

The Story Behind
Welcome to a Bright New World
By Dana Fialco

Welcome to a bright new world – where all children play and get along and are accepted for exactly who they are. Welcome to a bright new world – where we all accept and celebrate each other’s differences rather than excluding, fearing, and bullying those who appear different. Welcome to a bright new world – where we recognize what makes ourselves and each other special, and we learn at an early age to listen to the good voice inside ourselves rather than following the loudest, most threatening voice.

My name is Dana Fialco. This bright new world I speak of was the childhood dream of my sister, Tara. Faced with autism and gifted musically, Tara used her beloved piano to express many of her thoughts and feelings through music. Often teased and picked on at school, Tara came home and wrote magical, touching melodies and lyrics about a far more accepting world than the world she had to face each day.

This is the dream that my mom, Sharon Fialco, captured when she wrote the “Starabella” series. Through three audio books on CD with music and accompanying magical illustrations, “Starabella” tells the story of a musically talented little girl with learning differences, whose eyes shine like stars when she is happy. Through the goodness inside her, her wonderful imagination, her special connection to the stars – and of course her music – Starabella becomes a kindergarten rock star who leads her classmates and listeners to the bright new world of her dreams. Children will want to sing, dance, dream, and imagine along with Starabella’s music.

“Starabella” is a family project, and a true labor of love. Tara and I were born in St. Louis, Missouri, but moved to Hawaii as very small children. Raised in the culturally diverse and creative community of Honolulu, much of Tara’s music was inspired by our beautiful natural surroundings. Our family presents an example of the inclusion we speak of in Book Three of the “Starabella” series. Tara and I always

had a special connection through music. Tara composed, played the piano, and sang, and I sang and wrote lyrics. We started performing together and writing songs together at an early age. My mom envisioned and produced the “Starabella” project and wrote the stories, based on my sister’s music and experiences. Tara composed 17 out of the 22 songs and melodies used in the series, many of which when she was a small child. I narrated the stories, play many of the characters, and I wrote some of the songs and lyrics as well. My Dad has been a support through the entire project, helping to make it all possible.

The three books of the “Starabella” series take our heroine through three different stages of her early growing up. In Book One, we see Starabella at home, where she is the star of her family. Her parents start to recognize and react to their daughter’s challenges and her unique abilities. In Book Two, we see Starabella venture out into the community, where she reacts to a world that asks her to conform. Her parents balance wanting to protect their daughter with wanting to make sure she continues to believe in herself. In Book Three, Starabella starts her first day of kindergarten. Starabella’s kindergarten class includes children from a variety of backgrounds, all with their own challenges and abilities. As a young adult, Tara performed musical shows for young children in Hawaii schools. Some of the scenarios presented in Book Three were based on true social dilemmas my mom observed in the schools where Tara performed. In the diverse world of Starabella’s classroom, the children learn lessons of empathy, and learn that when they make friendly choices, their eyes, like Starabella’s, shine like stars. Children listening at home are asked to make choices as well, to help the children in Starabella’s class get to the bright new world.

Starabella is a superheroine for all children. The stories and music speak to anyone who has ever felt different for any reason, or who has treated someone else poorly for seeming different. If we can teach children at an early age to practice empathy and appreciate each other’s differences and abilities, they grow into adults who can achieve a better, more peaceful world. Please join our family in following Starabella there – to the Bright New World where all our unique paths meet in harmony.

