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**Mission:** *The National Association of Teachers of Singing, Incorporated, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging the highest standards of the vocal art and of ethical principles in the teaching of singing; and to promoting vocal education and research at all levels, both for the enrichment of the general public and for the professional advancement of the talented.*

The National Association of Teachers of Singing, Inc. is a member of the National Music Council.

# INDEPENDENT VOICES

## From the Independent Teacher Associate Editor Looking Both Ways and Crossing at The Light (Or How I Fell in Love with Traffic Light Man)

One of the unexpected delights of the Summer 2019 Inaugural NATS Transatlantic Vocal Pedagogy Exchange Trip to Germany was the discovery of East Germany’s iconic Ampelmann (traffic light man). Ampelmann (also known as the diminutive Ampelmännchen—little traffic light man) was designed in 1961 by traffic psychologist (yes, that’s a career) Karl Peglau to have different shapes so that pedestrians with red/green color blindness could safely cross roads.

The plump body of Ampelmann meant more light would shine through for greater visibility. From the first taxi ride from the East Berlin train station to our hotel I spotted the rotund jaunty little walking man with a hat urging pedestrians to “Go! Go! Go!”. I quickly discovered that Ampelmann was everywhere—on T-shirts, backpacks, and water bottles, in Ampelmann souvenir shops, and four-foot-tall green Ampelmännchen on corners and squares. Popular with locals and tourists, the green Ampelmann is clearly favored over the red Ampelmann holding his arms out to halt pedestrians. Green Ampelmann became an apt mascot for our NATS pedagogy tour group, always on the go with our packed itinerary of scholarly events, historic sights, arts, culture, entertainment, and so much delicious food. Only the miles of daily walking kept my figure from becoming even more like Ampelmann! When I would feel myself lagging behind my younger colleagues, I would say “Ampelmann!” and power ahead to catch up! Friends humored me and frequently pointed out, “Hey, Cynthia! There’s Ampelmann.”

Back home in my studio office in Washington now, I’m wearing my souvenir green Ampelmann earrings to motivate me to prepare for the Fall Semester and student schedule. It’s tedious and frustrating, but necessary and I just need to keep going until all of the pieces fall in place. I’m adding new faculty to my multi-teacher studio and also trying out some new Fall classes. Ampelmann reminds me that when I get stalled on a new idea, it is critical to take a moment to look at the pros and cons before stepping out. On the other hand, I can’t sit too long with the plan or the light will turn red and the opportunity will be gone.

In this issue of Independent Voices, NATS International Ambassador Laurissa



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## continued: President's Update Report of 2018 NATS Board of Directors Annual Meeting

Schütze, Edward Randall, and Dr. Hartmut Zabel in Berlin, Potsdam, Leipzig and Dresden. The presentations and conversations we shared with one another were truly unique. NATS member travelers relished the mix of pedagogy events, concerts, sight-seeing and so many good times.



## continued: Independent Voices—Looking Both Ways...

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Backlin shares her observations and reflections from an enlightening pedagogy trip to South Korea. NATS member Jonathan Pilkington's love of travel led to a major transition in his teaching and career. Michigan independent NATS voice teachers Carol Perry, Jessica Fielder, and Dana Lentini found that when their neighborhood studios collaborate everyone wins. Jocelyn Beausire is a classically trained vocalist who applies her training to an exploration of voice and architecture as an international performance artist. She credits her NATS voice teachers with encouraging her to follow a very non-traditional career path. These teachers and artists all boldly green-lighted ideas and opportunities.

German journalist Daniel Meuren (Der Spiegel) has described the surprising appeal of Ampelmann as "uniting beauty with efficiency, charm with utility, sociability with fulfillment of duties." That sounds like a lot of voice teachers I know. What are you waiting for? The light is green.

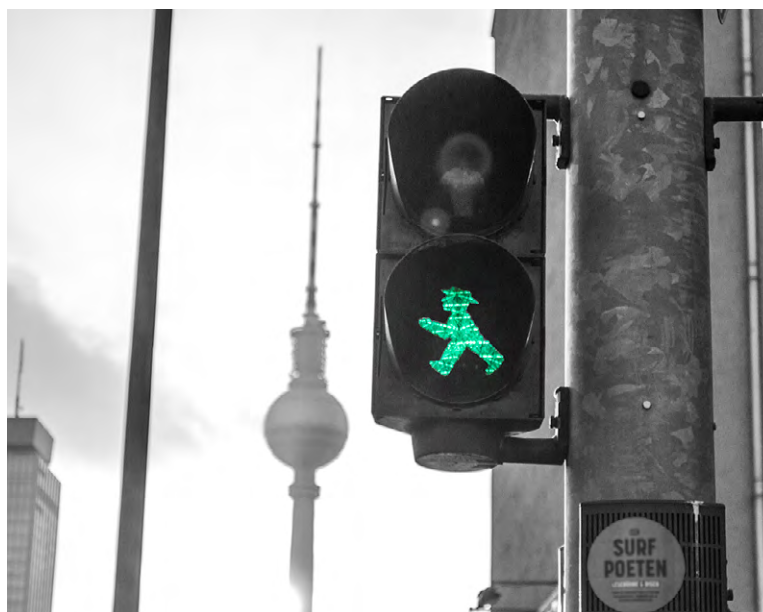


Photo credit (Ampelmann): By LucasGM58 - Own work

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### 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](mailto:CynthiaVaughn@mac.com).