

Survey of Making Music members (performing groups) January 2016: Payments to professional musicians

Executive Summary

Background

Making Music is frequently asked by members how much others pay the various kinds of professional musicians they engage. The results of this survey provide some useful indications.

Furthermore, we have been in discussion with the Musicians Union (MU) about creating a separate agreement on advisory rates for amateur groups engaging professional musicians. The survey results offer an informed starting point for those discussions.

Context

Amateur music groups overall are estimated to be worth £100m to the economy with Making Music members alone spending around £18.7m per year on professional musicians (Making Music Treasurers Survey 2013), the same amount as reported in the previous survey in 2010.

However, in 2013 the total number of musicians engaged had fallen by 10% to 34,000. It therefore seems that groups' incomes have not significantly grown, so if artists become more expensive, groups engage fewer of them.

In addition to engaging professional artists, groups spent around £1.7m per year with music publishers and commissioned 400 new pieces per year.

Main findings

Numbers

98% of respondents do engage professional musicians, though 8% only a conductor and/or accompanist.

87% engage soloists to sing/play with their group

76% engage conductors

97% of instrumental groups engaged orchestral musicians in the last 3 years

82% of instrumental groups engaged an orchestra leader in the last 3 years

21% of instrumental groups engaged section leaders in the last 3 years

79% of vocal groups engaged an ensemble or orchestra in the last 3 years

The numbers engaged averaged 26 a year, but ranged from 1 (presumably just conductor) to 250. Of those that engaged more than one or two, the central range was between 5 and 40 musicians per year.

Entire ensembles were engaged by vocal groups an average of 4 times, with an average 22 musicians per engagement and an average cost of over £2,700 per engagement.

Whilst to some extent respondents will have been self-selecting, this explains the astonishing numbers of musician engagements discovered by the Treasurers Survey.

Clearly, the amateur music sector contributes considerably, and significantly, to the sustainability of professional music careers and to the professional music sector.

Rates paid

We asked respondents about soloists, choristers, orchestral musicians, percussionists/harpists separately, musical directors/conductors, accompanists, orchestral leaders, and section leaders, and you can find the full results for each category below, including averages, ranges, lowest and highest fees.

Some noteworthy results:

- The range always starts at £0, for all roles
- It seems percussionists/harpists command higher rates; however, in the case of amateur groups, these fees tend to include transport costs which are routinely incurred by these instrumentalists
- By comparison with the last Association of British Orchestras/MU agreement that Making Music was included in, Making Music members often pay more than that agreement, particularly when engaging entire ensembles, probably through ignorance of the terms of the agreement
- Over 50% of respondents also offered additional benefits to the musicians they engaged, from bouquets of flowers or bottles of wine to food between rehearsal and concert, free tickets etc.

Types of contracts

- Conductors were most frequently on annual contracts, though a sizeable proportion of accompanists and even orchestral leaders were, too.
- Some conductors and/or accompanists are engaged per rehearsal
- The other most cited type of engagement was for a concert with rehearsal immediately preceding. This is used for some conductors and accompanists, more frequently for orchestral leaders and most often for section leaders and soloists

How are rates determined by groups?

In the case of individual musicians, including conductors and accompanists, groups will most frequently (86%) decide how much they can spend and then negotiate accordingly.

For entire ensembles, the conductor (61%) would generally do the negotiation, within a prior agreed budget that s/he would have advised on. For the other third of ensemble engagements, groups take advice from fixers or agents as to the rates and then decide whether they can afford them.

Comments throughout the survey suggest again and again that if professional musicians don't agree to the rates offered or ask for fees the group cannot afford, groups would generally change their programme. As their budgets are limited by their own membership subscriptions and the income from their events which generally only just break even, without any public funding or guarantees against loss, amateur music groups have to live within their budgets.

How payments are made

Groups still make the overwhelming number of payments (71%) via cash or cheque on the day of a concert, though annually engaged musicians are often paid at regular intervals instead. 43% used BACS.

Overall, this was a very mixed picture, reflecting the variety of circumstances, types of musicians and engagements – essentially groups are making use of all the possible ways of payment, particularly the least time-consuming.

96% of groups are aware of the need to create papertrails for all payments, though again they do this in a variety of ways (invoices, email agreements, bank statements etc.).

A third of groups, however, were not entirely clear of the legal definitions employed by HMRC to separate employees and self-employed persons, so Making Music will be looking to prepare guidance for members on this topic.

Respondents

414 responses from the 2695 amateur music groups who were sent the survey (it only went to our performing members, not to promoting groups) = 15%

Of the 2695, 1809 are vocal groups (67%) and 886 are instrumental groups (of all kinds) (33%), so it is likely the respondents to the survey are **approximately two thirds vocal and one third instrumental groups**, too.

BUT please note: we did not ask respondents to specify in the survey whether they were from a vocal or instrumental group, hence our distinction below between total respondents and *estimated* vocal or instrumental respondents.

Some definitions

'Professional' means different things to different people in different contexts. A future MU agreement would seek to recommend rates for:

- The full-time musician earning their entire living from performing
- The part-time musician earning part of their living from performing (e.g. music teacher or part-time worker in music industry)

But 'professional' might also encompass – and attract varying levels of payment:

- The professionally trained musician who now has a full-time job doing something else (e.g. full-time music teacher, working in other role in music industry, became an accountant instead)
- The full time music or peripatetic teacher who does not perform professionally but likes to still play, and does so in an amateur orchestra
- The amateur who has come up through the ranks and plays/sings/conducts well enough to be in demand
- The recent music college graduate who is trying to build up a career
- The current (pre) music college student trying to build up experience.

Fees generally refer to concert including one rehearsal, unless specified otherwise.

'Central range' – where this is referenced, we have based this initially on 60% of respondents to a particular question; however, because in many cases so many answers are the same either side of the central range, this means the central range does vary from question to question, and is often much larger than 60%, but it is always at least 60% of respondents.

Research results

1) In the last 3 years, have you engaged professional musicians to perform with your group (including conductors or accompanists)?

Yes –	90%
Only conductor/accompanist –	8%
No –	2%

2) What kinds of musicians have you engaged?

- Soloists to sing/play with our group for concerts (vocal & instrumental) – 87%
- Conductor (all groups) – 76%
- Occasional tutors for section rehearsals/orchestral coaching etc. (all) – 1%

• Accompanist (percentage of all respondents)	63%
• Accompanist (percentage of estimated vocal group respondents)	94%
• Orchestral ensembles to accompany choir (percentage all respondents)	53%
• Orchestral ensembles (percentage estimated vocal groups)	79%
• Choristers to beef up a section (percentage all respondents)	11%
• Choristers to beef up section (percentage estimated vocal groups)	16%
• Organists (percentage of all respondents)	2%
• Organists (percentage of estimated vocal group respondents)	3%

• Orchestral musicians to beef up sections (percentage of all respondents)	32%
• Orchestral musicians (percent. estimated instrumental group resp.s)	97%
• Orchestral leader (percentage of all respondents)	27%
• Orchestral leader (percent. of estimated instrumental group resp.s)	82%
• Section leader(s) (percentage of all respondents)	7%
• Section leader(s) (percent. of estimated instrumental group resp.s)	21%

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- Other -
 - 'professional'? includes music college students and part-time professionals
 - Workshop leader
 - Composer
 - note: 'conductor' includes: leader for Big Band; Samba maestro

3) On average how many professional musicians do you engage each year?

Average: 26 each per year (range: 1 to 250)

Includes: longer contracts; one off gigs; repeated one off gigs.

93% engage more than 1 or 2 a year. Of these 93%, the central range engage between 5 and 40 musicians a year.

19% engage fewer musicians (3 or 4) and 19% engage more (between 42 and 250).

4) (Last 3 years) How much do you pay SOLOISTS (excluding expenses)?

Average fee: £269 (range from £0 to £1100)

Central range: £150 - £350

18% pay less (from £0 to £146) and 18% pay more (from £375 to £1100)

Lowest average fee: £177 (range from £0 to £1100)

Central range: £100 - £250

16% pay less (from £0 to £83) and 16% pay more (from £260 to £1100)

Highest average fee: £385 (range from £0 to £2000)

Central range: £200 - £500

19% pay less (from £0 to £195) and 19% pay more (from £540 to £2000)

5. (Last 3 years) How much do you pay CHORISTERS (excluding expenses)?

Standard fee per concert: £35 (range: £0 - £180)
 Central range: £0 - £80
 20% pay more (from £100 - £180)

Lowest fee per concert: £32 (range: £0 - £160)
 Central range: £0 - £80
 19% pay more (from £100 to £160)

Highest fee per concert: £41 (range: £0 - £200)
 Central range: £0 - £100
 15% pay more (from £105 to £200)

6. (Last 3 years) How much do you pay individual ORCHESTRAL MUSICIANS (NOT percussion or harp) (excluding expenses)?

Standard fee per concert: £97 (range: £0 - £450)
 Central range: £50 - £130
 16% pay less (£0 - £45) and 16% pay more (£140 - £450)

Lowest fee per concert: £77 (range: £0 - £350)
 Central range: £30 - £110
 18% pay less (£0 - £35) and 18% pay more (£120 - £350)

Highest fee per concert: £144 (range: £0 - £900)
 Central range: £80 - £200
 15% pay less (£0 - £75) and 15% pay more (£220 - £900)

7. (Last 3 years) How much do you pay PERCUSSIONISTS and HARPISTS (excluding expenses)?

Standard fee per concert: £117 (range: £0 - £480)
 Central range: £60 - £150
 20% pay less (£0 - £50) and 20% pay more (£160-£480)

Lowest fee per concert: £100 (range: £0 - £460)
 Central range: £50 - £135
 20% pay less (£0 - £40) and 20% pay more (£145 - £460)

Highest fee per concert: £148 (range: £0 - £548)
 Central range: £75 - £200
 19% pay less (£0 - £70) and 19% pay more (£220 - £548)

	Last ABO/MU agreement	MM central/average	MM harp/percussion	Orchestra leader	Section leader	Entire orchestra
Principal	£108.20			£143 (£100 - £183)		
Sub-principal	£100.80		£117 (£60 - £150)		£66 (£0 - £115)	
Tutti	£95	£97 (£50 - £130)				Average £125 (£83 - £133)

8. How do you determine the rates you will pay individual instrumentalists?

- We decide what fee we can afford and then negotiate directly with individual musicians/agents – **86%**
- Conductor/MD recommends and/or negotiates – **7%**
- We have been using the ABO/MU agreement Making Music rates for orchestral musicians – **5%**
 - *We were not aware of the ABO/MU agreement – 18%*
- Whole orchestra price agreed, maybe through fixer or agent – **3%**
- Use subsidised/fixed rate schemes (Making Music AYCA/Help Musicians' artists/Josephine Baker Trust/RCM/RAM/RNCM) – **2%**
- Other
 - Free
 - Use semi-professionals/students/young musicians at the start of their career (*implication: cost less than full rates*)
 - If can't find musician for price we can afford, likely to change programme

9. Please tell us the actual costs of engaging an orchestra, if you do so

If groups engaged an orchestra, they did so an average times: 4x (range 1x to 14x)
Central range: 2x - 6x
15% only engaged an orchestra once and 15% engaged an orchestra more frequently (between 7x and 14x)

Average number of musicians involved per engagement: 22 (range from 3 to 68)
Central range: 12 – 30
In 15% of engagements there are fewer musicians (3-10) and in 15% of engagements there are more musicians involved (32-68)

Average cost per orchestra per engagement: £2,740 (range £100 - £10,000!)
Central range: £1,000 - £4,000
19% cost less (£100 - £960) and 19% cost more (£4,100 - £10,000).

10. What does that sum include?

Rehearsal hours – 3
Number of sessions – 2 (i.e. one rehearsal and one concert)

11. How do you determine the rates you pay instrumental ensembles/orchestras?

- We/with help from MD decide on a fee we can afford and then negotiate with individual musicians or whole orchestras directly - **61%**
- We use a fixer (orchestra management, or leader, or agent/agency) and pay the rates they ask – **39%**
- We don't know – MD has budget/overall fee and does it all – **6%**
- We have been using the ABO/MU agreement – **5%**
 - *We were not aware of the ABO/MU agreement – 17%*

12. How much are you paying your *musical director/choral conductor*?

Per year total, excluding expenses – average	£3,137 (range: £0 - £13,000)
Central range:	£1,370 - £4,500
20% pay less (£0 - £1,300) and 20% pay more (£4,675 - £13,000)	
Per rehearsal – average	£78 (range: £0 - £335)
Central range:	£50 - £105
19% pay less (£0 - £45) and 19% pay more (£108 - £335)	
Per concert day (including rehearsal) – average	£369 (range: £0 - £2,400)
Central range:	£150 - £500
19% pay less (£0 - £130) and 19% pay more (£508 - £2,400)	
Per concert day (no rehearsal) – average	£146 (range: £0 - £700)
Central range:	£0 - £250
20% pay more than that (£335 - £700)	

We conclude the concert day overwhelmingly includes a rehearsal with the conductor as there were only 56 respondents to ‘concert day no rehearsal’ (183 answered the option ‘concert day including rehearsal’).

13. How much are you paying your *accompanist*?

Per year total, excluding expenses, average	£1,882 (range: £0 - £5,224)
Central range:	£1,120 - £2,385
20% pay less (£0 - £1,115) and 20% pay more (£2,470 - £5,224)	
Per rehearsal, average	£54 (range: £0 - £228)
Central range:	£38 - £70
20% pay less (£0 - £37) and 20% pay more (£71 - £228)	
Per concert day (including rehearsal), average	£162 (range: £0 - £500)
Central range:	£100 - £230
20% pay less (£0 - £85) and 20% pay more (£232 - £500)	
Per concert (no rehearsal), average	£101 (range: £0 - £380)
Central range:	£0 - £200
17% pay more (£250 - £380)	

From the number of respondents, we conclude accompanists are less likely than conductors to have an annual contract [88 versus 163] and more likely to be paid per rehearsal or concert only [88 versus 153/115].

Accompanists, like conductors, are far more likely to be engaged for a concert day including a rehearsal [115 respondents] than just for the concert [35 respondents].

You might also like to compare these figures with those published by ISM recently, following a survey of their members who work as accompanists:

<http://www.ism.org/advice/accompanists-fees>

14. How much are you paying your orchestral leader?

Per year total, excluding expenses, average - £767 (range £0 - £3,500)
Central range - £0 - £1,650
20% pay more (£1,700 - £3,500)

Per rehearsal, average - £45 (range £0 - £119)
Central range - £0 - £70
20% pay more (£75 - £119)

Per concert day (including rehearsal), average - £143 (range £0 - £475)
Central range - £100 - £183
20% pay less (£0 - £90) and 20% pay more (£190 - £475)

Per concert day (no rehearsal) , average - £43 (range £0 - £150)
Central range - £0 - £80
20% pay more (£100 - £150)

Far fewer orchestral leaders are engaged on an annual contract than is even the case for accompanists (33 respondents vs. 88 for accompanists and 163 for conductors).

From the number of respondents we conclude, too, that the most frequent mode of engagement for orchestral leaders is for a concert with rehearsal (73 respondents vs 33 for annual contract, 32 for rehearsals, and 14 for concert without rehearsal).

15. How much are you paying your section leader(s)

Per year total, excluding expenses, average - £212 (range £0 - £2,000)
Central range - £0 - £0
Only 17% pay section leader(s) at all on an annual basis (£648 - £2,000)

Per rehearsal, average - £15 (range £0 - £87)
Central range - £0 - £35
18% pay more (£40 - £87)

Per concert day (including rehearsal), average - £66 (range £0 - £150)
Central range - £0 - £115
20% pay more (£116 - £150)

Per concert day (no rehearsal) , average - £9 (range £0 - £85)
Central range - £0 - £0
Only 19% pay at all (£28 - £85)

Even fewer section leader(s) are engaged on an annual basis than orchestral leaders, and if at all they are engaged for concert days, including rehearsal.

16. How do you pay the professional musicians you engage?

- Cash in hand/cheque on the day to each musician - **71%**
- Cheque or bank transfer after the event - **43%**
- Via agent/fixer on production of invoice/list - **13%**
- At regular intervals monthly/termly/via cheque/standing order/BACS – **6%**
- Other –
 - Varies, depending on which type of musician – e.g. regular conductor/ accompanist by bank transfer or cheque at regular intervals, soloists usually by cheque on the day or shortly afterwards, orchestra often by cash on the day or cheque to the representative
 - Depends what the musician wants, so any of cash/cheque/bank transfer pre or post event
 - Two cases of paying in advance

The overwhelming majority of respondents use several different methods to pay the various musicians they engage, depending on whether they are long-term or one-off casual engagements .

17. & 19. What records to you keep of payments to musicians?

96% of members are aware of the need to keep records of payments.

How they do this, however, varies. The responses and comments to this question were so mixed that it is difficult to draw significant conclusions from the answers to each option. Below, therefore, please find a list of the methods used by members to keep track of payments.

- receipts signed by recipients (individuals or fixer)
- cheque book stubs
- online receipt for BACS payments
- Standing Order/Direct Debit records
- bank statements online/paper
- invoices from individuals, fixer, agent
- list of names from fixer/agent
- email trail of agreed fee and any other payments
- contracts (electronic or paper) (one-off gigs)
- long-term contracts (regular conductor etc.)
- annual budget that payments are recorded against

18. Are you aware of the difference between employed and self-employed and how to ensure you set up the right relationship with any freelance musicians you engage in order to protect your group from any comeback from HMRC?

- Yes - 62%
- No - 36%
- Other - 2% (comments revealing significant uncertainty)

The answers to this question show that over one third of respondents are not aware of the difference and/or do not know how to set up the right relationship.

This indicates that Making Music needs to issue detailed guidance on this for members, including suggested wording or templates for receipts, contracts and letters of engagement.

20. Do you give the musicians you engage other benefits (e.g. free food between rehearsal and concert, travel expenses, free tickets) or 'pay' them in benefits (e.g. bottles of wine!)?

Yes	13%
No	28%
Sometimes	13%
• Gifts (bottle of wine/bouquet of flowers/other)	19%
• Travel expenses	17%
• Free food/refreshments	27%
• Free tickets	11%
• Other/miscellaneous (lifts, parking spaces, etc...)	2%

21. Any other comments – 74 respondents

The selected comments below illustrate some of the breadth of the responses overall.

- I have major issues with the definition "professional" musician. Our conductor is a talented, qualified music teacher who gigs occasionally. He conducts our orchestra as a pledge of commitment to community music, understanding well that we cannot afford to give him more than minimal expenses.
- More helpful if payments were broken down by hourly rates
- Looking forward to finding out how much other (comparable) societies pay conductors/soloists/orchestra players!!
- dayrates for workshop leaders mentioned: £400 / £300 / £600
- Some in-person training on appropriate rates for musicians, as well as how to find them and negotiate appropriate contracts with them, might be useful
- Clear guidance from Making Music regarding HMRC requirements (together with HMRC references) when paying any musician would be hugely helpful.
- To contain costs we have on several occasions chosen a reduction of the orchestral accompaniment to a version for string quartet
- MD serves as fixer for orchestra, sending in an invoice post-concert including commission and expenses. Charges per orchestra musician are not itemised
- We have a permanent Musical Director and a permanent rehearsal accompanist. Our normal programme is five concerts a year (two on consecutive days in December, same programme); most are accompanied by an orchestra, some just organ or piano; most need professional soloists, usually four, but not always. The average number of professional musicians would be therefore a seriously unhelpful figure even if I could calculate it!
- We are a small (25-30) choir. Occasionally we run 1 day workshops for which we pay a professional in the order of £600. Apart from that we use good non-MU or semi-pro (e.g. they are music teachers/ retired) at e.g. £700 for a quartet/ £100 for a local event.
- Some of these issues have been the cause of some difficulties in the past, and the advice of experienced fixers is to remember that the performers do not have to perform for us, and that it is in the societies' interest to look after and encourage good performers. We value a good reputation, which includes paying properly, as the performers request, and keeping proper records.
- We appreciate musicians should be paid the going rate and we do our best to offer reasonable fees but we are a small society with a limited audience and so we need to fundraise hard in order to afford soloists and /or an orchestra (especially an orchestra!). We are fortunate to have built up a small group of soloists who are happy to sing with us for the fees we offer (we have approached others who ask for £300 and so are out of our league) and we have a regional orchestra who are also pleased to play for us - we would love to have them every year but can only manage every 2 or 3 years with huge effort! Worth it though - always super concerts!!

- We are in the process of tightening up our contractual arrangements with soloists. Until recently these have been alarmingly informal. Advice on such things very much welcome!
- Our choir is, essentially, voluntary - voluntary conductor, accompanist and singers. Occasionally we engage a professional orchestra and pay them (but often not the pianist/organist as they are part of the group already). We are all professional/semi-professional musicians who sing in this choir for fun/friendship/a laugh!
- We pay our 5 professional staff an hourly fee for rehearsals/tuition/admin, plus a standard fee for performances.
- When using instrumental accompaniment in our choral concerts, the size of the group varies between 5 and 30, so the average figure given is purely that, and we have smaller groups more frequently than a larger group.
- Our works vary greatly according to funds available and so cannot say average musicians employed per year. It could be between 4 and 30!
- I would like to emphasise that the fees paid to musicians, conductor and accompanist are those which our society can afford. In certain cases, our conductor and accompanist are able to help us by introducing us to musicians who are starting their careers and are willing to perform at the fees which we can afford to pay.
- Funds are always tight so we use many local soloists - either our own orchestra members, or local music students. The audiences appear to appreciate this, and we are able to keep our costs down. Percussion is almost always the most expensive extra.
- I have tried to answer the survey accurately but the varied nature of what we do means that few of the answers fit the question exactly.
- Even though we are 'amateur' musicians we have great respect for those who make their living through music and would never ask for their time and talent for nothing - or for a fee that might be considered unacceptable.
- Some professional soloists choose what they want to play or trial and agree a reduced fee.
- Soloist rates - no average given as rate depends on whether or not soloist is school or college student, young inexperienced professional or more mature experienced professional.