

# Baritone picks up late role

By Caitlin Madden

His last performance at the Regent on Broadway was 10 years ago, the same amount of time he has been gone from Palmerston North. Now he is back in a role that could not have come at a better time.

Palmerston North-born baritone Chris Crowe, luckily caught between jobs, has stepped up to the plate to play a lead role in *Miss Saigon*, opening next week.

Karl Perigo, the singer who was set to play John in the show, came down with bronchitis, opening up the role. Ex-Palmerston North Boys' High School student Crowe has been rehearsing with the cast for just over a week, with about six rehearsals between him and opening night, but his wealth of experience should tell.

His singing career started when he was 15. "It happened by default. Someone said 'you can sing' and I said 'can I' and I've never stopped."

He has been in a range of professional productions from *Les Misérables* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* to *Grease*.

He sang at the 2007 Bledisloe Cup final at Eden Park and did a concert series in the pop

opera trio, *La Forza*, earlier this year.

He has come a long way from singing in gang shows with scouts and guides in his early performing days.

Crowe considers himself a musical theatre singer, but doesn't have a favourite musical.

"I used to. As I've aged and grown as a performer what I like changes dramatically. When you are young, you are just into everything and then as you get older you think a bit wider and deeper."

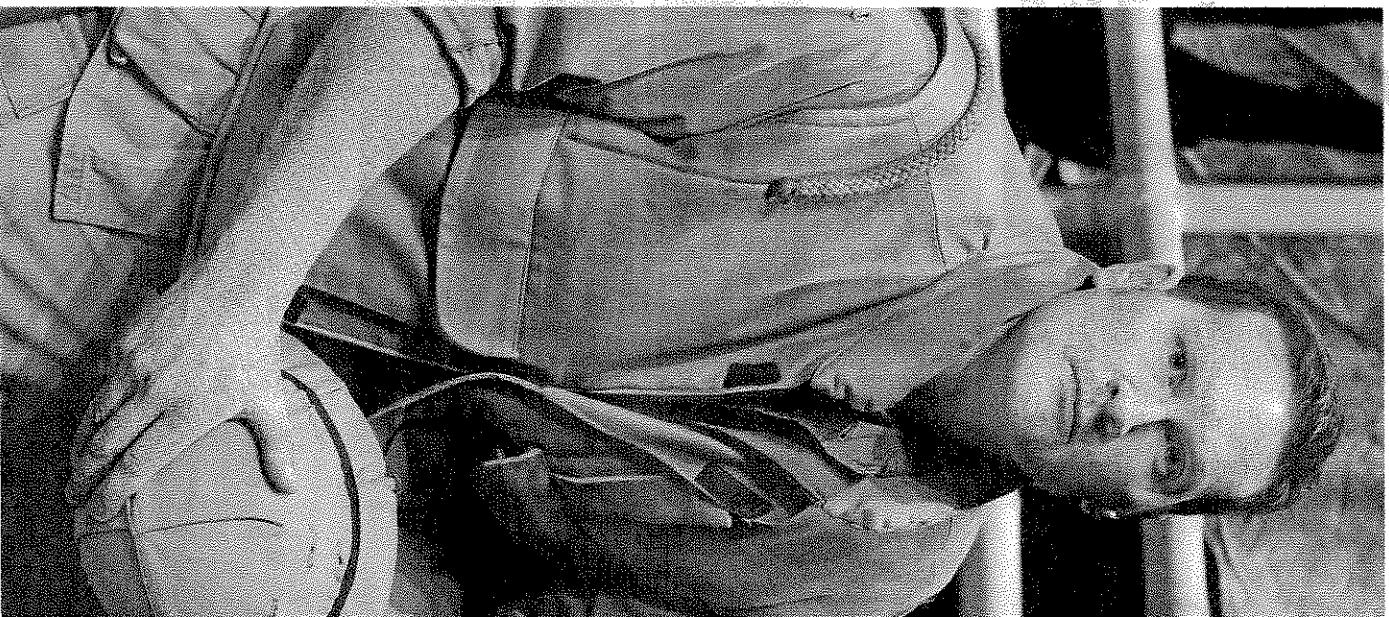
*Miss Saigon* has been challenging and exciting so far. Having cast members like Melinda Chua, who has starred in the show on Broadway, has helped.

"Especially coming in so late, it is not difficult because you get everything from her."

Show promoter Bruce Warwick says Crowe has fitted in well, especially in such a short time.

"He has been so professional and is learning so quickly. It is wonderful to have him back in a big production in Palmerston North." Crowe is now based in Wellington.

■ *Miss Saigon* runs August 14-29 at the Regent on Broadway.



Baritone Chris Crowe has taken over the role of American GI John in *Saigon* only a few weeks before opening night. Picture: WARWICK