

PAC GALA DINNER, 7 NOVEMBER 2011

SPEECH BY JAMES EDWARDS

Good evening ladies and gents.

Well, the reason I am here is because I am adopted and because I am an opera singer.

Being an opera singer is very much like being an adopted person. I constantly have to adapt and pretend to be other people in other peoples' lives. The Characters I play often exist in heightened circumstances, and most of the plots involve abandonment.

My personal adoption journey began 7 years ago and was the most fundamentally changing event of my life.

Meeting my birth parents for the first time as an adult and processing all the feelings including guilt, unworthiness, joy, confusion and acceptance were overwhelming. This was no opera; it was my life and I needed help.

PAC was there, and is still there, to support me and the other people involved in my adoption triangle.

Thanks to their support I am getting to know who I am at last and am now able to live a life connected to my wife, children and everyone around me. I am learning that I am valid a person with or without my professional achievements and no longer have to justify my existence in the world.

I have two jobs to do tonight. The first is to entertain you all by singing and the second is to encourage you all to be as generous as you can in supporting this important charity. I would also like to use this opportunity to publicise my silent auction lot number 44. A singing lesson with me - now don't be scared. If you do not want to have a singing lesson I will arrange for the winning bidder to attend one of my singing lessons.

Without further delay - partly because I have only had one glass of champagne thus far.....

I would like to sing 2 opera arias by Puccini. The emotions of these arias reflect the emotional journey of the adopted child. The first is about despair and the second is about hope. E Luce van Le Stelle from Tosca and Nessun Dorma from Turandot.

Thank you