

Richard Dale Sjoerdsma

Plus ça change . . .

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Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rest in ease.

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

. . . *MOINS C'EST LA MÊME CHOSE*. While perverting the original meaning, this version of a familiar aphorism may be closer to the truth.¹

With the launching of my first publication cycle as Editor in Chief, I began my first edition of “Editor’s Commentary” with the words, “Change is the only constant,”² citing a well worn bromide that has informed at least two subsequent editions of this column.³ Intended or unintended, change is difficult. Big changes are even more difficult. Big changes that challenge an aging brain sometimes can border on insurmountable. A number of changes that significantly affect the *Journal of Singing* are afoot—and in some instances are already under foot—that, as it happens, require an elderly *canis lupus familiaris* to learn new tricks.

So several recent developments render it necessary once again to broach the topic. My latest assault on the subject of change will address the matter in three areas: publication, language, and personnel.

PUBLICATION

For the past twenty years of my editorship, the workflow for the submission, processing, and publication of materials for feature articles and continuing columns has remained essentially the same. Authors submit manuscripts to me, and, in the case of feature articles, I forward them to my Editorial Board for peer review. If accepted for publication, these articles may remain in queue awaiting print for as long as 18–24 months. That delay is not only unfair to authors, some of whom may rely on publication for academic promotion and tenure consideration, but also problematic for time sensitive articles that could lose relevance and utility in the interim. The pandemic and the need expeditiously to address its challenges to our profession brought the latter consideration into especially stark relief.

At my *Journal of Singing* business meeting held via Zoom during the 2020 NATS (virtual) National Conference, I appointed an *ad hoc* committee charged to examine the problem and to consider various options for improvement. The group—John Nix (chair), Lynn Holding, Lynn Maxfield, Don Simonson, Dick Sjoerdsma (*ex officio*), and Laura Carter (*ex officio*)—attacked the task with thoroughgoing enthusiasm, laboriously investigating and evaluating several alternatives, and developing a stellar proposal with recommendations for change. That proposal was unanimously adopted by the NATS Board at its annual meeting in Jacksonville, June 16–19.

First, we have developed a relationship with Clarivate, makers of ScholarOne Manuscripts™, a web-based workflow and manuscript management system for scholarly journals and other publications. In an effort to avoid taxing the reader with excruciating detail, I submit simply that ScholarOne renders the manuscript submission process much more efficient, eliminates confusion, and saves editors and authors time through innovative capabilities, including AI powered metadata extractions and submission filtering. Concomitantly, however, the new process necessitates altered guidelines for contributors, whose submissions now must include an abstract and keywords in addition to an author bio, head shot, and all illustrations/music examples in high resolution format.

Second, through membership in an agency known as CrossRef, all materials published in *Journal of Singing* will be assigned a DOI (digital object identifier), a citation method that more accurately identifies specific works, and more reliably links them to their authors. DOIs will increase the reach and impact of the journal, and bring it in line with other scholarly periodicals.

Third, the *Journal of Singing* will adopt a practice of advance online publication (also known as “preprint”), as selected articles are placed on an accelerated track and posted online before being assigned to a particular print issue. Our inaugural preprint publication is already online with an important article by David Meyer, John Nix, et al., “Reentry Following COVID-19: Concerns for Singers” (<https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/45928>).

Beginning with the current issue (*JOS* 78, no. 1 [September/October 2021]), every new issue will be available to subscribers in a full text, reflowable online format that can be read on any device—smart phone, tablet, computer. This new digital edition (<https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/817>) is hosted by Project MUSE on the Johns Hopkins campus. According to their mission statement, Project MUSE “promotes the creation and dissemination of essential humanities and social science resources through collaboration with libraries, publishers, and scholars worldwide. Forged from partnership between a university press and a library, Project MUSE is a trusted part of the academic and scholarly community it serves.”

All these new initiatives aim to make our periodical more accessible to the wider scholastic community, to streamline and modernize journal editorial and production procedures, and to economize the publication cycle,

especially for time sensitive materials. The *Journal of Singing* occupies a position of prestige within the international voice community as the premier peer reviewed publication dedicated exclusively to the act and art of singing and teaching singing. However, in order to maintain and advance that standing, the journal needs to adopt and adapt to practices of the scholarly publishing community.

It is an exciting time for NATS and the *Journal of Singing*, and I look forward to meeting the challenges as they arrive.

LANGUAGE

Regular readers of this column, along with contributors to this journal—and to both constituencies I offer my continuing deep gratitude—will have come to recognize my love for words, as well as my persnickiness for clear, correct language. In an earlier “Editor’s Commentary,” I shared my concerns with *-al*, *-ic*, and *-ical* usage, maintaining that only seldom does the appendage *-al* add meaning to an *-ic* ending.⁴ That consideration partially informed my insistence on the term “music theater,” but it was also buttressed by a conceptual one that views “music theater” as a discrete genre, a unit, as opposed to “musical theater,” which suggests to me that the principal genre is theater, with music incidental.

Music acoustics, music appreciation, music education, music literature, music profession, music professor, music theory, music therapy—how did *musical theatre*, especially with that odd spelling, creep in, and once in, become so firmly ensconced? I heartily appreciate that for several years the Association has indulged my semantic preference; however, the apparent ubiquity of “musical theatre” among practitioners of the art and in its literature, resulted in a recent reckoning and subsequently an executive decision to revert to using “musical theatre” in its in-house advertising and promotion as the more accepted term. Thus, in order to avoid inconsistency between journal and association, I will accommodate individual author preference in this publication, accepting “musical theatre,” “musical theater,” and “music theater,” with the latter as my continued preference as the most correct usage.

PERSONNEL

It is with much regret that I announce the resignation of Scott McCoy as Associate Editor for the “Voice

Pedagogy” column. When Richard Miller retired from the position in 2007, I thought immediately of Scott to succeed Richard and was delighted that he agreed to assume those responsibilities. With his vast knowledge of vocal anatomy, physiology, and science, wise pedagogic insights, and pithy prose, Scott surpassingly filled those substantial shoes vacated by Richard. While saddened at his departure, I am profoundly grateful for his substantial contributions to NATS and the *Journal of Singing*, as well as his valued personal friendship and support.

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With the reader’s kind indulgence, I want to add one more “change” to the menu, namely, that we—particularly those fully vaccinated—once again are able to conduct much of our lives *senza maschera*! What joy to see, study, and respond to faces! Among myriad changes in human behavior wrought by and lessons learned through the pandemic, I hope never again to take for granted the importance of facial expression. We emanate inner emotions through facial expression, and human beings have the capacity not only to detect but also to mirror other’s emotions.⁵ This makes empathy possible. May we all have grown exponentially in this quality.

Life is its own journey, presupposes its own change and movement, and one tries to arrest them at one’s eternal peril.

—Laurens Van der Post

NOTES

1. With apologies to the author of the original, Alphonse Karr (1808–1890), whose original is recorded as, *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*. My version, translated, is: “The more things change, the *less* they are the same.
2. Richard Dale Sjoerdsma, “Editor’s Commentary,” *Journal of Singing* 58, no. 1 (September/October 2001): 3.
3. Richard Dale Sjoerdsma, “Editor’s Commentary,” *Journal of Singing* 63, no. 1 (September/October 2006): 3–4; Richard Dale Sjoerdsma, “Change,” *Journal of Singing* 69, no. 3 (January/February 2013): 261–262.
4. Richard Dale Sjoerdsma, “-al, -ic, -ical,” *Journal of Singing* 64, no. 3 (January/February 2008): 269–271.
5. Doug Newton, *Fresh Eyes on Famous Bible Sayings* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2018), 90.

Richard Dale Sjoerdsma received his AB degree from Calvin College, MM in voice from the University of South Dakota, and 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.

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.

Errata

In the “Recent Research in Singing” column from the March/April 2021 issue of the journal, the entry for Craig Price’s dissertation identifies the University of Southern California as the degree granting institution, when, in fact, it is the University of South Carolina.

Additionally, in the “Bookshelf” review in the May/June 2021 issue for *Madeleine Dring: Lady Composer*, the authors were listed incorrectly in the print edition. Brister is on faculty at Florida State University and Rosenblatt is on faculty at the University of Arizona.

The editor regrets the inadvertent errors.