

REAL ESTATE PEOPLE

Listening to that inner voice

Opera singer pursues dream to reach top of city's real estate business

By MAGGIE HAWRYLUK

The parallels between real estate and opera aren't immediately obvious, but DJK Residential's Heather Bise said she's reaping the rewards of her experience as a professional opera singer.

"I have incredible discipline now because of it. I would have to sit in a practice room for eight hours a day," the vice president said. "I also have a great memory from all of that time spent pouring through music."

The former mezzo-soprano was discovered at a young age after a family friend heard her singing and recommended she hone her natural skills. At the age

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of 12, Bise enrolled at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio — she grew up near Cleveland.

"I also played the violin and piano, but I always wanted to be in a rock band," she recalled, laughing. "Kids had always made fun of me because my voice sounded so old."

But those in the know weren't laughing at Bise's booming voice. She landed her first professional gig at 18, and was regularly traveling around to 15 states in a span of five weeks.

"I had no social life growing up because that was my thing," said Bise, whose trademark role was Carmen. "It was a way for me to help my family."

But once Bise became a mother, she had to give up

the time-consuming profession to watch over her own growing family. She was a stay-at-home mom until she felt her children were old enough to allow her back into the professional world. She didn't go back to singing, but instead, in 1999, took on another time-consuming profession — real estate.

"Growing up, my grandparents bought a home every year, and every summer we'd help them rehabilitate these houses and they'd sell them," she said. "The real estate thing was always there; that's how you build wealth."

She began working part-time in the relocation division of a local Ohio firm, earning the Rookie of the Year designation her first year. Soon, Bise said she became "obsessed" with Manhattan real estate. After reading "The Sky's the Limit: Passion and Property in Manhattan," by Steven Gaines, and getting a lot of encouragement from her colleagues, Bise decided to make the jump into Manhattan real estate.

"I figured that if I could sing in front of hundreds of thousands of people every night when I was young, I could do this," she said. "You become fearless. Nothing compares to being on stage."

Bise joined one of the city's top firms in the relocation division in 2006 and quickly made an impression.

"After three months, everyone thought I was a goddess," she joked.

But Bise wasn't ready to rest on her laurels and get comfortable. She said she has bigger aspirations in mind

that a large company couldn't accommodate. "I want to be a CEO of a firm one day. Everything I've said I wanted to do, it has happened," she said. "I decided that if I go to a small company and build my business, I can start my own one day."

So Bise made the switch to DJK Residential, has taken on more varied responsibilities and is happier than ever. "This is part of my life plan," she said. "I'm doing everything from rentals and sales to working with REIT projects and international clients."

In fact, Bise said her opera background really clicks with international clientele, and it is often their common thread. She added that about 80% of her clients come from outside of the United States.

But regardless where her business comes from, Bise said she's totally hooked.

"I'm completely dedicated," she said. "I write out my goals and values everyday. I have to make a positive influence every week."

