



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SINGING
Spring Conference and Student Auditions**

APPROVED

**Official Minutes of the
Mississippi NATS Chapter
Breakfast Meeting
President Nancy Maria Balach Schuesselin, Presiding**

**Saturday, February 27, 2016
University of Mississippi – Oxford, MS
8:00 a.m.**

I. Breakfast

II. Call to Order – President Nancy Maria Balach Schuesselin

Members Present: N. Perna; M. Spivak; K. Gunn; C. Payton; P. Lewis-Hale; L. Backlin; J. Yarrington; M. L. Buchanan; K. Broadwater; C. Shelt; N. M. Balach; A. Johnston; C. Roberts; S. Van Dyke; J. Robinson; B. Robinson; C. Coker; P. Rice; J. Aubrey; C. Linton; V. Dacus; L. Holliman; R. Landis; C. Jordan; C. Dunn; T. Warfield; J. Fontaine; and Kimberley Davis.

- A. Review of minutes from last meeting (Provided by Secretary, Kimberley Davis)
- B. Approval of Minutes from the November 13th, 2015 Chapter Meeting. Minutes were unanimously approved.
- C. The members were welcomed by President Balach with the announcement that 41 members were in attendance for this state conference.

Introduction of Chapter Officers

Governor – Phyllis Lewis Hale
President – Nancy Maria Balach
President Elect – Amanda Johnston

Auditions Chair – Tara Warfield
Treasurer – Mary Lenn Buchanan
Secretary – Kimberley Davis

Introduction of New members

A very hearty welcome was given to: Nick Perna (Mississippi College) – previously introduced at the November Regional Conference; Mandy Spivak; and Christopher Jordan (Mississippi State University).

III. Governor's Report – Phyllis Lewis-Hale

Thanks to all who participated in the Members Recital last evening. Thanks to Amanda Johnston and Nancy Maria Balach who assisted her as a committee. Want to encourage all to participate, as so often the same members who make submissions. We are trying to keep it a peer review event for Tenure and Promotion purposes. If we do not get different submissions, we need to further discuss other options such as bringing guest artists from other places/chapters, highlighting one of our own members to present a 50-minute recital or lecture-recital, etc., but still have a peer review process. There was no chapter discussion regarding this.

She is planning to attend the National Convention. Will be a first time for her.

As regards the Hall Johnson spiritual category there is a need to discuss the direction we wish to take this. There was discussion with a point raised by one member at last year's state conference that it might be offensive to have just a "spiritual" category. We must decide whether or not we wish to maintain the same procedures, rules and guidelines as National have them or should we cater them to our chapter. We may follow the National guidelines "as is *but* making sure the students have at least one HJ spiritual and two other spiritual arrangements by other African American composers/arrangers. That's open for discussion. This way they still are covered when it comes to the HJ category but, in the meantime, when they go to Regional and National, they need to do three spirituals by HJ; this means that a teacher may still assign as many HJ spirituals as needed for the Regional and National competition but also be exposed to other arrangers of spirituals for our state level. Therefore, we are still covering two areas."

Connie asked if she would review with the membership how this category came about. Lewis-Hale gave a very thorough review and editorial. This is a family endowment that NATS matches. Discussion ensued with many making statements. Patton: he assigns spirituals a lot ... At the state level we can decide to have one Hall Johnson spiritual and have a choice of two others to include. Perna: at the state level, suggested having an upper and lower level so that freshman are not competing against seniors. L-H: This is encouraging faculty to embrace other arrangers—African American, Latino, whoever—who are not normally in the mainstream but have a nice output of repertoire available to us. Broadwater: we have to diversify and if this opens the door for anybody we should do it; how many around the room who are African American? Because whites are the only ones going to graduate school, so they have the college level jobs. So if we can open a door for any one, we should do so.

IV. Auditions Chair's Report – Tara Warfield

Thanks to all for their comments and judging yesterday. Thanks for getting materials back to them; all went smoothly. Made a request for a volunteer to fill in a session.

A few reminders: there will be runners to bring the forms out for each category. Is important that we can read your numbers and please remember to sign. Ranking is 1 – 5 if five in the category. You must choose; cannot give two people a 1. If it comes out to be a tie, they will figure that out in the office. Governor’s award begins with junior women.

As a segue from Audition’s Chair to Treasurer, Nancy Maria announced that the Board voted at yesterday’s Board meeting to raise the first place prize award for winners in all categories by \$15.

V. Treasurer’s Report – Mary Lenn Buchanan

As Mary Lenn took the floor she continued with an addendum to Tara’s report in reference to those that often say that they must exclude themselves from judging because of a student they taught twenty years ago. This is not valid. A “former student” is eight months. End of story.

At the meeting in November is when she can have a full report. Suzanne Van Dyke gets the prize for bringing the most students rather than Patton Rice this time.

We ended the year of 2015 at \$9,340.74, having begun 2015 with \$7,976.29. Our beginning balance for 2016 is \$9,340.74.

As a group we voted to send the governor to the national conference if they are able to attend; this year Governor Hale is able to attend and we will be compensating her travel with \$1000.

VI. President’s Report – Nancy Maria Balach

Connie Roberts has offered to host but if anyone would like to offer, the door is open because it is not the best logistically. So the floor was opened to other volunteers. In that there were no other volunteers, all agreed to have next year’s state conference at William Carey University. Thanks to Connie and William Carey. Within two minutes she secured the university with her Dean.

It is time for a new **Slate of Officers** to be presented, so she turned this segment over to Governor Hale to cover. The Governor stated that it is time for a new vote for officers of the chapter and being that Nancy and Amanda stepped up after former chapter president, Viola Dacus, did not return for her second term. At yesterday’s Board meeting we discussed the upcoming election and the nominating committee—Lewis-Hale, Connie Roberts, and Cheryl Coker— would like to recommend to the chapter that we take the existing officers and ask that they be re-elected for a second term since they are all willing to serve a second term. If you agree with that, that’s great but we will also open the floor up for nominations for someone who’d really like to handle those offices – you may nominate yourself or someone else. The call was made for a vote.

Vote: a majority voted to reinstate the existing chapter officers for a second term and not make further nominations. Huge applause. Thanks to the chapter.

New Business - A. Future Regional Conference Sites

1. November 10-12, 2016, at OBU, Arkadelphia, AR
2. November 9-11, 2017, University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

B. Future State Conference Sites

1. LOCATION for March 24-25, 2017 – William Carey University
2. Location for 2018 – Mississippi College – prodded by Balach – did not hastily volunteer but stated they will be looking into it and get back with us.

C. Guest Artist for 2017 Conference

President Balach continued with discussion for future conference presentations. Two years in a row we have had members' recitals. The Board had a great conversation yesterday and decided to stick with the plan that was suggested last year that in our odd number years we will either bring in a guest from another NATS chapter that we can showcase to build up their vitae, *or*, if there is not a good response for that, bringing in an artist – someone like Will Crutchfield to talk about *Bel Canto*, Handel, or different things. In the even number years, will change up a bit and we'd love to showcase our own membership. So many are doing amazing things with great and varied areas of research and performing. It will still be a refereed process and come forward with a 50-minute performance or two people sharing it, two people doing presentations; that we dig a little deeper as to what our colleagues are doing and it will be a wonderful educational experience for our students. We will send out an announcement about this. It will be a true refereed jury process. We even discussed the spiritual, as Phyllis mentioned earlier, and maybe doing something along that line for 2018.

D. Members' Recital and other possible Conference Presentations

Question from Jennifer Robinson regarding the process: If you wanted to share with someone, would you have to turn in something with the person you're sharing or would you just turn in your part and hope that someone else would submit something? NM: We need to decide whether we'll be asking for 50-minute presentations or whether we will ask for combinations of 50- and 25-minute presentations and pick from that; we will pair up people, so no need to worry about that. It will be similar to CMS in that they still need to be submitted electronically – that will not be changed; this is something we all need to know how to do, particularly for our students because this is the applications are being handled these days. Further discussion ensued regarding rationale.

Phyllis added that it need not be a professional recording, as some are hesitant to do so thinking it must be perfect and professionally edited.

Lewis-Hale added that it doesn't have to be a professional or edited recording. JR: what if it's a lecture recital? NM: It will be probably a lot like the National NATS submissions with an abstract, the timing, the format, what your technical needs are, etc. Hopefully, as we go through this cycle, we will have something very substantial and varied to share with each other and our students. If you have ideas, please bring those forward.

Chris Shelt: some are working on several projects at one time that do not necessarily fit the mold of "the call" but would still like to participate; he thinks that opening the field to more things that people are involved in at the time for submission would be better rather than limiting to a specific genre. There should be a greater feel for what people are actually working on at a given time.

E. Topic from the floor

- a. Broadwater, announced that no one has yet expressed an interest in becoming Auditions Chair. Davis stated that Byron Johnson expressed an interest at the Regional Conference.
- b. NM: A couple of people have brought up the number of people that are in Finals. She wasn't sure if it was something we needed to discuss but she is curious and interested in knowing what the spreadsheet of numbers comparing the last three years against what we have now in the finals, having gone to the truncated conference. Her statement has no hidden agenda, she is only curious. Chad Payton added that no one was sandbagging as he looked at the scoring.

Part of the reason that the kids are now only singing once. She is not trying to change what we are doing, but her understanding is that Arkansas is able to fit in three rounds in two days with semis and finals on Saturday. She is just tossing that out there but not necessarily trying to change what we are doing and some teachers have submitted written comments to her regarding these things and are concerned about it. With both rounds being with the same three judges the students are not getting a fresh set of ears to adjudicate them and we are expecting the judges to shift their mindset so many times and it is also a bit of a burden. Tara added that in some categories there were no entries and said that she would look into this.

Chris Shelt raised a different take on the process and offered the disclaimer that it may be a terrible idea but the fact is that some students are bent on an all-or-nothing reinforcement and mentality that either you

are a finalist or you are nothing in this new two-tier system; success is associated with being promoted to the final round; you're nothing if you do not make the finals. In the finalist category you get the 90 and above and the four that actually make it get 95 and above, if we were to recognize students that were not finalist but were 90 and above as semifinalists after the fact (some chimed in with also an honorable mention), just so that they could take something away and go saying "I could be a contender" as opposed to being deflated and saying, "I'm just not good enough...I just won't do NATS next time..."

Discussion ensued as to how it could be done and thought it to be a great idea. NM: It is something that can be done right away. Tara stated that on Friday night we could announce the Honorable Mentions. He made an analogy to the often microsecond difference in the Olympics that differentiates between Gold, Silver, and Bronze. It would be encouraging to them to try again. Tara said she could go through each category and identify the Honorable Mentions and recognize them.

Call for a Motion.

Motion by Shelt; moved that contestants that achieve a 90 or higher average by the judges, and are not selected as finalist, be recognized as semi-finalist when the finalist are announced.

Seconded by Cheryl Coker and Jennifer Robinson.

Discussion ensued as to whether the title should be honorable mention or semifinalist. The end result seemed to be that all would be (Viola Dacus) recognized as semi-finalist and then an announcement that "the Finalists who will sing on Saturday will be..." The logistics of this will be hashed out further. Brad further added that "If we are not about encouragement, then what are we about?"

Vote: There was a majority approval for having a distinction for the semi-finalist.

Mary Lenn interjected that we do not judge anything lower than 80. Check out the instruction sheet. Davis raised an apparent confusion with the form where scores are placed: the seeming incorrect wording that says: "Not Worthy of Finals", "Not Worthy for Semi-finals" and do not properly coordinate with the numbers. It does not make sense. Phyllis stated that it is correct on the Judges form; another stated that it has been incorrect (a typo) for years. It is confusion. Buchanan stated that they would look into it.

Brad Robinson: thought there was going to be a check or other marking in addition to the plus / minus. We voted some time ago to do this. NM: stated that they had to make a decision because the forms changed on the Regional level and they had to make a decision as to how they were going to make work with our

shortened conference, so they have not created the perfect sheet yet and that it would be little more of a hybrid for next year because we are also waiting to see how many changes there would be for Regionals; there will be a little flux there, so we will work on making it better. Did not want to use the rubric because even though we're not using a score, they see where they fall in that rubric and if doesn't perfectly match with what the judges decided, and we also didn't want to place the "yes/no" on there. There is so much with two sheets. Discussion and suggestions ensued as to how some handle this.

Nick Perna: Since the sheet was mentioned, he would like to encourage us to consider moving to two different forms as we did at the Regional and National levels for Musical Theatre and for Classical – under two different rubrics. We've done this now at every level and most chapters. He would like for us to consider this and see a breakdown of the two categories to be adjudicated on a different scale as this is moving that way nationally.

F. Officers Slate – Presentation of Current Offices for Reinstatement and Call for floor nominations.

G. Adjournment: 9:17

Respectfully submitted,
Kimberley Davis, Secretary
MS NATS Chapter