

The Buckeye Voice

The Newsletter of Ohio NATS
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A Note from the President

Andrea Chenoweth Wells

Happy New Year and welcome to this month's edition of The Buckeye Voice!



In this issue we call for proposals for our Spring meeting, explore a three-step model for designing student-centered learning and remind ourselves why everyone benefits from studying singing!

Wishing you all a restful few weeks before resuming your usual flurry of activity! Hope to see you virtually on Jan 26 for our first Book Club!

Welcome to Our New Members!

Amanda Hoyles, Genoa

Upcoming Dates for Children and Youth Online Auditions

Registration Opens: 1/15/26.

Registration Closes: 1/29/26.

Log in to Auditonware on nats.org to enter your students in classical, commercial and musical theatre categories. Complete guidelines are linked on the audition homepage, but you may wish to refer back to the December issue of the Buckeye Voice for highlights.

Call for Proposals for our Spring Meeting: March 28, 2026

We invite Ohio NATS members to submit proposals for presentations at our upcoming Spring Meeting at Capital University. This gathering is an opportunity to share ideas, spark conversation, and celebrate the many ways we engage with the voice — as teachers, performers, scholars, and lifelong learners.



Proposals are welcome on any voice-related topic, including (but not limited to) pedagogy, performance, research, wellness, repertoire, entrepreneurship, interdisciplinary work, technology, and creative practice. Whether you're sharing a polished project or an idea still taking shape, we encourage you to bring your curiosity and expertise to the room.

To support a wide range of voices and formats, we are accepting proposals in the following categories:

Lightning Lectures (10 minutes)

Short, focused presentations (think TED Talk energy). Perfect for big ideas, teaching tools, research snapshots, or provocations designed to spark conversation.

Full Sessions (50 minutes)

In-depth presentations or interactive workshops that allow time for exploration, demonstration, and discussion.

Lecture-Recitals (30 minutes)

A blend of spoken reflection and performance, highlighting repertoire, pedagogy, research, or creative inquiry through music.

Showcase Performances (20 minutes)

Curated performance experiences that celebrate vocal artistry in its many forms.

We welcome proposals from emerging and established professionals alike, and especially encourage submissions that reflect the diversity of our membership and the evolving landscape of vocal artistry and pedagogy.

To submit your proposal, please click this [link](#). The **deadline for proposals is Monday, February 16, 2026 at 11:59pm**.

Please reach out to andreachenowethwells@gmail.com with questions.

Spotlight On: **Kate Merryman**



Originally from the Washington D.C. area, Kate Merryman has been labeled an “impressive singing-actress” by Broadway World (Washington DC). She has performed various musical theater roles including Johanna (Sweeney Todd), Elle Woods (Legally Blonde), Cinderella (Into the Woods), over 60 performances of Cosette (Les Misérables), and Narrator (Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat) for which she was nominated for a Washington Area Theatre Community Honors Award for Best Lead Actress in a Musical. She has performed several operatic roles including most recently, Mabel in Pirates of Penzance with Opera Project Columbus, Nella in Gianni Schicchi and Elvira in #UncleJohn with Opera Columbus. She is a graduate of The Ohio State University with a Master of Arts in Vocal Pedagogy and Singing Health Specialization. She currently serves as a part-time Professor of Voice at Otterbein University and manages a private studio in Dublin, Ohio.

Have an idea for a future
“Spotlight” column?
Click [HERE!](#)

We want to celebrate more of
the wonderful voice teachers
here in Ohio!

We are raising funds to offer
the **Ohio Vocal Arts Scholarship**.

This scholarship will support students who study voice with Ohio NATS-affiliated independent teachers and plan to continue their education at an Ohio college or university.

Once funded, the scholarship will provide \$2,000 to cover 32 hour-long lessons (\$60/hr) plus music and supplies. .

To donate, click [HERE](#).

WRITE FOR THE BUCKEYE VOICE!

Do you have an idea, insight, or passion you’d like to share with our Ohio NATS community? We invite you to submit articles, reflections, or resources for future issues of The Buckeye Voice!

All submissions will be peer-reviewed, and we welcome a wide range of voices and perspectives. Your contribution can spark conversation, share expertise, and celebrate the diverse artistry of our Ohio chapter.

Send your submission ideas to andreachenowethwells@gmail.com.

Whose Lesson is it Anyway?

Dr. Chad R. Payton

Each fall, a gaggle of undergraduates sign up for my Vocal Pedagogy course. They tend to be a typical mix of music education, vocal performance, and an occasional BA Music student looking for an upper-level elective. As a junior-level course, vocal pedagogy has students reflect on how their primary instrument works, what commonly gets in the way of their vocal efficiency, and since there is a practicum component to the class, begin turning book information into applied teaching skills. Several enjoy the variety of labs and student-centered focus I have them consider, but as students move from studying new vocabulary and anatomy and physiology into practicing what it is to be a teacher, several of them get frustrated by how clunky they are in expressing themselves as teachers.

“How do I manage all of the faults I hear at once?”

“How do I not get overwhelmed as the teacher?”

“How do I decide what to fix first?”

“How do I not get discouraged by not knowing how to fix what I’m hearing?”

“How can I fix what I haven’t fixed yet in my own technique?”

I admit, it has been a while since I taught my first lesson in the Community Music Program at my undergraduate institution. I remember getting assigned a four-year old student who liked to crawl under the piano as I played melodies from my Disney Songbook collection. She was particularly taken with the voices I used in “Les poissons” from The Little Mermaid, but I fear she did not leave with much pedagogical content knowledge.

If you are like my undergraduate students and worried about processing all of what you are hearing as a new teacher, take note that this is a common concern. We are warned as voice teachers that because we are teaching someone’s internal instrument, we have a responsibility of protecting their vocal health and must address technical and tensional faults. If you are looking for ways to structure your lessons in an organized fashion, I recommend hopping on the Three-Step Teaching Sequence. I warn you, this is not rocket science – it is a simple and practical way to move through your lessons like a conversation. It invites time for planning, performance, and reflection, and helps teachers stay engaged, focused, and systematic.



Dr. Chad R. Payton serves as Associate Dean for Student Success, Associate Professor of Voice, and Voice Area Head at Capital University, where he teaches voice and vocal pedagogy. Payton won the Praestantia Award for Outstanding Teaching in 2022, the Cotterman Award for Outstanding Service to Students in 2023, and was the inaugural winner of the Cooper Bing Spirit Award from Opera Columbus for his continued contributions to the operatic community.

Dr. Payton maintains a private studio of professional artists in New York City and teaches on the voice faculty at Seagle Festival each summer. Those artists have placed in various levels of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, and are singing with major opera companies and young artist programs throughout the United States and abroad.

Whose Lesson is it Anyway?, cont.

Three-Step Teaching Sequence:

- [1] Teacher Directive
- [2] Student Performance
- [3] Teacher Feedback

If you are like me and come from a ... certain generation ... it's likely that your teacher provided the directive and the feedback. I, as the student quickly began writing on my photocopied music with a pencil, so I gathered my teacher's thoughts and suggestions. I would then go home, rewind my cassette tape (...) and listen back to my lesson for additional markings and learning secrets.

From a pedagogical framework, what I and so many of us experienced in the master/pupil model would be considered a teacher-focused learning environment. While I was in the room, and I was the person singing (sometimes by myself), the focus was on what my teacher had to say about my singing. Their feedback, steeped in previous teaching and singing experiences and a wonderful performance career, which was captured by several photos displayed throughout the studio, guided me towards the correct way of singing a phrase or piece of music.

While the ideas of student-centered learning, also known as learner-centered education, have been around for more than a hundred years, the arts have been a bit slow to embrace change – shocking, I know, to think the academy would be slow to uptake new-fangled ideas! Noted vocal pedagogy researcher, Dr. Lynn Helding suggests a pedagogical shift in her *Journal of Singing* article, “Cognition in the Age of Corona: Teaching Students How to Learn,” stating, “In response to advances in cognitive science, I have proposed that a paradigm shift in voice pedagogy should occur, away from ‘how well teachers teach, to how well students learn.’” She continues, “How much better could teaching and learning go if the focus were switched from the content of the teacher’s brain to the landscape of the learner’s mind” and offers her own three steps to improve cognitive learning: [1] Teach Declarative Learning (educate learners how learning works, stressing the necessity of volition and effort in the cycle of learning; [2] Establish Goals (specific, written down, challenging, must answer the question how; and [3] Journaling (cognitive exercise that can help learners clarify both long-term and short-term goals.

Whose Lesson is it Anyway?, cont.

Utilizing Helding's suggestions, a modernized version of the Three-Step Teaching Sequence might look like:

- [1] Student provides their own directive from their previous week's practice journal
- [2] Teacher guides student to devise possible solutions to address the issue and has student perform multiple attempts at correcting it
- [3] Teacher asks student to self-reflect on those attempts, having the student compare what went well and what needed additional strategies, and asking the student to write a goal for this week's practice session that encapsulates what they just experienced

Compare the shifting role of the teacher in these two scenarios. At the end of this lesson, the teacher has now served as a guide towards students unlocking their potential, without imposing the correct way to sing; but, rather, they offered several ways in which a student could learn. The energy, or as Helding referred to it, the volition now lies on the shoulders of the student. The student leaves the lesson with learning strategies rather than performance biases, and because time was taken to teach students how to learn, devise strategies, and work through issues creatively, students are now empowered in the practice room to explore their volition and effort without trying to recreate their teacher's point of view. They now are recreating their own discoveries!

Note that this is not just a fancy play on syntax. By shifting the pedagogical focus away from what the teacher knows, the next generation of singers will have a clearer understanding of how learning takes place, how to problem solve, how to devise their own solutions, and how to stay engaged during the slow process of becoming a singer. They are blending pedagogical frameworks and learning tools such as reflective pedagogy through voice journaling, metacognitive learning strategies through goal-setting, and experiential learning opportunities by getting to role-play as the teacher during the lesson and following practice sessions. Suddenly, we as educators are no longer teaching how to sing the perfect vowels but asking students to devise ways of achieving perfect vowels on their own while self-discovering their process. Teachers cannot achieve this without having their own baseline knowledge and teaching experiences, but our hope is that we are not the focus of our students' lessons and practice sessions – their learning is!

Works Cited

Helding, Lynn. "Cognition in the Age of Corona: Teaching Students How to Learn." *Journal of Singing* 77, no. 2 (November/December 2020): 249-259.

A Meditation on the First Five Minutes of a Lesson, [Andrea C. Wells](#)

Before anyone sings, I am already listening.

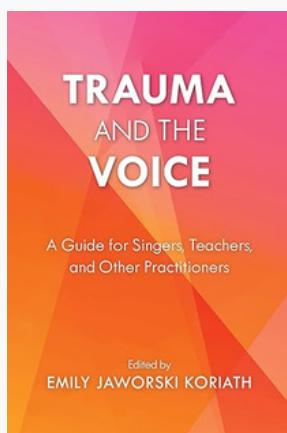
I listen to my student's breath and where it sits as they speak. Is the breath held, shallow, restless? Does it move easily, or does it seem guarded? Breath often reveals how a student is arriving in their body and in their day. I am not asking it to change yet; I am simply noticing.

Language is another signal. A student may arrive excited, anxious, distracted, weary, or quietly proud of something they have accomplished since we last met. Do their words come quickly or carefully? Are they apologetic? Certain? Curious? Defensive? The words students choose often reveal the narratives they are carrying about their ability, their effort, and their worth.

In these opening minutes, my work is about attunement. I am calibrating my attention, deciding what kind of presence this student needs today. Sometimes that means structure. Sometimes permission. Sometimes a push. Sometimes restraint. The goal is to meet the student where they are, rather than where I assume they should be.

When I finally invite a student's singing voice into the room, the lesson is already underway. The first five minutes form the foundation for what we often consider the "real" work. They remind me that teaching is not only about what I hear when a student sings, but about how carefully I listen before they do.

THIS MONTH! The Ohio NATS Virtual Book Club!



As we look ahead to starting a year of teaching, we'd love to invite you to our first Ohio NATS Virtual Book Club, a relaxed, social Zoom gathering where we can explore ideas that shape our work.

On **Monday January 26, 2026 at 8pm**, we will discuss *Trauma and the Voice* by Emily Jaworski Koriath, a thoughtful and timely look at how trauma intersects with vocal practice, pedagogy, and artistic expression.

Bring a mug of something warm and your curiosity, and join us as we share some new knowledge and engage in some supportive community conversation. No preparation required. Feel free to invite a vocally-minded friend!

Click [HERE](#) for the zoom link!

The Positive Effects of Vocal Study for Instrumentalists

Dr. David Sievers

Words matter. I still remember the first day of my graduate vocal pedagogy class. As we waited for the instructor to arrive, a trombone professor entered the room, set his materials on the lone music stand at the front, and joked, “You don’t need this. You’re singers; you don’t know how to read music.” Many of us have encountered some version of the familiar shorthand of “singers and musicians.” And yet, instrumentalists are often encouraged to make their instruments sing. What might vocal study offer musicians across disciplines? Here are just a few ways that learning to sing can help instrumentalists deepen their playing.

Studying voice can often help instrumentalists with intonation. With many instruments, if the fingering is right and the embouchure is somewhat correct and if you’re playing on a fairly decent instrument, you’re going to get the right pitch, generally. But how do you train the ear to hear the right pitch? We at the collegiate level often find that students’ musical ability rise quickly with taking aural skills and sight singing courses. Why? Training the ear through singing is like someone learning how to explain something to someone using their own words rather than from reading a script. In the early stages of musical development, most students can’t hear the phrase that they’re going to make without singing it first. Sight-singing can also be a vital tool in the voice lesson.

For obvious reasons, studying singing can help all musicians use breath with greater efficiency. One of my former students, a trombonist, told me that he thinks there are two trains of thought when it comes to breathing for a brass player: a. tank up as much as humanly possible, and b. use just enough air for the phrase. Both of these concepts could be tension-inducing. Learning how to use air effectively will help reduce that physical tension. A good breath can also teach about phrasing and sustained sounds, or *sostenuto* (a term used in Rossini’s definition of *bel canto*).

Most young instrumentalists often spend so much time dealing with the technical aspects of fingering, pedaling, bowing, or just simply trying to get the complex instrument to make sound that they forget about musical expressiveness. Voice teachers can easily teach ideas



David Sievers, DM, is a Senior Lecturer in Voice at the University of Dayton, where he teaches private voice, diction and literature for singers, voice pedagogy, and related courses. He has collaborated in more than 35 productions with the UD Theater Program. Dr. Sievers holds degrees from Washington State University (B.M.), Boise State University (M.M.), and Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music (D.M.). A dedicated church musician since the age of 12, he also serves as Pastoral Associate of Music and Liturgy at St. Luke Parish in Beavercreek, Ohio.

The Positive Effects of Vocal Study, cont..

like phrasing, musical gesture, and the rise and fall of a musical line, ideas that often get overlooked amid the technical aspects of learning the instrument.

As young musicians learn about their instruments, they are often totally unaware about the tensions of the body or how the body functions. Tensions created by (or that disturb) embouchure, bow position, and other ergonomic issues can all be helped with an increase in kinesthetic awareness. Tongue and jaw tension that is hidden by the instrument can often be found and corrected by observing someone sing. Because singers use their bodies as their instruments, they are often keenly aware of their use of physical space. There's a reason why most early voice lessons start with posture and observing potential alignment issues.

Studying voice can also improve stage comportment. Thrust in front of the band or orchestra and into a spotlight, singers rarely have things to hide behind when performing. Singers work with text and often use dramatic vocal gestures, bringing out important words and using tone colors. While instrumentalists can't necessarily do that in performance, perhaps in the practice room, doing so can help inform the student about the drama or emotional affect of the music, thus presenting a more musically expressive performance. Have your instrumental students make up a text to the tune that they are playing, and have them sing the text and observe how that informs their playing. Soft-spoken instrumentalists often benefit from vocal study, learning how to exude confidence. Singing can help other musicians learn how to project sound healthfully and avoid potential injury.

Finally, consider the professional realities facing today's musicians. How many music educators direct choirs without having formally studied voice? How many instrumental teachers rely on verbal imagery about breath, posture, and expression without a shared physical vocabulary to support it? Music therapists use their voices across genres for hours each day. Conductors, composers, and collaborative musicians of all kinds rely on clear, healthy vocal communication in rehearsal and performance. In each of these contexts, foundational vocal training is not an "extra," but a practical and transferable skill.

For voice teachers, this presents a meaningful opportunity. Many

The Positive Effects of Vocal Study, cont.

instrumentalists are already seeking greater freedom, expressivity, and physical ease in their playing often without realizing that voice study can provide exactly that support. By articulating the ways vocal training strengthens musicianship across disciplines, we can position ourselves as collaborative partners in our musical communities. Singing is for everyone, and voice teachers are uniquely equipped to help all musicians deepen their artistry, communicate more fully, and sustain their work over a lifetime.

So don't be afraid to name that value clearly and to market yourselves as resources not only for singers, but for instrumentalists seeking more expressive, embodied, and healthy music-making as well.

Concrete Ways to Invite Instrumentalists into the Voice Studio

- Frame voice lessons as a tool for expressive freedom and physical ease at the instrument.
- Share how singing clarifies musical intention before technical execution.
- Partner with instrumental colleagues to offer short-term or targeted voice study for instrumentalists.
- Normalize voice lessons as professional development, particularly for educators and music therapists.
- Communicate clearly that singing is a transferable skill that supports all forms of music-making. It is not a specialty reserved only for singers!

Something to Celebrate!



In case you missed it, our own Susan Wallin has been elected as the incoming region governor for the Great Lakes region. We are so looking forward to working with Sue in this new role and appreciate her continued service to NATS!

HAPPY *New Year*

Some people presume to be hopeful
when there is no evidence for hope,
to be happy when there is no cause.

Let me say now, I'm with them.

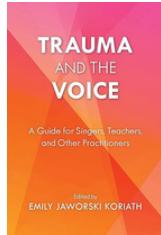
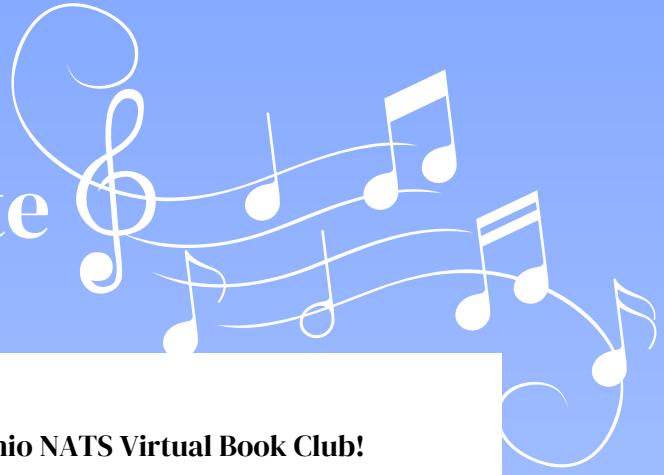
In deep darkness on a cold twig
in a dangerous world, one first
little fluff lets out a peep, a warble,
a song—and in a little while, behold:

the first glimmer comes, then a glow
filters through the misty trees,
then the bold sun rises, then
everyone starts bustling about.

And that first crazy optimist, can we
forgive her for thinking, dawn by dawn,
“Hey, I made that happen!
And oh, life is so fine.”

“For the Bird Singing Before Dawn,” Kim Stafford

Other News of Note



Save the date for our first Ohio NATS Virtual Book Club!
Get your copy of *Trauma and the Voice* by Emily Jaworski Koriath. January 26, 2026 at 8pm on Zoom!

Save the Date! Great Lakes Regional Auditions are being held on March 7, 2026 at Purdue University Fort Wayne. Entry deadline is February 15, 2026.



Capital University

Save the Date! The Ohio Spring Meeting will be held on March 28, 2026 at Capital University.

Save the Date! Next year's Fall Auditions will be held on October 17, 2026 at the University of Dayton.



Remember to take a short survey about our chapter and the contents of future issues! Click [HERE!](#)