



## **The S.B. Questionnaire: Karen Lytle**

**Talking About Singing and More with the Founder of Santa Barbara Voice Academy**

Sunday, April 24, 2016 by [ROGER DURLING](#)

As I sit in Santa Barbara Voice Academy founder Karen S. Lytle's convivial studio, I notice a chalkboard that hangs on her wall that says, "You don't have to be perfect to be beautiful."

As a vocal coach, Karen, who also holds a Master's degree in psychology, encourages people who lack confidence to literally find their own voice. But she teaches you to embrace mistakes as well, to learn to be vulnerable, to develop authenticity. Other coaches approach singing lessons from left-brain technicality, but Karen promotes the emotional process, which is always changing in the student. And she celebrates that progression.

Her sessions are 30 minutes, during which time she uses a Seth Riggs method called Speech Level Singing (SLS), which is a revolutionary technique that maximizes your vocal abilities in any style of singing. Just like any other muscle in the body, the vocal chords need to be stretched, conditioned, and repaired.

After private sessions, students can opt to join a performance class. Meeting one night per week, students perform onstage with professional musicians. I felt immediately at ease in Karen's presence, and I can see why students benefit so much from her.

On Saturday, April 30, 6:30 p.m., at SOhO Restaurant and Music Club, you can come, cheer, and clap for the Santa Barbara Voice Academy Showcase.

Karen answers the Proust Questionnaire.

**On what occasion do you lie?**

That's easy: when it's appropriate to build someone up and not tear them down, and you don't have the option to say nothing. Sometimes people need the truth; sometimes they need the edges taken off the truth.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Perfect isn't a word I like to us, but I'm happy when I feel content and at peace with myself. Our most challenging relationship is with our own inner critic.

**What do you like most about your job?**

I love supporting and inspiring people to reach inside themselves to tell their stories as authentically as they can and also sound great. When someone hears their voice improving right on the spot, and they get excited at the possibilities, it's instant gratification for me.

**What is your most treasured possession?**

My mind, which controls my reality every moment when I have my wits about me. Oh, and some superhero powers I have of getting a parking spot in front of wherever I'm going, always. It's a thing, really, ask my friends.

**What is your greatest fear?**

The state of our world, due to the shortsightedness of greed, and the lack of simple consideration and love in some hearts.

**Who do you most admire?**

My mentors and teachers for their wisdom, compassion, and neutrality.

**What is your greatest extravagance?**

Fine tequila and dark chocolate. Is there anything else?

**What is your current state of mind?**

Gratitude. Grateful I am blessed to do what I love everyday in this beautiful town we are so fortunate to live in.

**What is the quality you most like in people?**

Mindfulness. Intelligence. Humor. Creativity. Adventurousness. (Oh shoot, that's not one quality.)

**What is the quality you most dislike in people?**

Meanness, blaming, cowardice. (I can never pick one!)

**What do you most value in friends?**

Love (no matter my foibles), intelligence, honesty, and humor.

**What is your most marked characteristic?**

I'd have to say strength, resilience, and tenacity to a fault at times.

**Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**

"I love that!" See, don't you just love that!?!

**Which talent would you most like to have?**

Tap dancing. I love to dance and I love playing an instrument. I'd love to have that physical strength and coordination, so light on the feet.

**If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?**

I'm a bit focused and could use a little more "un-focused" brain time.

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

Using my mind to heal my body from a debilitating auto immune illness. Check it out: [DNRSYSTEM.com](http://DNRSYSTEM.com)

**Where would you most like to live?**

I think it's pretty all around, can't get better than this, right here. So I'm good in S.B.

**Who makes you laugh the most?**

Friends and family and some old Mel Brooks movies and newer YouTube videos. OMG! Smiling thinking about it. Laughter is immensely important to me!

**What is your motto?**

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Of course you do have to know when and if to quit. As W.C. Fields added, "Then quit. There's no point in being a damn fool about it."

**Which historical figure do you most identify with?**

Road Runner and the Wild Coyote. Okay, maybe not historical, but still. Then Joan of Arc for her strength.