

Josh Piterman's Magic of the Night.....

For our 41st Birthday celebration, our special guest was singer Josh Piterman, the last Phantom on the West End in London when COVID closed all theatres.

It wasn't till seeing Michael Jackson do the 'moonwalk' that sports loving year 11 student Josh took any interest in musical performance. By chance, the musical at Wesley was 'Grease' and Josh was persuaded to audition. He landed the leading role, included the moonwalk in the choreography, and from that moment he knew what he wanted to do. His parents were high achievers academically with a strong work ethic and the Piterman family had emigrated to Australia as survivors of the Holocaust. While the work ethic remained, science, maths and sport now took a back seat and Josh became obsessed with singing.

After studying at the Ballarat Academy of Performing Arts, Josh started his professional singing career. He spent time appearing for Tokyo Disney and the heavy schedule taught Josh how to maintain a healthy voice and develop greater vocal resilience. Then, when touring the world with The Ten Tenors, he learned to sing high and build a strong repertoire of classical and music theatre material.

Josh mentioned several theatre shows in which he has performed, including *The Drowsy Chaperone* for the MTC, touring Australia as Tony in *West Side Story*, *Hairspray* in London and *Beautiful: The Carol King Musical*. Not everything has been plain sailing and for a time Josh suffered from depression, took a break and questioned his place in the business.

It was after singing *Nessun Dorma* on the steps of the Opera House in Sydney that producer Cameron McIntosh was impressed when sent a tape of Josh's performance. This led to the young Australian returning to London where he not only landed the title role in *Phantom Of The Opera* on the West End but met and fell in love with Lotte, a Scottish songwriter. Josh credits her for helping him achieve to the degree he has.

'Playing the Phantom at Her Majesty's Theatre in London's West End for six months was everything and more,' he said. 'Sharing the same dressing room that Michael Crawford used as the original Phantom back in 1984 was a great thrill. Michael started it and I finished it.'

Josh added, 'COVID taught me many lessons ... knowing who I am and to unconditionally love myself.' He impressed us all with his grounded approach to life, his values, his honesty and his obvious passion and talent. We wish him the very best when he again plays the Phantom, in Sydney later this year.

A truly special night at Rotary North Balwyn

Greg Ross