

# APATA PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

**Title:** Jackson Hughesman- Winner of the 2021 APATA Performing Arts Student of the Year.

**Host:** Yolande Smith, APATA – Australian Performing Arts Teachers Association

**Link:** <https://bit.ly/APATAPodcastwithJackson>

**Start:**

**Yolande:** *Hello everybody and welcome to the first 2022 Australian Performing Arts Teachers Association - APATA Podcast for this year. Looking forward to more podcasts held throughout the year, we tend to do one a month which is great. Connecting people within our industry, and our community and sharing their thoughts across a range of different areas.*

*Super excited because our first podcast for 2022 is with [Jackson Hughesman](#), and Jackson of course was the APATA Performing Arts Student of the Year and took our award last year in 2021. It was a great honour to see Jackson receive that award and also join the community at St Patricks College who put on an entire show for us and hosted us so wonderfully.*

*So, we thought we'd kick off the year having a chat to Jackson. Last year, year eleven, heading into year twelve. A very different year twelve. We'll have a bit more of a chat about that. Looking forward to some insights from a student which would be a great advantage, I think, for both our teachers and students this year working across performance platforms in multiple areas, welcome Jackson.*

**Jackson:** *Hi there how are you?*

**Yolande:** *I'm good thank you, how are you?*

**Jackson:** *I'm fantastic.*

**Yolande:** *We were just saying before the recording that Jackson has done year eleven which was a very different year for everybody, and he's now moved into year twelve and done the first couple of days online, as most of the country has, how's that been for you Jackson?*

**Jackson:** *Well, it's something different, not the first day of year twelve I would have imagined. But I think you just have to do what you've got to do. I'm glad we're all staying connected. Though it's a bit different, just making the most of year twelve is the goal for this year. Because we're not sure what we're going to get at the end (of the year), but what you get given, I think you can do amazing things with.*

**Yolande:** *Absolutely, and the flexibility I think we've all worked through in the last couple of years has been extraordinary, so well done to everybody out there. So, let's start the performing arts conversation, Jackson. For you, where did this all begin? You're at an all-*

*boys college that has an amazing curriculum across performing arts, but where did it start for you? Was it at high school? Was it primary school? What was your introduction?*

**Jackson:** *It was pretty young; I think at the age of two I was watching the Wiggles a bit too much and singing along a bit too much to their stuff. I think mum signed me up for a little theatre group near five (years old) just to do showcases and singing, and I ended up really enjoying it. I felt like there was such a drive and passion for it from me.*

*I think a lot of the boys my age were into football or soccer. I tried AFL for one season and hated it, I could not enjoy it, but everyone seemed so passionate about it. I think I was just looking for that, "something" that anyone could just go to and enjoy their interest. Something they can enjoy, but still want to work hard for.*

*I ended up finding that in singing, acting, and dancing. Which was just such a crazy thing and I think once I found it, it was like, just something I was just so excited to be at and yes, we did the showcases and ended up doing shows and musicals, which was like the next level thing that I really, really enjoyed doing.*

**Yolande:** *So musical theatre, and that's something I've definitely seen you predominantly in. And your passion for the stage; I know how hard you work. And I know, certainly, how your teachers speak so admirably of you and your love for being on the stage. Being part of the script. You love being backstage. So, you kind of embrace theatre as a whole wherever you can, to build your knowledge, from what I can see.*

**Jackson:** *Yes, well I really love all facets of it. It started with performing obviously, but then I started a real passion for set design. I just love looking at a stage and what they've done with it and how they've transformed it from just a blank stage, into a whole new area. The first show I saw was **Wicked**, that maybe same for a lot of people, and incredible musical, still one of my favourites. I just remember going in there and seeing the big dragon clock at the top, Emerald City on the curtain and it just felt like we'd entered a new reality and it was just something so crazy to me.*

**Yolande:** *It is and having worked with lots of set designers as well and all the disciplines that come together for us to build a theatre performance, and the art and the craft, and the entrance and exits, and changing costumes and it's just amazing how it's all put together.*

*It is seamless across performances and the size and the scale, of just rehearsal, to have all those things connect. Because as you know when we're given that 30-minute call, and our 5-minute call, and the house curtain goes up; we're live and everyone has to contribute and do their role to make all these wonderful productions, on any scale, come together. Everyone has a major role that they need to do.*

*So, what would be your favourite thing at the moment? I know you work a lot on scripts, I know that you're on stage, and I know you're into set design and getting back there. So, you're really working towards understanding theatre, from what I can see, on both sides.*

**Jackson:** *At the moment it would probably be performing. Like, I love writing scripts, looking at the set, analysing lights and all that, but I just really do love performing. I love getting a character and diving in headfirst and analysing them and then putting my interpretation on the stage. I really do love it.*

**Yolande:** *How do you start investigating and identifying with your character? What steps do you take? You've got quite a body of work that you've done over the last few years and they're very varied roles from what I can see. So, what is your methodology? Or what have you leaned on where your teachers have supported that progress?*

**Jackson:** *Well, once I get the role I usually read through the script and get a general idea of certain language and why this character would say this certain line, as opposed to why this other character is very different and what motivates that. I look at the language first.*

*I treat every script like a blank canvas. If you see my scripts, (if you've seen people who write beautiful notes and it's all strategic...) Whereas my script, if you read it, you will not have a clue what's going on. It would be: "limp on" or "shake body", just stuff like that and then general notes next to it. Then once I get the language then I go into the voice.*

*So, the accent; the tone; and the authority from the voice. Because I think acting is three parts: the body, face, and the voice. I focus on them individually, and then when I perform it, I try to mend all three together. Which is the challenge of acting because a lot of the time I find myself really engaged in the face, but then the body's just not representing the character. So, it's being aware. Self-aware.*

*So, once I've sorted out the voice and the language then I go physically to understand why my character would move like this. Why certain things, are certain things for the character? I think when I get to the rehearsal room, then I've got a good base and then I work with the director and build on that.*

*They might absolutely hate what I've come up with over the few weeks before rehearsals, or they might love what I've done and work on it a bit more.*

**Yolande:** *How do you go taking **Notes**? Because it can be tough. You've spent a lot of lead-in time developing your character and your thoughts. I see **Notes** as a really critical part of the process as we're going through. So, taking **Notes** from your artistic director and teachers, how do you manage that? Sometimes is it a bit of a surprise or do you go, "You know what? I'm going to take that on board." How do you go through your process as you're coming together in a collaboration?*

**Jackson:** *It's actually really interesting. That idea of taking **Notes** has been brought up a lot in the last few weeks. A few years ago, I would take **Notes** and I would take it very personal, and I was never any good at reacting to notes, but I've learned over the holidays and listening to a few acting podcasts that **Notes** are what actually get you places.*

*No one is out to get you, no one wants you to do bad, no one's trying to say you're not doing your job properly. They're literally trying to advance you. So, my big thing this year, and one of my goals as an actor, is to try and take **Notes** on and don't take it personal, grow from it and learn from it. I think being an actor, the biggest part is just always being open to learning.*

**Yolande:** *Most definitely, and I think when we're not open to it, we stop learning. We learn throughout our entire lives, that's how we build our experience and improve to the levels that we want to improve to, and I'm glad to hear that **Notes** has been discussed quite heavily over the last couple of weeks cause it's really an important part of the process.*

*I've only worked on one production where **Notes** weren't what I was used to, and it just helps consolidate the cast and crew at the end of each rehearsal and tech run as we refined.*

*Now performing arts at an all-boys school. Not having been at St Patrick's. I have to say I wasn't there for your award day, and I certainly missed out because it was just absolutely awesome and amazing. It was such wonderful footage to see your entire community come together. And your auditorium was packed, like it was just full. I looked across when the camera panned and I was like, oh my goodness just look at all these young students.*

*There would be football players there, and people who would be in the debate team, and it was just so broad, and you all seem such a close community. So, how have you found performing arts in an all-boys school?*

**Jackson:** *Well, in year five it was pretty crazy, because in primary school being in a co-ed school, performing was just natural, you're so much younger and more naive. So, going to St Pat's it was a total cultural shift. Everyone there was into rugby, AFL, soccer and stuff like that.*

*Grade five Jackson was playing Oliver in Oliver Twist and it got mentioned at assembly and some kids were confused about that. I don't think it was spite, I just think it was a lack of knowing what it was.*

*I really do have to thank my head of culture at St Pat's, Mrs Albury. She came in grade six and she just lifted the cultural program up so, so highly. I think 'Pats is one of the most known cultural schools in Brisbane. We've just got such great talent and so many boys studying it after school and doing it professionally.*

**Yolande:** *I definitely hear exactly what you're saying, and the other thing I love when we look across anything to do with St Pat's. On any newsletter or social media, there is sport. There is culture. And it's really about the passion of what the students want as well.*

*Every program is just quite substantial and it's just wonderful to see that, and as you said there are so many young men who are into arts and culture and studying it. It is just so wonderful to see, and to see those programs come and flourish.*

*Its educators like Head of Department and Culture, Mrs Albury who make such a mark on driving those programs. There's great gratitude there, and I'm sure we all are (grateful). I certainly had that in high school as well and it led me to what I love doing.*

*So, let's talk awards because I have a sneaky suspicion that you had no idea that the award was going to be done in the way it was, which I love. The element of surprise! And everyone was working very hard in the background and of course family was there and then you began to think, "Oh is there something more here?"*

*How was it having the award presented at the school like that?*

**Jackson:** *I think on the Friday I saw on Facebook that I won the award because Mrs Albury was like, "I'll just apply for it, and we'll see how we go". I think six weeks or four weeks before the announcement one of the Tuckshop ladies was like, "Oh congratulations you're in the top two for the awards!" And I was like. "Oh, am I?" So, I went to Mrs Albury, and she*

*was like no they must have been talking about how you got nominated “yada yada”. But then I heard that the principal had mentioned at a meeting that I was shortlisted, so I think she was covering that up.*

*So, I found out Friday and I had a performance that night for our school, a showcase, and it was just a mentally exhausting day because then I had something else on. So, I had a range of emotions going inside my head. And then the next week was **Addams Family**, which was my final high school musical. Which was a big role, a very big, demanding role that was dance, singing, acting, everything. Loved it, but it was crazy.*

*So going into that we had a matinee on Tuesday and Mrs Albury was like, “We want to promote the show a bit more. Do you want to do a song at assembly?”, and I was like, “I guess?” I wasn’t the most keen on doing a song at assembly, but I did it. Then there were a few suspicions because Mrs Albury said, “Could you just stay at the end and Mr Latrice is going to ask you a few questions about Addams Family”, and I was like that’s weird, but yes of course. So, we did that, and I sang my song and then I tried to get off the stage as fast as I can. I didn’t want to see the reaction just in case.*

*But then a whole team walked up on stage, and I was fully taken aback. And I hadn’t even seen my family yet but apparently, they were sitting front row centre*

**Yolande:** *They were front row centre (laughs)*

**Jackson:** *I was so focused on doing the song I didn’t even look at someone’s face. I was performing to the walls really, and then they did a whole spiel. It was just such a crazy surreal moment, and my family was there and two great presenters - **Lee Lewis (Artistic Director, [Queensland Theatre](#))**, who we later ended up inviting back to St Pat’s to do a leadership talk.*

**Yolande:** *She is just wonderful; did you enjoy meeting her?*

**Jackson:** *She was incredible, such a wise person and the stuff I learnt from just a few minutes talking to her. She was very motivating as well with her words, just really inspiring. I don’t know how else to describe it, but I just loved having a chat.*

**Yolande:** *It’s one of the things I know my entire team love doing, to have the privilege to come to schools and present the award and have some really wonderful industry ambassadors there I think is a wonderful experience, so great to hear.*

*This is the first time you and I have really had the opportunity to touch base about how you felt about a group of people walking on stage and going “Oh my goodness that’s Lee Lewis”, and it’s a wonderful experience and we can’t thank all the people that work with us to make those experiences happen as part of our award program So wonderful to hear that you thoroughly cherished and enjoyed, and had that connection with Lee.*

**Jackson:** *Yes, I learnt so much, and then following that we had a morning tea with the principal and my family, and then 30 minutes later it was time to do the matinee for Addams Family. It was just go, go, go.*

**Yolande:** *We kept you on your toes, that's great. What do you think the award's done for you? So when you look at where you're heading and what you want to do, what has the award personally done for you that you received last year?*

**Jackson:** *I think it has definitely been a big thing that kept me motivated. I think during Covid when you haven't been able to see and do so many shows and perform in any, it was really easy to lose that motivation. And so, getting that award, it came at a time when because I was also still deciding what to do at uni. I was really torn on what I wanted to do. It was between psychology or musical theatre, and it was something that was keeping me up at night. Do I go with something I really enjoy and hope to make a career out of? Or go with something that possibly guaranteed a career?*

*I think that award came at a perfect time as like a reminder that it is something you want to do in the future. It is something that you want to do after school, and to keep going with it.*

*It also led to such a big cultural representation at my school. A lot of the boys now are interested and keen to try some new cultural stuff like to join the choir, learn an instrument, do the musical, art club, it's just given so much acknowledgement to it.*

**Yolande:** *Wonderful. You mentioned before, there's been a lot of changes. Performances have been stopped and started. And I think that probably is not just the performing arts industry, I think there's been a lot of stop and start for many people out there across the world. And it certainly has been challenging. We've had classes online, then we're back in the classroom. And that transition, I think, was challenging for a lot of people in the beginning, not just students, but most definitely our educators.*

*How have you personally coped, and are there some mechanisms you've had to put in place there, switching between: are we on? do we need to postpone? Is there a different way of preparing as to being in the classroom? How has that journey travelled for you personally?*

**Jackson:** *It was a good reminder to really appreciate everything you have and to do everything you're doing with 100%. Before Covid I was doing shows and not really understanding. It was something I've always loved doing and enjoyed but – I was just doing a show; doing a show; doing a show and I wasn't really learning or appreciating it as much.*

*And so, I think going digital and having some shutdowns and show cancellations really showed me how to appreciate what you have, when you have it. I think a total of four shows I was doing had to be postponed, luckily none of them got cancelled. Sorry actually no, one did get cancelled. I was assistant directing for our junior musical **Aladdin** unfortunately that got cancelled. Which was such a shame because we it was such a great cast, and it was going to be such a great show.*

*I've always just loved seeing young people just getting out there and doing it. So, that was a bit disappointing. But all my other shows ended up being postponed and that gave me such an appreciation for what I have and what I get to do.*

**Yolande:** *You have a very heavy schedule, how do you balance, and what does a typical week look like for you? So, let's not look at this week because we're all starting back in. But last year you had a pretty big dance card from what I can see, and I can tell by your information that was sent through and submitted for the awards, and then looking at what's*

*going on out there in the real world. What does a typical week for you; between academic study, balancing rehearsals, developing character, being at school ...Do u have any time off?*

**Jackson:** *Ah, no. I'm just lucky I love what I do. Term four last year was just crazy because I was inducted as a college captain for St Pat's. So, it's added a whole other level now. So, on top of my training, on top of rehearsals, on top of school, on top of work, I'm now a school captain. It's so amazing and I'm so grateful for the opportunity. It was always a goal of mine, and I was never the sporty type, so glad for receiving that position. And doing what I love doing.*

*So, a week in my life is: school starts at 8:30am so I usually get up at 6ish, and then have a coffee (laughs). I like to look at the news and see what's going on at the moment. Staying in touch; I think that's some good gratitude training as well because you see some horrific stuff on the news, but you can acknowledge that and say, "Hey I woke up this morning; I had a great cup of coffee, and I was lucky to have breakfast!"*

*School is 8:30am – 3pm, then after school is either rehearsal or choir. So, during school I do Music, Music Extension, which is a lot of fun, very, very challenging but I've learnt a lot already from it, and Drama, so very arts heavy. After school, I'm usually there till 4:30 – 5pm, doing rehearsal s and stuff like that. Then go home and do a lot of technical stuff. Really homing in on vocal technique and getting good vocal stamina.*

*Another skill I've been doing is sight singing, so learning how to read music and sing it. And I usually listen to an acting podcast, I can't remember the name of it, but it's really good to listen to while you're driving and getting up in the morning. Those ideas get fresher in your head, and they can help advance you a lot. And then dance is one thing that I'm still trying to fully work on.*

**Yolande:** *Would you say that the dance side, looking at musical theatre, so that's probably your biggest challenge area? So, when we talk about musical theatre quite often you hear the language about, they're a triple threat." They can sing; they can act; they can dance; so, dancing would be your biggest challenge at this stage?*

**Jackson:** *Yeh, I never got into dancing when I was younger. Which is unfortunate but it's what you can do. So, I started with a dance school in August last year with the scholarship money I got for my performing arts award. But it just wasn't for me. Because I was new, but also really old. So, it was really challenging.*

**Yolande:** *I like that Jackson, really old at seventeen. (laugh) very awesome, I hear you.*

**Jackson:** *It was a shame because I was really keen to learn dance, but I threw myself in the deep end and though I'm always up for a challenge, it was too much for me, too early.*

**Yolande:** *Look, you set your mind to it and went for it. So that's what you used your scholarship money from the APATA Award for? Wonderful. That's really great, that you put it towards something you really needed.*

**Jackson:** *Yes, so I'm currently trying to find some dance classes that are technique-focused and all ages, and a lot more chill. Dance has always been the struggle and I think just learning the dances. You know I did the dances and they looked fine, you know, nothing*



*amazing, but it's just learning it that I really struggle with. So, hoping to get in some classes for that.*

**Yolande:** *Wonderful. Getting your mind around choreography, while there is a certain repertoire of steps that goes with that it does take time to develop those skills. We look forward to speaking to down the track in a few years' time to see how that's going. Are you fixing on a particular genre of dance or are you focusing on movement in general? Are you looking at hip hop, or are you looking at ballet? Where have you taken yourself with this?*

**Jackson:** *Well, that is the unlucky part of musical theatre. Any show has any genre. So, you've got tap, ballet, jazz, hip hop so I'm trying to learn as much as I can. I think I'm mainly focused on jazz because jazz is just your basic dance type and pretty much all shows have that.*

**Yolande:** *And it gives a very good universal body movement and placement and those types of things. So, you're heading into year twelve, 2022 is looking like a very big year for you. What's the road ahead looking like for you?*

**Jackson:** *So as usual always a few shows planned ahead, and I do that with [Brisbane Junior Theatre](#) and [Brisbane Musical Theatre](#). Brisbane Junior Theatre is a holiday company, new shows in a week. It's really good productions in a week as well, which I don't think you'd expect. Especially with such young people, but it's such a great way to balance school, on top of still training and learning. So, a few shows planned with them. One of my dream shows is coming up, **West Side Story**.*

**Yolande:** *Have you seen the movie yet?*

**Jackson:** *It's incredible, I've seen it three times.*

**Yolande:** *Ah, so all inspired, that's perfect timing.*

**Jackson:** *It's a dream show, such great characters in it. With strong dance; strong singing; strong acting - so really excited to do that. **Shrek** is coming up as well, it's hidden gem of a musical Shrek actually. It was the first show I saw out of lockdown, and I didn't expect to enjoy it so much. But it's such a great show.*

**Yolande:** *What are you hoping to get out of the year personally because this is such an important year, I think. I still fondly look back on my year twelve and what that year was, and it was a wonderful time in my life. And I was a little bit scared about the road ahead and choices to be made and those things, it was just such a wonderful year and I loved everything about my year twelve. What are your hopes out of year twelve?*

**Jackson:** *I hope for year twelve to just make the best memories and make the best of what we get. I'm glad we're having the online learning from the start, it's just that gentle reminder that each and every opportunity is a blessing really. I'm just there to have a good time and hopefully get into a good Uni course.*

**Yolande:** *What are your thoughts heading into the next level of education, for university, what are you thinking?*



**Jackson:** *The main one is a Bachelor of Musical Theatre, but it's a very hard course to get into. So, I'll audition for that, try my best and see what happens from it. But if not, I'm going to go and do a year of a diploma just to get up my dance and to further develop my singing and acting. I'll continue to do that until I'm happy and get a course in a Bachelor of Musical Theatre and that's what it's looking like at the moment.*

**Yolande:** *Wonderful. So, you know exactly who you are and what you want and where you're going. Which is, I think, just a wonderful place to be in because you probably have friends and colleagues who are still not quite sure what that direction is for them. But you know your passion, you discovered that many years ago, and that's super exciting.*

*What would be your advice for students considering diving into the world of performing arts. Your journey has been there from the time you were small. It's still there right now to today and looking well and truly heading into the future. What would your advice be?*

**Jackson:** *Oh, lots and lots!*

**Yolande:** *Go for it.*

**Jackson:** *I would say my main one is to just train and do the hard work earlier on, cause then you have those years to perfect it. Do your technical stuff early like your singing, and your acting, and dancing. And then do shows, because shows drive training I believe, and being around a cast where everyone is doing their own thing, everyone is doing their own roles, you can just learn so much.*

*Another tip would be to listen to as much music as you can, and a variety as well. Understand different genres and what you enjoy about them. I think there's nothing like music. It was a three-hour drive here today and to keep us going we were all playing music. Or you're at a gym, you're listening to music, and it drives you. I don't think there's anything else that can really get you going as much as a good song, or something that you can sing along to. Really appreciate music and listen to that. And...just get out there and do what you can do!*

**Yolande:** *I think that's just wonderful, exactly that. Get out there and do what you can do, and I think another one is for me, personally is, enjoy the journey while you're doing it. There's just so much to take from there isn't it. When you walk away and every little note or something that went well, or didn't go well, you take that experience, and you keep building it throughout your entire career. I'm a little bit biased though. I too love performing arts and I couldn't imagine a world without it.*

**Jackson:** *One hundred percent. And listen to mentors. I'm so lucky I found a fantastic vocal teacher this year, Ms Engwirda, who goes to St Pats. Vocally she's taught me, as well as technically, but she's also just been there as a coach and like a mentor especially for the arts, because you always have your sports coaches. So, speaking to your arts teachers and listening to what they say because they've gone to uni, they've seen lots of different journeys and different outcomes for people and they know you as a person and as a performer, so listen to them.*

**Yolande:** *Our teachers are our greatest mentors and I think a lot of us don't realise how that process has started until you reflect on it down the track and you realise, they weren't just my teacher they were a mentor. And they still reflect in the way that I work, and my aspirations*

*and helping me improve. And the world without teachers I can't even imagine because they start us on our road in life which is so important.*

*Well Jackson thank you so much for your time today. It's been wonderful to chat with you.*

**Jackson:** *It's been so much fun!*

**Yolande:** *It's just nice to hear your insights and your enthusiasm and a very big year and we wish you all the best for 2022. And I'm sure we'll catch up again very, very soon. Look forward to always staying connected which is great. I probably also want to say a big thank you to our families in the background they have been awesome this morning. That's a wonderful thing with how we all work now, I love that flexibility.*

**Jackson:** *Yeh, I think we've got 30 here at the moment on holiday, from 5 to 80 years old. So, you definitely heard them.*

**Yolande:** *We can't thank you enough for your time and again congratulations on the road and the journey that you've travelled. It was just such a wonderful experience, out of really tough category I'd have to say, to award you the APATA Australian Performing Arts Student of the Year. And we were deeply honoured to have that and certainly deeply honoured to have St Patrick's host and present you with that award.*

*That's why we really wanted to bring you back as our first podcast for 2022 and share your insights and the road you've travelled and of course this wonderful journey you have ahead.*

*Thank you very much to all our listeners out there I hope you enjoy this podcast with Jackson today. Lots to learn, lots to consider. You will find this podcast on the APATA website: [www.apata.com.au](http://www.apata.com.au) and [Itunes](#) and [Spotify](#), pending your choice.*

*We look forward to catching up for our next podcast very soon. Thank you Jackson all the luck and all the laughs, looking forward to seeing your journey in 2022.*

**End**