

From living rooms to local venues to auditions in New York, Brittany Nagy of Brick is making herself heard. Now, the 11-year-old singer is setting her sights on the biggest stages.



broadway's lullaby beckons

Story and photos
by MICHAEL SYPNIEWSKI
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

"Sing that song from ..." is a familiar refrain for Theresa and John Nagy, who often ask their 11-year-old daughter, Brittany, to belt out a tune for visiting family and friends.

Many children who are proud of their achievements — like reciting the alphabet or performing a magic trick — are equally shy when it comes to doing that special something in front of company, especially strangers. But not Brittany. She will stop whatever she is doing and give you a private concert right then and there.

The Nagys, of Brick, discovered their little entertainer's talent when she was 3 years old.

"She could remember whole songs after hearing them just one time," said Theresa, 37, about her daughter's musical ability — a talent that has propelled the girl to a career as a soloist.

Brittany's performances took her from her living room to local events, including a Breast Cancer Awareness Walk-A-Thon in Point Pleasant when she was 9 years old, and to her family's church, Visitation Roman Catholic Church in Brick, where she began singing with the adult choir that same year. The sixth-grader at Lake Riviera Middle School tried a couple of private piano/voice instructors, but she was looking for the right coach to help her develop the proper vocal

VISIONS

Today, the Asbury Park Press presents another in a series of monthly photojournalism essays on varying topics of local interest. This feature normally appears on the last Sunday of each month in the Impact section.



Brittany Nagy, a sixth-grader at Lake Riviera Middle School in Brick, practices her singing (above) during a voice lesson with Sal Dupree of Dupree Performing Arts Studios in Linwood, near Atlantic City, and in her bedroom at home (top).

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In February, Brittany auditioned for an off-Broadway musical, "Captain Louie," and though she didn't get a part, she was grateful for the experience. Left: At home, Brittany's mother, Theresa, helps her daughter get ready for the trip to New York. Center: Brittany, with her mom, takes in the city sights as they walk to the audition. Right: Brittany awaits her turn.

Brittany

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techniques.

The Nagys' search was over when a friend suggested they see Sal Dupree of Dupree Performing Arts Studios in Linwood, near Atlantic City. The only question was whether Brittany was the right student for Dupree, who said he turns down 200 people a year who audition for him.

"God gave her a lot of natural gifts already," said Dupree, who has been coaching Brittany since late 2003. "All I try to do is take those gifts, if I can, and bring it to the next level."

Dupree's voice coaching has brought many singers to high levels, including Tiffany Evans of Egg Harbor, the 2003 Star Search winner in the junior vocalist category, and Chrissy Conway, formerly of Gloucester City, of the chart-topping contemporary Christian vocal trio ZOEgirl.

For Brittany, the next level, according to Dupree, is to get her the right agent/manager and book her for her first Broadway show.

But is she ready for Broadway?

"Oh, definitely," Dupree said. "She has a lot of things going great for her. Will she go to the next level? That will be up to her."

In February, Brittany auditioned for an off-Broadway musical, "Captain Louie," and in April for a traveling production of "Annie." Although she did not get a role in either show, she was glad for the experience. "I think it was a great opportunity just to try," she said.

While Brittany and her parents are occupied with auditions and voice lessons, Brittany's grandmother, Theresa Diaz — who lives with the family — helps to manage things at home.

In the meantime, Sandcastle Kids Management, Parsippany, and Weist-Barron-Ryan, Atlantic City, are doing their best to secure auditions for Brittany, with the latter company helping with acting lessons as well.

"I don't have to push her to go to the (acting) lessons," Brittany's father, John, 43, said. "It is something she wants to do."

Linda Riley, a manager at Sandcastle, said the talent management firm is excited to be working with Brittany. "She's cute and has an excellent voice," Riley said.

Ursula Ryan, president of Weist-Barron-Ryan, says Brit-

Sal Dupree (above and below) gives direction to Brittany during her weekly voice lesson.

(STAFF PHOTOS: MICHAEL SYPNIEWSKI)



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tany is "going to make it" as an actress.

Brittany, who has brown hair and stands 4 feet, 6 inches tall, said "I want to be on TV," when asked her goals for the near future. She has recorded her first demo CD, which includes Broadway classics such as "Tomorrow" from "Annie" and such current pop hits as "My Happy Ending" from one of her favorite singers, Avril Lavigne.

While keeping an eye on Broadway, Brittany continues to perform locally in talent shows. She is scheduled to sing this summer when a talent show sponsored by New Jersey 101.5 comes to Point Pleasant Beach and also at Brick Summerfest.

Trying her hand at song writing and guitar playing keeps Brittany busy at home when she is not doing homework or playing with her brothers, Michael, 9, and Matthew, 14.