

NATS Visits AATS



Richard Dale Sjoerdsma

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing was founded in 1922 by fifteen men, all members of the profession of the teaching of singing. Charter members were Walter L. Bogert, William S. Brady, Dudley Buck, George Fergusson, Yeatman Griffith, George Hamlin, Frederick H. Haywood, Sergei Klubansky, Gardner Lamson, Francis Rogers, Oscar Saenger, Oscar Seagle, George E. Shea, Percy Rector Stephens, and Herbert Witherspoon. Women were admitted to membership in 1983.

The founders were motivated in the formation of the organization by a desire to make contributions to the improvement of the practice of the profession from the standpoints of both teaching and ethics—such contributions as they individually could not hope to make and such as a large organization might not find practical to undertake. They took for their province such matters as, in their opinion, could best be handled by a small group. Hence, membership in the Academy is by invitation only

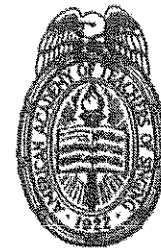
and is constitutionally limited to forty members of the profession of the teaching of singing.

Almost immediately, the Academy initiated a continuing practice of publishing the results of intensive and extensive work by committees whose reports are given critical consideration by the entire membership. On the approval of a majority, these reports are published in the form of pronouncements, or statements. The first pronouncement of the Academy was the Code of Ethics, which has undergone several revisions since its appearance in 1923.

The Academy has had a long and important relationship with NATS and, in fact, was instrumental in its founding. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the impact of this dynamic organization spread to Chicago and, as a result, the Chicago Council of Teachers of Singing was formed. At the March 4, 1940 meeting of that body, Richard DeYoung proposed the forming of a national organization of singing teachers, with local chapters throughout the United States. The National Association of Teachers of Singing was founded on March 23, 1944, by the American Academy of Teachers of Singing, together with the New York Singing Teachers Association and the Chicago Singing Teachers Guild. In fairly recent years, a number of AATS publications appeared in NATS journals, although sporadically, and, following dialogue with Academy Vice Chair Jean Westerman Gregg, Publications Officer Robert Gartside, and Chair Robert White, the Editor has decided to sys-

tematically publish particularly relevant Academy statements in the *Journal of Singing*. The statements do not necessarily reflect the philosophy of NATS or imply its endorsement. Readers are invited to visit the AATS Web site [www.voice teachers-academy.org].

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF TEACHERS OF SINGING



Reasons for Studying Singing

(Originally published in 1929, this statement was changed to its present form in 1997.)

Singing fortifies health, widens culture, refines the intelligence, enriches the imagination, makes for happiness, and endows life with an added zest.

Singing, an athletic event, is healthful; it develops the lungs and purifies the blood by emptying more completely the lungs of used air and filling them deeply with fresh air.

Singing promotes good body posture and graceful carriage.

Singing lends expressiveness to the countenance and animation to the mind.

Singing, through difficulties overcome, develops character and increases poise and self-confidence.

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Singing strengthens the memory and self-discipline, as well as the power of moment-by-moment concentration.

Singing gives a pleasanter, richer speaking voice and improved speech, thereby adding to the charm of personality.

Singing acquaints one with the inner meaning of words, and thus stimulates deeper insight into poetry and prose.

Singing teaches us to use the whole brain (right brain, music and left brain, language) so as to create the meaning of language and music simultaneously.

Singing will, as a study, train the mind to make discriminating choices.

Singing, the only performing art in which language and music can be experienced and communicated at the same time, awakens living interest in the beauties of music and admits one to the rich and varied treasure of song literature.

Singing enables one to understand and enjoy more fully the art of great singers.

Singing, through the absorbing pursuit of an ideal, brings new aspirations and new buoyancy into life.

Singing is a means of self-expression that develops the fulfillment of individual talent.

Singing, even when pursued with no thought of professional application, gives pleasure to one's self and ultimately to one's friends, because its appeal is universal.

Richard Dale Sjoerdsma received his B.A. degree from Calvin College, M.M. from the University of South Dakota, and Ph.D. from Ohio State University. Since 1968, he has been on the music faculty of Carthage College, Kenosha, Wisconsin.

*Tenor Sjoerdsma is an active recitalist in the Midwest, and he has appeared with a number of important orchestras, opera companies, and oratorio societies. He is also a veteran of 14 European concert tours, having sung in Berlin, Hannover, Hamburg, Augsburg, Budapest (Hungary), and a number of other cities in Germany, Sweden, France, and Austria. As a writer, Sjoerdsma has authored some TNB articles, a book on the chamber music of Franz Christoph Neubauer, an article, "Neubauer" for the new Grove's, and he has managed the "Bookshelf" column for TNB/TNJ/JOS from 1972 to 2001, at which point he became Editor of the *Journal of Singing*.*

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