things louder, softer, more crescendo, less, faster articulation, faster than it needs to go. All of those things to make you flexible but also mean that you've got that extra space in your toolkit in case. You know so it's a slightly bigger screwdriver, it's a screwdriver but it's a bigger (one), it's a small handle or it's a, you know? All those things, I think having that built into your psyche as a musician makes your, not only makes you a better player but also makes it more enjoyable cause you're built then to be able to handle all those, those variants.

BT: Amazing, I love that saying that you just said 'in practice, it's all about pushing the boundaries'. I like that, that's a good summary of it.

PC: And I think because otherwise we think oh ok, I can play that, I can play Midsummer Night's Dream and if our only box is that we need to tick for practicing that is I can do it at 92, that's only the job.

BT: Then you can't really do it, can you?

PC: No!

BT: You can only do it at that speed.

PC: That's not the job, and with that articulation and with that dynamic. What if the other winds in the section are actually like super light players and it's really soft and your attacks too heavy or what if they're a really big like dark sounding section and you're playing really light, on a light setup? Can you do it with a harder setup and punch the sound through? It's probably not likely in that bit but I would still make sure that I could do it in those different ways. And if you can do that then you're starting to push yourself as a musician. Being able to play softer, louder, those things are straight forward but

even finding, finding a different colour in the sound and you can always try and find more so it's, it's almost like it doesn't end. If you think it does then you're probably not on the right track.

BT: That's so interesting, yeah there's so much thought behind you know, approach to just general musicianship let alone playing the clarinet. It's really fascinating.

PC: Oh, absolutely and I think also playing, I mean we haven't even spoken about, well I haven't mentioned phrasing. You know which way do you phrase so that it's not ... favourite Scherzo (from A Midsummer Night's Dream). \*Sings\* If you've got to get away from that but you've practiced it in. So, if you practice in, what if I do \*sings\* so two-bar phrases. What if I do, so again finding different ways so that then you kind of come up with, actually that really works, I like that. And then as you're doing it and you do it the next time it's not going to be same because it's going to be a different conductor, chances are your colleagues are different even if it's the same orchestra. It's not going to be exactly the same and I think so that flexibility is absolutely paramount.

BT: Amazing.

PC: Yep.

BT: Let's talk for a moment about Yamaha.

PC: Yes.

BT: Tell us the story behind your instrument choice.

PC: Ok, so I've gotta actually give Richie Sholl who was associate (clarinet) at OV before Justin (Beere) and he'd tried them and he was quite keen and I kind of I think I'd ...

BT: This was around sort of, early 2010s I would assume?

PC: I think so. I think so, my memory is not getting any better. But yeah, it must've been about then.

BT: 2012-ish maybe? 2011?

PC: Oh, I'd say so, yeah. And I, yeah so, he brought it up and he kind of, he actually got the ball rolling with Yamaha and then we had them I was like ohh, moving away from Buffet, you know? Everyone's so, so at that stage it was, you know it was, I think there was only.

BT: It was incredible (that everyone played Buffet).

PC: I think it was only Andrew Seymour who was not playing on (Buffet).

BT: I think he was on a Leblanc at the time.

PC: On Leblanc, yeah. And I think he was the only one at the time.

BT: I think so.

PC: Maybe there was someone else on a?

BT: I think nah, I think that sounds about right.

PC: And then so everyone else on Buffet and I'd say what, 80% of them were on Festivals.

BT: Yeah, that sounds about right.

PC: Festival or Prestige.

BT: Yeah, some equivalent.

PC: and so it was, you know I did feel kind of the pressure but then having tried them so that was the CSGiis and we did a test in the state theatre. And he played his clarinet and then played the Yamaha and then I played it and yeah I remember listening to him and just thinking wow, such an improvement and he thought the same thing about me. So, I yeah, it was a kind of, and I'd yeah, we had been, my clarinets were only recently new like I'd gone to Paris and picked them out.

BT: Oh! I didn't know that part of the story.

PC: Yes, yes I think that was 2008, so I'd only had them for like well, less than 4 years. So anyway, tried the Yamahas and I know there was talk that they were not big (sounding) enough, they weren't, but I found like in the pit they were absolutely fine, you know we have small string sections where usually told to play down, you know I don't think I've ever been told to play more, massively more.

BT: OK.

PC: The problem is always playing softer and lighter, not being able to play big. You know, I'm sure in a big symphony orchestra, it's different and you do need to cut above a massive string section.

BT: For those that are listening and have no idea what we're talking about, the (Yamaha) CSG clarinet, the G stands for German. So, it's essentially a German-bore-inspired instrument with French keywork. So, it's a slightly smaller, sweeter, rounder sound, than your typical French big projecting over an orchestra kind of sound. So, to make that switch is a big deal, yeah.

PC: But as I said, it didn't feel like it was, it didn't feel like it was any less. So, I felt great in just in terms of intonation, homogenous across registers. It was just so, it was in a very easy in the end. It was a psychological thing of not playing Buffet. But then once getting past that, Richard and I went out to Ozwinds and tried a whole stack and yeah, it was very easy finding one after having had a couple of pairs to try in the theatre and rehearsal venues and all that and then actually picking the instrument was very, very easy.

BT: Cool.

PC: And then yeah, gone to the SE artists, the Mark II, which must be again memory not great, but must be three years now, I think. And absolutely love them.

BT: It's just everything you love about the CSG, but amplified again even more.

PC: Oh, no, more and more. And look, you know, I think I've got David Thomas, a lot to thank him for in terms of his work with Yamaha on refining a few things and definitely barrels and bells. And he was there he was very generous in his time. And expertise having a listen when I was picking my pair and picking the barrels and bells for them.

BT: Cool.

PC: And yeah, absolutely love them.

BT: Excellent. I should say your experience has been almost identical to my experience.

PC: Yeah.

BT: Pretty much is identical. I think within a year or two of you making the switch and getting your CSG, I did the exact same thing. And I loved the sound and the homogeneity over the register. And then, same also with the CSG, sorry, the SE artist. It's the same for me as well. And interestingly, the professional orchestral clarinet players of Australia seem to be doing the same thing. There's a lot of people that have switched now.

PC: Yeah, absolutely. So, there's David Thomas, there's Dean, Dean Newcomb in Adelaide, Kate Travers, Richard Rourke in the opera orchestra.

BT: Yeah, I think Brian Catchlove as well.

PC: Okay.

BT: He was on CSGs. I'm not sure if he's gone to SE artists, but yeah, he's another one.

PC: Yeah, and I've actually got quite a few students who I've never pushed a certain clarinet because I've played it, but I've always said, "Look, make sure you go and go and try them." And yeah, there's quite a few of my students, uni students and private students who now are playing on the same and it makes such a difference.

BT: I think every musician at some stage has come across Yamaha instruments because they're student models are so widely adopted, so almost everyone would start on a Yamaha 250 or a 255 or something and then as they grow up through school, they might upgrade to the next intermediate model, whether it's of a different brand or not and make sure you go back and try the Yamaha's, they're always so consistent and really good.

PC: Oh yeah, look at, I'm absolutely.

BT: All my saxophones are Yamahas.

PC: Yeah, right?

BT: I've got a Yamaha flute and piccolo.

PC: Yeah ok, nice.

BT: Yeah, it's good. Is there anything coming up that you want to give a shout out? Any upcoming performances or anything like that?

PC: We've got, what's coming up? Opera season, we've got Barber of Seville and I'm just trying to think. Usually I'm only thinking a couple of weeks ahead.

BT: Of course, yeah Barber of Seville that's pretty good.

PC: Yeah, there's lots of different things on. You know, tonight, as I said, we've got the Ravel, Le Tombeau de Couperin. You've got some ballet seasons of (Philip) Glass coming up, Prism. So, there's massive variety, which is great. And I love. Sometimes I could do it a little bit less. But, yeah, no, there's lots of different things coming up. You know, but yeah, as I say, nothing. Nothing is jumping out right now.

BT: That's okay. Well, maybe the general shout-out is folks, if you're listening, check out Orchestra Victoria's seasons, what they've got coming up. Check out Online Virtuoso. Make sure you check out Yamaha clarinets and saxophones or anything else. And Paul, thank you so much for sharing your time and wisdom and knowledge with me and the listeners.

PC: Absolutely.

BT: Yeah. And we look forward to seeing you soon.

PC: Excellent. Thanks, Brendan.

BT: Thank you.

PC: Cheers, thanks.

**END TRANSCRIPT**