

ANNUAL BUDGET PROJECTIONS FOR A COMPOSER

THE GOAL

- At the most basic level, a composer should aim to cover all of his/her annual expenditures by the annual income produced via the activities listed below and not through supplementation of a non-music job.
- In the best case scenario, a composer will not only cover all annual expenditures through the income produced, but also be able to use the money towards living expenses (health care, rent/mortgage, food, car, etc.). In other words, your goal is to pay yourself to be a full-time composer.
- A composer's income can vary greatly from one year to the next! Save as much as you can in more profitable years.

MUSIC INCOME

- commission fees for new works
- royalties from performances of your works, as collected by ASCAP, BMI, or SESAC
- royalties from commercial CD sales
- music score sales (either through a publisher or via self-publishing)
- competitions with cash prizes
- residence activity fees (presenting a master class on your music or other topics, teaching composition lessons to university students, etc.)
- private lesson teaching (composition, instrumental, etc.)
- other types of work that capitalize on your musical skill set, including arranging, orchestrating, music copying, recording concerts, editing/producing CDs, building and maintaining websites for composers or musicians, moderating concerts, etc.

MUSIC EXPENDITURES

- postage for packages
- travel (airplane tickets, road trips to concerts, hotel costs)
- food (while you're traveling, if you pay for a conductor's dinner, etc.)
- supplies (paper and cardstock of different sizes, coil binding machine and coils, laser-quality printer, CDs and cases, mailing envelopes)
- concert tickets (not for anything that features your own music – for which you should ask for comps – but to hear and meet ensembles, composers, conductors, etc.)
- headshots (every 2-3 years)
- dry cleaning (must be performance clothes only)
- music recordings and scores (for you to study)
- professional memberships (American Composers Forum, the Recording Academy, College Music Society, etc.)
- computer hardware (laptop, hard drive, screen, a good set of speakers, etc.)
- computer software (Sibelius or Finale, Microsoft Word, a website designing program like Rapidweaver or Dreamweaver, etc.)
- webhosting for your website
- Music conference fees (for participation in conference events or a table in the exhibition hall) for music service organizations, such as Chamber Music America, Chorus America, League of American Orchestras, etc.
- Gifts to thank performers (bottles of wine, chocolates, gift certificates, etc.)

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL CLASSICAL MUSIC COMPOSER BUDGET LOOK LIKE?

Note that the numbers below are calculated with no other earned income from outside jobs (music or non-music). Very few composers can make a living solely from composing-related work alone. Most have part- or full-time positions to flesh out their money flow.

For many composers, as their rate of composition-related work increases, they decrease the amount of “other” jobs they maintain.

Also note that there is no true “typical” classical music composer budget – you will each carve out your own unique path to making a living. Nonetheless, these numbers will give you a rough idea of what your future income sources and expenditures might be. Please note that the most determined composers (those who chase down opportunities rather than waiting for opportunities to come to them) are typically the ones who fare better monetarily.

	Emerging Composer (right out of grad school)	Mid-Career Composer 10-15 years after school
Income		
Commission fees	\$1,500	\$20,000
Performance royalties	\$100	\$3,000
CD sales royalties	\$0	\$100
Score sales and rentals	\$0	\$750
Prizes	\$500	\$2000
Activity fees (speaking engagements, university residences)	\$0	\$500
Teaching (studio lessons)	\$2000	\$5000+
Writing gigs (CD liner notes, articles)	\$1500	\$3000
Adjudication panels	\$0	\$2000
TOTAL	\$8,100	\$36,350
Expenditures		
Headshots (every 2-3 years)	\$200	\$200
Postage	\$700	\$500
Travel	\$3000	\$5000
Food (while traveling)	\$350	\$1000
Supplies	\$1000	\$600
Computer hardware	\$500	\$300
Computer software	\$300	\$300
Concert tickets	\$350	\$1500
Memberships	\$200	\$350
Web hosting	\$300	\$500
Conference fees	\$200	\$400
TOTAL	\$7,100	\$10,650
TOTAL PROFIT	\$1,000	\$25,700