



Most Awesome Brochure from Austin, Texas

By Trevor O'Donnell – Author of 'Marketing the Arts to Death'

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I've written before about the great work Jason Nicholson from the Austin Symphony is doing. Today I'm delighted to let you know that his 2013/14 season brochure has been recognized by peers at the League of American Orchestras as the "Most Awesome Brochure" in his category.



You can see the brochure [here](#). Early reports suggest that the brochure is pulling ahead of last year's, but we're waiting for overall results. What we insiders like and what works aren't always the same thing, of course, so we'll have to hold off on making judgements until the numbers are in. (Surprising as it may seem to some veteran arts professionals, sales results are the only reliable indicators of an orchestra brochure's quality). From a strategic perspective, however, I can identify several elements of this brochure that make it worthy of its awesome designation:

1. It's based on **research into audience motivations**. Jason learned from audience members on the outer fringes of his support system that the experience of enjoying a night out was as important as the content of that night out, so he created a brochure that focused on the customers' experience.
2. It's as **much about the customer as it is about the product**. Commercial marketers know that one of the best ways to sell a product is to show happy people who represent their target demographic actually enjoying the product. This does that beautifully. (Larger orchestras that use their promotional real estate to talk exclusively about how wonderful and important they are could learn a thing or two from this).
3. **It tells a story**. Rather than simply presenting sequential product information, this brochure tells a compelling emotional story about a couple's night at the symphony. It uses narrative to draw consumers in and help them identify more personally with the product. That last shot of the happy couple walking hand-in-hand up the aisle under the words "Subscriber Information" is priceless.
4. **It breaks the fourth wall**. I could write a lengthy treatise about the rhetorical impact of that shot of the patrons and musicians in the same hallway.
5. **It meets the audience where they live**. Arts institutions often maintain a philosophical belief that audiences should aspire to their level, which is fine and may be true, but allowing that philosophy to spill into marketing messages can be suicidal. This brochure avoids condescension by saying, "This is about you," which is exactly what it is.

I'm a huge fan of the work the Austin Symphony Orchestra is doing and I look forward to seeing great things coming from Jason and his team in the future. Congratulations, Jason. Can't wait to hear how the campaign works.

To read Trevor's blog and download his e-book 'Marketing the Arts to Death' -
<http://trevorodonnell.com/>