



Clasax Victoria Podcast

Episode 4 - Stuart Brownley D'Addario Australia Show notes

D'Addario Australia Website - <https://daddario.com.au/>

D'Addario Players Circle Program Website - <https://www.daddario.com/products/woodwinds>

Woodwind Doubling Resources -

Bret Pimentel Website - <https://bretpimentel.com/resources/music-for-doublers/>

Ed Joffe Woodwind Doubling Book - <https://www.joffewoodwinds.com/books/woodwind-doubling-saxophone-clarinet-flute/>

Merlin Williams Woodwind Doubling Channel - <https://www.youtube.com/@WoodwindDoubling/>

Guide Dogs Australia Website - <https://guidedogs.com.au/>

Interview Transcript between Brendan Toohey and Stuart Brownley:

BT: Hello! You're listening to the fourth episode of the class axe Victoria podcast. I'm your host Brendan Toohey and I'm very excited to be joined today by special guest Stuart Brownley from D'Addario Australia. Stuart, good morning, how you going?

SB: Good morning.

BT: Thanks for coming on the show.

SB: Glad we've managed to find a time and a place to get together.

BT: It's always been the hardest part. It's just being available at the same time as our guests.

SB: Totally.

BT: So thanks for making the time to do this.

SB: Of course, great to have you up here.

BT: So talk to me a little bit about D'Addario Australia. What do you do here? Where are we first of all?

SB: So we're at our Australian office, which is in Kilsyth. in the outer distance suburbs of Melbourne. D'Addario Australia is a wholly owned subsidiary of D'Addario and Co., which is an American family cancer private family company so we're not we're not public company. And the current, the D'Addario family can trace their lineage back to the 17th century in Italy making strings for instruments in Italy. Then the D'Addario family emigrated to the United States in the early 1900s and there was a range of businesses that the family ran all involved in music but the current form of the

company started in the early 1970s with Jim D'Addario who's our current chairman of the board and his family so the current form has been around for about 50 odd years. D'Addario products in Australia used to be distributed by some third-party distributors here up until about nearly 15 years ago when the company decided to have their own corporate presence in Australia. So, they invested quite heavily in the facility that we're in now to have a stronger corporate presence and to represent themselves. It's always challenging for companies to have third-party distributors. So it's always, for D'Addario, they decided that it's best for them to have their own corporate presence here so they can control their own destiny in the market. My role here, the term of my role, the title of my role is Band and Orchestral Specialist. So, it's a multifaceted role. We all keep lots of balls in the air here at D'Addario, each of us. My role involves looking after the woodwind and orchestral strings side of the business across Australia. So that includes product management. So, working with our operations manager to make sure we've got enough stock of reeds and mouthpieces and violin strings and rosins and so forth. It's also about, on the product management side, it's setting prices. So be nice to me and I won't raise the prices of reeds too much. It also involves a lot of outreach. So, at events that you'll see around the country where when a university has a day of saxophone or clarinet or one of the clarinet and saxophone societies has an event and we're there that's my role as well to be a part of that. There's also a sales element to my role and my sales element involves looking after what we call our specialist stores. So, if you think of the larger specialist brass and woodwind stores and orchestral strings stores around Australia, they're the stores that I look after to make sure they've got what they need, that they've got stock, they've got availability of everything that we offer. So, lots of balls in the air, but for me, that's great. It means that I'm always working on something different. There's always plenty of things, plenty of things happening. It's very dynamic.

BT: Yeah, fantastic. I should say, thank you to D'Addario for being a long-term supporter of the Victorian clarinet and sax society. You've donated prizes to our competition in the past and this year, so yeah, thank you very much.

SB: Look, it's a really important part of what we do, and there is a quite a substantial budget that we allocate each year to support those kinds of events, and we really proudly support what's happening with the clarinet and saxophone societies, not only in Victoria, but also in New South Wales, in Queensland, in Western Australia, as well. I have a very strong background in education myself. I was a high school music teacher for 25 years before I landed here and so education is really important part of the job for me and so I think supporting those players that are coming up and developing and trying to develop their playing be it people who end up trying to pursue a professional path or those who do it just for pleasure it's really important that we're seeing to be supporting the growth in the wider industry. I think it's very easy for people to become a little bit cynical about corporates and looking after profits and so forth. So if anything, that's what a private business is about. We're trying to turn a buck. But we also allocate, as I say, a healthy portion of our profits to supporting the growth of the wider industry.

BT: Yeah, that's fantastic. One thing I really like about D'Addario is they seem to do everything they touch well at every level. So, whether it's sort of the beginner, student, teacher, market, or the professional high-end stuff, there's something at every level and they do it all really well across all instruments.

SB: Yeah

BT: Which is not something you see all the time.

SB: No look, as Our guests is a pretty unique organisation. We are the world's largest music accessories manufacturer. We don't make any instruments, but we make all of those bits and pieces that go on against with next to strap onto your instrument to help make them work. And I mentioned Jim D'Addario earlier, our chairman of the board. He has a very strong engineering background. And

so he's always been very driven and has driven our staff and our R&D department in New York to develop the best products they can. Whether it is an entry level product, or whether it is a high-end professional product, it shouldn't matter what that is. It should be the best product that we can make to bring to market. And we're really proud of the products that we produce.

BT: I remember I watched a video on the D'Addario YouTube channel and it was Jim D'Addario talking about from his engineering background the problem with reeds, clarinet reeds, saxophone reeds. He couldn't believe that historically you'd buy a box and maybe two or three of them would be good. And then he just set his engineering mind and team and resources to how can we improve these reeds. And the YouTube video is incredible. I'll drop a link to it down below. But yeah, what can you tell us? You've been over to the States ...

SB: I have yep,

BT: to see the big facilities?

SB: Yep, I've been in the facility. It is absolutely mind-blowing. It is just incredible that the work that they have done and continue to do on how we produce our how we produce our reeds. A little bit of background because I think context is important. So just over 20 years ago in 2004, D'Addario purchased the Rico International Company, Rico Reeds. That was the name of the company. But if we go back even before that, this is the part of the story that a lot of people aren't aware of, is that prior to that, D'Addario was VanDoren's distributor in the United States. We were, Jim D'Addario and Bernard VanDoren still maintained a very strong friendship, but we worked together very closely up until 2004.

We were, as I say, Van Doren's distributor in the United States, and around 2004, the RICO company came up for sale, and there was a discussion around VanDoren and D'Addario buying the company together, and sort of conquering the world. And it got as far as doing due diligence, and contracts were drawn up and so forth, and for various reasons VanDoren decided at the end to not continue with the agreement. But, at that point, Jim D'Addario and our board had decided that this was a very strong move. We knew the reed market very well, having worked with VanDoren very closely. And we knew this was a very strong development for the company. So, we purchased Rico in 2004. And this is the bit of video you saw. Once we started to talk to Rico about what was going on in our experience with VanDoren, we knew that players were getting two, three reeds in a box that sort of played well and everything else became compost or was thrown in the bin. So it became, with Jim's engineering background, it became about how do we increase the value for the player, how do we increase the quality of what we're producing, because as you say, D'Addario is very dedicated to producing the highest quality products as they can. How do we increase the yield of your life? How do we increase the quality of the root product, given that it's organic, and there's always going to be variations within that context. So we went back to the drawing board, and rather than using the machines, they're called Frankie Machines, rather than using the machines that had been used for many, many years. We went back to the drawing board and said how do we automate this process? How do we use technology to create a repeatable, high-quality process? And the machines that you see in that YouTube clip were designed and built in-house. So, we bought in a whole range of engineering expertise and there were meetings at board tables with saxophone players on one side and clarinet players and engineers on the other side with them with the players and the artists saying this is what

we need from our reeds and the engineers saying well this is what our machines can do and trying to find where those two curves intersect so that we can create the best quality product. So over a period of years, we developed a fully automated digital vamping machine. And the quality of the product we're producing now is unsurpassed in the industry and that's just at the production phase when we get to the reeds being produced. Rico were based in Los Angeles for many, many years. 1928, the company started in LA. In the last three years we've closed the Los Angeles facility and moved everything over to our facility in New York where everything is, everything is produced in New

York now. It's a very big campus. It's almost a campus, if you like, in Farmingdale?, which is out on Long Island, about an hour or so from Manhattan. And so our reeds are produced there now. But our cane does come from the south of France. We're just down the road from VanDoren and just up the road from Marca and all of those companies that grow they kind in the south of France. We also have a cane field in Argentina as well.

BT: Cool.

SB: So our cane is grown in France. It is aged in France. It is then brought to the United States, cutting to what we call splits, which are pieces of cane that are about that long. They're then transported to the United States where in our facility they're made into the reeds. So that production still happens. And the high-quality productions happening in New York. But in France, we've moved to, in many of you, many of the listeners and the viewers would know that we're now producing organic reeds. And it's, I still get a whole lot of questions about what does that actually mean. A certified organic, organic reeds. And it has to do with us growing our cane. And keep in mind that when you play a cane reed, it goes in your mouth. And so we want it to be as healthy as we possibly can. And so, we worked for many years with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. To certify our cane fields and that means they had to test our water, they to test our soil, they to test our cane to make sure that we were obeying the organic rules, the regulations around what can be certified as organic. But we can guarantee now that our cane has no pesticides, no herbicides, no synthetic fertilizers, it's all a natural process. So that's really important to us, because as I say, when it's something that's going to sit in your mouth for an awfully long time, you want to be sure that it's healthy and safe and so forth. And we're one of the few companies now. We we're the very first company in the world to offer this. And we're still one of the very few companies that can offer certified, certified cane. At our own cane plantation, it's important to note too that we don't buy the cane from anyone else. Our cane plantations are owned by D'Addario. So it's complete vertical integration from the rhizome in the ground, the root of the cane plant, right through to when you take the box from the shop, it's all D'Addario, right from beginning to end. So we can control the process almost unlike any other organization from beginning to end.

BT: Wow, it's really amazing. When you think about, you know, you're obviously own and grow, your own cane, manufacture itself, handle all the distribution yourselves. It's really quite incredible. Fantastic.

SB: Yeah, look D'Addario has really proud of the work that they do. And, and there's always things we can improve and there's constant improvement. We're constantly talking amongst ourselves here about how we can improve our distribution processes in Australia, and we're having to have our head office in New York too about, about the quality of the products, you know, new products that are coming online, how they're going to sell. It's, it's a great organization to work for.

SB: Fantastic. When, when did you start working for D'Addario?

SB: I've been here for almost 10 years now. It was a role that I didn't go looking for. It was a bit of a sliding door moment for, for me. Full disclosure, I'd been playing D'Addario our products for many years because I, I, you know, we talk about players having two or three reeds in a box that works. Like a lot of clarinet saxophone players, I got sick and tired of paying, you know, exorbitant amounts of money, and you know, only getting a couple of reeds that played well. So, a colleague of mine put me onto the D'Addario many years ago and I hadn't looked back since. So, I was a convert, I was a believer in what they do, I was playing professionally, I was still teaching a little bit, but I was playing professionally, and a store here in Melbourne that I got a lot of my gear from, who as a good D'Addario customer said, look, they're looking for someone in their band in orchestral role. I, so just a quick aside, band in orchestral is my role. Band in the music products industry, band refers to anything that is think concert band. So anything that's brass, woodwind, that's what we mean by

band. But yeah, they had an opening in their band in orchestral role, and they thought it sounded like it was something that was right up my alley. So they created an introduction with the general manager here, I came out here and had a couple of chats, and we talked about what the role looked like and how I might fit into it, and look to be honest with you, I was a little nervous because I'd come from a background of being a professional performer and working in just in education. And so the idea of moving into a corporate role was at first a little bit daunting, I wasn't sure how cutthroat it was going to be, and how scary it was going to be. but kudos I'll mention again kudos to D'Addario for being unbelievably flexible and welcoming and supportive. And I can't speak highly enough of them as an organisation to work for. They're incredibly supportive of all of us here in the Australian office, but me as a professional performer. Still being able to have a bit of flexibility to be able to pursue a career as a player. But also being able to get the job done.

BT: Fantastic. That's really good to hear that they were so accommodating and welcoming because yeah, I imagine going from a teaching/performing role to more of like a sales sort of representational kind of role that would be quite daunting.

SB: It was, yeah.

BT: And the rest is history.

SB: Indeed, and I mean the fact that I've been here for 10 years probably says a lot about the organisation. You know, I think workforce mobility is something that we all think about. Am I in the right job? Am I doing the right thing for me in my future? But no, they've been great, I'm happy to be here.

BT: Oh, fantastic. Let's take a step back for a moment. Let's talk a little bit more about your professional performing career. For those listeners or watchers that don't know, you're a phenomenal jazz sax player and multi-woodwind doubler. Tell us about sort of your musical story up this point.

SB: Sure, I started as a flautist, as a classical flautist.

BT: A flautist! Oh, there you go.

SB: If you like, flute was, I mean apart from playing recorder in grade five as we all did as a class. I started my more serious musical journey I suppose as a flautist. And I did flute as an instrument for my year 12 from my HSC or VCE or whatever it's called this week and then studied at Melbourne University with the idea of becoming a teacher. I had a few pivotal, seminal people along my journey that made me think teaching was a good journey to embark on. So, I always wanted to be a teacher as well as playing. And so, I studied to become a teacher and I ended up teaching for 25, odd 25 years, both classroom and instrumental, and as an ensemble director. But at the same time pursuing something of a performing career. By the time I finished high school, I was already playing saxophone and clarinet. And they became an important part of my, an increasingly important part of my journey. And then I, I suppose like a lot of us, I met a few people along the way through my tertiary studies and we started working together. I started doing some professional gigs and some amateur gigs. Whatever I could get, sometimes playing three, four, five nights a week, just trying to cut my teeth and carve out a career and then as you do you meet certain people along the way that offer you opportunities and you take certain opportunities and you meet other people and you take those opportunities and it just sort of builds, I know my good friend Diana Tolmie at the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, talks a lot about the portfolio career and about how's a musician, the idea of the one job simply doesn't exist. You'll piece together a whole range of things that become a journey and that's absolutely true of my professional career. I ended up as a doubler doing a lot of theatre and I got into that through, again, some colleagues and some teachers who

recognise that I was at a stage of being able to sort of play professionally. So, I did some, I started by doing some depping, some filling in in some of the shows and then you get to know some of the musical directors, they're happy with the way you're performing and then the next show they come back to town with, they ring you and say would you like to come and come and do the show. So, again, it's that piecing together of the whole, there's no one single line. It's not linear. It's a very odd path and so, look, I've been really fortunate to be involved in some pretty high profile and really fabulous gigs along the way. And it all feeds into making my job here at the D'Addario work so much better because as a player at a certain level and someone who's spent a lot of time in teaching and a lot of time in education, it gives me the opportunity to be able to come at my job from a whole range of angles and see what different people are trying to get out of what we offer and hopefully we can offer that.

BT: It's almost like you're the middle of the Venn diagram. You've got the performer, the teacher, and this kind of businessy kind of sales side of things and you're right in the middle and know how to handle it all which is great.

SB: Totally, as I say, I think it's part of the reason why I enjoy this job and why they perhaps, why D'Addario saw something and what I was offering is that I could bring a range of those pieces to the table and it works really well.

BT: Yeah, great. Let's talk a little bit about musical theatre. I think it's an area that a lot of performers really want to get into and it's quite hard to get into it. You kind of have to be not a master of everything but a jack of all trades, so to speak, you've got to be able to cover a wide range of styles on pretty much every instrument you can get your hands on and there's such a barrier to people trying to get into that, firstly from a financial perspective, you need to own a lot of instruments or have access to a lot of instruments and yeah, just how do you get into that? Do you have any advice for any people?

SB: One of my favourite stories is at Melbourne Uni in the late 80s and early 90s, a lot of me had lessons with Ina Godfrey, who's still teaching at the Conservatorium at Melbourne Uni. And at that time, Ian was very heavily involved in the musical theatre scene and was playing a lot. And a lot of us were keen to get that sort of work. And we said to Ian, "So Ian, how do we get a job in professional music theatre?" He said, "It's easy. You just wait for one of us to die." And look, to a point, you know, Ian's sarcasm is not lost on anyone. But he was sort of right to a point. It's viewed by many as being a bit of a closed shop. And, you know, it takes a long time to get the confidence of the people who make some of the decisions. And, you know, once I started to do a bit of, though, do some of those gigs, whether it was depping or starting to get my own sort of full-time contracts, you realise why it's the same people that get booked every time. It's because they're the people that can get the job done. It's a pretty, from a woodwind perspective, it's a very, it's a very specialised area, being able to play three, well, flutes, clarinet, saxophones and sometimes double reeds at a high level of proficiency, stylistically and over a long term, doing eight shows a week. So, there are challenges, but if it's something that you're wanting to do, you need to make those, create those opportunities for yourself. So, ingratiate yourself with the people that populate that space, and get their confidence that you're able to do the work. It's not easy. I mean, I think in any profession, it's hard to break in and make a name for yourself. But I suppose for musical theatre, it's challenging because there's this much work, and there's this many people that want the work. And when I first started doing some of the professional music theatre in the mid 90s, late 90s, it wasn't uncommon to have shows that had three, four five reed books. So you might have five reed plays on a show. Nowadays, the way theatre is written and performed now has changed a great deal. And so it's very common now to have one, two, maybe at most three, unless it's a revival of a well-known show from some years ago. A lot of the modern common musical theatre shows now have fewer reed books available. And so that's even even less work. And so it creates an even more of a challenging space. But what I would say is that over the last 20 or 30 years, there's been a lot of newer faces. It was the same crew

for many, many years. But there's lots of faces moving through now. And I think that's a good thing. Renewal is a good thing. In any environment, renewal is a great thing.

And so there's more young, there's more young, you know, particularly in Melbourne, that's the scene that I know better. But even the crew that I know in Sydney and Brisbane and interstate as well, there's more younger people having opportunities now to play in, perform, who perhaps in the years past, that might not have been because it was much more of a closed shop. So I think that's only a good thing. But it does show that those younger players who are keen to develop those skills and make themselves a part of that scene, the opportunities are there.

BT: Yeah, great, fantastic. What are some of your sort of highlight top shows that you've done either professionally or amateur theatre or anything?

SB: Yeah, look, some of my greatest musical memories are doing some amateur theatre. In fact, when I do professional shows these days, there's a lot of those people in the professional pit that I played amateur shows with. It's probably worth pointing out that there's no direct career path from amateur theatre to professional theatre, they don't necessarily, it's not like being in sport where you play amateur football will aim at a goal and that sort of leads to a professional career. In that industry but I have some great memories of doing some amateur and semi-professional theatre shows. On the professional front I suppose the shows that stick out for me are if I was to list in, this is in no particular order, just coming to mind is Chicago which I've done a few times now, a few return shows of Chicago, professionally and any chance you get to work with Anthony Warlow which I've done on a couple of occasions and three occasions now, actually. He's great. He is an absolute master. So, to work with him is always fabulous. I suppose some of the Disney things I've done, Frozen and Aladdin, which were both sort of long runs. I got to do frozen in Singapore a couple of years ago, which was nice. And doing Matilda, Tim Minchin's show, that's probably nearly 10 years ago now, where we did I think Matilda, I think we went for about nine or ten months on Matilda but that was a that was a fabulous experience being involved in an Australian written by Australia and performed in Australia that was a great experience you know like about Tim Minchin's writing is fabulous you know highly regarded and rightly so and so you know really proud that I was a part of a part of that tour. But look that's not to that's not to downplay any the other things that I've done but they're the ones that sort of stand out for various reasons. You know, with Aladdin and with Matilda, I got to spend a lot of time sitting next to him playing with John Barrett and some of your listeners would know John who for many years has been one of the probably the top woodwind doubler in Melbourne if not Australia and anyone who listened or has heard television or TV or watch TV would have heard either John's playing or John's compositions. John also writes a lot of production music for documentaries and TV versions. So, to be able to sit next to John and get paid, you know, sitting next to one of the door-ends of woodwind doubling in this country wasn't absolute treat. You know, I got paid to have a lesson every night.

BT: That's really cool. You mentioned that you did Matilda for was it ten months?

SB: Something like that, yeah.

BT: That's amazing. Is that the longest run of a show that you've done?

SB: I think Matilda and then Aladdin came very soon after. They were both about sort of nine to ten months each of eight shows a week. It's not for everyone. I know some fabulous, fabulous musicians for whom the idea of doing eight shows a week is diabolical. They wouldn't even go anywhere near it. I actually find it quite reassuring. I like sort of setting up my little workstation in the theatre and coming to work every night every day and having another go. And I mentioned it Ian Godfrey earlier on and I remember talking to Ian way back when in the early 90s and I'm saying, I had that exact same question for him, how do you do eight shows a week for months and months on end? And he said he had this idea and I'm sure Ian would correct me if he was here, but I'll paraphrase what he said. But

he had this idea that he would come to the theatre every night with a different focus meaning it might be tonight I'm going to play the overture of the best I've ever done, or tonight in song number five, that F sharp in bar 107, I'm going to make sure that that's the most in tune that's been with the trumpet that I'm playing with.

So, these little micro-spots along the way and he said these would evolve as the show settled, it evolved. You come up with different ideas for how to re-engage with the show.

Because it can become, driving into the city, trying to find a car park, get into the show on time, making sure you have dinner early enough, get to the theatre. as a woodwind player playing 3, 2-3-4-5 instruments, making sure you have enough time to set up and warm up and find the right reeds. So, it's a lot of backward planning to make sure that those 1500 people that come to the theatre get a high-quality performance every night. So, you do need to set yourself these little goals along the way, to make sure that it is a high-quality product because as much as you're doing 8 shows a week yourself, for the people in the theatre, that might be the only show they see that year or it might be the first show they've ever seen. So, you know, they deserve, and they're paying 160, 170, 180 more a ticket, they deserve to see a top-quality Broadway show. They don't care that you've been doing it eight shows a week for six months. It doesn't matter to them. They're on their night out. They want to see a top-quality show. So, you sort of owe it to yourself as a musician, as a performer, and to the audience to produce the best product you can.

BT: That's really interesting. I think that answers my next question, which was going to be, Are you trying to play it the exact same way every night or you, you trying to change things up so yeah, I guess it just depends on what micro-challenges you set yourself.

SB: Yeah, look there's a there's a I mean the shows these days are very much like franchises and if you think about McDonald's for example, you know you go to buy a big Mac in LA it's going to be the same as a Big Mac in Berlin as a Big Mac in London as a Big Mac in Sydney. And because these shows are franchises usually when the shows come from either Europe from London or from New York typically with our shows They'll send out a supervisor or a couple of supervisors to make sure that it looks and sounds the same as the show that's showing on Broadway. So, if you go and see X show on Broadway, it should be pretty much within a small margin, the same as you'll see here in Melbourne, that's the idea. So in terms of changing things up, there's a limited scope for doing that. So there is a repetitiveness that they're about. But at the same time, as a musician, as we know, when you play something, it only exists in the moment that you're playing it so there are things that you're messing with constantly to try to improve blend or improve intonation or improve how things are running. But there's discussions that happen constantly within the pit between the musical director and the musicians about how things are running just to make sure that things are lining up and working as they should.

BT: Fantastic. A little bit of a funny story. I think you've told me in the past that you actually financed a new car with one run of a show.

SB: I did, I did yes, the Volkswagen that's sitting in the car park here at D'Addario at the moment was paid for by Aladdin.

BT: Oh, great.

SB: So thank you to the Disney organisation for buying me a new car.

BT: Thanks Aladdin.

SB: So no, look, it's great to be able to do that work. It's a profession so it pays the mortgage and it pays for people's kids to go to school and it's very different to every other job, but in many ways, it performs the same function as every other job.

BT: Fantastic, let's talk a little bit more about D'Addario. Just before we started recording you showed me through the facility downstairs. I took a little bit of footage but not much. Can you walk us through again a little bit about how that works and operates? How the distribution of everything goes on?

SB: Sure, So we are as I said, we're a wholly owned subsidiary of D'Addario in the United States. And so once a month we have a 40 foot container land here full of D'Addario goodies and they're unloaded into our warehouse by our three warehouse staff.

BT: The best way I can describe it folks is imagine like a bunnings. It's not quite as big as a bunnings but it's pretty big and it's just full of music stuff. It's great.

SB: D'Addario in Australia we're also the third party distributor for a range of different brands, for SKB instrument cases, for Mapex drums, for LP percussion, Schecter and Alvarez guitars as well. So, our warehouses is full of, is full of all of that gear. So, orders will come in, orders will come in from our retail stores, and the orders are entered here in the office. They're sent down to the warehouse where our three warehouse staff will pick. What's called picking the orders, and we have this intelligent warehouse system so that when the orders are printed in the warehouse, it allows the warehouse staff to plot a path around the warehouse that's the most efficient use of their time, so they're not going, having to go from aisle A over to aisle L and back to aisle B, the slips will arrange a walking path for the staff to use their time and effort the best way possible.

BT: Amazing.

SB: So we're not quite at the Amazon level yet with robots running around but we're getting close but it makes sure that our warehouse runs as efficiently as it possibly can and then every day in the afternoon at four o'clock our logistics people turn up with their truck and we load things on and things get shipped out to our facilities.

BT: I should mention it's probably, well you can correct me if I'm wrong, but it's not just stores that are ordering things like customers can order things through the website, is that right?

SB: Yeah, we don't have what's called D2C in Australia yet, D2C is direct to customer.

BT: Right.

SB: So, consumers can't purchase from D'Addario Australia so we're just a wholesaler and distributor so for us at the moment in Australia you would still need to go to a store to buy our strings or our reeds or whatever it might be. The people that can purchase directly from us are members of our player's circle loyalty programs. It's like our frequent flyer, frequent flyer program. When you buy D'Addario product there's usually a little code that's printed on the inside flap of the box or a little card and you enter that you create an account on the D'Addario website, enter that little number and you build up your player's circle points and then they can be redeemed down the track for just like frequent flyer miles, you can redeem those points for free products or t-shirts or merch or whatever it whatever it might be.

BT: Yeah, cool. I should mention for audio only listeners. I'm currently wearing a D'Addario hoodie and a D'Addario t-shirt. I've also got my D'Addario backpack here.

SB: You've got more D'Addario stuff on than I do, I work here.

BT: All redeemed for free through this Player Circle program. It's amazing and it's something that I don't think most people realize or know about. Particularly students. Yeah, every time you get a box of reeds, there's a code and if you save up enough points you can get more reeds and other things. It's really fantastic.

SB: It's been running for a long time and it's very well-known program in our fretted with our fretted customers, so our guitar string and bass string customers that they know of this program very well. It's less well known in our woodwind and orchestral. So yes, for everyone listening and viewing, yes, jump onto the D'Addario website, create an account and every time you purchase something you can build up your points and redeem them for merch, like you're wearing.

BT: And a little bit of a loophole, I don't know if I should be saying this, particularly teachers, if you're a teacher and your school every six months or 12 months buys a thousand plus dollars worth of reeds. That's a lot of points that you can be redeeming before a student buys one reed at a time. You've got the boxes there, so I've definitely redeemed a lot of points through schools that have lots of reeds laying around.

SB: There's a little education hack I haven't thought of yet.

BT: Yeah, yep, yep. So another thing that really kind of opened my mind when checking out the player's circle points is you don't have to redeem them for clarinet and sax stuff. Because D'Addario makes so much stuff, you know, I've redeemed speaker cables and guitar things, polishing cloths, you know, anything. It's all there, and yeah, definitely check out the player's circle points.

SB: Yeah, it's all available, yes, no, there's no limits on what you can redeem it for. As I say - the world's largest music accessories manufacturer so whether it's guitar strings or drumsticks or drum heads or violin strings or rosins or whatever it might be you can redeem them for them.

BT: Or backpacks.

SB: Backpack!

BT: They make an awesome backpack. It's really, really good.

SB: Totally.

BT: Cool. Stu, thank you so much, is there anything else that you want to add? Is there any upcoming events or anything on the calendar? Any trips you have coming up or shows?

SB: Look, we're always supporting a range of events around the country. The mega sax Day Melbourne University is coming up soon. We're supporting that. I'm in touch with the Queensland clarinet and saxophone society. Their annual performance competition is coming up. So I'm in touch with the committee up there to support and provide some prizes for them. We're working closely with a range of other suppliers as well. We've just given away an Eastman violin, an electric violin which was a part of our presence at the AUSTA, the Australian String Teachers' Association conference in Sydney. We're working closely with Selmer Paris, a range of our endorsed artists in Australia, are also Selmer Paris endorsed artists, so we're working closely with the new Selmer rep in Australia to sort of do some co-promotions and build both the brands. We have a lot of irons in a lot of fires, but as I said originally that's part of what I love about what we do at D'Addario. We've got our fingers in a lot of pies. We try to support the development, well in my role at least, the development of what's happening in the woodwind and orchestral string space as much as we possibly can.

BT: Fantastic, it sounds very similar to Clasax, like we often see you at various events that we're also supporting, so that's great to see.

SB: Happy to be on board.

BT: One very last question before we finish up, and we don't have to talk about it if you don't want to, but this is a little bit personal now. Another interesting thing about yourself that you use to do, I don't know, correct me if I'm wrong, if you still do it. But you foster, is it seeing eye dogs? Guide dogs? Guide dogs? Yes. That is amazing. Tell us about that.

SB: Yeah, we have raised puppies. Guide dog puppies in the past.

BT: Super cute.

SB: Yeah, they're great. It's hard work, but we were keen to sort of put back into the community and do some volunteering or something like that. So we, my partner and I decided, well, we both love dogs. So, we thought that was a nice little matchup. So yes, we've raised a couple of guide dogs from from seven weeks old through to one of them is currently a working guide dog.

BT: Oh, amazing.

SB: Another one didn't quite make it to guide dog status, but, but she got what we call reclassified and she's now living with a family with a young boy that has autism and is providing support to them and their family. So, um, so it's great. It's, it's, it's incredibly challenging and it's, it's very hard, but it's unbelievably rewarding to know that you put in the effort with these beautiful animals and, and they go on to serve the community and that's really important to us.

BT: That's amazing. You know, we might have to get some footage if we can and show that off because they're so cute.

SB: They are, they grow.

BT: That would be very difficult to raise them from such a young age and then have to, you know, hand them over to someone else eventually.

SB: Yes, guide dogs Australia talk about that. They often say don't think of giving them back. Think of giving them forward.

BT: Yeah.

SB: And that's all great right until the point where you have to get them, you have to get them back and that, you know, grown man crying. I'm not afraid to admit that I shed a tear when they leave. So, because they become such a massive part, you're so invested in their development and trying to get them as far down the path as you can to hopefully helping a vision impaired person or helping a family that needs support. But no, it's a great thing for us to do. We love it.

BT: Oh, amazing. Thank you so much for just being an amazing human and musician and for your time today. Folks, check out D'Addario. Check out Guide Dogs Australia. And if you're interested in, you know, musical theatre doubling, and things like that, I'll put some resources in the show notes today as well. Stuart, thanks again so much.

SB: Pleasure.

BT: We'll see you soon.

SB: Thanks Brendan.

BT: Thanks everyone.

END TRANSCRIPT