

Ade!

Richard Dale Sjoerdsma



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Reader, “Adieu!”—I will not say “farewell!”
That word, full-fraught with sorrow as a knell,
Breathes forth a strain of sadness to mine ear,
And is too often mother to a tear!

“Adieu!” speaks hopeful that we yet may meet
And with each other hold communion sweet.
If aught that I have said doth give thee cheer
I’ve made a friend of thee—and friends are dear!
In this stern world of ours each friend we gain
Makes life more sweet, and helps to soothe life’s pain!

Remember, then, dear friend, before we part,
These simple strains are from a glowing heart
That seeks to find an echo to its voice
In heart of thine—and, finding that, rejoice!

“Adieu!,” John Imrie (1846–1902)

THE DAY FINALLY HAS ARRIVED—not one that I’ve dreaded, actually, but one that I have long anticipated, admittedly with some apprehension. It is, of course, the day that I put pen to paper to draft my final edition of “Editor’s Commentary.” I’ve never handled goodbyes well, and this is proving to be no exception.

During the months leading up to now, I gradually became aware of an accumulating list of lasts: the last business luncheon with my editorial board (NATS Chicago Conference, June 2022); my last deadline for contributors (January 1); the last batch of submitted manuscripts sent for peer review to the editorial board, now a new process and responsibility of my successor; the last letters of acknowledgement to prospective authors who had submitted articles for consideration, and last letters of status to those whose submissions had completed the peer review process; my last edited manuscript of an issue of the journal. Last rounds of proofs, which will entail a final scouring of my shelves for poetic filler for unwanted “white space” in the copy, and two more deadlines are still to come, as is my last NATS Board report. The annual board meeting in June will close this chapter of my career.

To experience this litany of lasts has an emotional impact, to be sure, and I confess to a degree of separation anxiety. When I retired from my academic career at Carthage College in 2007, I already had been editor of the *Journal of Singing* for six years, and it became a matter of shifting focus to expanding activities and responsibilities in that position. So the word “retirement” was not an apt descriptor for my life at that time. Now, however, stepping aside

from the editorship will be a different adjustment, also of identity.

But it's time. When I assumed the editorship, Richard Miller—friend, journalistic mentor, and strong advocate for my candidacy for the position—gave me a wooden printer's die block for the cover of *The Bulletin*, until 1962 the name of our publication, with title and the former NATS seal (Figure 1). That treasured historical relic remains prominently displayed on my desk. I remember that Richard would regale me with stories of his term as editor of our periodical (1980–87), for example, how he and wife Mary would have pages of the journal strewn over their living room floor, where they would labor over assembling all materials, including advertising, into page layout. That picture of past publication practice has become sepia tinted, due to a staff of competent professionals with whom it has been a privilege to work. Change is the only constant, however, and as we move into a new world of electronic submission, processing, and publication of articles, an editor who still prefers to edit and proof hard copy, and his thoughts to travel from brain through arm, hand, and pen to paper, experiences a narrowing comfort zone that suggests, without regret, a passing of the proverbial baton.

Upon retrospection, I am astounded to realize that my 22 year editorship has occupied one-third of my professional career. As memory dims, I sometimes wonder whether I brought the same passion to my teaching and performing as that with which I approach my editorship responsibilities. In those years I have found joy, and I count these among my most significant decades, immeasurably enriched with experiences, learning, and memories. Please allow me to review only a few of the many highlights.

- Collaborating with JOS Production Manager Laura Carter to redesign the periodical, both in appearance and content (debuted September/October 2006).
- Assembling a *Festschrift* issue in honor of Richard Miller on the occasion of his 80th birthday (January/February 2007).
- Excavating archival material and working with colleagues to publish a NATS 75th Anniversary issue (September/October 2019).
- Centering annual March/April issues of the journal on World Voice Day themes.



Figure 1. Wooden printer's die block for the cover of *The Bulletin*.

- Receiving the NATS Lifetime Achievement Award, along with recognitions from my Editorial Board, at the Chicago National Conference (June 2022).

Appropriate words and sufficient space are not adequate to express my gratitude to those who have occupied significant room in my personal and professional life during my editorship. I have been privileged to work under twelve NATS presidents and three executive directors, and I am deeply indebted to all for their friendship, encouragement, and support. Endless thanks to my regular contributors past and present, some of whom have been with me for the duration of my tenure; I have delighted in the consistently excellent columns, often exulting in a particularly elegant sentence and/or felicitous word choice. Most contributors will continue under new leadership, but I want to acknowledge some departures—Robert Edwin, Ingo Titze, Leslie Holmes, Margo Garrett, Leslie De'Ath, Heidi Moss Erickson—with deep gratitude for their distinctive, valued contributions to the journal. Thanks, too, to the many authors who have penned interesting, informative, innovative, occasionally controversial feature articles that have helped to elevate our periodical to a position of prestige among academic journals. Laura Carter has been my guiding light over the years. Her expertise in graphic design, publication, and production has been of pivotal importance to me as editor and to the journal, as has her advice on many levels, and she continues as valued friend and colleague. A huge debt of gratitude also is due NATS Executive Director Allen Henderson for his unwavering support, encouragement, and friendship. And I express thanks to my wife Mary for her longsuffering patience and understanding of my editorial agonies and ecstasies, but also for her sometimes uncomfortably forthright critiques of my writing.

As we look forward, I have only one major concern—without an airing of which a typical “Editor’s Commentary” would not be complete. In an expanding culture of e-books, e-mags, and e-publications of all kinds, I fervently hope that the *JOS* will continue print publication. Much is lost as we tend to devalue the matter of shelf life of important materials. For example, I often go to my own library shelves to search for a particular book, and notice others along the way, pick them up, renew acquaintance, relive experiences, options not possible with e-books. Similarly, while seeking a particular issue of the journal, I am prone to select another in the same volume, perhaps to see what books were reviewed that year, what pedagogic matters were *de rigueur*, and the like. We have enough going on in our lives, distractions, stuff cramming our consciousness, that tend to stifle curiosity. Curiosity is necessary for intellectual and spiritual wholeness of existence, and vital to the act and art of singing.

In our telephone conversations, even those close to his death, Richard Miller often would exclaim, “The best is yet to come.” That is my confident vision for the future. The journal will be in excellent hands with incoming Editor in Chief Lynn Holding, in whose competence, expertise, professionalism, and preparation I have utmost confidence. Different paths may be trod, and that is both exciting and as it should be.

I have intentionally omitted a thank-you from a previous paragraph for inclusion here, and that is to you, dear reader. First, I beg your indulgence for an essay with ubiquitous use of the first person singular, seemingly inevitable in a valedictory. Then, I thank you for reading the journal, and also for tolerating a number of my journalistic preferences and idiosyncracies; insisting upon the Oxford comma, eschewing hyphens, preferring *-ic* to *-ical*, among others, come to mind. Finally, thank you for allowing me the privilege to serve. I have felt your love, kindness, warmth, and support over the years. John Imrie’s “glowing heart” mentioned in the opening poem is assuredly also mine.

Throughout my career as a performer, I have studied and sung a great deal of the music of Franz Schubert. So it’s appropriate, I think, to close with lines from Müller’s poem, “Die böse Farbe,” immortalized in Schubert’s cycle, *Die schöne Müllerin*.

Ade, ade! und reiche mir
Zum Abschied deine Hand!

[Adieu, adieu! and give me
In parting your hand!]

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 has occupied a significant part of his retirement and has been his passion for more than two decades. He plans to step aside as Editor in Chief at the end of the current publication cycle. 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. To honor Dick’s service to the Association and the *Journal of Singing*, the NATS Board, at its June 2022 annual meeting, took the unprecedented action of conferring on him the title of Editor Emeritus, dedicated a board room at the National Office in his name, and, at the 2022 Chicago National Conference, he was awarded the coveted NATS Lifetime Achievement Award.

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.

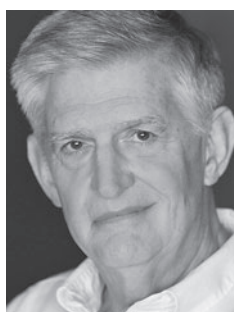
ERRATUM: In the “NATS Visits AATS” column of the first issue of this cycle, “The Singing Voice Specialist: An Overview of the History, Training Protocols, Career Opportunities, and General Considerations” (*Journal of Singing* 79, no. 1 [September/October 2022]: 9–11), the citation for Dr. Rebecca Loar’s dissertation research is erroneously attributed. It was completed at the University of South Carolina, not the University of Southern California. The editor regrets the error.



The Journal of Singing Salutes with Deep Gratitude
Its Retiring Contributors



LESLIE DE'ATH
Language and Diction
2002–2023



ROBERT EDWIN
Singing A Cappella to Zydeco
(formerly *The Bach to Rock*
Connection and Popular Song and
Music Theater)
1985–2023



HEIDI MOSS ERICKSON
Minding the Gap
2022–2023



MARGO GARRETT
Collab Corner
2015–2023



LESLIE HOLMES
The Vocal Point
2000–2023



INGO TITZE
Voice Research and Technology
(formerly *Voice Research*)
1981–2023

Celebrating Richard “Dick” Sjoerdsma



In the photo above, Dick proudly displays his NATS Lifetime Achievement Award with NATS Executive Director Allen Henderson at the 2022 gala banquet in Chicago. Scan this QR code to watch the video slideshow that played during the award ceremony and to hear audio recordings of the man himself in song.



Above: Dick and wife Mary visit long-time printer Modern Litho in Jefferson City, Missouri.

Dick, I'll step out from behind the curtain to tell you how much I've enjoyed working with you as your right hand woman and production partner since the Sept./Oct. 2002 issue. It's been a great pleasure and privilege. Your friends at Carter Publishing Studio wish you all the best! — Laura C.

On behalf of the NATS Board of Directors, the *Journal of Singing* editorial board and contributors, the NATS membership, executive staff, and many others who share the love of song, we extend our collective salute to Richard “Dick” Sjoerdsma for a job well done after 22 years of service as Editor in Chief for the *Journal of Singing*.

After his investment of countless hours reading, writing, and editing; the curation of inspiring content; and his steadfast stewardship; we are filled with gratitude for his dedication to the role, the journal, and the association at large.

It is fitting that Dick will hold the title of Editor-in-Chief Emeritus, and that his name will grace the NATS executive office board room in recognition of his many achievements. His exemplary efforts have made an indelible impression in the voice community, and, likewise, on all of our hearts.

Thank you for everything, Dick. Cheers!



Top: Dick and Mary in their beautiful Kenosha, Wisconsin yard in 2006. Bottom: Dick conducts his German male choir at their award-winning performance in 2018.