

Norman Spivey

We Are Stronger Together

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AS I MENTIONED IN THE LAST COLUMN, my involvement with NATS began as an undergraduate student going to annual chapter and regional auditions (where I typically came in *second*—always a groomsman, never a groom). While I didn't understand much about the Association at the time, what I was able to perceive was that there was a larger community beyond my studio and university. And even though I might have noticed some rolling eyes and heated interchanges between my teacher and NATS colleagues, it was clear that there was more to be gained by going to these events than by staying home. We were “stronger together,” so my teacher would register us and off we'd go.

It is very much like this today when I bring my own students to NATS events. Of course, it would be simpler not to spend the time and energy going to these events, and it would be more lucrative to stay home and teach. But reconnecting and networking with colleagues, being buoyed and challenged by written feedback, learning from presentations, hearing wonderful singing, becoming acquainted with new repertoire, seeing the growth in students—these are among the important reasons we go.

This doesn't mean that we all get along all of the time. In fact, I have heard that some members no longer participate in certain NATS activities because of difficult personalities or long-standing philosophic roadblocks. But staying away rarely becomes a helpful solution. One typically has to be present to be part of a process and to help bring about meaningful change. Enduring challenging personalities is likely a universal experience in any organization. It is often in the differing of viewpoints, however, where we find growth and understanding. Continue to examine why you believe the things you do about our art, and keep exploring how to articulate them more clearly. Stay involved, seek out opportunities, be the catalyst of change you'd like to see—remember: “we are stronger together.”

Last time I spoke about past NATS leaders and the important role their mentoring played in my development. I'm grateful not only for the individual kindness they showed to me, but also for the larger model it presents. Leadership so often needs to be nurtured and developed. Who are potential leaders in your community, in your chapter or region?

I'll continue in the next column with some specific examples of success in service throughout our Association, but in the meantime, let me challenge you to consider how *you* might be of service to NATS.

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