



“Not fitting into a specific musical category definitely has its pros and cons,” notes pop/classical vocalist Josh Groban. “It’s a struggle sometimes, because people try to categorize you. But blending genres is what inspires me. I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

Nor would millions of “Grobanites,” the moniker adopted by fans of the young singer. The pairing of Josh’s once-in-a-generation vocal cords with a broad repertoire of rock, pop standards and operatic melodies has generated one of the greatest crossover success stories in years. Groban’s self-titled 2001 debut album broke sales records worldwide. The hit albums that followed—*Josh Groban in Concert* (2002), *Closer* (2003) and *Josh Groban Live at the Greek* (2004)—prove that Josh’s winning formula was no fluke.

Producer David Foster first heard Josh singing at a California gubernatorial inauguration party in 1999. Foster tapped the 17-year-old singer to fill in for Andrea Bocelli at that year’s GRAMMY® rehearsals, singing a duet with Celine Dion. Before long, Josh had dropped out of Carnegie-Mellon University to pursue singing full-time.

Josh says he can’t even recall a time when he wasn’t passionate about singing. “I’ve loved music ever since I was a little kid. I was singing songs for my parents when I was very, very little. I got the music bug early on—my parents were very enthusiastic about exposing me to the arts. They didn’t push me, but I was exposed to everything Los Angeles had to offer in terms of music and theater.”

Another constant was the piano, which Josh started playing when he was five. “I was just drawn to it,” he remembers. “And there was always one around. My grandmother had one. My parents had one. If a melody got stuck in my head, there was always this big thing I could sit down at to get it all out. Soon I could play things by ear after hearing them on the radio.”

The piano remains a cornerstone for Groban. He composes on it, exercises his voice with it and features the instrument in all his shows. Josh prefers Yamaha pianos, which he discovered via David Foster. “I fell in love with their sound and the way they respond,” he says. “The Yamaha sound can be classical or pop. They’re excellent pianos and I hope to play them for the rest of my life.”

Groban is also a fan of Yamaha’s Motif keyboards. “They’re killer synths,” he says. “I’m in the process of building my own home studio and I’ll definitely be using the Motif as the primary keyboard. It sounds great, and there’s a musicality to the keyboard feel. It’s definitely one of the greatest ones out there.”

If anything, the piano will figure even more strongly in Josh’s future work. Onstage he has always stood in front of his pop/classical chamber ensemble, but he plans to start accompanying himself on the piano as well. “When I can sit down at the piano and play,” he explains, “something comes out that’s even more grounded than when I’m standing there singing.”

And what will his upcoming music sound like? “The next album will feature the things fans enjoyed about my first two studio albums, but I also want to do some exploring. I’d like to work with more world musicians. I love collaborating with other artists, because it’s an opportunity to go outside yourself. It allows you to explore different

styles and find a way to make it work.” Groban hopes for a Spring 2006 release date for his next album.

Josh’s other big goal: the theatrical stage. “Originally, I was going to be an actor,” he says. “Theater was my first dream and my first love and I hope to go back to it.” Josh, who started college as a musical theater major, says he’s also looking at various film scripts, both for musical and straight acting roles.

“Because of the kind of classically-influenced music I do,” notes Josh, “some people assume that I’m no fun, that I’m boring. But my dream is to be on *Saturday Night Live* one day and just do stupid comedy. I started in comedy theater and the voice thing was separate.”

But Groban isn’t exactly complaining about his current lot in life. “I had no idea how much I’d enjoy touring, even though it’s hard being away from family and friends. But being able to sing to people all over the world is the greatest gift I’ve ever been given.”



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JOSH GROBAN: VOICE OF A GENERATION