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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SINGING  
46th Annual Southern Region Conference and Student Auditions

**OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES  
of the  
Mississippi Chapter**

**Presiding: Dr. Nicholas Perna, President-Elect**

Friday, November 12, 2021 9:30 A.M.  
Intermezzo@Woods Gallery, The University of Southern Mississippi

**Call to Order**

The Mississippi Chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing was called to order at 9:34 a.m. by Vice-President, Nicholas Perna. Members present were:

K. Broadwater; M. L. Buchanan; C. Coker; J. Hightower; S. Hurley; Byron Johnson; Meredith Johnson\*; E. Jones\*; J. Lamar-Kantack; P. Lewis-Hale; G. Long; A. McPhail\*; N. Perna; P. Rice; C. Roberts; D. Watson\*; J. Yarrington; and K. Davis.

\*New Member

**Welcome – President-Elect, Nicholas Perna**

In absence of our President, Amanda Johnston, Chapter members were welcomed by President-elect/Vice President Nicholas Perna. He apologized on behalf of our members (Board Members – N. Balach, A. Johnston, and J. Dahmen) who were unable to attend the conference and today's meeting and gave explanations.

The Minutes of the 19<sup>th</sup> March Chapter Meeting were disseminated by Secretary Kimberley Davis. A time for the reviewing of the Minutes was extended followed by the approval. Taylor Hightower moved to approve the March Minutes; the motion was seconded by Constance Roberts. The Minutes were approved as presented.

**New Members Welcomed**

Danielle Watson (Doctoral student/Teaching Assistant at USM); Meredith Johnson – new tenure-track faculty at USM; Elizabeth Jones – University for Women; Ann McPhail (Doctoral Student/Teaching Assistant at USM).

**Governor’s Report – Nancy Maria Balach (in absentia)**

Perna read the Governor’s brief report. Balach sent well-wishes to all and apologized for not being able to attend, but looks forward to the spring conference. During this time of navigating our way through this fifth semester of Covid, “it is amazing to see all of the incredible discoveries” that we, as teaching-artists, have made along with the collegial support that is occurring. It is important to recognize the challenges and exhaustion we’ve endured in the midst of it all. Remember to be kind to yourselves. She thanked each person for being a part of NATS, ending with “it is comforting to know that we have each other.”

**Auditions Chair’s Report – Jamie Dahman – No official report**

Because Jamie Dahman experienced car trouble on his way to the conference, there was not the opportunity to provide a written or official report. In his absence, Perna reminded all of the change that we made to the Musical Theatre categories at the March 2021 meeting, which is reflected in the Minutes at the bottom of page 3. We have changed our language to match the Region and National Audition language. (Davis inserts the language here for the reader’s convenience: *“To change the wording in the repertoire requirements for all of our Music Theatre categories in the Mississippi District to align with those already approved at the National Level.”*) It makes the language more *inclusive* rather than *exclusive* and opens up the options [of literature] as to what can be in that category. Perna mentioned this so that all can begin to familiarize themselves with the change in preparation for our spring 2022 State conference.

**Treasurer’s Report – Susan Hurley**

Treasurer Hurley disseminated copies of her report and then presented a line-by-line explanation. As of March (3/17/21) our beginning balance was \$8,743.86. She collected fees and dues from the National Office totaling \$1,305.00. Winner’s checks (\$594.00) given for the Spring 2021 conference have been cashed/deposited bit by bit; as of this meeting, there are still some outstanding checks. Hurley encouraged us to contact our students (the students she named) with these outstanding checks to get them deposited. She emailed them in summer but not all have responded. This is important in order to keep the records straight and updated. Our ending balance is \$9,454.86, which is \$1k above where we were last year.

Perna added that it has been or is being discussed that some regions have moved to started paying students electronically. “It is a giant pain!”, he stressed. It must be set up via *Zelle* and the setup requirements are a royal mess. It is best to continue to bear with checks for the time being until *Vinmo* is a possibility.

**President's Report – Amanda Johnston (in absentia)**

President Johnston sent notes, which were read by Perna in her absence. Included was a reminder regarding the Musical Theatre Category alignment, which Perna covered earlier in the meeting – it should be updated on the website. For Mississippi State NATS 2022, be reminded that the dates were changed to 25-26 February so as not to conflict with regular spring breaks across the state. The conference will be held in person at “The W” – the University for Women – “unless something changes dramatically”, Perna added.

Regarding this, Susan Hurley announced that her Department Chair is definitely committed to hosting but is requesting that because of their small size, limited space, and the continuing Covid situation, she would like for our first round to be virtual – a similar format to what we are doing now (referring to the current Regional conference). Perna reminded her that we only have two rounds for our state conference; to do a virtual first round would result “in a concert.” He added that The Board would need to discuss it and get back to her; at this point, we have already planned to be in person for both.

Continuing with Johnston's notes, Perna went on to read that in keeping with our alteration of hosting guest artists and membership recitals, it is now time to have an invited guest clinician. We previously arranged for Valentine to join us at the last conference; he may be considered. We'd arranged for two guest artists at the last conference but hardly anyone signed up. If the membership does not support having guests, it is not worth the amount of work. If we would rather have member presentations again, and there is serious interest, she is open to doing that instead. The floor was opened to discussion of thoughts regarding hosting a guest or having a membership concert for the spring conference. Perna expressed concern for a guest, particularly one from out-of-town and if there is any possibilities of anything “weird” happening.

Discussion ensued. Patton Rice suggested the option of a Teacher's recital and Jonathan Yarrington agreed; Perna also thought it would be nice. Perna asked Susan about the mask situation at The “W.” All are to wear masks – as of now. Perna advised that we all must try to be patient with each other over the next six months, as circumstances and governing rules are constantly changing.

We will have Election of Officers in February: Secretary and VP/President-Elect, both for two-year terms. The Board will be sending out a call for nominations and creating a slate of officers. Perna encouraged that if members have an interest in serving in either of these capacities to let them (Balach, Johnston, Perna) know.

Perna referred back to an Ad-hoc Strategic Planning Committee that Region Governor Broadwater mentioned at the end of the Region meeting. If you have interest in this, let him know (now) or reach out to Broadwater or Claire Vangelisti. He expounded on this committee and its purpose.

We have 57 active members. Perna added that it is good to see 15-20 (19 to be exact) of us here now.

## New Business

- **Future District Conference sites**  
2022 – Feb. 25–26, 2022 at MUW (in-person and with masks)  
2023 – March 17–18, 2023 at Delta State University. This is still confirmed for the 2023 State Conference.
- **Future regional conference sites**  
2022 – Louisiana State University – TBA.  
2023 – Arkansas – TBA.
- **2022 NATS Winter Workshop** is Jan. 7–9, 2022 in NYC. This will be in-person.
- **2022 NATS National Conference** is July 2–6, 2022 in Chicago. Perna has two presentations: one with his Podcast co-host, Sarah, on “The Teaching and Learning of Voice Acoustics”; the other is part of a Panel on “Flipping the Voice Pedagogy Classroom.” John Holiday is guest artist. [A phenomenal singer (operatic countertenor), Holiday is an Assistant Professor of Music at the Conservatory of Music at Lawrence University.]

Broadwater mentioned that Scott McCoy retired from the NATS Journal Pedagogy column; they are seeking another writer.

## Additional Topics from the Floor

Patton Rice referred back to the low attendance participation or student response from our Region regarding the National Student Auditions mentioned by Perna earlier in the meeting. This would be one reason to support a new Development Officer joining the Region (referring to the new Ad-Hoc committee, Chaired by Claire Vangelisti). Financial exigency is the reason most do not participate. A Development Officer would be able to assist with fundraising that could possibly allow for funding to defray costs for travel and participation for those who qualify. Perna added that one of the ways we are going to help solve the diversity, equality, and inclusivity issues in Mississippi is by dealing with accessibility issues. In our Region, we are dealing with three states that are not wealthy. If we’re going to combat that, we must deal with the fact that the lack of money creates an accessibility wall. “That is not okay.”

Hightower added that when he attended National conference several years ago in Colorado, he observed that auditionees came with families. If we are from one of the three poorest states in the United States, it is difficult for students to travel with their families for a four-day trip. It was wonderful to hear the singing but just the fact that it is typically going to be so far away and only get to sing once, it is very hard. Other discussion ensued, with B. Johnson adding that the winners’ funds are now inadequate.

Perna added that the first place winners are now *losing money* and we need to give this some serious thought and discussion.

Greg Long raised a question regarding the ACDA conferences and their being the same time as our State conference. Southern Region ACDA is the same weekend as our state conference in 2022. He wanted to know about his ability to send students to state NATS in his absence. This will follow the same rule as usual – as long as there were not two consecutive conference absences, he is fine to only send his students.

Perna encouraged all to renew their dues.

Perna’s final thought and admonishment was to reach out to teachers who are teaching in the state and invite them into the organization. Independent teachers (those who teaching Pop and non-classical voice) outnumber the higher education academic teachers. B. Johnson added that some schools in the north have added non-classical repertoire to their curriculum to the point that it is now becoming mainstream. He suggests that we now need to be proactive in assuring that there is at least a hybrid of some sort to insure we are not creating our own demise. Perna added that for their MM program at MC, they are removing “the requirement” of classical repertoire (only); they may audition with classical literature but the requirement is to now sing “Five songs of their strength and one that is not in a native language that they speak.” C. Coker added that she will be retiring at the end of this year and will be one of those “private/independent” teachers. She suggests we find a way to include the high school students/teachers who are unable to attend the regular conference but need to be recognized for their vocal achievements and contributions, respectively. Perna stated that this was also a discussion at the Region Board meeting the night before. It should be considered for sure.

### **Call for Adjournment**

Perna called for a motion to adjourn the meeting: Both Hightower and Yarrington moved to adjourn. The Chapter meeting adjourned at 10:01 a.m.

Respectively submitted,

Kimberley Davis, Secretary  
Mississippi NATS Chapter  
The University of Southern Mississippi