Jeffery Straker is more than just a singer — at heart, he’s a storyteller.

A professional pianist whose music is a self-proclaimed mix of folk, pop and cabaret sounds, Straker punctuates his live performances with anecdotes from his life, striking a balance between the Ramboesquely hilarious to the heartbreakingly honest.

“What works for me — and you can only figure this out by trial and error as a performer — but I balance the audience with songs,” Straker explains. “The banter allows me to be my animated and storytelling self, but it also allows me to transition between songs. Whether the song is slow, sad or up-tempo, I can separate the songs with the banter.”

Straker’s latest album, Under the Soles of My Shoes, presents his most varied collection of songs and sounds, straying from his usual up-tempo comfort zone into ballads and tuned down numbers. While some of the songs on the album like “Gate” and “Brand New Oceans” maintain Straker’s signature energetic sound, other songs tackle the album’s overall theme of overcoming obstacles and picking yourself up in a much gentler way.

Citing romantic relationships and personal encounters with death as some of the inspiration behind the album’s slower numbers, it’s Straker’s experiences with his great aunt, suffering from Alzheimer’s, that really stand out.

Showcased in his song “Coat Hanger,” Straker illustrates a visit he made to his great-aunt in her nursing home, singing, “I wish you could tell about the days / When you were young and carefree / Before the wrinkles and the grey. I don’t know why I didn’t ask you maybe just 10 years before / when it still bound up in volumes and the letters hadn’t worn.”

The quiet piano ballad has become a frequent request during Straker’s live performances, which has a profound effect on the atmosphere of the show.

“When I tell the story at shows and then sing the song, it’s a real moment in the show,” Straker says. “People are kind of fixed with their own mortality in a way, since dementia and Alzheimer’s and those types of things have become so common and touch almost everyone. I find it fascinating how people can find themselves in these songs.”

Over the years, Straker has found himself being compared to many well known artists — Rufus Wainwright, K.d. Lang, Elton John — but finds himself admiring artists whose own storytelling abilities factor into their performance as well.

“Someone I really look up to is Jann Arden,” Straker says. “She can tell you the most hilarious story about a tampon and then sing the most heart-wrenching, sad break-up song. It’s this roller coaster thing she does.”

Straker’s own ability to apply stories to his music strikes a chord with his audience, many of whom identify with the experiences behind his songs. He claims it’s not uncommon for fans to reciprocate by sharing their own stories with him, and that being able to foster that interaction through his live performances is ultimately one of his purposes as a performer.

“My main thing is my live shows,” Straker says. “I love performing and I love sharing my songs live. To me, all these songs translate really well on a live stage, and that is my main objective.”