

## From the Independent Teacher Associate Editor



Nancy Bos  
Independent Teacher  
Associate Editor  
for Inter Nos  
[nancy@studiobos.com](mailto:nancy@studiobos.com)

When I started teaching voice in a small town in New Mexico, my first students were six high-school kids taking lessons for the first time and one Christian Scientist adult who refused to discuss anything physical regarding her voice. That was more than two decades ago and I have forgotten all of their names, not to mention having lost track of them. But the people I do remember and care about from those early days are the two other voice teachers in town. The relationship between us three teachers was the key to my professional community and development. The students brought me joy, frustration and meaning, but the teachers formed the scaffolding of my early career.

Then when I moved to the Seattle area two years later, I immediately reached out to three local voice teachers.

One has passed away, but the other two are still a part of my life; we share ideas over email and enjoy seeing each other at NATS events. Once again, I have no idea what has happened in the lives of my first half-dozen Seattle-area students, but the teachers -- both those first friends and the teachers I have met since -- are the structure that I rely on for my professional life. Thinking of all the ways I interact with local voice teachers, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for my colleagues.

It is tempting for an independent voice teacher, especially a fiercely independent voice teacher like me, to keep to myself. But the benefits gained from taking the initiative to create community are too large to ignore. Here is just a partial list of the benefits I've received from stepping out.

- Student referrals -- both to me and from me
- Small-business tax advice
- Education through an organized pedagogy group
- Friendships
- Accompanist referrals
- Venue referrals
- Audition notifications
- Performance opportunities
- Substitute-teacher pool for when I was sick
- People to attend shows with
- Greater appreciation of other genres
- Understanding different teaching environments
- Rate and policy discussions
- Sounding boards for student issues
- Mentoring, both of me and by me
- Collaboration regarding teacher-hopping students
- Master class opportunities
- Technology in the studio discussions
- Sympathetic listening

Our local areas, much more than our online worlds, are small worlds where lasting relationships are built. Burning bridges with local colleagues is a mistake that can take years to repair, but not even trying to build those bridges is a sad loss of opportunity to gain all of these benefits and more.

So my challenge to you is on the table: Make a new voice teacher friend, share coffee or a book discussion, change your professional life for the better. And if you live near me, I'll buy the first cup.

With my sincere gratitude for all that NATS and my NATS colleagues have given me,

-- Nancy Bos ([www.studiobos.com](http://www.studiobos.com))

*Inter No Associate Editor, Northwest Regional Governor*