




THE  
**Man**  
IN THE  
**Mask**

BY LUCY GREENBERG

From the most **OMINOUS CHARACTER** on Broadway  
to an openheartedness he'd never known, Texas Tech **ALUMNUS**  
**DAVID GASCHEN** has learned to let his song take flight.

ILLUSTRATION BY ARMANDO GODINEZ JR.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN REX & ASHLEY RODGERS



# HE STANDS BEHIND THE GLASS, WATCHING HER AT HER VANITY, BRUSHING HER HAIR AND ADMIRING THE ROSES.

## The roses he gave her.

Jealousy snakes through him like a poison. He sees the couple leaving; he must act now. The timpani roll.

“Insolent boy this slave of fashion, basking in your glory.”

Low strings pluck eighth notes.

“Angel, I hear you speak, I listen.”

Violins swoop in with a melancholy melody.

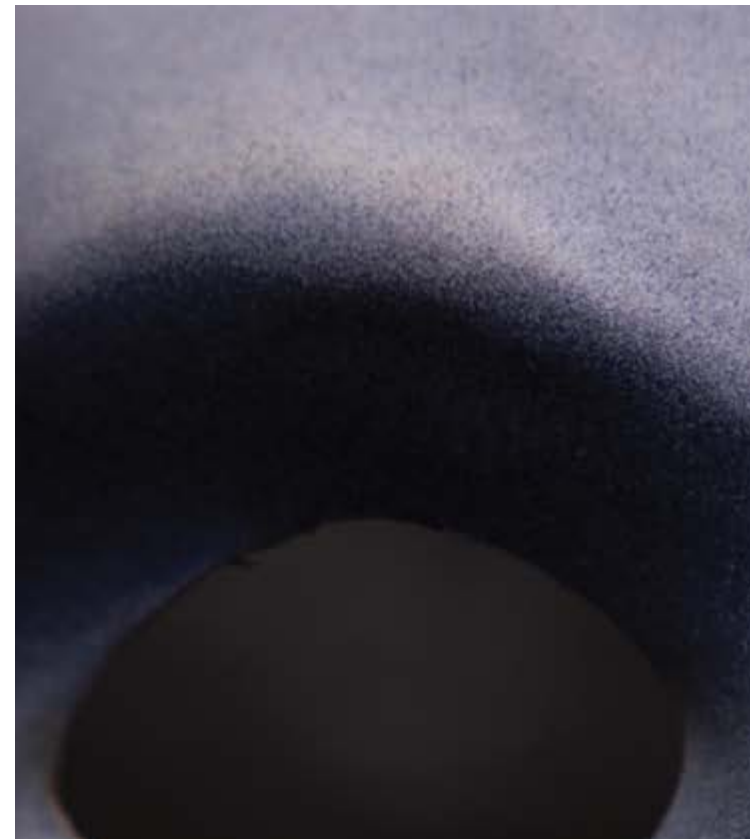
“Flattering child, you shall know me; see why in shadow I hide. Look at your face in the mirror, I am there inside.”

The glass mirror slides aside, revealing a hidden passageway and the infamous masked face of the Phantom of the Opera.

It is Nov. 8, 1999, and David Gaschen is behind that mask. With passion, vibrato and flair, he’s a hypnotic presence; every pair of eyes is on him.

In this moment, he has complete control – both as a performer and character. Adrenaline courses through his veins. It’s an electric feeling.

He glances out toward the rapt audience. It was in those very seats he sat with his parents years ago, his mother by his side. But tonight, she is not here, and he has no control over that.



# T

HE IDEA OF making a living with his voice never dawned on David when he was young. The Lubbock native came from a musically inclined family – the last of eight children who could all carry

a tune. David watched each of his siblings enter business, health care, insurance and other fields of study. Music filled their home, but it didn’t follow them out.

That is, until David.

“David was the last to know how talented he was,” says his brother Paul.

When the Gaschen children were young, their oldest sister planned something special for their parents.

She told them if they practiced a song and performed it for their parents’ anniversary, she’d get them all candy from the sweets shop where she worked. David, no older than 5 at the time, was the star of the show. Family members exchanged glances as David sang as if to verify, “He’s as good as I think he is, right?”

Helen Gaschen, David’s mother, played piano and carefully selected music to play with her son. Both Helen and her husband John were active in their church and encouraged David to use his talents there.

The Catholic Cathedral with its collection of stained-glass windows and octagon-shaped skylight, elevated the mind to things above. It also was the venue where David found a love for performance. He looked forward to sharing his voice with others. And if you spend any time with David, you know his voice is just that – a vessel to bring others joy.

It’s a perspective John and Helen instilled in their children.

# ACT ONE

While David was encouraged to use his talents in church, he was teased at school by upper classmen for being in choir. His desire to split time between baseball, theater and choir was something the other boys did not understand.

“I was always quick to laugh things off, but those experiences stuck with me,” David said.

That suddenly changed in David’s 10th-grade year, when he landed the role of Danny Zuko in Monterey High School’s production of “Grease.” The girl cast as Sandy was the head cheerleader.

David was suddenly the hero of the baseball team.

## Overture

As David continued through high school, he participated in plenty of musicals and concerts but still never considered studying music. The summer before college, David auditioned for Lubbock Moonlight Musicals, a local theater group.

His audition choice was “On the Street Where You Live” from “My Fair Lady.”

“I saw a man walking toward me very quickly after I finished the song,” David recalls. “He complimented me on my tone, and I thought, “That’s great. Who are you?””

Reading the confusion on David’s face, the man laughed realizing he’d gotten ahead of himself.

“I’m John Gillas. I’m the head of the vocal department at Texas Tech’s School of Music,” he said. “I’d love to have you study with us next year.”

Flattered, David responded, “Well, thanks, but I’m going to study business.”

“You’re what?” Gillas asked, obviously displeased.

David informed him that singing was more of a hobby. Still confused but undeterred, Gillas offered to be David’s private teacher on the spot. David enthusiastically accepted. By the time David made it backstage, the other auditioners were clamoring around to ask what Gillas had said.

“He asked if I wanted to be part of his studio,” David told them. “Is that good?”

“Good? That’s the best thing you could possibly have,” they said.

David would later realize how true that statement was.

After a semester of spending 20-plus hours in the College of Business Administration each week and only one hour in the School of Music, David realized it should be the other way around.

A few factors made that decision for him.

First, he loved to sing far more than he loved math. Second, everyone who knew him encouraged him to change his major. Third and possibly most important of all, he visited Broadway for the very first time.

David’s parents took him to New York City the winter after his first semester of college. They saw several shows but one in particular captivated David.

He remembers it like it was yesterday.

The curtains came up. Andrew Lloyd Webber’s music reverberated throughout the Majestic Theatre. A struggle for love unfolded.

As the curtains came back down, 19-year-old David looked at his parents and said, “I’m going to be the Phantom one day.”

His father applauded David’s ambition. His mother gently reminded him that hundreds if not thousands of singers try out for the role.

“And most will be taller than you,” she teased.

But David knew his mother. If she was teasing, she actually thought he could pull it off.

# PROLOGUE

## Think of Me

When the plane landed back in Lubbock, David went to the registrar's office and changed his major to vocal performance. He continued to train under Gillas but now also had instruction from John's equally talented partner, Mary Gillas, along with other dedicated faculty.

John took David's natural talent and infused it with pristine technique, knowledge of vocal anatomy and a mastery of storytelling. David learned to sustain notes with perfection, like a feather slowly drifting to its destination. His range was something he was born with, but it grew wider with practice.

From their many lessons together, what David remembers most is what John taught him of character.

"John showed me the best way to get where you want to go is with kindness," David says, "not by being a diva."

John reminded David what he already knew: talent is something to be shared.

Another crucial skill David learned at Texas Tech was how to sight-sing and read music. Everything he'd learned up to that point was by ear.

"With all the singing in the Catholic church you would think I'd have learned to read music," David laughs. "But let's be honest, most of that music goes back and forth between the same two notes anyways."

Along with the highs and lows of David's vocal range existed the highs and lows of life.

David met his wife Jeanne at Texas Tech. Her curly brown hair blowing in the October breeze at a Texas Tech versus Texas A&M football game was all it took for David to fall, and he fell hard.

Texas Tech may have lost to Texas A&M that day, but it was one of the best days of David's life.

It is a day he'll never forget. Humorously between the couple, it's a day Jeanne doesn't remember as clearly. But after an evening of bowling with friends and a sorority mixer, David not only became memorable, he also became Jeanne's boyfriend.

## Angel of Music

That fall brought other changes.

David's mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer right before David started college. The music that filled the Gaschen home was silenced as the arms that usually reached for piano keys were stretched out for needles.

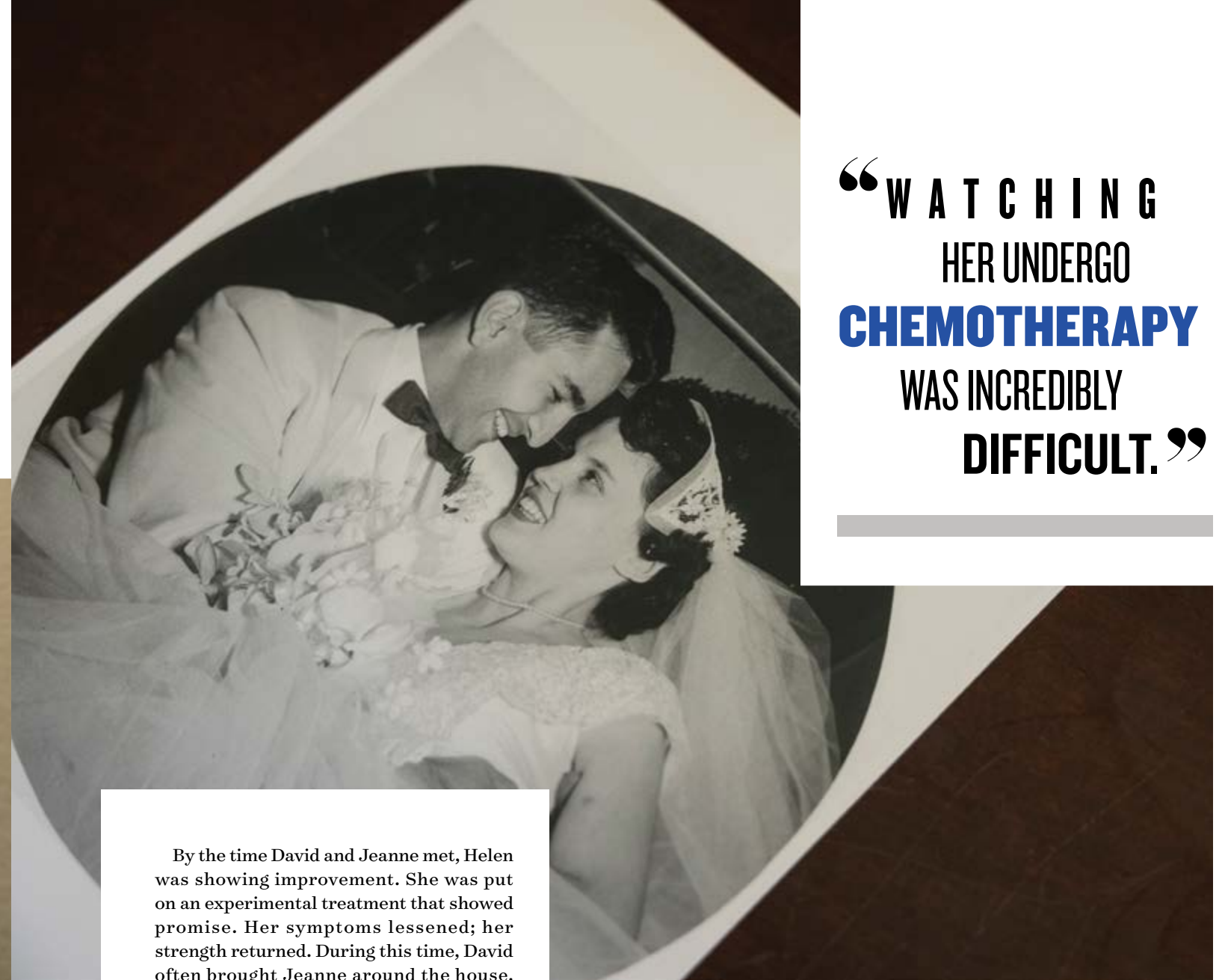
"Watching her undergo chemotherapy was incredibly difficult," David says, a wrinkle appearing between his brows.

David was always the comedian of the family. There were few bad days that couldn't be fixed with one of David's jokes, but his mother's illness threatened his optimistic outlook on life.

It didn't threaten Helen's.

She sang hymns and worshipped God through it all.

"I'm sure she had moments of doubt, but she never let it change who she was," David recalls.



“WATCHING  
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DIFFICULT.”

By the time David and Jeanne met, Helen was showing improvement. She was put on an experimental treatment that showed promise. Her symptoms lessened; her strength returned. During this time, David often brought Jeanne around the house. His parents fell in love with her as quickly as David had.

"I knew I wanted to marry David," Jeanne says. "I dreamed about how luxurious our life would be," she laughs.

Jeanne imagined opening nights and limousines, interviews and magazines.

Helen brought Jeanne back to earth. "Honey, I don't think you realize what you're signing up for," she told her son's girlfriend.

"David's going to be gone a lot," she said. "There are going to be incredibly long hours and many late-night rehearsals. Are you OK with that?"

Jeanne realized she could do without the glamour, but she didn't want to do without David.

As the couple's relationship progressed, sadly, so did Helen's cancer.

In 1992, it came back in a new form. The experimental drug had cleared the breast cancer but caused complications resulting in aggressive stage 4 leukemia.

She died a few months later.

## The Phantom of the Opera

After graduating from Texas Tech in 1993, David and Jeanne moved to Chicago. Performance gigs and off-Broadway opportunities were plentiful in the Windy City and the cost of living was better than New York.

David juggled seven part-time jobs to make ends meet, auditioning in the evenings, but he also struggled to adjust to his new reality.

"It was hard to move on without my mother," David says. "Life just kept moving and I remember thinking, 'Does anyone know what just happened? She's gone.'"

He tried to put the images of his mother hooked up to machines out of his head, knowing she was no longer suffering, but the experience left David terrified. Helen's cancer had come back like a thief in the night. David wondered if that's what life was: a story waiting to unveil a bitter ending.

But David was a man of faith.

Amid meeting Jeanne and losing his mother, his relationship with God only grew stronger. Not everything made sense, but he clung to God, nonetheless.

"My biggest fear became getting cancer," David says.

David met his future wife, Jeanne (left), at Texas Tech. But as their relationship progressed, so did the cancer David's mother Helen (above) had been fighting for years.

**“LIFE JUST KEPT MOVING AND I REMEMBER THINKING, ‘DOES ANYONE KNOW WHAT JUST HAPPENED? SHE’S GONE.’”**

And yet, David put that fear aside and moved forward the only way he knew how: singing.

He was cast in a production of “Pirates of Penzance” in Evanston, Illinois, in late 1994. An agent was in the audience and contacted David afterward asking to represent him. Although flattered, David worried she only represented opera singers and he wanted to make a career in musical theater.

“I’m not really an opera singer,” David told her over the phone.

“You just sang an opera,” she pointed out.

“Well, it was a light opera,” he joked.

The agent said she had colleagues working at Johnson-Liff, a major Broadway casting agency at the time. A few days later, she sent him a casting call for the role of Jean Valjean in “Les Misérables.”

David auditioned for Ron LaRosa, the casting agent of the show.

Besides the Phantom, David’s other dream role was Valjean, the leading man in the story of love and redemption set in 19th-century France.

The stakes were high.

LaRosa asked David to sing “Bring Him Home” in the key of the show, which is quite high. David sang the song with all the conviction he could muster.

As he finished, LaRosa just stood there.

“That was the most beautiful performance of that song I think I’ve ever heard,” he told David, unable to take his eyes off the young singer. “How old are you?”

“I’m 24,” David said.

“Moving forward, don’t tell anyone your age,” LaRosa said.

He knew David’s youth could prove a stumbling block for casting the character of Valjean, who is supposed to be middle-aged. LaRosa called David later that afternoon and told him there was an understudy opening for Valjean on Broadway.

David got to the audition in New York City the next day. He sang for LaRosa’s boss.

“Come back when you’re older,” the man said, and that was that.

LaRosa promised David there would be other opportunities and said he’d call as soon as he had something. David didn’t count on it. He returned to Chicago disappointed but continued to audition.

As the spring of 1995 arrived, David and Jeanne were planning their June wedding back

David’s dream roles were the title character in “Phantom of the Opera” and Jean Valjean in “Les Misérables.” Ultimately, singing Valjean’s most famous solo helped him earn his spot as the Phantom.

in Lubbock. David was working as a Schlotzsky’s delivery man and Jeanne as a flight attendant.

Six weeks before the wedding, LaRosa made good on his promise.

David picked up the phone. LaRosa was going on about an audition coming up. It wasn’t for Valjean; it was for the Phantom of the Opera.

David’s interest piqued.

But there was one catch – the opening was in Basel, Switzerland.

Figuring he didn’t have much to lose, David went to the audition.

While some men hold bachelor parties

“Fine,” Blodgette conceded. “David, can you please sing ‘Bring Him Home?’”

David sang the song with the same passion he’d sung with in New York. As he finished, silence filled the room.

Blodgette looked at him, wheels turning in her head.

“Do you know the music for the part of the Phantom?” she asked.

“I do,” he responded.

“We’re going to rehearse tonight. Tomorrow, you’ll sing for Hal Prince,” she said.

“Who?” David asked.

“Harold Prince... the director of the show?”

Blodgette worried aloud.

“Oh right, that Hal Prince,” David said, hiding his embarrassment.

Blodgette rehearsed with David that night, and they went over “Music of the Night” multiple times.

“David had no idea how talented he was,” Blodgette says. “I still don’t think he does.”

“His technique was flawless, which is rare for someone that young. But more than that, David had something special. His personality was compelling, and he had a joy that’s rare in this industry.”

David performed the Phantom’s famous solo for Hal Prince the following day and returned to the Hyatt Hotel where he was the lunchtime bartender and awaited an answer.

He was pouring a mimosa when the phone rang an hour later.

He got the part.

“I called Jeanne immediately and said, ‘I just got offered the Phantom of



before their weddings, David treated himself to an audition for the role of a disfigured monster.

The audition was run by Kristen Blodgette, the associate music supervisor of the show – just one step below Andrew Lloyd Webber himself. The stakes were high once again, but David didn’t let it rattle him. The energy gave him even more precision.

David picked up his audition book looking for the song he planned to sing. As he flipped through the pages, LaRosa, who also was at the audition, told Blodgette to have him sing “Bring Him Home.”

Blodgette rolled her eyes.

The song was easily the most overused solo at the time and no one in casting wanted to hear it for the hundredth time.

LaRosa insisted.

the Opera in Switzerland,” he said. “What do we do?”  
 Jeanne responded, “Do you like delivering Schlotzsky’s?”  
 “No,” he replied.  
 “Well, then I suggest you sign the contract.”

### The Music of the Night

After their summer wedding, David left for Switzerland and Jeanne returned to her job as a flight attendant. Luckily, her miles allowed her to visit David often. But the arrangement was far from normal for a newlywed couple.

Jeanne recalled her conversation with Helen three years prior. This was what she had signed up for. The couple made the most of that first year though.

Jeanne would fly in for a few days when David had time off and they’d travel by train around Switzerland, Germany and Austria.

Other than those few excursions, David gave himself fully to the show. He was the Phantom alternate to a Swiss performer, which meant he went on as the Phantom a few times each week. However, the other performer fell sick often, meaning David played the Phantom frequently.

In addition to the lead role, David was a swing. This meant he learned 16 additional parts and had to be able to perform them at any given time.

All the parts were in German. Learning 17 roles in a foreign language was the hardest thing he’d ever done.

“But it was better than delivering sandwiches,” he laughed.

The second year of David’s contract, Jeanne moved abroad to join him.

David’s phone rang again in 1997 with a new offer: the Phantom alternate in Hamburg, Germany. David and Jeanne decided to take the chance. It was a difficult goodbye to the friends they’d made in the Swiss show, but they knew it was a good opportunity for David’s career.

David and Jeanne spent a total of four years abroad. David compiled thousands of hours on stage as the Phantom. He became familiar with every little detail of the show. He knew almost all the parts and memorized every cue.

By the end of those years, he was ready for an even bigger stage.

“Europe was a great experience, but the end goal had always been Broadway,” David says, “ever since that night I’d seen ‘The Phantom of the Opera’ with my parents.”

“I’ll never forget opening my first show in New York,” David recalls.

It was Nov. 8, 1999. Arrayed in a tuxedo, silk-lined cloak and the Phantom’s iconic fedora, his dream began.

While the Phantom felt nothing but control, David felt nothing but gratitude.



“My mom had the best seat in the house that night,” David said while keeping back tears. “She was up there with me.”

Seeing David on Broadway for the first time hit Jeanne differently, too.

“New York was the goal and he had finally achieved it,” she says. “This was everything he’d been working toward for a decade. I cried that night.”

Jeanne wasn’t the only special guest in the audience. John and Mary Gillas made the trip from Lubbock to see David’s debut as the Broadway icon.

Mary Gillas, now 93 years old, still remembers that night.

“David was born to sing,” she says. “He might have been surprised he made it to Broadway, but we weren’t surprised at all.”

The Gillases had special access to the show and Mary recalls hearing one of the backstage managers comment on the new Phantom.

“I cannot believe how perfectly every

vowel and note is placed,” he whispered to one of the crew.  
 John and Mary just smiled.

### All I Ask of You

Life changed dramatically for David and Jeanne during his time on Broadway. David was in the show when the planes crashed into the Twin Towers in 2001. The very mission and tone of Broadway shifted during those months.

The couple also became pregnant with their first child, Andrew. Rocked by the events of 9/11 Jeanne told David she wanted to raise their family outside the city. So, they found a home in Connecticut, just a 45-minute train commute for David.

Four years later, the couple welcomed their daughter Molly.

The six years David played the Phantom were some of the most thrilling years of their lives. But as their family grew and their priorities shifted, they wondered if their time on Broadway was ending. After much consideration, David and Jeanne lowered the curtain on that remarkable time in life and returned to Texas.

David traveled with the touring company of “Phantom” for five years, filling in as needed. But on the road, he discovered a love for teaching.

“Cast members would ask if they could get pointers,” David says. “Then their friends wanted lessons.”

Soon, David was the unofficial vocal coach.

Jeanne suggested if he enjoyed teaching so much, he should consider making it his full-time job. The idea of completely stepping away from the Phantom was strange to David. It’s all he had known for 15 years. But Andrew and Molly were growing up and he didn’t want to miss it.

David began teaching vocal lessons out of their home in Frisco, Texas, in 2012.

The family found a new normal, albeit a normal with a dozen students in their house every day and constant singing echoing up the stairs. But to Andrew and Molly, it was all they ever knew.

**DAVID HAD PLAYED THE PHANTOM MANY TIMES BEFORE, BUT IT WAS JUST DIFFERENT IN NEW YORK. THIS IS WHERE HE’D TOLD HIS MOTHER HE WOULD ONE DAY BECOME THE PHANTOM.**



After four years abroad, playing the Phantom in Switzerland and Germany, David returned to Broadway, where he’d first seen the show. Only this time, he’d be starting in it.



It was a welcome reminder of the music that had filled David's childhood home, and of his mother. Until it, too, was nearly silenced.

**Entr'Acte 2023**

**I T'S A WARM JUNE MORNING IN** Frisco, the air already hanging heavy with humidity that will thicken throughout the day. It's a slow morning in the Gaschen house. David and Jeanne are just putting away leftover cake from Molly's 18th birthday party the night before.

Molly, soon to be a first-year student at Texas Tech, and Andrew, a fourth-year student at Texas A&M, are still asleep upstairs.

David sits at the kitchen table with his Bible and a cup of coffee.

He points out how many times the scriptures say, "Do not fear."

365 – once for every day of the year.

Every day for the past six years, David has reminded himself of that.

In 2017, David developed a sore throat. As any professional singer would do, he immediately went to the doctor. His left tonsil was swollen. The doctors examined it and listed off the likely culprits: tonsillitis, strep throat or any other number of bacterial infections.

But even tonsillitis is a singer's worst nightmare.

The tonsils, while not medically necessary, greatly affect the timbre and pitch of the voice. Removing a tonsil can leave a singer with anything from slight changes to a completely different sound altogether.

The doctor decided to remove the tonsil and as David waited on pathology, he prayed for the best. When the doctor called, he wished the news had been tonsillitis.

"You have B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma," said the doctor in a solemn voice.

David had cancer.

"I was sure I'd heard him wrong," David recalls.

But reality began to wash over him, racking against him like waves. David hung up with the doctor and immediately phoned Jeanne.

"Cancer hadn't even crossed my mind as a possibility," she says. "I was completely caught off guard."

The outgoing and optimistic man she married was sick. He was one of the best singers she knew, and he had cancer in his tonsil.

"It was an all-time low," they both agree.

David's doctors felt confident they had gotten the cancer out by removing his tonsil. They did not find any other cancerous cells in his body, so they put him on a watch-and-wait plan, scheduling PET scans once every few months, then once a year.

Scan after scan came back clean. It seemed the doctors caught the cancer before it had time to spread.

But fear was spreading in David's mind like a cancer itself.

"From the time my mom passed away, this had been my biggest fear," David says. "Watching her suffer the way she did still haunts me."

David remembered standing around his mother's hospital bed with his father and siblings when she passed away. The image of Jeanne and the kids having to endure that was too much for David to bear. For a man of faith, he realized how much control he still had to relinquish.

“WHERE THERE IS CONTROL, THERE CAN BE NO LOVE. AND I WANT MY LIFE TO BE ABOUT LOVE.”

**Masquerade**

"I didn't tell people I was sick," David says.

He worried others might think he was too ill to perform – that on top of everything else, he would be unable to make a living. Because while he taught full time, he also performed many concerts throughout the year.

Surprisingly, the removal of his tonsil had not affected his voice, so there was no way for others to know anything was wrong. David's humorous personality masked anything that was amiss, but there was a storm brewing below.

"David is like deep waters," Paul says of his brother. "He is the life of the party, but his mind goes deep. He has an inner life that is complex."

The doctors had told David there was no need for chemotherapy since they didn't find any other cancer. This was tremendously good news to David – not only because he's got a great head of hair, but because chemotherapy terrified him.

Year after year passed, and the PET scans kept coming back clean.

"Every scan made me anxious," David says. "Each time I thought, 'This is where my luck runs out.'"

But David tried to trust the God who had been faithful to him thus far.

Life returned to normal after a while. Andrew went off to college, though his parents still lament his choice to be an Aggie. Molly started high school and David's vocal studio grew larger than ever. He had more than 60 students, many of whom have gone on to Broadway themselves.

"Our house is usually really loud," Molly says. "Dad is singing, or I'm singing, or a student is singing, but someone's always singing."

And then the next appointment would come. Life would come to a screeching halt at the beginning of each year when David went for a scan. The memories of his mother being OK, and then suddenly not OK, taunted him.

The Gaschen house became quiet during those weeks.

But then another scan would come back clean. Life moved on.

Molly's senior year of high school began, and her dad planned a special surprise for her. The father-daughter duo took a trip to New York City in January 2023 to see the "Phantom of the Opera."

Molly was too young to remember her father in the role and had never seen the show on Broadway. David introduced her to friends in the cast and crew after the show. They caught up with Kristen Blodgette, who had remained a lifelong friend to David and Jeanne.

The trip let David's spirit start to soar again.

But toward the end of the trip, David's right tonsil began to swell. As much as he wanted to believe it was strep throat, it felt the same as the left tonsil had in 2017.

When they got home David had his right tonsil removed. The lymphoma was back.

Only a few weeks removed from reliving his glory days at the Majestic Theatre, David faced a new reality: a sterile operating room. While the doctors were once again successful in removing the infected tonsil, the lymphoma had spread this time.

Things were more serious.

"The first time around I knew pretty quickly I would be OK, but now the doctors were talking about chemotherapy and a year's worth of treatments," David says. "That's when I hit rock bottom."

**Wandering Child**

After surgery, David became depressed.

"It was difficult to get out of bed and I had frequent panic attacks," he says. "I'm an optimistic person but this felt too big."

That's when David went deeper into his own heart to reconcile the fear



### You Alone Can Make My Song Take Flight

David didn't end up needing chemotherapy. In the seven years since his initial diagnosis a new science emerged that allowed him to receive immunotherapy with very few side effects.

He teaches. He mows the lawn. He Facetimes Molly and Andrew at college.

You'd have no idea he was even fighting cancer unless he told you.

"I'm so grateful for the advances we've had in medicine," he says. "Cancer is a different reality than it was when my mom was sick."

Since his diagnosis in February 2023, David's cancer has disappeared.

"It's nothing short of a miracle," he says, a wide smile on his face.

And while this experience has required him to give up some things, even more has been given to him.

"There is a passage in scripture that says, 'God's power is made perfect in weakness, so I will boast in my weakness so that God may be glorified.'"

David looks at those words in his Bible. They're underlined and the page is worn.

After the cancer began to disappear, he decided to try singing again. Nervous about what his voice could or could not do, he sang, "The Music of the Night."

Kristen, who'd heard David sing in Switzerland more than 30 years earlier, listened to David sing the song he'd sung thousands of times before.

*"Purge your thoughts of the life you knew before.*

*Close your eyes, let your spirit start to soar. And you'll live as you've never lived before."*

Tears streamed down Kristen's face.

"It's more beautiful than before, if that's possible," she said softly.

Somehow the cancer hadn't ruined David's voice. He sang the familiar lyrics, but with new emotion.

As he finished the last note, he turned and flashed a classic David grin.

"Well, that wasn't half bad." 🦋

he felt with the peace he wanted. As a lifelong church-goer, he heard about the peace God offers. That peace seemed distant, though, and David was tired of pretending everything was OK.

David began to reflect on the character he played for so long.

The Phantom is one of the most complex characters in musical theater. Born disfigured, his mother casts him aside and he grows up with gypsies as the "freak" in their show. After escaping, he finds his way to the Paris Opera House where he controls its staff and performers through fear.

At his core though, he longs to be loved – especially by Christine, the woman with whom he is obsessed.

He tricks her, bribes her, threatens her.

"The Phantom thought he loved Christine," David says. "But instead, he controlled her."

In the last moments of the musical, the Phantom releases Christine and her fiancé from his dungeon. After Christine kisses him without his mask, all his deformities on display, he is left shocked and ashamed. The Phantom is alone again, but this time by his own choosing. There is no anger, no control – only grief.

He crouches down and winds his music box, the one possession he had as a child. He becomes small, reverting to the first thing he learned to do: hide.

He softly sings along with the music.

"Hide your face so the world will never find you."

"It isn't until Christine kisses him that he realizes he has no idea what love really is," David says. "It's free and it can't be controlled."

As doctors put David on a treatment plan, he realized he wasn't so much afraid of cancer as he was of suffering – the complete lack of control. Looking at the pills, he realized he was trying to control his days like the capsules sorted in his hand.

"That's what it comes down to. Where there is control, there can be no love. And I want my life to be about love."

David decided to give up control, rather than lose it.

He told people about his cancer this time. He asked for support in whatever way he could find it. There was an outpouring of love from their community. Meals and flowers flooded their front doorway. Friends from Switzerland even sent cards.

"The Phantom cast is like a family," Jeanne says. "It's a very tight-knit and loving group."

Now cancer free, David feels unencumbered in a way he never expected to – and only part of that is due to his clean bill of health. You see, in giving up control, he has grown beyond the limits he thought existed.

# STRIVE FOR HONOR

The people who power Texas Tech University

BY GLENYS YOUNG & ALLEN RAMSEY

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