

## SASO UP CLOSE REHEARSALS AND PROGRAMS

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Now that we are in the summer doldrums of heat and monsoon tempest, the new season of the Southern Arizona Symphony Orchestra is several months away. This affords an opportune time to explore how public orchestra concerts matriculate. Two general areas, programing and rehearsals will be covered and explored.

Looking at rehearsal first, there are a variety of events that need to take place prior to the first downbeat of the conductor's baton. The conductor has previously selected the music to be performed for the entire season. The librarian has the music for each concert ahead of time by borrowing, renting, buying or securing it from the SASO library. He then places parts in a folder for each player which are ready for the first rehearsal. There is also a personnel manager who insures that there are musicians to cover the requirements of the selections as some works need fewer or greater number of players. This person also is in charge of auditions of new members.

At each rehearsal orchestra volunteers set up chairs but each player puts the chair away afterwards. The conductors stand and podium are included. Percussion instruments that are needed are set up by the performers. Anywhere from two to five timpani are moved into place, drums are unpacked and instruments like xylophone, bells and chimes are set up if needed. The orchestra owns all of its' own percussion instruments.

There are seven rehearsals for each concert. one of these is a sectional where the strings, woodwinds and brass, each have their own, to work out problems, phrasing, and intonation. Three of the rehearsals take place during concert week: two evenings, Saturday morning dress rehearsal followed by a Saturday night and Sunday

afternoon concert. Regular rehearsals run from 7 to 9:30 PM and the dress runs 9 to 12 AM and there is a 15 minute break at each.

The conductor sends everyone an e-mail prior to each rehearsal stating which selections or parts of these at a specific time will be rehearsed. When the players arrive they are prepared to rehearse specific sections. Two minutes prior to starting, the oboe sounds A 440 for tuning by sections: brass, woodwinds, low strings, high strings. There are various problems to be covered at a rehearsal. Two important ones are intonation and phrasing(bowing in the strings-when does the bow go up or down.) Others are knowing your music, arriving on time, mistakes in the printed parts, and instrument problems. One important aspect of a community orchestra like SASO is attendance. It is vitally important that each player attend all rehearsals. All the wind and percussion musicians play different individual parts and only the string players have uniform parts. This means that the former are basically playing solo parts and the strings have the major problem of matching each other exactly. Only rehearsing can resolve this serious problem.

Performance is the other part of this essay. Far in advance, a variety of necessary arrangements need resolution: concert dates, advertising and public relations, ticket availability, long distance travel arrangements, music selection and acquiring the parts. Closer to concert dates, uniform review and concert locations are covered for new members. Donors are very important for an orchestra group as ticket sales never cover expenses which include conductor's salary, buying or renting music(each selection can run hundreds of dollars), purchasing percussion instruments, facility, stage and storage rentals, instrument hauling trailer, and "thises and thats" that turn up.

On the day of a concert the volunteer group sets up chairs, risers, checks lighting, piano if called for and PA system. There is also a stage manager, a very important role, in charge who also hauls the instruments from site to site. An hour prior to the program there is a sound check to get the "feel" of the auditorium. At concert time as at

rehearsals, the concert master signals for the tuning A from the oboe. The conductor comes on stage and the concert is underway. Following the program the audience leaves fulfilled and pleased and the musicians pack up and depart with a feeling of accomplishment having performed the composers works correctly. For information about the new 2011-12 SASO season, musicians, tickets, or general information go to [www.sasomusic.org](http://www.sasomusic.org)