

PUBLISHER

Allen Henderson
Executive Director
allen@nats.org

MANAGING EDITOR

Deborah Guess
Director of Operations
deborah@nats.org

INDEPENDENT TEACHER ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Cynthia Vaughn
CynthiaVaughn@mac.com

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.

From the Independent Teacher Associate Editor

Student Privacy in the Age of Oversharing

by Cynthia Vaughn

There are a few moments in my performing life that I would have like to have preserved. For example, I'd like to have that VHS performance of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" that my husband accidentally recorded a Super Bowl game over. I've got a few recital recordings, and some professional LP albums and cassettes in a box somewhere, but most of my performances exist in my memory when I stumble across one of the printed programs. I save the programs, but not the performances. I have always felt that a live performance exists specifically in that moment of time. It's not just how I sang, or what I sang, or what I wore. (Although I have a remarkable memory for which gown I chose for each recital.) The concert venue, the energy of that specific live audience,



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

the time in history... all of those things influenced the performance in ways that could never be fully captured in a recording or video. My students tease me because I get weepy at recitals. Caught up in the beauty and story of a song, or by a student who has had a recent vocal breakthrough, I often find a tear in my eye. Concert films and recordings rarely move me like that.

Mostly I am grateful that I grew up in an age where my parents didn't have smart phones to record my every utterance, especially during my awkward pre-teen years. I had the freedom to find my voice and make mistakes and crack a high note and figure out who I was as a singer before the invention of Facebook Live. Today's technology makes it extremely easy to record and film, well... everything. While the technology is a boon for professional artists seeking an audience and marketing their music, it can be a dilemma in the voice studio.

- 1) Does a student ask to audio or video record his/her own lesson to listen or view during the week's practice? I don't discourage that. It can be helpful for the student to hear or view a song in progress to work on specific technical goals. I tell the student lightly, "This is for your own personal use. Don't put it on YouTube." Joking, not joking. It's not usually a problem, though. My teen students won't even let their parents listen to their lesson recording, much less the entire internet.
- 2) Is a student preparing for a pre-screening college audition video? It can be helpful for the student to do some test recordings during a lesson before the actual audition filming. Recording and watching the video in a safe space, can help the student get comfortable in front of the camera and microphone, and weed out some mannerisms.
- 3) What about recording student performances? I often ask a videographer to record student recitals that can be shared selectively with out of town relatives and friends. I don't post it publicly. Knowing that there will be a recording available, most parents and audience members will turn off their screens and be more present. Listening to live performances without a recording device in hand is one of the best things you can do for a student performer, to give your total attention.

continued: Independent Voices

4) Do I post about students by name? If I post student performance photos online (with permission) or mention a student who has won an award, my policy is to only name minor students by their first name and initial (ex Michael P.) to protect their privacy. I don't post student videos except those intended to be public, such as the Hal Leonard Vocal Competition that are uploaded to YouTube.

5) What if a parent posts a student performance video? That is a discussion to be had between the student and the parent. I rarely comment on the video post, but I will comment on the performance in person when I see the student.

6) What if a student posts her performance video? Well, I might comment on it. After all, this must be a performance that a student is proud of and comfortable sharing on the internet.

7) What about recording video during a lesson to share with other teachers? I strongly encourage teachers to ASK PERMISSION if they intend to video or record a student during a lesson to share in an online teachers forum. A student may authorize a teacher to show a video to online colleagues for technical suggestions, but it personally makes me uncomfortable commenting on a student I do not know. Some teachers include a waiver in their studio policies.

Ultimately, every studio teacher will need to make decisions about student privacy and recording, as technology will likely become more pervasive in the future. Someday soon, though, those mp3 and .mov files will be as antiquated as my old VHS and cassette tapes.

Cynthia Vaughn is the Founder of Magnolia Music Studios in Fort Collins, Colo., and Richland, Wash. She was formerly on the voice faculties of Colorado State University and Cedarville University. Cynthia Vaughn and Meribeth Dayme, PhD, are co-authors of a leading college voice class textbook/anthology, The Singing Book (WWNorton, 3rd Edition 2014). Cynthia wrote the "Currents" column for Inter Nos and was a feature writer and editor for Classical Singer magazine.

Call for Submissions

Short articles on relevant topics are being accepted for inclusion in the independent teacher section of future issues of *Inter Nos*. Submissions should be sent by email to CynthiaVaughn@mac.com.