

# Pianist's music healing

## Spielberg bringing sound to Camden

By Dale McGarrigle  
Of the NEWS Staff

Robin Spielberg would not be the right person to write the soundtrack for her own life.

Spielberg's acoustic compositions are calming ... soothing ... they take the listener away to a quiet place.

But the pianist speaking on the phone has a whole different rhythm. Her speech comes out in rapid-fire fashion, rat-a-tat-tat, rat-a-tat-tat.

"I'm almost impatient, wanting everything to happen quickly," Spielberg said from her New Jersey home office. "My life is fast-paced in general. I'm used to working 16-hour days, so I get a lot done."

Spielberg is planning a couple of busy days in Maine. She will be doing a CD signing from 2 to 3 p.m. Saturday at Planet, 31 Main St. in Camden. Then she will perform in a 2 p.m. concert Sunday at the Camden Opera House.

After releasing six albums in four years, Spielberg is turning her considerable energies more to performing these days.

"Now is a good time to go out and play as much as I can," she said. "I've been playing a lot on the East Coast, and I'm now planning a tour of Arizona and California."

Throughout her life, Spielberg has been torn between music and theater, and more often than not has found a way to merge the two.

She grew up in a musical family. Her grandfather played flute and her great-uncle was concertmaster, both under Toscanini in the NBC Symphony Orchestra.

"Some people say it's genetic," she said. "While often parents have to coax their children to practice, my parents had to get my sister and I off the piano. The piano was a wonderful place to go to for comfort, solace and enjoyment."

She got bit by the acting bug in grade school, and acted in plays throughout school, while still playing the piano.

Spielberg attended Michigan State University for a time, taking a liberal-arts program while determining her direction.

While cutting through the theater building on a cold day, she saw a notice for auditions for the title role in "The Diary of Anne Frank." She won the part, and decided to dedicate her energies to acting.

She transferred to New York University, studying under play-



Robin Spielberg will perform her first concert in Maine Sunday afternoon in Camden.

wright David Mamet, actor William H. Macy and director Gregory Mosher. After graduation, she and several classmates co-founded The Atlantic Theater Company, and she often ended up composing for the company's off-Broadway productions.

To support herself, she also played at piano rooms at the city's hotels. Before long, she was working in her own originals, drawing praise from audience members. That rapidly led to her first album, "Heal of the Hand." One of her fans lent her \$10,000 to make the recording.

After she sold 2,000 copies on her own, the North Star Music label picked it up and re-released it. It became the label's fastest-selling recording in its 10-year history, and was their best-selling title for 1994 and 1995.

"Acting didn't seem as urgent as the first album took off," Spielberg said. "I got wrapped up in the business of touring. I haven't acted since 1994."

Spielberg has released five more albums since then, two of

holiday music, two of original music and one of standards.

She also formed her own production company, Spobs.

"It's a mixed bag of producing concerts, appearing in festivals, playing for other promoters and making appearances at stores like Borders," she said. "But after the experience of having to do all facets in the theater, producing a one-woman show is cake."

Spielberg also can be seen on the PBS special "The Soul of Christmas," hosted by fiddler Johnnie Cunningham and author Thomas Moore.

"It was great fun," she said. "I met Johnny when he performed on my 'On the Arms of the Wind.' Then he called me to be on his recording, which snowballed into a PBS special."

While doing the special, Spielberg chatted with singer Cathie Ryan, singer-songwriter Susan McKeown and composer-fiddler Maire Breatnach. The four agreed to collaborate on an album to be released around Mother's Day.

Spielberg also did her first film

music for the independent feature "Story of a Bad Boy," an avenue she hopes to explore more in future.

So how does the high-speed Spielberg relax from her busy schedule?

"My music does the same thing for me as it does for my listeners," she said. "It's my therapy, my way of staying focused and centered. The piano is where I go to drift off."