

## News Graphic

### FEATURE

#### **Stephanie Brill: 13-year-old singer/songwriter releases CD**

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Her lyrics are called poetic and highly visual, her musicianship, a natural gift, and her vocals, pure and otherworldly.

She writes songs about helping the hopeless children, the harsh reality of love's betrayal...and eating purple Skittles.

That's the only real giveaway that Cedarburg singer/songwriter Stephanie Brill is 13 years old. By all accounts, she is an eclectic amalgam of pure talent, combining a sharp sense of humor with a strong commitment to writing songs that matter...while also having the hilarious time of her middle-school life.

"Writing meaningful music is definitely my passion," said Brill, who recently released her first recorded CD collection of songs, *Heartbroken Joker*, at North Shore Academy of the Arts (NSAA) in Grafton to an enthusiastic crowd -- friends, family, and local supporters well aware of her musical gifts.

"I love to compose songs -- and depending on my mood, they can be about world poverty or love, or something hilarious my friends and I did," said Brill, an eighth grader at Webster Transitional School, who also performs with Trinity Irish Dance and in school plays and musicals. "Music and performance is such a powerful way for me to express how I'm feeling -- and, it's fun."

So much fun that Brill's mother, Susie, decided to move their family's piano into Stephanie's bedroom for all the writing she was doing.

"When you love something so much, it's not work, and it's clear to me that Steph's passion for music is not work," she related. "As parents, we've always encouraged her do what she loves. But I'm amazed at this as much as everyone else."

Brill's theory and songwriting mentor of four years, NSAA's Angela Mack could not agree more.

"Many months of serious brainstorming, writing, composing, and editing went into the 10 songs on Stephanie's CD -- humorous songs, as well as instrumentals -- and I'm extremely excited for Stephanie and this outstanding accomplishment," said Mack.

"I'm deeply impressed with her musicianship, level of imagery, and the insight and poetry of her lyrics, which reflect a great level of

musical maturity."

One song is a social commentary on the pitfalls, as well as the addictive qualities of Facebook. Another focuses on giving as much as possible to help homeless, poverty-stricken children. Others are lyrical piano instrumentals -- haunting and lovely.

But...purple Skittles?

"Sometimes my friends and I do crazy things," explained Brill, "and we've made lots of memories, so sometimes those little jokes find their way into my songs.

"And as fun as it is," she continued, "it's been a lot of hard work. Ever since I was very young, my Mom noticed how I reacted and related to music -- and quickly signed me up for piano lessons.

"Steph's first piano teacher discovered that she had near-perfect pitch, and she flew through several levels of piano books very quickly," said Susie Brill. "When she began with Angela in fourth grade, Steph wrote her first song, and Angela's been encouraging and working with her ever since."

Four years of hard work, and counting.

"I have a mission that drives me," Stephanie said, whose musical inspirations include the Eagles, Elton John, and alt-rocker Regina Specter.

"I'm angry that this generation of music is based on things that don't seem to have much meaning to me -- partying, cheating, getting crazy," she continues. "It's not good for me to listen to that kind of music -- it doesn't inspire me in any way."

"I guess this collection of music is my way of saying, 'I wish our music had more meaning. These songs definitely do to me.'"

As for the name *Heartbroken Joker*?

"It reflects all the kinds of imagery in life that speak to me -- a class discussion about world poverty, relationship issues and what they means to my friends and me, and just plain funny things we do," Brill concluded. "If I become famous one day for doing this, I would love that...and so would my friends!"

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Stephanie Brill's new CD, *Heartbroken Joker*, is available for \$10 through Susie Brill at 262/424-9502.