

Internationally renowned vocalist and stage performer David Gaschen remains best known for the years he devoted to the title character in "The Phantom of the Opera." That success did not arrive overnight; it only seems that way.

Gaschen graduated from Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, his home town, in 1993, his degree in vocal performance. He chose to move to Chicago, Ill., to begin his professional career.

He performed in more than 20 musical plays in Chicago --- and was cast by Light Opera Works of Chicago in the leading roles of Frederic in "The Pirates of Penzance," and Karl Franz in "The Student Prince."

Acceptance in Andrew Lloyd Webber's "The Phantom of the Opera" would not be far behind.

In fact, in May of 1995, he was cast as the alternate for The Phantom in the original Swiss production of "The Phantom of the Opera" in Basel, Switzerland. Even as an alternate, Gaschen averaged 3 to 4 performances per week as the Phantom. At age 26, Gaschen had become history's youngest performer cast as the Phantom in a professional production..

Gaschen's first European performances were in German. Eventually, however, the immensely popular production in Basel began being produced six times in German, and twice in English, each week.

Gaschen was a success in Europe. After refining the role of the Phantom over the course of two years in Switzerland, he was contracted to perform the lead in the German production of "The Phantom of the Opera" in Hamburg. All told, Gaschen made the role his own, acting and singing as the Phantom more than 1,000 times in Europe.

In the summer of 1999, Gaschen found himself walking out on stage to sing for famous Broadway producer Harold Prince. The result was immediate: Gaschen joined the Broadway cast after that audition. He would make his Broadway debut in the title role of "The Phantom of the Opera" in November 1999.

All told, Gaschen has performed the role of the Phantom in professional productions more than 1,300 times.

While producers of "The Phantom of the Opera" still call on Gaschen to temporarily join productions when needed, the versatile performer eventually opted to leave Broadway and seek success in the recording and concert arenas.

He already is included on the compact disc "Broadway's Fabulous Phantoms" with the likes of Howard McGilin, Hugh Panaro and Michael Crawford, the latter of course being Broadway's original and best known Phantom of the Opera.

However, Gaschen also recorded a solo CD called "Let Me Sing and I'm Happy," and more recently released a new, self-titled CD, "David Gaschen." His recordings paved the way for pop music success, and his vocal guest appearances with orchestras include the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, Wheeling Symphony Orchestra and Lubbock Symphony Orchestra.

Benefit work by Gaschen has thus far included voluntary performances to help raise funds for the Susan Komen Race for the Cure in Lubbock, Tx.; Christian education at Lubbock Christian Schools; Bishop Defalco Retreat Center in Amarillo, Tx; St. Thomas More Church in Darien Ct.; Junior League of Lubbock; Chancellors Gala Dinner at Texas Tech University; Catholic education at Christ the King Cathedral; and Lullaby of Broadway at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York City.

Gaschen also has performed voice-over work.

Success on the professional stage would also find Gaschen honored in his hometown of Lubbock. In September 2006, Gaschen was inducted onto the West Texas Walk of Fame, where bronze plaques depict West Texas natives being honored for excelling professionally in the arts; this walk of fame traditionally is located adjacent to a bronze state of the late Buddy Holly, considered Lubbock's native son. Gaschen also returned to Lubbock to receive the Distinguished Alumni Award from Texas Tech's School of Visual and Performing Arts.

Gaschen and his wife Jeanne have a son, Andrew, and a daughter, Molly Marie.