

Richard Dale Sjoerdsma

# Heritage and Heroes



Richard Dale Sjoerdsma

**L**ONG BEFORE THE ASSOCIATION'S 75TH BIRTHDAY on March 23, 2019, much thought, discussion, and preparation were directed toward ways to commemorate this remarkable milestone. I had anticipated, of course, that the *Journal of Singing* would play a significant role in the celebration, and, while excavating the NATS archives for the "Anniversary Factoids" that appeared in every issue over the past publication cycle and will continue through 2019, ideas began to surface for that eventuality. An epiphany of sorts occurred when I discovered to my considerable astonishment that the first official publication of the Association appeared in October 1944, only months after its founding. At that time, the publication's title page already identified it as the Official Organ of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, Inc., seeming to indicate a firm faith in its future. That designation continues up to now, except that there has been an organ transplant with the term "Journal."

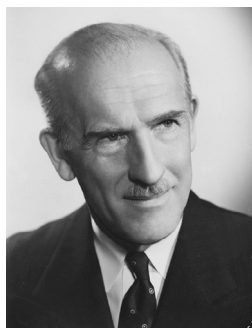
Further archival exploration, fueled with an obsession for research fostered by a PhD in musicology, led me to determine to make the September/October 2019 issue of *Journal of Singing* an anniversary issue. The decision was not made without considerable trepidation. Although years earlier I had departed from usual journal format with a *Festschrift* issue as a tribute to Richard Miller in honor of his 80th birthday,<sup>1</sup> this would be a quite different matter altogether. How does one go about creating an anniversary issue? Solicit tributes from current NATS members and noted figures in the vocal arts scene? Publish, as customary, new feature articles and have a few theme-targeted columns? Devote the entire issue to reproductions of archival material? (The latter would produce significant problems of widely divergent layout and format.) There was no prototype to offer guidance. No similar journalistic commemorations occurred in 1969 and 1994, although the 1969 NATS National Convention in Cleveland celebrated our silver anniversary, and all journal covers of the 1993-94 publication cycle featured a 50th anniversary insignia. Thus, I was plowing new ground, so to speak, an undertaking that causes anxiety in all but the most intrepid—or the most oblivious.

After having weighed the options identified above, I decided upon a mixture, but one in which all articles, columns, and reviews would draw from the past. In this issue, then, feature articles and most columns are largely vintage (archival); other departments are penned by regular contributors, but referencing and citing earlier material.

With that introduction, I invite you to join me as we go back in time to the dawn of NATS and its "official organ." Perhaps an appropriate way to invite

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you into this Anniversary Issue is to cite the inaugural editorial by first editor, Homer G. Mowe.



Homer G. Mowe

"To encourage effective cooperation among vocal teachers for their welfare and advancement" is one of the important objects of NATS. To achieve this end, communion must be established so that we may become better acquainted with each other and learn of the various interests, aims, and activities of our colleagues.

In a country as large as ours, the geographical distribution of the members imposes a serious obstacle. It is difficult for us to get together, so we must adopt other means for the present. With this in mind, your Executive Committee believed that a Bulletin would best serve our purpose. Hence this present issue.

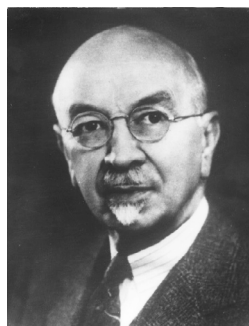
In assembling material it seemed best to focus attention on what has been happening in NATS during the first six months of its existence. The message from our President clearly states our aims and our difficulties. The reports from the Regional Governors acquaint us with District activities. The By-Laws inform our members of some of the laws under which we operate. The messages of greeting and good wishes from eminent leaders in the field of music assure us of their support and good will.

It is no simple matter to set in motion all the forces needed to make effective the life of a National Association. However, the enthusiasm with which leading teachers all over the country have greeted NATS promises well for the future. We are growing at a healthy rate. When the many details of organization have been cared for, our attention can be focused on our beloved Vocal Art. Joined together in NATS, in the spirit of good fellowship and cooperation, all things should be possible. May our new Bulletin serve, at least in some small way, to unite us in spirit and to assure each of us of the support and sympathy of his colleagues.<sup>2</sup>

I am especially moved by the spirit in which Mowe uses the word "communion" in his opening paragraph, and it is reinforced in the final sentence, which still reflects my hope for the journal today.

Also in this inaugural issue, John C. Wilcox, first NATS president, in his greeting suggests that this initial issue of *The Bulletin* "will be followed by others from time to time." His rather tentative prediction was

fulfilled by an unbroken progression of publication cycles to the present. Additionally, the issue contains a welcome to the nascent NATS by Edward Johnson, then General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera Association, Inc.



John C. Wilcox

The National Association of Teachers of Singing has come into being at an important moment in the progress of vocal art in America.

The American public has shown itself ready, nay eager, to welcome our native singers on their own merits. Today, at the Metropolitan, the majority of our artists are American-born

and American-trained. Many of them are proving that they can take rank with the finest of those from other countries.

There is a profusion of vocal talent in America. But, only through the development and maintenance of the highest standards among teachers of singing, through their adherence to the highest principles, through their mutual cooperation and interchange in the advancement of their profession can this talent be cultivated and brought to full flower. That these should be the avowed purposes of The National Association of Teachers of Singing is significant and the organization deserves the warmest welcome from every one who knows how eloquent and beautiful the human voice can be.<sup>3</sup>

Also included are messages of greeting from an impressive slate of well-wishers: leading Metropolitan Opera baritone Lawrence Tibbett; John C. Kendell, President, Music Educators National Conference; James T. Quarles, President, Music Teachers National Association; and Edwin Hughes, Executive Secretary, National Music Council.

As a somewhat irrelevant but amusing sidebar, I note here that in the first issue is a report from the California-Western District by Regional Governor Ruth Chamlee, who, as it happens, is the author for "The Independent Teacher" column in this issue. She includes material from the *Pacific Coast Musician* (September 2, 1944), "Rhyme, Rhythm and Song," by Eleanore Rogers Hageman, with a report that unfortunately has contemporary resonance.

Let us hope that the founding of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, Inc., will mark the beginning of a healthier condition in this profession. As told to me by Ruth Miller Chamlee, a director of the organization, the aim of this group is "To advance and to protect in a progressive manner, the ideals, interests and the educational and cultural ministration of the American vocal art throughout the United States." Membership is limited to those who can prove that they are qualified to teach singing. This certainly seems to be an important step in the right direction. Would that all branches of the musical profession might follow suit!

Southern California seems to be the happy hunting ground for charlatans who are turning up here with increasing regularity. I am writing specifically about the type that arrives with great fanfare (self-made) and releases publicity in which he or she claims to have held great positions with European opera houses and orchestras. I suggest that the local press ask for reasonable proof of the statements of these imposters before falling for them to the extent of printing their falsehoods!

These pseudo-artists often make such inflated statements concerning their careers that when a modest but legitimate claimant turns up, he is too often left in the obscurity of his modesty, while the aggressive bluffer gets the job and basks in the limelight. Mrs. Irish could fill the Bowl with musicians who claim to be protégés of Toscanini and the conductors who claim to have been THE CONDUCTOR of the Vienna Philharmonic. That august body would have, of necessity, been founded B.C. to have accommodated all of these claimants. New York, Boston, Philadelphia and older eastern cities seem better able to protect themselves against these imposters—let us hope that the rest of the country will succeed in weeding them out.<sup>4</sup>

Documenting the development of our publication over 75 years and various incarnations is to trace a journey from bulletin to journal. To begin the discussion, however, it is necessary to define terms. A bulletin is usually a short report on specific newsworthy items; no periodicity or regularity of publication is implied or intended. With that in mind, it is my opinion that our periodical has been inappropriately titled for many years of its existence and that "bulletin" is actually a semantic misnomer for its mission and contents. A newsletter is "a written report, issued periodically, typically by a business, institution, or other organization, that presents information and news to people with a specific

interest in the organization . . ."<sup>5</sup> Then we must make a distinction between magazine and journal. The latter is a scholarly publication issued by a learned society (a designation earned by NATS relatively early in its history) and aimed at researchers or specialists—in the case of *Journal of Singing*, voice practitioners. A magazine, on the other hand, is typically of lighter weight, with prolific use of color, photos, illustrations, and the like, often printed on glossy paper. Early in my career as editor, my production editor at Singular Thomson Learning, at that time the publisher of the journal, quite pointedly corrected my misuse of "magazine" as applied to the *Journal of Singing*, a lesson that I have not forgotten.

As our journalistic history began, the publication was essentially a newsletter, consisting of four pages, and, as we already have seen, containing a welcome from NATS President Wilcox, an editorial by Mowe, and messages of greeting from various notables. Additionally, one finds a list of NATS officers, regional governors, and representatives at large, reports from six of the seven districts, and the NATS Bylaws. This general format was expanded to 12 pages with *The Bulletin* V, no. 2 (November/December 1948), which also included ads, and, interestingly, an index to the previous volumes.

While under the editorship of Leon Carson, *The Bulletin* VII, no. 1 (September/October 1951) achieved 25 pages in length, and included a discrete cover (although the initial appearance of a cover occurred in the previous issue, *The Bulletin* VI, no. 5 [April/May 1951]). It should be noted that the periodical retained a newsletter character through its various name changes—*The Bulletin* (1944–1962), *The NATS Bulletin* (1962–1985), *The NATS Journal* (1985–1995).<sup>6</sup> That format diminished somewhat with the September 1969 appearance of *Inter Nos*, which remains the Association's newsletter, although as late as *The NATS Journal* 47, no. 1 (September/October 1990), one still finds vestiges of newsletter format, in this case a report on the national convention.

Mirroring the growth of NATS itself, the publication also grew in size and influence in succeeding years, with an increase of feature articles, columns, reviews, and, of course, advertising. The first issue for which I was fully responsible as editor, *Journal of Singing* 57, no. 5 (May/June 2001), was 72 pages long. Today the journal averages 130–140 pages, and further expansion seems unlikely.

It was fascinating to learn that as early as *The Bulletin* II, no. 3 (March/April 1946), one finds two associate editors identified, a circumstance that continued until September 2002, when I revamped the organizational structure of the *Journal of Singing*. Currently, we employ the unremunerated services of seven individuals. A particularly large advance took place in the fall of 1956, when, under long-term editor Harvey Ringel, NATS President E. Clifford Toren “introduced the concept of an Editorial Board in order to relieve him [Ringel] of the sole responsibility in the choice of articles.”<sup>7</sup> Although not specifically confirmed in the sources, it may be assumed that at that point our publication became a peer reviewed periodical.

In the preparation for this Anniversary Issue, one of my major decisions concerned the choice of feature articles from the past. The opening article by Leon Carson on native song, as I indicate in my Editor’s Note that accompanies the piece, poses some challenges in terms of race and gender sensitivity; yet, as the first published feature, it has important historical interest. The other two feature articles are authored by giants from our past, the venerable William Vennard and the legendary Richard Miller, along with Dutch researchers Janwillem van den Berg and Harm Kornelis Schutte. These contributions illustrate not only early work in voice science (an early use of “formants”), but also NATS’s expanding influence and activity in the international voice community. I hope that Van Lawrence and Victor Fields, formidable figures in the history of the Association and *Journal of Singing*, along with others cited in our several columns, will be familiar names among the NATS constituency.

Other critical journalistic decisions concerned usage, format, bibliographic format, punctuation, and a number of other issues that impact the integrity of *Journal of Singing* style. I must admit a need to exercise editorial restraint in publishing items as they originally appeared with only occasional minor adjustments. I tried to retain the flavor of the original, even in cases where, for example, the author was egregiously comma averse, editing only when deemed necessary for clarity and/or to avoid jarring inconsistencies.

This admittedly has been a huge undertaking, consuming a great deal of time and energy. It has also been fun, insofar as a recovering Dutch Calvinist can experience “fun” and not consider it a synonym for “sin.”

The effort has certainly enriched my life and altered my thinking. First, I am particularly in awe of the first editor’s initiative for creating and shepherding a fledgling newsletter toward a viable publication, and the wisdom, foresight, and courage of the founders, including the first president, in launching us on the road to the robust organization we have become today. Second, each of the editors over the years has stamped the periodical with his or her personality and has brought the publication to new levels of excellence. Third, I am now more fully cognizant of the shoulders on which I stand. The dedication, talent, professionalism, commitment to responsibility, and love for the art, Association, and publication, inspire me to honor them by striving to continue in their tradition.

I am deeply grateful to my regular contributors and their cooperation in searching archival material appropriate to their respective columns, and especially to my graphic artist, Laura Carter, for her creative suggestions along the way and for her beautiful work and that of her staff in the design and layout of this issue.

And, finally, dear reader, my profound thanks to you for your continued support—and for reading by far the longest “Editor’s Commentary” in my 18 years in this position. I hope you will treasure this Anniversary Issue as a historical document of our glorious past.

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## ERRATUM:

In Nils Neubert’s article, “Reading and Listening Between the Lines: Ideas on Singing the Short and Open Vowels [I], [U], and [Y], and the Long and Closed Vowels [e:], [o:], and [ø:] in German,” in the May/June 2019 edition of the “Language and Diction” column, a few grammatical anomalies occur. On page 569, column 2, line 15, the passage should read as follows:

Once a phonetic framework has been established and internalized, however, a singer’s aural and kinesthetic awareness (not to mention musical, emotional, spiritual, and artistic connections with the words) remains the primary arbiter of diction. Supported by discerning outside ears and sufficient experience, it ensures that the singer sings the language, rather than being sung by it, or its IPA, for that matter.

The editor deeply regrets the error, for which he accepts full responsibility.

## NOTES

1. See *Journal of Singing* 63, no. 3 (January/February 2007): *passim*.
2. Homer G. Mowe, "The First Bulletin," *The Bulletin* I, no. 1 (October 1944): 2.
3. Edward Johnson, "A Welcome to the National Association of Teachers of Singing, Inc.," *The Bulletin* I, no. 1 (October 1944): 1.
4. *The Bulletin* I, no 1 (October 1944): 3.
5. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/newsletter> (accessed June 7, 2019).
6. The reader will correctly infer that the current title, *Journal of Singing*, has the longest tenure.
7. Wei-Khuan Chia, "A Content Analysis of Articles on Vocal Pedagogy in the Magazine of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, 1944–1992" (Doctoral Thesis, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, 1993), 18. This study joins Harvey Ringel's *History of the National Association of Teachers of Singing* (Jacksonville: N. A. T. S., 1990), and John Burgin's *Teaching Singing* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1973), as studies desperately in need of updating.

**Richard Dale Sjoerdsma** received his AB degree from Calvin College, an MM in voice from the University of South Dakota, and a PhD in musicology from The Ohio State University. His research and dissertation on the music of Franz Christoph Neubauer (1760–95) have rendered him an authority on this composer, resulting in contributions to *The New Grove Dictionary*

of *Music and Musicians* and *The Grove Dictionary of Opera*. Additionally, he has written articles for *The NATS Journal*, penned reviews for *NOTES* and *The Piano Quarterly*, and has authored a book on Neubauer published by A-R Editions.

In 2007 he retired from a 39-year career at Carthage College, Kenosha, WI, where he taught studio voice, opera, vocal literature and diction, voice pedagogy, and directed opera productions. During that time, he served almost three decades as Chair of the Department of Music and eight years as Chair of the Fine Arts Division. Dr. Sjoerdsma, a tenor, also has performed widely in opera, oratorio, concert, and recital, both in the US and in Western Europe. A veteran of 22 European solo concert tours, he has performed principally in Germany, but also in Sweden, Hungary, Austria, and France. Additionally, he has appeared frequently as guest clinician and adjudicator, has conducted symphony orchestras, and has led a number of voice master classes.

After having managed the "Bookshelf" column since 1972, a responsibility assumed under editor Harvey Ringel, Sjoerdsma was appointed Editor in Chief of *Journal of Singing* in 2001, a post that occupies a significant part of his retirement. He has been a member of NATS since 1971, and was invited into membership of the prestigious American Academy of Teachers of Singing (AATS) in 2002. Further honors accrued as Carthage College dedicated his former voice studio and established a scholarship in his name.

A multifaceted career as scholar, pedagogue, performer, and editor was instrumental in Sjoerdsma being honored by the OSU School of Music 2017 Distinguished Alumni Award. Further honors accrued as Carthage College dedicated his former voice studio and established an endowed scholarship in his name.

## PUBLICATION DEADLINES

**Vol. 76 No. 1**  
**Sept/Oct 2019**

**Vol. 76 No. 2**  
**Nov/Dec 2019**

**Vol. 76 No. 3**  
**Jan/Feb 2020**

**Vol. 76 No. 4**  
**Mar/Apr 2020**

**Vol. 76 No. 5**  
**May/June 2020**

*Article manuscripts should be submitted directly to the Editor-in-Chief. All manuscripts are evaluated by the Editorial Board. Decision to publish rests with the Editor-in-Chief. The deadlines published here refer to articles that have already been accepted for publication.*

### Features and Reviews by Continuing Contributors

1 May 2019	1 July 2019	1 Sep 2019	1 Nov 2019	1 Jan 2020
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### Submission of Advertisements

24 Jun 2019	22 Aug 2019	24 Oct 2019	20 Dec 2020	21 Feb 2020
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### Issue to be placed in mail approximately

22 Aug 2019	22 Oct 2019	26 Dec 2019	21 Feb 2020	21 April 2020
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### Issue to be received by subscribers approximately

5 Sept 2019	4 Nov 2019	9 Jan 2020	5 Mar 2020	7 May 2020
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*(Dates of delivery may vary depending upon local office policies.)*