



HISTORY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA NATS

The Delaware Valley chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) was founded in 1974 by Marvin Keenze, June Carson, and two other voice teachers. Its activities were held at the University of Delaware and West Chester University, and its membership spanned the broad area of the state of Delaware and all of Eastern Pennsylvania. The teachers at West Chester University soon began playing an important role in the administration of the chapter and their campus became the regular location for events through the next several decades. Voice teacher Patricia Conrad was the last president to help maintain the chapter until 2010, at which point all activity stopped.

In such a rich cultural region of our country, which boasts numerous and important performing institutions and colleges of music, the absence of a vital chapter was felt by many. Conscious of the void, in 2014, the Eastern Regional NATS governor Debra Field began an initiative to revive the defunct chapter. As governor, it was her responsibility to ensure the health and vitality of all the chapters in the region, but she also had a personal interest in the chapter, which had been of great significance to her in her early years as a teacher. In August, a temporary planning committee/board was assembled and assigned the tasks of establishing new by-laws, setting up new financial mechanisms, and planning the activities of the chapter renaissance. With the help of donations from a number of founding members, a website was also built as an online resource for members and the promotion of chapter activities.

As a result of the committee's efforts, and the support and enthusiasm of local teachers, students, the governors of the Eastern Region, and the National Office, the chapter was restored in 2015 under the new name Greater Philadelphia (GPNATS). The new chapter welcomes all NATS members regardless of geographical affiliation, but mostly encompasses singers and teachers living and working in the greater Philadelphia area, including Delaware, Bucks, Philadelphia, Montgomery, and Chester Counties. The name reflects changes in the regional chapter map, which now includes our sister chapters Allegheny Mountain and Lehigh Valley.

Dedicated to the mission of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, GPNATS now provides educational experiences and opportunities to singing students and teachers residing in the Greater Philadelphia area today.