

BUSINESS MONDAY

THE WORKPLACE: MANAGING YOUR PEOPLE, YOUR BOSS, YOUR COMPANY AND YOUR CAREER

AT WORK IN ST. LOUIS
THE PERSONALITY OF DOING BUSINESS



DAVID ALBERS / POST-DISPATCH

On the piano, Sheila Dugan accompanies classical singer Kate Talbert of Chesterfield. Talbert, who has studied with Dugan since the ninth grade, attends Indiana University to study vocal performance.

SING A SONG WITH THE SCIENCE

Voice trainer Sheila Dugan teaches students about their respiratory, phonatory and articulatory systems. But she keeps her tips concrete and her images familiar.

BY RACHEL MELCER
Of the Post-Dispatch

Not many voice trainers would compare singing a song to building a car. Or executing a pirouette. Or playing lacrosse.

But not many voice trainers are like Sheila Dugan. In her Maryland Heights home, she uses tangible images, props and medical diagrams to teach her students how to breathe, focus, sing and speak. They combine art and technology to make beautiful music.

"Most voice teachers use their ears to determine sound ... and use vague and colorful references to try to get students to sing differently," Dugan said. She bristles at the thought of students being told to "spin in the tone" or add "fiber in the voice."

"They mean nothing," she said.

Dugan earned bachelor's and master's degrees in vocal performance at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and took postgraduate courses in speech and hearing science at St. Louis University. She says the voice is an instrument as concrete as a bass fiddle or a French horn. So, the best way to approach it is through science.

"I teach and correct the underlying technologies to create the most efficient use and production with this instrument. And then, I overlay the art. It's like building a car: First, you build

the chassis; then, you add on the body and the paint and the extras," Dugan said.

Students are taught about their respiratory, phonatory and articulatory systems — but in a simple way. Dugan instructs through analogies that match the knowledge and interest of her students. For example, she uses ballet positions with dancers and sports terms with athletes.



Grenfell
Dugan student with Broadway appearances

Katy Grenfell, who has been studying with Dugan for 16 years and whose credits include three Broadway musicals, chalks up her singing achievements to the "vocal guru."

"Before Sheila, I had a voice teacher who had me singing from my belly button, but there are no lungs there. Sheila works with your exact physiology and with the individual," she said.

See Singing, E4

"She can come up with a concept off the bat that you'll understand. It just clicks for you right there — she's that good."

Joe Grandy, a recent Belleville East High School graduate, on voice trainer Sheila Dugan



Sheila Dugan

Age: 56

Residence: Maryland Heights

Education: Bachelor's and master's degrees in vocal performance from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Types of lessons

Initial voice evaluation: \$50

Half-hour of therapy: \$45

Hour of public speaking: \$100

Half-hour of singing: \$35

Singing

Her services branch into public speaking

Continued from E1

Grenfell, 31, a graduate of Parkway West High School, said singing caused her physical pain before she learned Dugan's techniques. Now, it's her greatest strength. Though she lives in New York, she continues to study with Dugan by phone and through occasional visits.

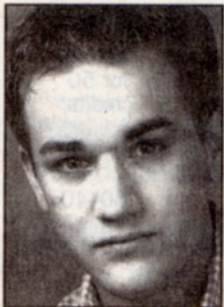
Dugan, 56, began offering voice lessons at the age of 20. She was on the faculty at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and taught at the former St. Louis Conservatory and Schools for the Arts.

She was a 34-year-old single mother when she decided to go it alone. "It was a scary thing. I was self-employed at a time when it was not fashionable," she said.

Still, she loves the autonomy and sense of control.

Dugan's home-based practice grew through word of mouth, along with coaching gigs at Stages St. Louis and the Muny. As her inter-

SOME OF SHEILA DUGAN'S STAR STUDENTS



Michael Burton
Appeared in Muny musicals as well as the Broadway show "Tom Sawyer"



Robert Gallagher
Appeared in several Chicago-area productions and the 10th anniversary Broadway run of "Les Misérables"



Natalie Hall
Appeared in Muny musicals as well as the Broadway run of "The Sound of Music"

est and training in physiology grew, she began working with doctors and speech pathologists in voice rehabilitation. She added lessons in public speaking and performance-anxiety management for businesspeople.

Today, she charges \$50 for an initial voice evaluation, \$45 per half-hour of therapy and \$100 an hour for public-speaking lessons. Singing students pay on a monthly

basis, at a rate of \$35 per half-hour. She estimated that she gives about 2,000 lessons a year.

Being an entrepreneur "is hard," she said. "You have to be a self-starter. You have to want to do it." Then, she repeated advice she gives to students: "Where passion and actual talent intersect — in any field — you will make a living."

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