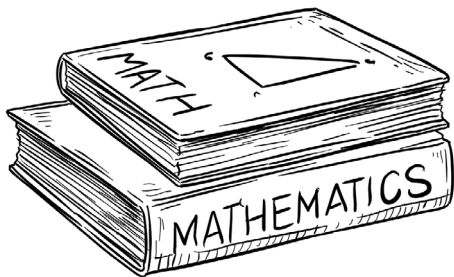


## The Value of Independence

By Cynthia Vaughn, Associate Editor for Independent Voices

I've been thinking a lot about what it means to be an independent voice teacher. Typically, independence in our field implies that you are working for yourself as a sole proprietor or small business owner, outside of K-12 or higher education. Independence can be defined as *not relying on others for aid or support or not influenced by the thought or action of others*, however, that doesn't really apply to us. As the name of this publication "Inter Nos" advocates, we freely share ideas and support "between or among ourselves." We are indeed influenced and inspired by our colleagues.



My favorite meaning of "independence" is the definition that is used in mathematics where independent refers to *a variable that does not rely on the value of any other variable to determine its value*. My sixth grade math teacher would be proud that I remembered this rule, even if I am taking it completely out of context. Applying the logic to our profession, however, your value as an independent voice teacher does not depend on any other variable. Read that again.

**Your value as an independent voice teacher does not depend on any other variable.**

*An independent variable stands alone.*

You are the boss. As an independent voice teacher you can create, structure, price, run, market, and decorate your independent studio any way you choose. Some of my colleagues have been teaching independently for decades in home studios, their own commercial studios, and multi-teacher studios. Others are teaching independently while also juggling part-time college positions. In recent years, with shrinking university budgets, faculty reductions, arts program eliminations and closures, I've seen more academic teachers make the switch to independent teaching. Retired faculty frequently continue their teaching and coaching career in the "private" sector. I say, welcome. How can we help you become your own boss? You know how to teach singing. There are many resources available through NATS, MTNA, and other

professional organizations to teach you the necessary business skills.

*An independent variable can be changed freely without affecting other variables in the equation.*

Guess what? You can change your mind, your business model, your branding, your tuition, the color of the paint on the walls, or any other variable. You might start your business as a generalist teaching anybody — all ages and all styles, and later shift to specializing in working with a specific type of ideal client. Maybe you have discovered that you don't really enjoy working with teenagers (and their parents), but you love teaching avocational adult singers or professionals. Do you love working with singer-songwriters, actors, dancers? You might discover that you get a bit bored with one-on-one lessons, but you love the energy and interaction of group-voice. The variables are endless, and you get to choose your own path with no one looking over your shoulder.



Cynthia Vaughn  
Associate Editor  
for *Inter Nos*  
[CynthiaVaughn@icloud.com](mailto:CynthiaVaughn@icloud.com)

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independent studio any way you choose."*

In this issue of *Inter Nos* "Independent Voices," six NATS members share their varied journeys. Amy Canchola writes about building an independent voice studio that caters to your strengths. Thomas Erik Angerhoffer shares how his martial arts experience has influenced his voice teaching. Marisa Gray Atha explores empathetic connection in the studio — meeting our students as whole humans and knowing where to draw boundaries. Matthew Giallongo talks about how he has navigated the dual roles of voice teacher and musical theatre music director. Leah Partridge envisions a bold model for post-undergraduate voice study for emerging artists and Jen Jimenez interviews NATS International member Sandra Oberoi.

You are valued as an independent, and we want to hear your voice. (No math required.) If you have an idea or a submission for NATS *Inter Nos* "Independent Voices," email [CynthiaVaughn@icloud.com](mailto:CynthiaVaughn@icloud.com)

**Cynthia Vaughn**, associate editor for *Independent Voices*, has been a proud NATS member and independent teacher since 1983. She has been active in leadership at the chapter and region levels, and she was an invited master teacher for the 2020 NATS Intern Program (postponed to 2021 due to COVID).

*Before moving to Norfolk, Virginia, in 2022, Vaughn retired from Magnolia Music Studio, the multi-teacher studio she founded and directed in Colorado and Washington from 2008 to 2022. In addition to her independent studios, Vaughn previously taught at Colorado State University, Cedarville College, and Art Connects International. Publications include The Singing Book group-voice textbook and song anthology with co-author Meribeth Dayme. The new 4th edition with editor Matthew Hoch was released July 2024 by Rowman & Littlefield/Bloomsbury Publishing and NATS Books.*

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