

## To Everything There is a Season

By Allen Henderson, NATS Executive Director

As some of you read this issue of *Inter Nos*, the anticipation of spring is on the horizon. Where I live in South Georgia, we have already been tempted by what we call “first spring” and at my house the tulip magnolia tree blossoms with bright purple blooms. Inevitably, as in most years, below freezing temperatures returned this week and the blooms wilted into brown blobs as the tree returns to a somewhat dormant state until a more stable “second spring” occurs.

For nearly 18 years, I have had the honor of celebrating the seasons of change in our profession with you in these columns. We have celebrated our collective successes; mourned the passing of giants in our profession; planted seeds that have blossomed into major initiatives and new programs and products; survived a worldwide pandemic together; and supported future generations of singing artists and teachers; all driven by our collective vision of transforming lives through the power of singing.

In June, I informed our board of directors at our annual board meeting that I would be retiring as executive director effective December 31, 2025, after 18 and a half years of service. As our association moves through this leadership transition, President Alexis Davis-Hazell will appoint a search committee approved by the board of directors and a search will be initiated. You will be hearing much more about this process in the coming days. I have had the privilege of working with some great leaders at all levels of the NATS organization during my time as executive director, and I am confident that the strong leadership currently in place is particularly positioned to lead our association through this transition period and into the next era. I look forward to concluding my career teaching my students and leading some special projects and initiatives at Georgia Southern University. I have had the great fortune to call Georgia Southern my academic home for the past 20 years and have been grateful to my students, colleagues, and the administration for supporting this extraordinary service opportunity. Most of all, I am grateful for the support of my

spouse, in house CPA, and soulmate Ann without whose support none of this would have been possible.

As I put the finishing touches on this column, I am returning from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where I had the privilege and honor of speaking at the celebration of life service for Joan Frey Boytim, a major presence in our profession for many years who was awarded a NATS Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016. The self-described “little old lady on Glendale Street who teaches people to sing” dedicated her life to teaching voice in her independent studio in her home. A chance encounter with Rick Walters of Hal Leonard at a NATS conference led to the creation of an anthology of music for the voice teacher and that blossomed into more than 60 volumes with over 1 million books sold by 2015. Present at the celebration were scores and scores of past students — from her last high school student, now an undergraduate at Northwestern University, to more “mature” singers throughout her community. Many of her former students are also voice teachers themselves. It was a joyful celebration of a life well lived, a life of service, and a life dedicated to the pursuit of excellence. Voice teaching around the world is better today because of Joan, and her legacy continues to reverberate. May we all adopt the motto Joan adopted later in her life — *Aspire to inspire until you expire!*

As we look forward, our NATS National Student Auditions season is shaping up to be a record breaker. In my home region, we will have a record of 490 singers at the Southeastern Region Student Auditions in DeLand, Florida. With the expansion of our audition categories and age ranges, I have seen large numbers in other regions and chapters as well. Soon, all those eligible will be able to register for the national rounds that will culminate in AuditionCon and our live finals at Temple University in



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Philadelphia, June 26-28. This weekend will be filled with workshops, masterclasses, and of course student auditions. We invite you to join us. AuditionCon will include an expo where schools and training programs will be present to recruit students and present performance classes for singers in attendance. We hope you will register your school to be in attendance.

This summer we welcome the world of voice teaching to North America as NATS hosts the International Congress of Voice Teachers in Toronto, July 31-August 3. Nearly 200 presenters and performers are on the program, and Toronto offers a vibrant cultural landscape in which to celebrate the global voice teaching profession. Check out the program on our website and register by the early bird deadline of April 1. If you have never attended an ICVT, I encourage you to make an effort to attend while it is in North America.

Throughout all the seasons of my professional life there has been one constant — NATS. I hope the same goes for you. For those just beginning, what I hope will be fulfilling teaching careers, I encourage you to take advantage of the resources NATS provides us all and contribute to its future with your energy and expertise. We are stronger together

and, as we reach out to broaden the tent of our association, our common connection and love of our art form support us and draw us together when the winds of change in other parts of our lives may be turbulent.

As always, I welcome your comments at [allen@nats.org](mailto:allen@nats.org).

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