THE GENESIS OF WHAT IS TODAY NATSAA BEGAN IN 1955 with the first NATS Singer of the Year (SOTY) Competition. Repertoire for the first competition included an opera aria, oratorio aria, song cycle, and two full recital programs. The first winner, Richard Rivers received $500 plus auditions with the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Chicago Lyric Opera, and concert engagements. Throughout its history the purpose of this competition has been to select, through a series of elimination rounds on the district, regional, and national levels, singers whose tenure indicates that they are ready for a professional career and to encourage them towards that goal with a cash prize and the opportunity for performance engagements. By 1968 it had become apparent that the number of accomplishments of the contestants had reached the level that recognition of more than one winner was appropriate. Accordingly, the name of the competition was changed to the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist Awards. For sixteen years two or three prizes were awarded.

A significant trend was established in 1984 with the endorsement of the Mary Wolfman Award. Since that year additional prizes have been endowed through the NATS Foundation so that since 1989 all semifinalists have received an award. The American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz offered a scholarship to the first place winner for many years.

Today, thanks to the generous support of NATS and the NATS Foundation, a total of over $40,000 in prizes are awarded. The winner receives a significant cash award and a New York Solo Recital Debut in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall due to the generosity of MidAmerica Productions.

NATSAA Award Winners

1955 Richard Rivers
1956 Alice Riley
1957 Beth Ann Hood
1958 Calvin Dash
1959 Barbara Faulkner
1960 Ray Griffler
1961 Teresa Ormanates
1962 Robert Hale
1963 Sylvia Friedrich
1964 no award
1965 Richard Allen
1966 Marilyn Burns
1967 Linda Matonack
1968 Rose Wild
1969 Kathleen Mott
1970 William Parker
1971 Paul Benefield
1972 Linda Zoghby
1973 Margaret Eaves
1974 Gymhia Karnstadt
1975 Peggy Pruett
1978 Jo Ann Pickens
1980 Jonathan Mack
1981 Andrea Matthews
1983 Karen Smith
1984 Wendy Hillhouse
1986 Debra Kay Fitzgibbon
1987 Bonita Hyman
1989 Lauren Wagner
1990 Stephen Monece
1992 Loretta Grattis
1993 Elizabeth Smith
1995 Norah Annell
1996 Lyndi Keith McKnight
1998 Debra Wilkie
2000 Vanessa Sahar
2002 Karin Gaggenmos
2004 Marcia Porter
2006 Danielle Talamantes