



Montana Association of Symphony Orchestras History

The Montana Association of Symphony Orchestras (MASO) was formed in 1981 by a steering committee composed of representatives from six symphonies (Billings, Butte, Bozeman, Great Falls, Helena, and Missoula). Glacier Orchestra and Chorale, Kalispell, joined in 1984 followed by the Miles City Community Orchestra as an associate member in 1985 for a total of eight. **MASO's mission** is to promote, encourage, and assist in the maintenance and development of quality musical programs throughout the state of Montana. MASO's voting membership is made up of seven orchestras, each with up to four members on the board of directors which meets two to three times each year. Since its inception, MASO has provided a number of mission-related programs to promote the exchange of ideas and resources among its member organizations and to encourage and develop music programs, careers, and educational services:

- A statewide catalog of instrumental and orchestral music provides a music exchange program for orchestras to save the considerable cost of commercial score rental or purchase. A catalog for choral music library was created in 2006 as a service to members. In addition MASO budgets \$3,000 annually to purchase additional titles.
- In the early years MASO created a Volunteer of The Year award which recognizes outstanding volunteers in Montana Symphonies. This award identifies and honors volunteers who have made a difference to their organization.
- As part of Montana's Centennial celebration, MASO sponsored a Composition Competition to recognize regional composers and encourage support for their music.
- In 1991 MASO established a biennial Young Artist Competition to recognize young musical talent in the state and guarantees winners in each of three categories a public solo performance with a member orchestra.
- From 1987 through 1994 and again beginning again in 2000, MASO conducted leadership conferences for Montana non-profit organizations and their volunteers.
- In 1996, MASO hired its first part-time executive staff to oversee a Montana residency of the National Symphony Orchestra from Washington, D.C. presenting concerts in all major cities and outreach activities in thirty-five Montana communities.
- From 1997-2002 MASO cooperated with The Montana Power Company, then North Western Energy, to produce the Montana Summer Symphony in Helena. Television broadcasts of this high-quality performance appeared on Montana Public Television and then broadcast nationally to a peak audience of nearly 45 million in 2001.
- As an outgrowth of the National Symphony's Montana residency, MASO began an Educational Outreach assistance program for full-member member orchestras to support their rural and youth educational activities.
- By 2007, income from the "Montana is a Symphony" specialty license plate was earmarked to increase funds available for this project.
- In 2013 MASO resumed providing continuing education workshops for members. Consultants such as Colorado Symphony former CEO and consultant Jim Copenhaver, internationally recognized speaker Doug Kinzey, from Texas, Jan Wilson, former CEO of the League of American Orchestras, Susan Howlett author of Boards On Fire and Patricia Hughes, author and advocate of Gracious Space have been invited to present.
- In 2016 MASO hired a grant writer, and in 2018 MASO added a Young Artist Coordinator to the ranks of the part-time consulting staff. With financial support from the Montana Arts Council, National Endowment for the Arts, Montana's Cultural Trust, Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation, D.A. Davidson Companies, the Gilhousen Foundation and others, MASO is proud to be a statewide coalition that enhances the cultural climate of Montana.