

## On the Horizon: A Look Ahead for One Independent Studio

By Dana Lentini

NATS member Dana Lentini was a panelist for the February 25, 2021 NATS YouTube webinar — [On the Horizon: A Look Ahead for Independent Studios in the Second Half of 2021](#). In addition to her live comments in the panel discussion, she shared these personal thoughts with *Inter Nos*.

**Inter Nos:** What has the pandemic taught you about our industry?

**DL:** We are resilient and creative. We already knew that, but now we are witnesses to this truth. We have so much to offer our students. I had already been dabbling in online lessons, so last year when all other activities went dark, I was right there to start on Zoom immediately. I would say 95 percent of my families were on board and thrilled to have this one opportunity for the kids that wasn't lost to the quarantine. My delivery changed, but my families all willingly trusted me. Now we are seeing new amazing opportunities and new ways of delivering quality and content to our voice lessons. Even my youngest 6-year-olds are now masters of self-tapes. We can work asynchronously by sending recordings and offer feedback via email and messaging as we collaborate throughout the week. When they send me things, I am able to offer a quick anecdote or observation to what they worked on and say, "Hey, why don't you try this . . ." I'm moving away from the "pay me by the hour service" and into a different business model.

**Inter Nos:** Based on what we know now and have learned, what do you think fall will look like for the independent studio segment of the singing industry?

**DL:** Fall for me will remain online. My situation is unique because I moved in the middle of the pandemic from Michigan to New York. I kept almost all of my old students, and I gained even more across the country.

**Inter Nos:** What are some things you have learned and implemented that you might retain even after post-pandemic life returns to some sense of pre-pandemic normalcy?

**DL:** I love online opportunities — competitions, auditions, online recitals! Not all recitals need to be this way, but perhaps



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an annual online performance plus an annual studio in-person experience. I work with young kids, and I can say, for them, this is going to catapult them even further to being adaptable with online lifestyles from work to play. As I mentioned, my studio will remain strictly online. I will continue to offer services, as well as to teachers across the globe who wish to coach and mentor with me. I am happy and thrilled to be offering my services to a wider international community. I never would have imagined I would have been able to do this.

**Inter Nos:** How do you manage all of the new offerings?

**DL:** I have an apprentice teacher working for me now in my old region. We are able to share lesson recordings and observe each other's teaching much easier without traveling through the week to someone's studio to observe.

**Inter Nos:** What are some things you have shed that you hope will not return?

**DL:** Crazy schedules. My time with family, eating and cooking together in between our online activities is incredibly special. Scheduling things differently is much easier. It's easy for me to say, "No I am not free at that time." And a big change: illnesses and canceled lessons rarely occur. I have enjoyed not having students in my house. Somehow there is less pressure for my family and myself. But that being said, I do miss several face-to-face experiences. At this point, however, if I went back face-to-face teaching, I would now find myself missing just as many things I enjoy from being online.

**"We are not going back. We are moving forward!"**

**Inter Nos:** Has anything else changed in the way you approach your studio and lessons?

**DL:** Of course among all of this is Black Lives Matter, continuing #MeToo issues, and labor issues in the industry. I definitely want us to discuss how the intersection of everything has specifically

created so much for our industry to address. DEI (Diversity/Equity/Inclusion) is something all of us as independent teachers must consider in our studios from repertoire selection and understanding sexual diversity. It is becoming very common to see tweens and young teens share their gender non-conformity with their voice teachers. We teachers need to be well versed in how to manage these brave and vulnerable experiences in the studio. I just did a NATS NYC workshop on this topic via Zoom, and it was so great to share and learn from so many wonderful people in this new technological way. It is this merging of so many things that excites me for our future!

**Inter Nos:** Final thoughts?

**DL:** Everyone keeps talking about going back to our lives the way they were. I am excited to see what is in store with all we have learned.

We are not going back.

We are moving forward!

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*After cultivating techniques as a classical singer, voice teacher, and children's choir director, Dana Lentini combined her experiences to create Born 2 Sing Kids, a program designed to nurture the development of beginning singers. Through consulting and coaching, she helps teachers build their own successful studios and empowers young singers to explore healthy vocal techniques through a systematic approach. Her book, "Teaching the Child Singer: Pediatric Pedagogy for Ages 5-13" is available from Hal Leonard Publishing. For more information, visit [born2singkids.com](http://born2singkids.com)*



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