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ASSOCIATION NOTES

The NOW Normal

I have taken to calling these days the NOW NORMAL. I used to call them the 'new normal,' but then became confused with which "new" normal I was referring to as data, input variables, and external constraints constantly changed my personal and professional worlds on a sometimes daily basis. Since the last time I wrote to you in *Inter Nos* it is an understatement to say our world has been turned upside down. Building a career in the arts is difficult enough without the added complication of a pandemic in which the specific way you make art is viewed by many as one of the least safe activities during these times. Our friends and colleagues have left the profession, some by choice and others by economic necessity. Our students, past, present, and future have questions we cannot answer with the same certainty we once could. Our confidence has been shaken as many of our previous assumptions about life, death, and daily living, no matter how informed, have faced the reality of a deadly pandemic. We have also dealt with the anguish of loss of friends, colleagues, and family members who succumbed to this deadly virus. Our ability to celebrate lives well lived and grieve publicly for even those not lost to the virus has been impacted by restrictions on public gatherings, including funerals, making the grief process even more difficult for many.



Allen Henderson
NATS Executive Director

As if a pandemic was not enough, we have also faced the senseless murders of Aundrea Arbery in GA, Breonna Taylor in KY, George Floyd in MN, and others whose names we must say, at the hands of police. The systemic racism, hatred, and bigotry must stop and we must ALL be a part of the solution, supporting our black colleagues and students everywhere, lifting our voices in a loud and unwavering chorus demanding lasting and eternal change while acknowledging our failure to address the privilege many of us have enjoyed for centuries.

Despite the challenges, injustice, and loss, our singing and teaching community has risen and continues to rise to the challenges before it. As many of you know, NATS has led during this difficult time, bringing our network of experts to bear on

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Association Notes — The NOW Normal *(continued from page 1)*

the issues before us, collaborating with sibling organizations throughout North America to present a unified message to singers and teachers from NATS, ACDA, Chorus America and the Barbershop Harmony Society. Our May webinar that clearly placed the gravity of the situation before our community resounded widely. Although there were those who criticized some of the positions stated by our experts at the time, I am most proud that every fact presented, when considered in context, has proven to be prescient as the pandemic progressed. Both before and after that webinar a team of NATS members and colleagues from other organizations worked cooperatively to ensure our conversations, presentations, and experts brought the best available advice to our membership and the broader singing community. The names are too many to list here, but I must collectively thank all our guests, collaborators, researchers, and our staff and leadership who worked tirelessly to keep you up to date and prepared to transition quickly to online teaching.

By the time you read this, those who had a break over the summer are back in their Fall teaching schedules and using what they learned “on the fly” in the Spring and over the summer to create the safest teaching and singing environment possible. The now normal involves constant reminders to mask up, stay distanced, and make sure your teaching environment is clean. I hope you continue to be diligent and safe in all your teaching and performing settings. It is so easy to become lax as the statistics in our own locales improve.

NATS’ success this Summer extended to the successful conversion of the [NATS National Conference](#) to a virtual event. Whew! We needed to be together as a community, if only virtually, and it was a week to remember which will resound within our community for years to come. It was an enormous team effort and a testament to the resilience and strength of

our association. We set a new record for attendance and have had thousands and thousands of views of some of our sessions on our [YouTube channel](#). If you attended, don’t forget that you have access to recordings of all the sessions through the end of 2020. All sessions are now available at the [NATS Live Learning Center](#).

As we move forward, our now normal includes a newly revised [mission statement](#) and [new vision, values, and diversity and inclusion statements](#). Our recently completed [Strategic Plan](#) will guide the work of our committees, leadership and chapters and regions. We are currently developing some dashboards that will help us track our progress and provide you a picture of our progress. We also look forward to welcoming a new development director.

I am more excited than ever to be a member of my professional organization and I hope you are too. Because I am excited about the direction we have been moving and the ways we have been responsive to the needs of our members and their students, I have committed to make a monthly philanthropic contribution above my annual dues to support the important work of NATS as part of my now normal. Our dues only comprise 42% of the support needed to ensure that NATS continues to support us in our teaching and performing. I hope you will join me this year by becoming a monthly donor to NATS this year. Even a small monthly contribution can make a big difference over time. [Donate now](#).

As your now normal changes throughout this Fall, you can be sure that NATS will be here to support your work and provide expert guidance and resources to help us all navigate the times ahead. NATS is: many voices, one passion—singing!

As always I welcome your comments at allen@nats.org

Allen

IN MEMORIAM

February – August 2020

Merla Aikman
Ellen Chickering
Gail Gingery
Jacqueline Green

Myron Hermance, Jr
Soo Yeon Kim
Raymond Leuning
Donald Miller
Ewan Harbrecht Mitton

Patricia Saunders Nixon
George Vassos
Karen Wicklund
Paolo Zedda