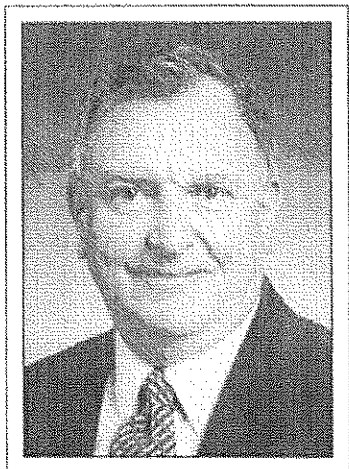


NATS Visits AATS



Richard Dale Sjoerdsma

The *Journal of Singing* continues a serial reproduction of selected pronouncements issued by the American Academy of Teachers of Singing. For a brief history of the organization and its unique relationship to NATS, the reader is referred to the *Journal of Singing* 58, no. 1 (Sept/Oct 2001). Since 1922, the Academy has actively written and disseminated papers on all subjects pertaining to the teaching of singing. Inevitable changes in the profession itself and in musical life in general have demanded that the Statements from the Academy be brought up to date.

The Statement on the care and development of the voice from childhood to maturity, changed to its present form in 1997, was originally published in 1938. It is presented here without comment or emendation. The guidelines do not necessarily reflect the philosophy of NATS, nor does the appearance of the Statement in the *Journal of Singing* imply NATS endorsement. Readers are in-

vited to visit the AATS web site, www.voice-teachers-academy.org.



THE CARE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE VOICE

In Childhood

- DO:** Teach the child good posture.
- DO:** Try to enroll the child in a school system where singing is part of the curriculum.
- DO:** Encourage the child to sing in small groups or choruses whose musical standards you know and approve and whose conductor has qualifications that you respect.
- DO:** Provide a home environment in which the child hears good music and good singing.
- DO:** Encourage the study of another instrument, so as to equip the child with the basic principles of reading music. The study of piano, probably the best for this purpose, should begin around the age of seven, and other instruments around the fourth grade.
- DON'T:** Provide rock music, belting, or rap music as examples of what singing should be.

DON'T: Start children on singing lessons. Just let them sing naturally, while learning to enjoy music.

DON'T: Allow children to sing in massed choral situations where they will be allowed or encouraged to sing too loud.

In Adolescence

- DO:** Encourage adolescents to sing naturally in the proper ranges for their voices. Operetta, American musicals written before the advent of rock music, and Gilbert and Sullivan are good vehicles.
- DO:** Continue, or begin, the study of piano for an adolescent interested in doing work in singing, for which keyboard facility is essential.
- DO:** Discourage rock singing.
- DO:** Encourage adolescents to sing in good choruses where they will have the opportunity to sing fine music. Be sure the choral director is a qualified musician-singer, who does not program music either too difficult or too taxing for the young voice.
- DO:** Be extremely careful in the choice of teacher for an adolescent starting voice lessons. If you do not know the teacher's work personally, engage only a teacher who comes highly

NATS Visits AATS

recommended by someone whose musical judgment you know and trust.

DON'T: Allow young girls to "belt" or sing only in chest voice.

DON'T: Put girls who have good chest voice in the tenor sections of school choruses, but rather insist that they sing in their proper range.

DON'T: Embarrass boys whose voices are changing by insisting they sing in their unchanged register in chorus, or by putting them too soon into the tenor or bass sections. The shame may cause them never to return to singing. If necessary, have them stop singing until the voice begins to stabilize.

DON'T: Start singing lessons too soon. It is a waste of money, and can even be harmful. Wait until the voice is truly stabilized as occurs after the onset of puberty, unless it is a voice that has matured exceptionally early.

In Maturity

DO: Make sure that you are speaking correctly. Persistent hoarseness or a voice that rapidly becomes fatigued after speaking at length are indications of poor speech habits. Go to a good singing teacher or speech pathologist who specializes in voice disorders.

DO: Sing lightly in choral rehearsals, if at all possible.

Save the full voice for the performance.

DO: Rest the voice after long hours of singing, particularly choral singing. Try not to talk. Lozenges are medically proven to be particularly soothing for tired voices.

DON'T: Sing when it "hurts," as when you have a bad cold, sore throat, or laryngitis.

DON'T: Sing high pitches at full voice in choral rehearsals for extended periods. Rest the voice frequently at such times by singing lightly or, at times, not at all.

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 revivalist in the Midwest, and he has appeared with a number of important orchestras, opera companies, and oratorio societies. He is also a veteran of fourteen 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.
