

Norman Spivey

NATS National Offerings—How You Can “Get with the Program”

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PREVIOUSLY I WROTE ABOUT the excellent, creative work going on at the chapter level in NATS, and now I'd like to highlight a number of our exceptional national programs. Diverse offerings have something to offer the entire membership—whether you are a developing teacher, an experienced pedagogue, or a student of singing.

Our **National Conferences** are held every two years and attract registrants and presenters from around the world. As the more than 950 people assembled at the recent Boston conference can attest, the schedule overflows with plenary and breakout sessions, exhibits, poster papers, competitions, performances, and social gatherings—all of which celebrate the art of singing, while being educational and inspiring. The conferences continue to expand in breadth and scope, and among recent new features are two additional singing competitions—the National Music Theater Competition and the annual National Student Auditions. Our next conference will be in Chicago, July 8–12, 2016.

NATS National Workshops have long been dynamic continuing education events. Workshop programs gather around a central theme and offer in-depth exploration of the topic. Having organized and attended workshops, I can attest that these can be very vibrant affairs. Let me also remind you that the Vice President for Workshops is your elected officer, so don't be shy about sharing your ideas for future programming. The next workshop, which includes the finals of our National Student Auditions, will be held at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, July 7–10, 2015.

With the planning of conferences and workshops we are always mindful about varying the location, so that members periodically have closer access to events. No matter where they are held, however, these are ideal opportunities to expand your understanding of our art and to interact with teachers from throughout the Association. In addition, the **NATS Live Learning Center**, an electronic archive of videos from recent workshop and conference sessions, has recently launched. Be sure to visit it on the NATS website and return often as it grows.

The **International Congress of Voice Teachers** is a worldwide gathering of voice teachers, very much like NATS National Conferences, but global in scope. These meetings have far-reaching impact, and I continue to hear inspiring accolades from the 2013 meeting in Brisbane. ICVT is held every four years in one of the member countries. The next meeting will be in Stockholm, Sweden, August 2–6, 2017.

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Perhaps a region and chapter resource more than a program, the **Discretionary Fund** is an important source of support, made available from national dues, to help facilitate special projects that might otherwise not be able to be offered. While the fund is not intended to be a primary source of support, and matching funds are typically required, the monies assist chapters and regions in sponsoring master classes, lectures, recitals, workshops, and other activities that enrich the professional life of students and teachers.

Many people find the **NATS Intern Program** among the best things that NATS does. Generously supported by NATS and the NATS Foundation, the Intern Program is an exciting and innovative venture that pairs experienced and recognized master teachers with talented young members who have been teaching for no more than five years. The program combines a focus on supervised teaching with master classes, lectures, and demonstrations. Its format is intended to foster and promote the dynamic exchange of ideas and techniques, with the goal of substantially improving the studio teaching skills of these promising teachers.

The **Emerging Leaders Award** is designed to mentor leadership by recognizing and supporting teachers with fewer than ten years of teaching experience who have been active in chapter and regional activities. The award helps those selected with expenses to attend a national conference. It is offered on a rotation, with recipients selected from half of the regions for one conference, and from the other half for the following conference.

The **Independent Teacher Fellowships** recognize and support teachers who do not hold academic teaching positions. These grants cover registration fees to attend a national conference and provide a wonderful means for independent teachers to get a first experience with a conference. Those who have attended conferences already know that the worth far exceeds the cost, and these fellowships help those who may have no other funding resources.

The **Van Lawrence Fellowship** is an award jointly administered by The Voice Foundation and the NATS Foundation. Created to honor Lawrence's outstanding contributions in fostering interdisciplinary education

among physicians, voice scientists, speech-language pathologists, singing teachers, and performers, this fellowship is of interest to members who are active teachers, have demonstrated excellence in the studio, and have shown interest in and knowledge of voice science. The award provides an opportunity to become more thoroughly acquainted with the practices, techniques, technology, and people involved in laryngology and voice science. It is hoped that the award will enhance the teacher's ability to do meaningful interdisciplinary research and encourage application of appropriate voice science advances in the studio.

The **Voice Pedagogy Award**, made available through the NATS Foundation, supports a recipient in the study of voice pedagogy and/or voice science at a seminar or workshop.

Another recent resource is **Vocapedia**, a dynamic new information database linked from our website. It is a remarkable outgrowth of the work of the Voice Science Advisory Committee, and, because it is openly available to the public, it has the potential to change how information about singing and the science of voice is shared with the teaching community around the world.

Of course, there are other programs that are national in scope, many of which are generously supported by your national dues, regional funding allotments, the NATS Foundation, or through some combination. These include **Student Auditions** and **Student NATS (SNATS)**, the **NATS Artist Awards**, the **Art Song Composition Award**, our **National Music Theater Competition**, and the **National Student Auditions**.

Having participated in some capacity in almost all of these activities, I can speak to their worth and importance. Which ones might be best suited to you and your students? I hope you will consider supporting our programs with your participation and your gifts. For more information, including eligibility, applications, and lists of recipients, visit the NATS webpage.

In the next column I'd like to make you aware of the partnership between NATS and the NATS Foundation—and through your support, how you can help shape the future of our offerings.