



“I don’t think male genitalia should be trapped in something so tight! It’s really more of a G-string and taking it off is just a wonderful release.”

Purr-feet!

» He runs a gym for theatre folk, likes his icons “crap free” and he’s currently playing a moggy in a musical. **Josh Piterman** tells Matt Myers about life on all fours.

DNA: You’re currently playing Gus in the Australian national tour of *Cats*. Is it a challenge for a human playing a cat?

Josh Piterman: Of course. Just being a feline alone is challenging enough, but Gus is a lot older than I am, so that’s a challenge in itself.

Nick Afoa said to prepare for his role as Simba in *The Lion King*, he studied lions at the zoo.

Did you study cats? Absolutely. We had cats come into rehearsal and for two weeks we did exercises exploring feline behaviour. We’d start by scratching, cleaning and doing all the things cats do when they wake up. Then we’d bring in all the other components of the character.

Does applying the make-up involve a strict trademark style attention to detail? Yes! I get to the theatre two hours before the show to go through what’s probably the most intense make-up process of all the characters. I have five make-up changes in one show. It’s full on!

You were part of Australia’s successful Ten Tenors, which tours globally. What is your most memorable experience from that? We once played to around 10,000 people on a Mexican beach. But I won’t talk about the more memorable things that happened off-stage, and there were many!

Was this like *Mad Monday* for footballers? Yes, and it could be any night of the week in any country. In Spain we did about four shows in 30 days, so that meant 26 days of quite intense male behaviour. It was a lot of fun, but I think what happens on tour stays on tour. It’s all entrenched in the Ten Tenors vault and I’ve forgotten the password!

You also played alongside Geoffrey Rush in *The Drowsy Chaperone* for the Melbourne Theatre Company. That was my first ever musical and I couldn’t have been more fortunate being cast alongside Geoffrey, as he’s just astonishing. He’s an amazing mentor and a supreme talent. Robyn Nevin, a great Australian actress, was also in there, as were Rhonda Burchmore, Shane Jacobson, Christie Whelan and so many others. I was kind of thrown in the deep end, but I couldn’t have been in a better environment to learn.

What’s the best thing about working in

musical theatre? For me it’s always the cast. Spending that time with a group of people, learning and building friendships.

You have a few gay mates. Have you ever had to jump to their defense? Never in a physical incident, but certainly online. I’m a massive advocate for equal rights and gay marriage. I had such great hopes and expectations when Malcolm Turnbull took over the leadership [and became the Prime Minister of Australia], but was quite shattered to find he’s just toeing the party line. I have so many gay friends in wonderful relationships and it just makes no sense that two people, who love each other just as much as I love my wife, do not have the same rights. Or that their love is not respected and valued in the same way. I think it’s something that’s really wrong in this country. No doubt we’ll look back on it like we do with the history of voting rights for women and Aboriginal people. We’ll see how backward we were!

If you were gay, who would do it for you? Hugh Jackman. He’s a great actor and singer and moves really well and he’s a great family man. You never hear crap about him. He doesn’t get done for drugs or abuse or speeding. He’s just an honest Aussie bloke. I respect those who are at the height of their career and maintain humility and a level of normality. I really value integrity in an industry that is often tarnished by all sorts of crap.

Who is Josh Piterman’s diva? I guess Delta Goodrem would want me to say her, because she’s in *Cats*, but I’m not going to. Sorry, Delta! I’m going with Celine Dion. Her voice is ridiculous and she’s always so classy and constant. She may not be bringing out singles, but that girl’s rocking out Vegas all the time. Like with Hugh, you don’t hear any crap about her.

You are also a certified Master Functional Trainer and opened PITFIT, a gym designed for performers. It was originally designed for performers because I was working as a personal trainer by myself in a studio in St Kilda, and 90 percent of my clients were performers. When we opened the studio we found a creative, fun and colourful approach to training. People

were getting results but also really enjoying themselves. Then we started getting a great response from the general area and now it’s only about 40 percent performers. Anyone can do the workouts at PITFIT and I’m so glad that people from all backgrounds are coming along.

Have you ever had a wardrobe malfunction on stage? Yes. The best one happened in high school in Year 12 when I was playing Judas in *Jesus Christ Superstar*. I had leather pants on and the zip broke, leaving me with my pants hanging halfway down. For a 17-year-old boy, that was crushing!

Are dance belts annoying? I have to wear one in *Cats* and Matt McFarlane [who plays



Munkustrap] and I both say there is no more joy than taking off a dance support after a show. There’s a lot of lifting and pushing just to get it on, and I don’t think male genitalia should be trapped in something so tight! It’s really more of a G-string and taking it off is just a wonderful release.

This is DNA’s Swimwear issue. Are you a speedos or boardies man? Boardies all the way. I don’t like speedos. I feel like it’s too much of a close connection to Tony Abbott [Australia’s previous Prime Minister, famous for his red speedos] and I want to draw as much distance to that parallel as possible!

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