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August 2, 2021

Greetings colleagues,

It is hard to believe but school is just around the corner and it's that time of the year when I reach out and bring you up to date on what you can expect for the fall.

Before I get into details regarding the fall, I want to remind our members that at our spring business meeting, we voted unanimously to fund First Prize of the High School Division of the American Negro Spiritual Competition at the National Student Auditions. I received a lovely thank you letter from the winner of that award, Chance Ridgeway, who asked me to thank the NC Chapter for our generosity and to thank us for all we do as voice teachers which enables singers such as him to pursue his dreams.

Now, November may seem far away but November and our CCM/MT auditions weekend will be here before you know it. We are already finalizing plans and our Auditions Chair has begun preparing AuditionWare for registration. The deadline to make a decision regarding our fall auditions is now upon us.

The state and regional boards met over the summer and in the past twelve days, I have had additional meetings with our Auditions Chair Brittnee Siemon, District Governor Jennifer Seiger, Regional Governor Jill Terhaar, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Board, and have spoken with Allen Henderson via phone. I've been in regular contact with our host venue and due to our need to begin preparing for this audition cycle and since we cannot be certain how COVID might affect our ability to be on Meredith's campus in November, we have decided that the best plan for our students is to hold our auditions online once again.

My fear has been that if we plan an in-person event and COVID surges and we are not permitted on campus, our event would be cancelled and our students miss the opportunity to participate in regionals as it would be too late to change gears, submit videos, etc. Additionally, we have groups of singers that cannot yet be vaccinated due to their age. Lastly, Meredith will require anyone who is *not* vaccinated to remain masked when on campus, even if singing. We want to set every singer up for success and create auditions that are as equitable as possible. We feel that going online is the best option as it will allow all singers to sing unmasked and create an environment for themselves in which they are comfortable and safe.

Brittnee will be sending out important dates and information regarding auditions in approximately two weeks but I wanted to let you know as soon as this decision was made so that you could begin planning. Videos will be due around mid-October so you can start thinking about that and lining up accompanists. I ask that you please give Brittnee these next couple of weeks to iron out small details before asking her questions. When all is up and running, you'll be the first to know.

It is our fervent hope to hold classical auditions in person in February as well as the regional auditions. We encourage everyone to get vaccinated as soon as they are able so we can convene in-person in the spring.

I do have some exciting news though. Youth, Children, Adult, and CCM (18+) categories will be advancing to regionals as the Mid-Atlantic region voted this week to add these to our regional event. They are also adopting the NC CCM Rubric.

Please note that ONLY NSA categories will advance to the IN-PERSON regional event at UNC-G in the spring. The Youth, Children, Adult, and CCM (18+) categories will remain completely online this year. Still, it is thrilling that other chapters are adding these categories! Alas, the High School CCM category will NOT advance to regionals this year as not all chapters offer this category but we hope that that will be an option for our High School singers soon.

Thank you for your resiliency and your adaptability. I appreciate all you do to make this chapter one of the most vibrant in the country.

Keep up the good work! We'll get there.

Wendy L Jones - President, NC NATS

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