From Boise to Broadway and Beyond: The Life of Morgan James

Morgan James, born in Boise, Idaho, was influenced by the arts from the very beginning. With both parents actors and literature professors at the collegiate level – her father also a high school drama teacher and mother a speech teacher – Morgan was encouraged to perform. Her musical career began with the gift of a karaoke machine from her grandmother, who valued Morgan’s vocal talent discovered in junior high choir. Throughout her high school career in California, Morgan developed a passion for vocal performance, and as her days became numbered as a senior, she was faced with the looming task of auditioning for colleges. Like many high school seniors, she auditioned for her dream school of Julliard, knowing the odds were slim with only 6% of applicants accepted. However, Morgan beat the odds and claimed one of the coveted spots in Juilliard’s voice department where she studied opera. Morgan’s aspirations of becoming an opera singer were short-lived and she desperately missed theatre during her college years.

Upon graduation in 2003, she was pigeon-holed into classical roles because of her training and desperately desired to utilize her big soprano voice. With the help of her agents and manager, Morgan transitioned to musical theater and, after five years of auditioning, she booked *Godspell* in 2008; unfortunately, the production fell apart shortly after. Two years later in 2010, Morgan made her Broadway debut in the musical production of *The Addams Family.* She quickly realized the difficulty of a career on Broadway but her debut only ignited her spark for musical theatre and she coveted new roles. Morgan later appeared in *Wonderland* where she played Alice four times during the closing weekend for many industry professionals. Danny Goldstein, impressed by Morgan’s growth since he had last cast her in 2008, booked her for the revival of *Godspell* in 2011 as one of only ten cast members in the production.

Injury is one of the greatest fears of performers. Morgan knew it all too well when she sprained her ankle in a trampoline accident during tech rehearsal three days before the preview of *Godspell* in October 2011. This injury devastated Morgan, who prided herself on her physicality and was forced to sit out of the production for seven weeks, including opening night. While out on injury, Morgan was able to focus her attention on her solo career, writing albums and creating a relationship with her band. She eventually rejoined the production in November 2011 and would later perform the role of Teena Marie in *Motown: The Musical* until December 2013.

During her time on Broadway, Morgan dabbled as a solo artist with a backing band at numerous New York City clubs and released her first solo album “Morgan James Live: A Celebration of Nina Simone” in December 2012. She would later go on to release her second solo album “Hunter” in June 2014, which is her first entire album of original material. Morgan prides herself on her ability to encompass many genres including soul, jazz, funk, and R&B in her work and looks to Nina Simone as a source of inspiration. Morgan’s talent has caused her to become a viral sensation with her collaboration with Postmodern Jukebox. She has produced a wide range of cover songs for their YouTube channel from Meghan Trainor’s “All About That Bass” to “Call My Name” by Prince. With each cover, Morgan adds a vintage and soulful orchestral funk that transforms pop hits into a 1970s style.

Morgan aspires to continue to develop as a songwriter and become a stronger musician and she continues her career. We are looking forward to seeing how she will leave her mark on the music industry in years to come.

See Morgan James perform live at Wharton Center’s Pasant Theatre on December 6, 2015 at 7:30pm. Tickets available at 1-800-WHARTON or whartoncenter.com

<http://www.playbill.com/celebritybuzz/article/diva-talk-chatting-with-godspell-star-morgan-james-187375/P4>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morgan_James>

<http://www.collegedata.com/cs/data/college/college_pg01_tmpl.jhtml?schoolId=1010>