

For Good

By Allen Henderson, NATS Executive Director

The time has come to pen my last *Inter Nos* column as executive director of NATS. I ruminated a lot in recent months about what to say in this final column. There are so many directions I could go after a total of 18 ½ years in this chair. Many of you have heard me speak over the years and expound upon the fact that in my very first voice lesson in college, Dr. Thomas Teague mentioned NATS to me. As a result, NATS has been within my consciousness since my entry into our wonderful profession; first as a student, then a young artist, and later a teacher and arts administrator — I grew up in NATS. It was due to being heard at a NATS audition my senior year that the entire trajectory of my life and career changed when I was encouraged to audition for and subsequently offered a graduate assistantship that supported my graduate studies and provided my first professional operatic gigs. When I made the important decision to pursue a teaching career, it was mentors I had met through NATS who were sounding boards and provided sage advice. Because of NATS I have been changed, for good.

As an early career teacher, I found the resources and programming NATS provided so important to my growth and development. I met leaders in our field who believed deeply in the mission of NATS, the sacredness of our profession, and the great responsibility entrusted to us when each individual enters our studio, classroom, or clinic. It was also where I heard debates about how our profession was expanding, should expand, or was not changing fast enough; how expanding knowledge and research about the voice was transforming our profession; how we can and should partner with our colleagues in science, medicine, and other fields to benefit our teaching and students; and how we should balance the artistic focus of teaching with scientific knowledge. As a result, my network of colleagues and mentors expanded and grew. I could call, write, or later email authors of articles and books I had read and because of our mutual connection in NATS, they responded. We connected and deepened those connections over time. If we only saw each other in person every few years, after a few

pleasantries we could easily move into deep conversation on a matter of mutual professional interest. Because of NATS, my professional network expanded for good.

My opportunity to begin serving within the NATS community began at the chapter level. I was later elected to national office as Secretary/Treasurer. It was here that I truly began to understand the mission of NATS at a global level. The volunteer leadership that so many members devoted to NATS and the deep conversations that the Board of Directors engaged in expanded my view of the impact NATS was having on our profession and how its international impact was growing. I was in the right place at the right time when President Martha Randall asked if I would step in as interim executive director for a year after an unexpected staff resignation. After a year, many issues had been resolved, the organization was running smoothly, and the board asked me to continue permanently. The opportunity for me to use my entire skillset in service of my broader profession has been rewarding and fulfilling. The opportunities to celebrate and mourn with colleagues, to walk with them in difficult professional circumstances because they reached out for advice and support, and to connect people who I realized needed to know one another because they had similar interests will remain cherished memories for me. Because of NATS, my opportunity to serve has changed me for good.

For sure there have been difficult times as well, we all remember COVID, but a deep bench of leaders in our profession have always been on hand for sage advice as sounding boards, idea generators, and problem solvers. So much of what we do today as an association is due to the many leaders who have served NATS, inspiring us all to do better and be better as professionals and humans. We certainly could not be successful as an association without a



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VOL. 58, NO. 2

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inter nos is the official newsletter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing. It is published two times per year (spring and fall) for all NATS members.

team of dedicated staff members whose professionalism and support for our work helps us all advance in our careers. Our current team of Tina, Heather, Kelly, Jen, Beth, Mark, Karen, and Lindsay Kate all have a heart for NATS and care deeply for our mission and each and every member. Because of dedicated volunteer leaders and staff at NATS, I have been changed for good.

I certainly would not have been successful in many endeavors without the support and advice of my wife Ann, a trusted confidante and advisor for 40-plus years, and my children. They have often been present at various NATS events throughout the years and have also developed friendships with members who have followed our children's growth through high school and college, and their entry into their professions as "productive members of society" as I like to say. They were instrumental in encouraging other members to bring their children to NATS events and have friendships they continue to maintain with a few children of members they have met over the years.

As I return to the status of professional member of NATS on January 1, 2026, I leave you with some of the lyrics from the song which inspired the title of my column, a pivotal song from *Wicked*.

"I do believe I have been changed for the better

And because I knew you... I have been changed for good."

In fact, if the mission and vision of NATS could be boiled down to the fewest words possible, in my opinion, it would be — for good.

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your fellow members.



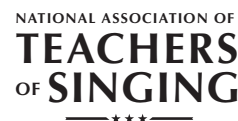
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CALL FOR POSTER PAPERS

The National Association of Teachers of Singing invites you to submit abstracts for poster paper presentations at the **59th NATS National Conference, July 3–7, 2026, in San Antonio, Texas**. Topics may include:

- Voice Pedagogy
- Voice Science
- The Private Studio
- Technology and Teaching
- Vocal Repertoire
- Performance Practice
- Commercial Styles
- Musicological Studies



...or any other topic related to the art and science of singing and teaching singing.

Abstracts should not Exceed 500 words and should be completed through the NATS.org portal. Only electronic submissions will be considered.

DEADLINE: Dec. 1, 2025 • Visit NATS.org to submit.

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