



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
**TEACHERS  
OF SINGING**  
— ★ ★ ★ —  
Mid-Atlantic Region

**Jill Terhaar Lewis, Mid-Atlantic Region Governor**

## January 2023

Happy New Year! May 2023 be an excellent year for you and yours! It is already shaping up to be an exciting new year for the Mid-Atlantic Region of NATS.

### **Region Governor-Elect**

For the first time in the history of our region, the position of Region Governor-Elect has been created to help with the transition to the new governor by the July 1 deadline. Please welcome Dr. Serena Hill LaRoche who has been elected to this position. Serena will be working closely with the current Region Governor, Dr. Jill Terhaar Lewis, as well as with the Region board in this new position.



*Jill Terhaar Lewis, Mid-Atlantic Region Governor (provided)*

"Serena is well-suited for this job," says Lewis. "She has vision and the organization skills to help the Mid-Atlantic Region through the growth it has been experiencing. I am so happy to leave this organization in such capable hands!"

Serena has served in several offices within the NATS organization and spearheaded the move to bring Summer Program Auditions to Mid-Atlantic Region students first, and then nationally through NATS. She is also completing her term as President of the South Carolina chapter. Thank you to Serena for stepping up to this new job!

**Serena Hill LaRoche, DMA**, is an active concert artist having recently been featured in works such as Samuel Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Herbert Howells's *Hymnus Paradisi*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, Handel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *Creation and Seasons*, Brahms's *Requiem*, Charpentier's *Te Deum*, Vaughan William's *Dona Nobis Pacem* and Handel's *Samson*. Dr. LaRoche is an

active recitalist with regular performances around the country with a special affinity for the discovery of new works and the promotion of works by underrepresented composers. She has had the



**Serena Hill LaRoche, MAR Governor-Elect** (provided)

opportunity to engage as a soloist or clinician with various festivals and arts organizations, including most recently with the Puerto Rico Center for Collaborative Piano, Music on a WIM (Women's Initiative Music Series), Chattanooga Symphony Orchestra, Masterworks Chorus, and Varna International Music Academy, as well as notable past engagements with Greenville Light Opera Works, South Carolina Philharmonic, Bechtler Museum of Art, Palmetto Opera, Firenze Lirico, Columbia Museum of Art, and Abadía Benedictina de la Santa Cruz del Valle de los Caídos with other performances in both Spain and Italy. Her opera credits include Micaela (*Carmen*), Lady with the Cake Box (*Postcard from Morocco*), Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), Countess (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) and the title role in Dominick Argento's *Miss Havisham's Wedding Night*.

An award-winning vocal artist, Dr. LaRoche has earned praise for her “power, virtuosity...and elegance” with “a thrilling instrument at the top of its range.” She was a 2003 finalist in the Southeast Region Metropolitan Opera Auditions, a 2012 and 2008 NATS Artist Award Regional Finalist

and the 2006 Artist of the Year with FBN Productions, Inc. In 2003, she was the Bizet Award winner for the Orpheus National Young Artist Vocal Competition and a Palmetto Opera Competition Finalist in 2005.

Currently, Dr. LaRoche is an assistant professor of voice and director of Carolina Music Studios at the University of South Carolina where she has the great privilege to work with eager undergraduate and graduate singers in applied voice, diction, and vocal pedagogy courses. She earned a Doctorate in Musical Arts with a minor in music history as well as a Master of Music from the University of South Carolina, both in Vocal Performance, and a Bachelor of Music from the University of North Alabama. Committed to arts advocacy, Dr. LaRoche has volunteered much of her time to various community and professional arts organizations. She is an active member of the Pan American Vocology Association (PAVA). From 2014 to 2017, Dr. LaRoche served as a board member for the Hartsville-Coker Concert Association. Since 2013, Dr. LaRoche has served as the judge coordinator of the South Carolina District Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition (formerly the National Council Auditions). Dr. LaRoche has been an active member of NATS since 2002 with students regularly participating in district, regional, and national NATS events. She has been a regular adjudicator at all levels of the

NSA, presented in district and regional sessions, organized, and attended NATS-sponsored events, mentored SNATS chapters, and served as guest clinician for NATS-sponsored masterclasses. Dr. LaRoche served her South Carolina chapter for many years on various committees and as the regular point person for the vetting of musical theatre repertoire before moving on to serve as vice-president and auditions coordinator in 2019. In 2020, Dr. LaRoche teamed up with a fellow NATS member Elizabeth Knight to co-coordinate the first ever unified NATS Summer Program Auditions. Now in their third year, these annual virtual auditions seek to offer singers the opportunity to connect with many summer programs at once without the added expense of travel. In 2022, she participated in the national NATS pedagogy sub-committee work on Supplementary Educational Programs for Science-Informed Voice Pedagogy, which culminated in a workshop presentation for the 2022 NATS National Conference in Chicago, IL. In 2021, Dr. LaRoche began her service as president of the South Carolina district. She looks forward to more opportunities to serve and connect with members, students, and the larger singing community.

## Mid-Atlantic Region Conference Workshop and Student Auditions

Plans are in motion to return to some in-person auditions for the 2023 Region Conference: Workshop and Student Auditions. This will be the first time to offer some categories in person since 2019! Members may remember a last-minute shift to virtual auditions in March of 2020!



National Association of Teachers of Singing

This event will still be a **hybrid competition** as the region has grown since the last in-person auditions in 2019. It is important to recognize that since 2020, the last MAR NATS planned in-person event, the landscape of auditions has grown and changed dramatically. Now one student could potential enter up to 4 genre categories in the same competition. Also, the number of audition applications for the region has increased. The number of students and teachers participating have grown, but not at the same rate, since some students are in multiple categories. This has created a need for more judges to

accommodate the categories and the extra applicants. These changes have required that we also adapt our audition format to accommodate the new conditions. It is no longer possible to cover all auditions offered at the Mid-Atlantic Region over the two-day, in-person format. Moving auditions to a hybrid competition facilitates these needs and increases our competition days without increasing travel days for participants.

**Part one will be the online auditions.** Categories for this event will include a few of the very large categories that will advance to the national auditions. These categories are the MT 3A Lower High School Musical Theatre Treble Voice and MT 3B Upper High School Musical Theatre Treble Voice. These two are traditionally among the largest split categories in the region requiring several preliminary divisions and a sing-off round for each. Results of qualifiers for North and South Carolina Auditions are in since they took place in the Fall. Even before the final two chapters (Maryland - D.C. and Virginia) have held qualifying auditions, these two categories already have 100 students eligible to complete at the region level. The high numbers of these two categories and the early reporting are the reasons that they have been picked to be online this year. It is expected that if the hybrid format continues, there will be a rotation created to take turns being online over a cycle of years.

The online auditions will also include all categories that will not advance to national competition. These categories are all Children (MT 1, CL 1, and CM1) and Youth categories (MT 2, CL 2, and CM 2), all additional Commercial Music categories (CM 3, CM 4, CM 5, CM 6, CM 7, CM 8, CM 9, CM 10, CM 11, and CM 12), and all Adult categories (MT 11, MT 12, CL 11 and CL 12). (Many of these categories *will* advance in the 2024 auditions next year!)

Students participating in the online categories are encouraged to get a jumpstart on filming auditions now so they can meet the **March 1 deadline for all applications, including videos.** This included those in VA and MD-DC NATS, too, since the turnaround time will be so quick. Having recordings made early may allow singers to redo only one or two of the songs between the chapter and region event, if needed.



**Online judging will begin March 3 and be completed by March 6.** These categories will be complete with sing-off rounds, as needed, and a video honors recital. All honors recital qualifiers for the online competition are invited to reprise their performance at the in-person recital in Virginia. Also, all competitors - including the online students - are encouraged to apply for the in-person master classes to be held March 10 and 11 in Virginia.

**Part two of the auditions will continue with the in-person auditions held at Liberty University March 10-11.** Post high school (college-age) categories not offered in the online auditions will be held on Friday, March 10, and the remaining High School categories not in the online auditions will be held on Saturday, March 11. Each day there will also be a master class featuring teachers from the region as clinicians. Students from online or in-person auditions are all welcome and encouraged to apply for the in-person master classes.

**Teachers submitting students are required to judge or provide a substitute** at the auditions.



Efforts will be made to separate online and in-person judges. Teachers who do not have students competing in the in-person auditions will not be required to judge at the in-person event. They are welcome to attend as a sub for another member on one or both days in in-person events. Conversely, in-person judges are not required to judge the online event, but volunteers are welcome. It is particularly important that teachers from the in-person auditions, are available to judge both days of in-person competition. Online categories can more easily be covered because judges can be called from nearly anywhere in the country to serve as a sub. In-person auditions require people to be available at specific times. Board officers are working to compile lists of potential sub judges for both parts of the auditions. It is the teacher's responsibility to secure a sub judge if they cannot be available on one or more days of the competition.

This year the Mid-Atlantic Region will also be incorporating **paperless adjudication for all auditions**. Paperless scoring has been done the past three years with online auditions. This will be the first time the region has incorporated this method at the in-person events. All judges are expected to bring a device to use for scoring students using the electronic forms on AuditionWare. These measures will help save tremendous costs for printing and mailing and will also increase accuracy in the tallying of scores. All judges will be required to be prepared to access the forms with a digital device, whether online or in-person.



During the week, there will also be some online and in-person presentations of workshops. More details and applications for the workshops and master classes will be coming soon. A working Master Schedule that will be updated is posted here and on the webpage: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fQdNkwL-AY1DBrs4\\_RAN1zLOI\\_xj04sxL/edit?usp=sharing&oid=116368191286024760154&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fQdNkwL-AY1DBrs4_RAN1zLOI_xj04sxL/edit?usp=sharing&oid=116368191286024760154&rtpof=true&sd=true)

More information on the entire conference can be found on our website on the welcome page and on the 2023 Conference Information tab: <http://midatlanticnats.org/>

## Can You Lend a Hand?



Volunteers are needed to serve as substitute judges, to vet repertoire, and to help serve on committees and for the Region Conference.

Specifically:

- Hosts for in-person and online sessions
- Volunteers for the Workshop Committee
- Volunteers for the Master Classes Committee
- **Substitute Judges for in-person and online adjudication. Even just one day of availability helps!**
- Repertoire vetting

Please fill out this form if you can help! <https://forms.gle/XZNpkJvNYCt4TCmZ6>

## NATS I.D.E.A. Toolkit

The Mid-Atlantic Region encourages all members to complete the training modules from the NATS Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism. Below is a reprint from the webpage about the I.D.E.A. Toolkit. [https://www.nats.org/IDEA\\_Toolkit.html](https://www.nats.org/IDEA_Toolkit.html)



At its core, the National Association of Teachers of Singing is a service organization dedicated to supporting and educating its membership, which includes the essential topics of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Anti-Racism, and how these areas inform our work.

Designed especially for members, NATS has launched a new [I.D.E.A. toolkit](#) containing educational videos, a glossary of I.D.E.A. vocabulary, slideshow presentations, suggested readings, and more.

We want to thank Past President, Carole Blankenship for her leadership throughout the beginning of this process, our D & I Focus Group, and diversity strategist, Theresa Ruth Howard and consultant, Alejandra Valarino Boyer for their work in creating this toolkit.

**We are happy to announce the completion and launch of  
Module 2 of our I.D.E.A. Toolkit!**

If you haven't already accessed Module 1, please take the time to view it as well:

## MODULE 1

## MODULE 2

**Passcode: natsideatoolkit**

MODULE 2 LINK: <https://mobballer.org/index.php/2021/12/13/nats-i-d-e-a-bootcamp-tool-kit-module-1/>

MODULE 2 LINK: <https://mobballer.org/index.php/2022/01/10/nat-i-d-e-a-bootcamp-toolkit-module-2/>

Viewing this material is essential to learning about all the ways we can strive to be a more welcoming and supportive community of members who celebrate unique identities, varied backgrounds, and experiences.

Our goal in this work is to learn to recognize our biases, promote diversity, and foster a respectful, inclusive, and equitable environment within NATS where everyone can feel they belong and thrive.

## **I.D.E.A. Best Practices Guide**

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Additionally, NATS offers the [I.D.E.A. Best Practices Guide](#). It provides written guidelines on how to create and maintain a welcoming and supportive community as well as a culture of diversity and inclusion. The guide shares strategies for communicating across cultures. It gives examples of how to demonstrate value and validation in community along with ways to build inclusion for all identities.

GUIDE LINK: [https://www.nats.org/Library/docs/NATS\\_IDEA\\_Best\\_Practices\\_Guide\\_Final\\_1\\_17\\_22\\_rev.pdf](https://www.nats.org/Library/docs/NATS_IDEA_Best_Practices_Guide_Final_1_17_22_rev.pdf)

[View Guide](#)

## **Upcoming Content**

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In the coming months, we will be working on completion of Module 3 — all about applying what we have learned in the first two modules. It is important for us to talk about how we are internalizing and applying this information to real scenarios — in our NATS activities with colleagues and in our studios with students.

**Stay tuned:** Module 3 coming late spring/early summer!

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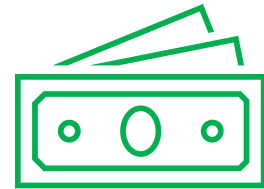
**We thank NATS D&I Focus Group members for their time, feedback, and commitment to ensuring that all voices within NATS are valued and heard in an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all.**

Alexis Davis-Hazell, Amy Yeung, Anna Lantry, Darryl Taylor, Eiji Miura, Elizabeth Benson, Elizabeth Eschen, Ellie Escher, Emily Martin, Gregory Brookes, Greta Pope, Hannah Murray, Holly Bewlay, Isai Jess Munoz, James Martin, Jeremy Blackwood, Jessica Usherwood, Joey Holland-Garcia, Jonathan Walker-Vankuren, Katherine Jolly, Katie Tupper, Kayla Gautereaux, Lily Guerrero, Loraine Sims, Marcía Porter, Marisa Naismith, Michael Preacely, Michael Walsh, Paulina Villareal, Rae-Myra Hilliard, Rebecca Pieper, Sam Handley, Stephen Ng, Sylvia Stoner, Tricia Toledo, Triniece Robinson-Martin, and San-ky Kim.

## Mid-Atlantic Region Development News

Due to the money saved from online auditions this year, there was a surplus in funds at the end of the calendar year. If this money wasn't spent, it would have been absorbed into the national office funds. This surplus enabled the Mid-Atlantic Region to make some equipment purchases and to contribute to chapter and audition development funds.

New equipment was purchased in preparation for the needs of moving to electronic adjudication forms for the in-person auditions this March. Four Chromebooks were purchased to be used in the tally room and as loaners. Multiple extension cords and power strips were also purchased to have on hand for adjudicators.



Additional surplus money was donated to NATS causes. Five hundred dollars was given to the NATS national account to help fund prize money for the national competitions given in the name of the Mid-Atlantic Region. To each of the four chapters in the region, a gift of \$300 was donated.

The gift to the North Carolina chapter will help to contribute to student scholarships. They also already have named awards given to students including the **Sharon Szymanski Award** given to an outstanding high school male music theater singer and **The Anika James Award** is given to an outstanding high school female music theater singer by the Anika James Foundation. There is also the **Geraldine Cate Continuing Education Award** given to an outstanding singer in classical categories for Adult Women and Adult Men and other Outstanding awards for singers at their classical auditions in the spring. Visit the NC NATS page for more details: <http://www.ncnats.org/2023-classical-student-auditions.html>

The gift to the South Carolina chapter will do the same regarding the funding of awards and scholarship. Other donations given to the chapter have also supported special awards, including the **Fran McMillan Pinson Collaborative Pianist Award** to celebrate collaborative pianists spearheaded by Dierdre Welborn and given twice a year to an outstanding pianist in the state. The **Spotlight on African American Composer Awards** celebrates the best performances of a song by an African American Composer with four awards over the year. Two awards each at both the fall and spring competitions, one for a High School singer and the other for a College/Adult age singer. This



award is funded by Jill Terhaar Lewis. There is also a link to donate any amount of money in honor of or in memory of a chosen person. See the SC NATS page for more information on awards and ways to donate for special awards. <http://www.scnats.org/>

The gift to the Maryland/DC chapter will be used to **provide professional development opportunities** for members of the Chapter and **learning opportunities** for their students. As Ethan Watermeier (MDDC District Governor) says in his thank you message: "Singing is fundamental. The work we do together in NATS is critical to building the next generation of singers and teachers." More here from MDDC NATS: <https://www.mddcnats.org/>

The donation for the Virginia chapter contributed to the **Susan Randolph Braden Memorial Endowment**. This gift honors Susan - a longtime NATS member and officer - and is used to support



*Susan Randolph Braden (provided)*

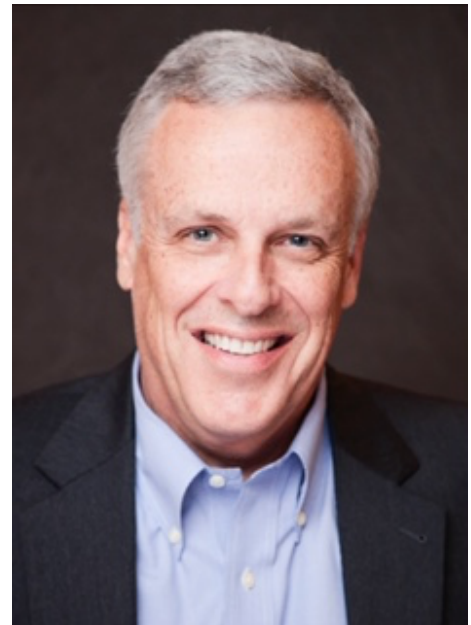
students attending the National Student Auditions. See their page for more about Susan and this opportunity. <https://www.vanats.org/donate>



*Dierdre Welborn, MAR Development Liaison (provided)*

that increase access to the vocal arts and to provide transformative experiences for members and their students. Your compassionate support truly makes a difference!"

It doesn't take much to make a big difference to someone else. Consider making a one-time or recurring donation to your local chapter and region to support these causes. It can be made for general costs or earmarked for specific things. As Executive Director Allen Henderson says, "You are helping to grow programs and services



*Bob Bryan NATS Development Director*

The **Mid-Atlantic Region has a Development Liaison**

**Dierdre Welborn**. She would be happy to help work through fund raising ideas and to connect people with **NATS Development Director Bob Bryan** (bob@nats.org). For more on ways to donate, visit your local chapter and region pages as well as the national website here: <https://www.nats.org/givingtuesday.html>