

Art is Temporary

By Cynthia Vaughn, Associate Editor for Independent Voices

Recently, I've been fascinated by the concept of temporary art, inspired by street chalk artist David Zinn. Zinn has an incredible eye and imagination and he creates detailed whimsical animals on urban sidewalks, parking lots, playgrounds, brick walls — whatever strikes his fancy! Zinn photographs his urban art and posts videos of the making of the art, but few passersby see the actual art. Each detailed powdery chalk drawing will eventually wash away with rain or snow or be covered by leaves and muddy shoes. Not only is Zinn's chalk art temporary, but he happily encourages copycats like the children who drew their own chalk art next to his on a playground. Zinn describes himself as a "habitual doodler and street artist, wrangling ephemerality and finding uplift underfoot."

When I was packing for a cross-country move last summer, I found a lot of faded performance programs and photos of me in concert gowns and peasant skirts, but virtually no recital or stage show audio recordings or videos. I was a little sad

not to have those souvenirs, but also strangely grateful. I had proof on paper that the performances happened and that jogged pleasant memories. However, in the predigital era I did not have the pressure of having to perform perfectly for posterity. (There's a tongue twister!) My colleagues and I performed in the moment, and if you weren't in the theater or concert hall you missed it. It was gone. You couldn't stream it or download it to watch later.



Cynthia Vaughn
Associate Editor
for *Inter Nos*
CynthiaVaughn@icloud.com

Even the performances I did save are not easily accessible or shareable. They are on outdated technology. Somewhere in a storage box, I've got dozens of voice lessons recorded on cassette tapes and a VHS video tape of a graduate recital that my husband accidentally recorded over with a Super Bowl. (But that's another story.) Live performances have always been temporary. Recordings of live performances are also temporary because the format evolves for better or worse. (I really miss cassette tapes and my mini-disc player.) Just in my lifetime, vinyl was replaced by cassettes, VHS, CDs, DVDs, mp3s ... and now vinyl returns. Not long in the future, YouTube and TikTok will also be mere pop culture footnotes.

While old masterwork paintings are curated and preserved in museums, most people will never see the original. Music by classical masters lives on in printed scores and is still performed to the best of our knowledge, though no one who saw the original performances centuries ago is alive to talk about it or tell us how it really sounded. Sometimes all that is left is an aria of a forgotten opera or the title of a work that is no longer extant.

So, why do we bother to make art if it's temporary and temporal — enduring only for a time? I suggest that is the very reason that we make art. It must be renewed and recreated. We sing the best performance we can in that moment. We teach the best lesson on that day. Then we continue to evolve and create and discover. Sometimes I wonder how well would our students sing if they weren't being



"So, why do we bother to make art if it's temporary and temporal — enduring only for a time? I suggest that is the very reason that we make art. It must be renewed and recreated."

graded or auditioned or adjudicated? How well would we teach if we didn't have the pressure of performance reviews and legacy — real or perceived? If we are lucky, we will find times in our singing and teaching to create intentionally temporary art. Then we may inspire our students to make art alongside our art, like the children who joyfully chalked their own images next to Zinn's playground art. May we also learn to "wrangle ephemerality and find uplift" in the studio and on the stage.

In this issue of Independent Voices, I share a conversation with Anna Diemer and Deborah Conquest on the joys and convenience of teaching older adult singers online. Nikki Loney challenges independent studio owners to embrace 45-minute lessons and Christin Coffee Rondeau sings the praises of semi-private small group voice classes. Jazz singer Sarah Groh goes to the dogs, with her side-business as a house sitter. And finally, a new interview feature "Speaking Independently" invites NATS

leaders and members to explore the future of NATS, beginning with President Diana Allan.

— Cynthia Vaughn

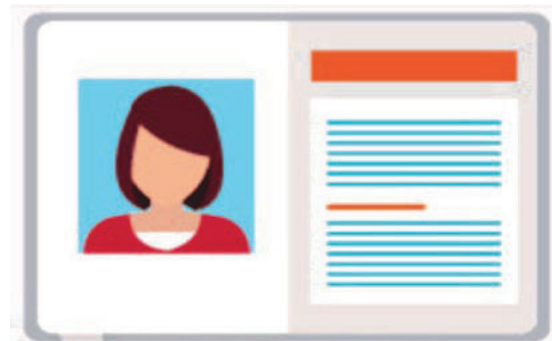
Cynthia Vaughn, associate editor for *Independent Voices*, has been a proud NATS member since 1983. She has been active in leadership at the chapter and region levels, and she was an invited master teacher for the 2020 NATS Intern Program (postponed to 2021 due to COVID). Before moving to Norfolk Virginia, Vaughn retired from Magnolia Music Studio, the multi-teacher studio she founded and directed in Colorado and Washington from 2008 to 2022. Previously she was on the voice faculty of Colorado State University. Vaughn and the late Meribeth Dayme, PhD, co-authored three editions of "The Singing Book," a leading college voice class textbook/anthology. Rowman & Littlefield will publish a new fourth edition in spring 2023. Vaughn and Matthew Hoch edited and compiled "The Essentials of CoreSinging: A Joyful Approach to Singing and Voice Pedagogy by Meribeth Dayme," April 2022.



Call for Submissions

Articles on relevant topics are being accepted for inclusion in the independent teacher section of future issues of *Inter Nos*. Approximately 1,000 to 4,000 words. Submissions should be sent by email to cynthiavaughn@icloud.com.

Have you moved, changed your contact information, or your email?



Members: Now is a good time to update your information on NATS.org. Keeping your contact information up-to-date ensures that you won't miss any of our member benefits or upcoming events.

To make updates, log on to your Member Home Page (your email address for NATS correspondence is your Login). Then, click the "My Profile" link on the right.

You also can call the NATS National Office at 904-992-9101 for assistance.