

Joshua Idio

MUHS 604-01

Seminar in Historical Research

Dr. Laura Dolp

December 8, 2021

## Music Publishing Survey Results

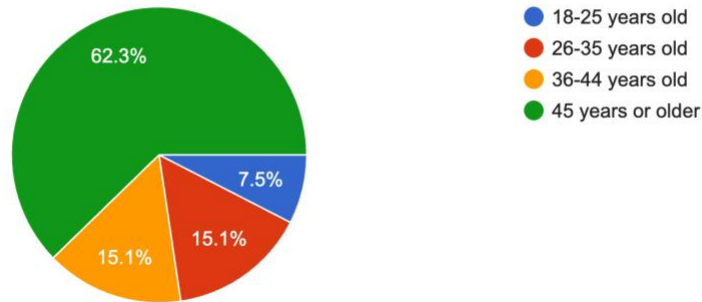
As of 12/1/2021

53 Participants, reached out from various social media groups pertaining to music composition, including the following:

- *String Orchestra Directors and Composers*, Facebook Group
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/451214925286326>
- *New Release Print Music for Concert Band and Ensembles*, Facebook Group
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/721926427974077/>
- *J. W. Pepper My Score Composers*, Facebook Group
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/myscore/>
- *Sheet Music for Concert Band, Brass Band, Orchestra and Jazz Ensemble*, Facebook Group
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/sheetmusicforbandandorchestra/>
- *Wind Ensemble Music Promotions*, Facebook Group
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/853308681540518>
- *New Music for Concert Band*, Facebook Group
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1820787294817406/>
- *New Release Print Music for Concert Band and Ensembles*, Facebook Group
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/721926427974077/>
- *SMP Youtube Music Videos*, Facebook Group
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1435324123473955>

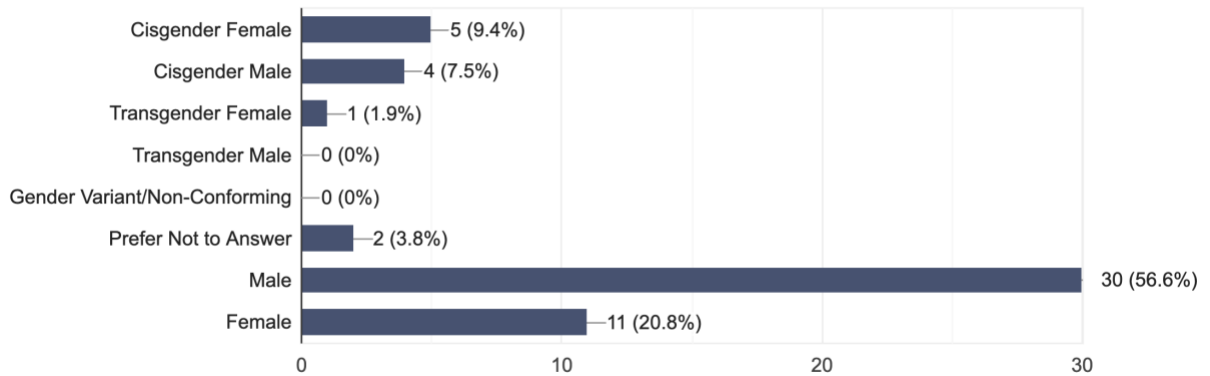
### What is your age?

53 responses



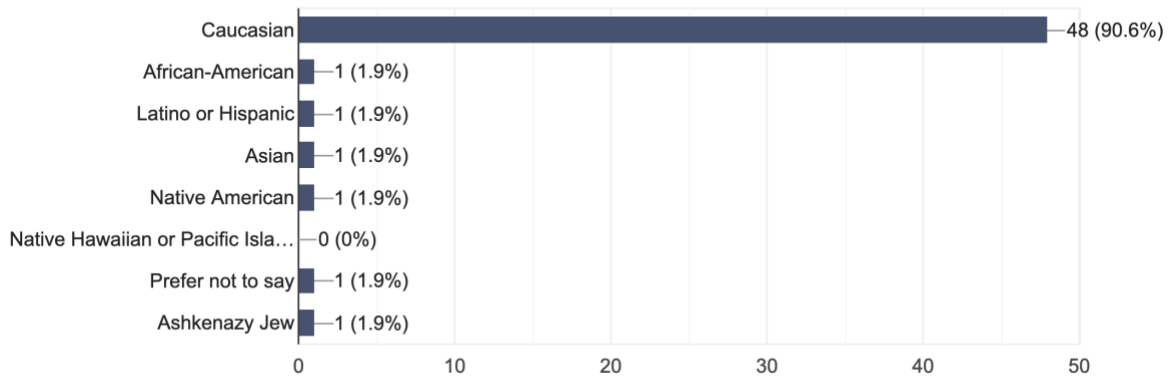
### To which gender identity do you most identify? Select that all apply

53 responses



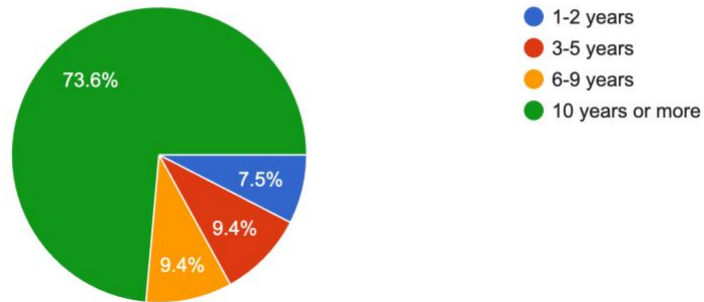
### Please specify your ethnicity. You may choose more than one.

53 responses



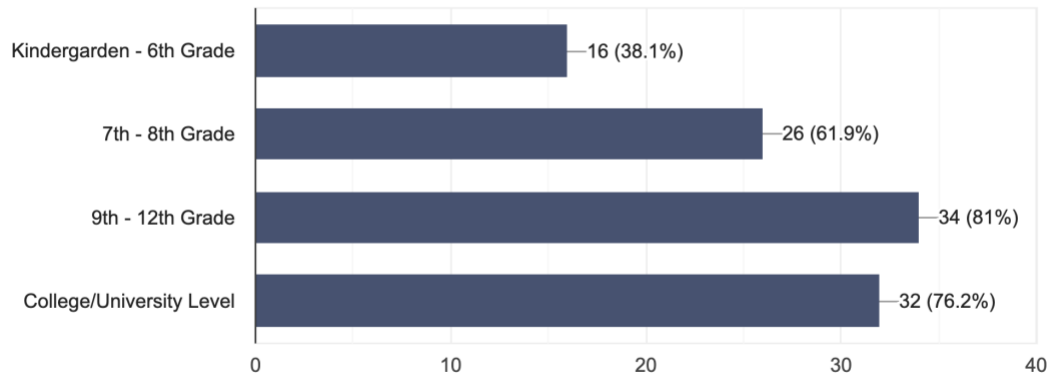
### How long have you been working as a composer/arranger?

53 responses



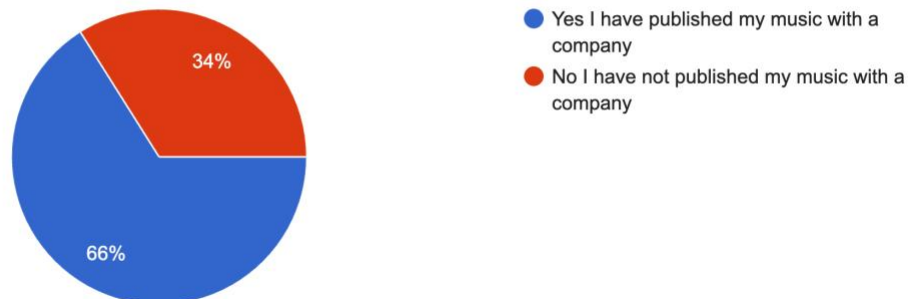
### If you compose music for school ensembles, what grades do you write for?

42 responses

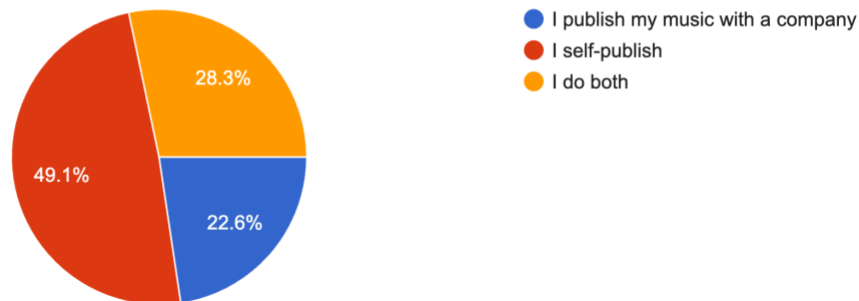


### Have you ever published your music with a company?

53 responses



Do you currently publish some or all of your music with a company or self-publish? Note: Choosing an answer will move you to a new section pertaining...with both to go to the first section of the survey  
53 responses



### Questions pertaining to: Publishing Companies

Does your publishing company accept specific forms of compositions? Forms include: genre, instrumentation, etc.

28 responses



Question: If they do not accept all forms of compositions, please explain. Example: They only accept choral music.

14 Responses:

Sacred  
band and orchestra  
Some accept all forms, others only church related music  
They do not publishing jazz band music.  
Each has their own focus, but most accept choral, keyboard, and handbell music of various sorts.  
Genera specific  
They do not accept music for large ensembles, e.g., symphony orchestras  
Only Orchestra compositions

I work with many companies  
 I believe, Walton and earthsongs only accept choral music.  
 Contemporary Classical  
 Only musical theatre  
 Some are instrumental only, some are choral and instrumental, some focus on only original concert music vs arrangements. Most avoid higher grade levels or only publish minimal grade 4+  
 Only standard instrumentation.

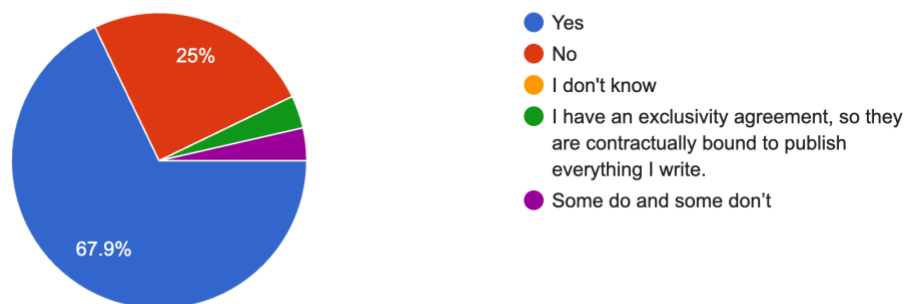
Does your publishing company accept specific difficulty/grade-levels of compositions? If other, please explain.

28 responses



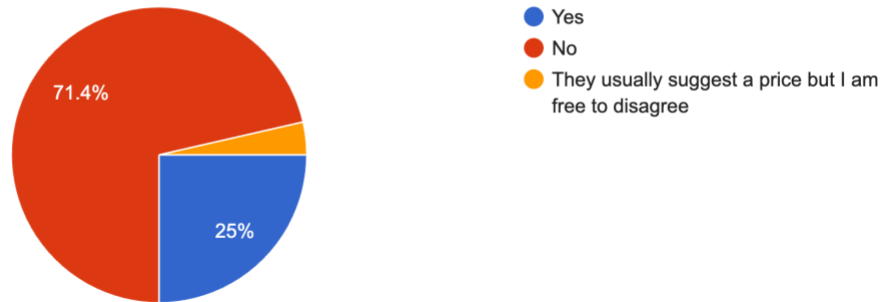
Does your music need to be submitted for review/consideration before it gets published with your company? If other, please explain.

28 responses



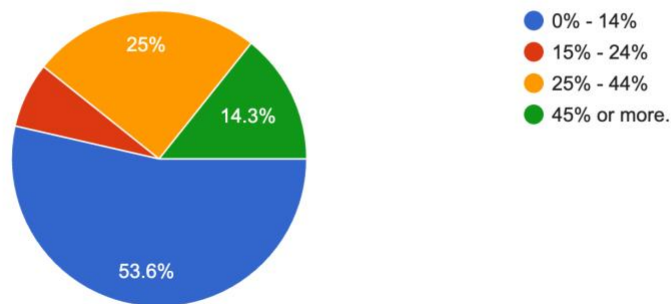
Does your company let you set the price point for your music? If other, please explain.

28 responses



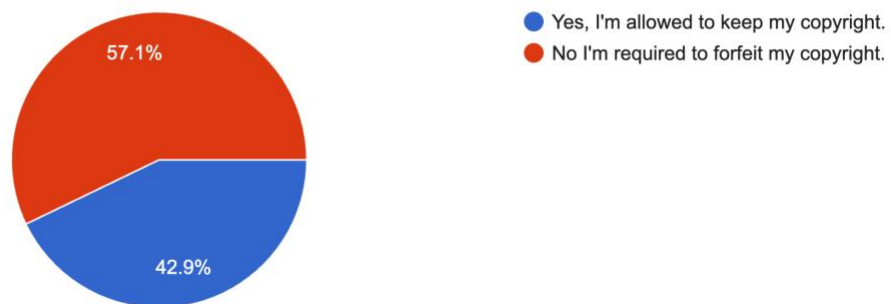
How much does your company pay you in royalties?

28 responses



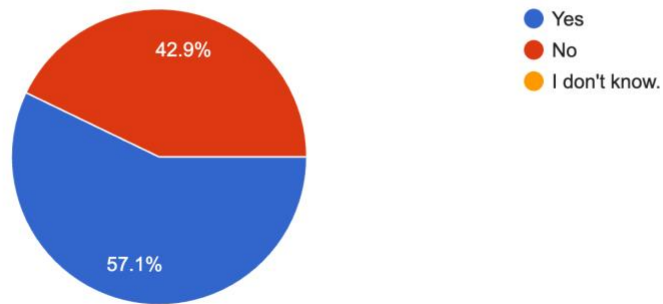
Does your company allow you to keep your copyright?

28 responses



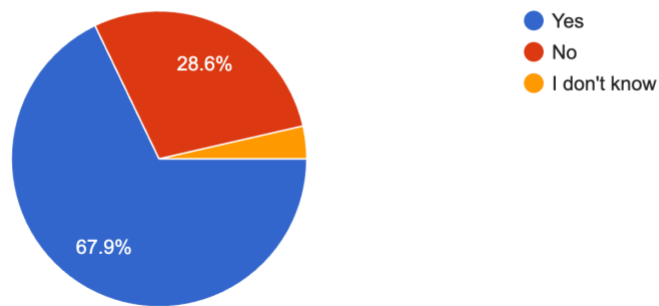
Does your company provide engraving/editing services?

28 responses



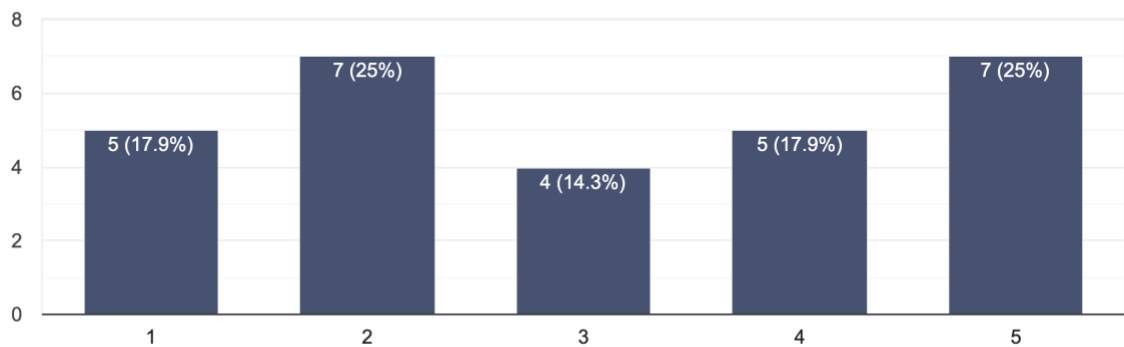
Does your company require original composition files for engraving/editing purposes?

28 responses



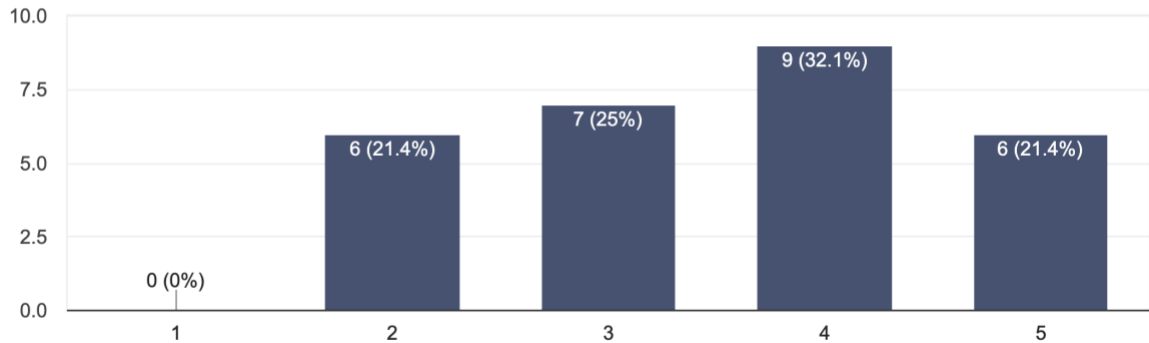
How frequently has your publishing company promoted your music?

28 responses



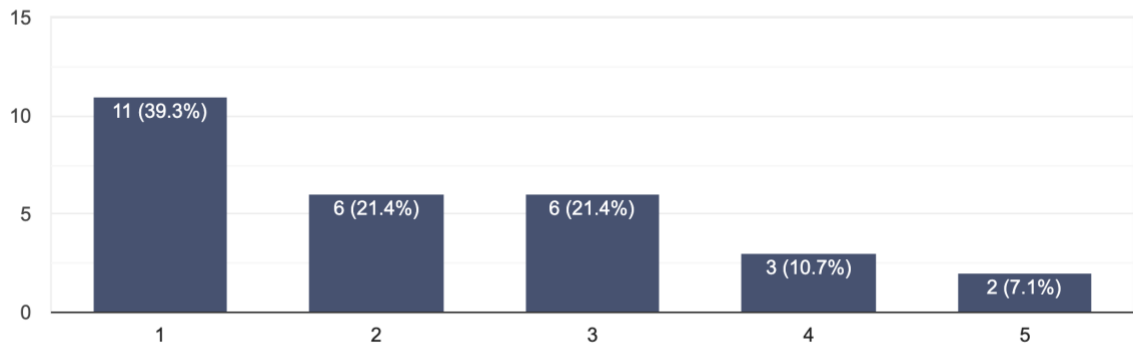
On a scale of 1-5, how frequently has your music been purchased through your publishing company?

28 responses



On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to search for your music on your publishing company website?

28 responses



Question: Have you had any bad experiences or incidents with your publishing company? If so, please explain.

18 Responses:

No

Yes...wait time for music review was too long

No incidents.

website WAY too slow and frequent computer breakdowns

Some companies aren't the most prompt at paying royalties.

n/a

none

NO

Some promote and others do not. The company sets the time of publication (except one).



With earthsongs, yes. In an attempt, I believe, to be efficient in paper and ink, they engraved my score for SATB and piano to be miniscule, and I have had many complaints from performers. I have yet to ask them to engrave the piece. The original work, before publication, I engraved myself, and it is a superior job.

Benign neglect

Just no traffic

One of the companies is very slow to communicate. Other than that, they are fine.

Poor production quality that required replacing the first printing, thereby holding up the release of the product for over a year.

Question: What made you choose to sell your music through publishing companies?

25 Responses:

Better publicity and easier to "find"

They have reach and too much work to do it o my own.

The do all the work to get items sold and me paid

Church run publishing company

By searching for a platform to sell

They took care of copyright registration, printing, advertising via mini-scores/CD's.

Distribution, sales clout.

Personal attention and willingness to release music of any instrumentation.

i make good money

The company is a great marketer.

Handbells (my main type of composition) have a limited number of publishing companies that sell and promote that type of music, so I use those companies, as they're good about promoting music to the appropriate directors and ensembles, increasing my chances of sales.

Thought it was worth trying at least once

Better marketing and wider audience

It is easy

They contacted me and asked to publish the compositions.

Paperwork

Originally it was the only way. Now it is (in one case) fir the distribution

With earthsongs, it was a special opportunity to get on the Anton Armstrong Choral Series, and with Walton, it was to get on with the Lynne Gackle Choral Series. These are my personal colleagues, but they are also big names, and they helped me get my foot in the door for further career development. I do have my regrets, however.

I did so in conjunction with the release of my first solo CD

The advertising resources and recognizable name they have

I work for my publishing company, but my music is treated the same as a published composer, the main difference being that I am not subjected to the selection process.

It was the book writer's idea. I agreed

It's where I started and as I've become more known I've started working with more publishers.

I tend to choose who I send certain pieces to based on the style of the catalogue and the style of working with the editor.

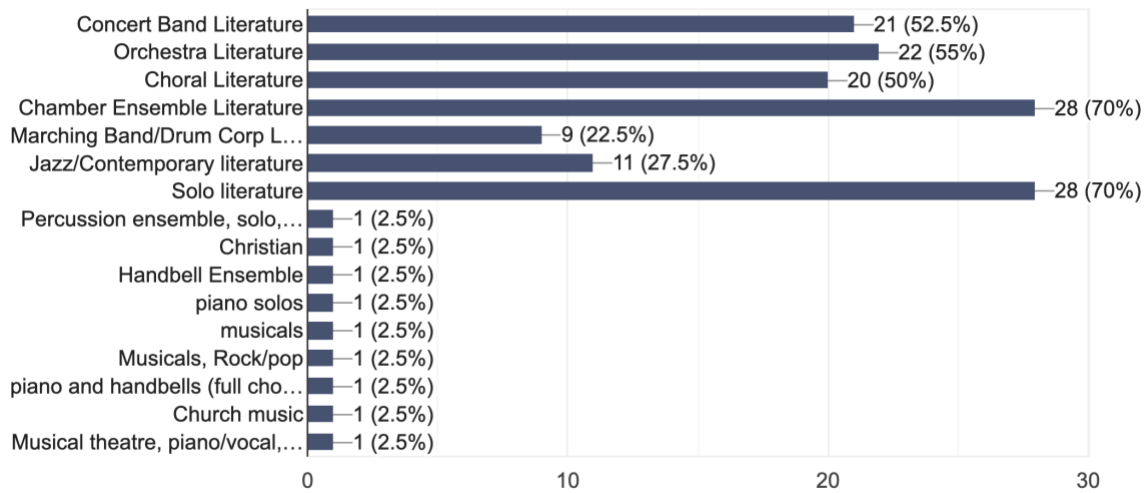
Legitimacy, time and headache of self-publishing, and my skill set is more as a composer than administrator.

My lack of experience as a self-publisher. Now, I don't do that.

### Questions pertaining to: Self-Publishing

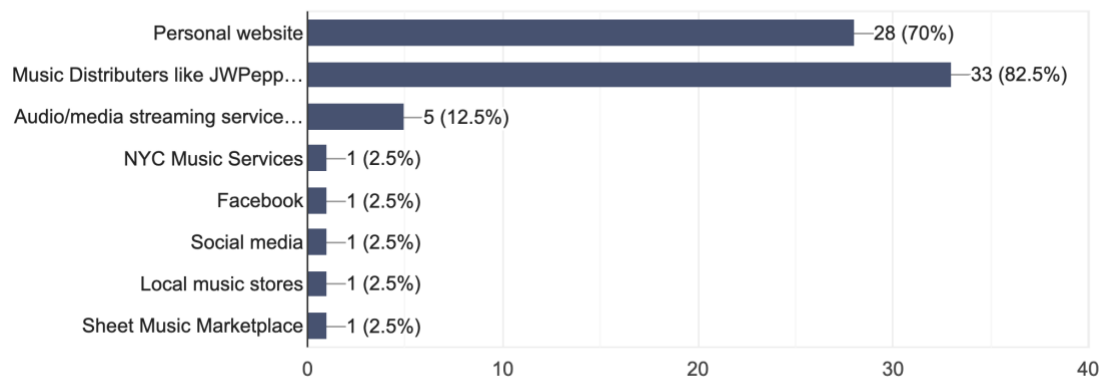
#### What types of music do you compose?

40 responses



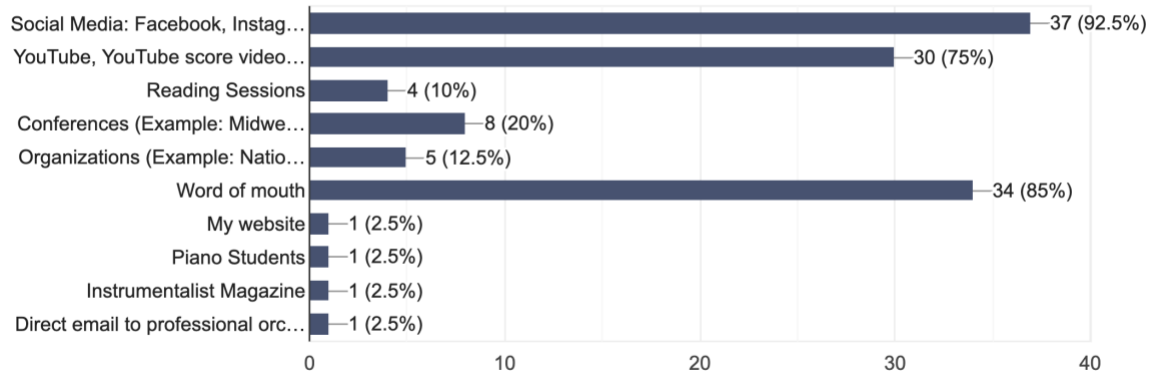
#### What are some ways in which you sell your music?

40 responses



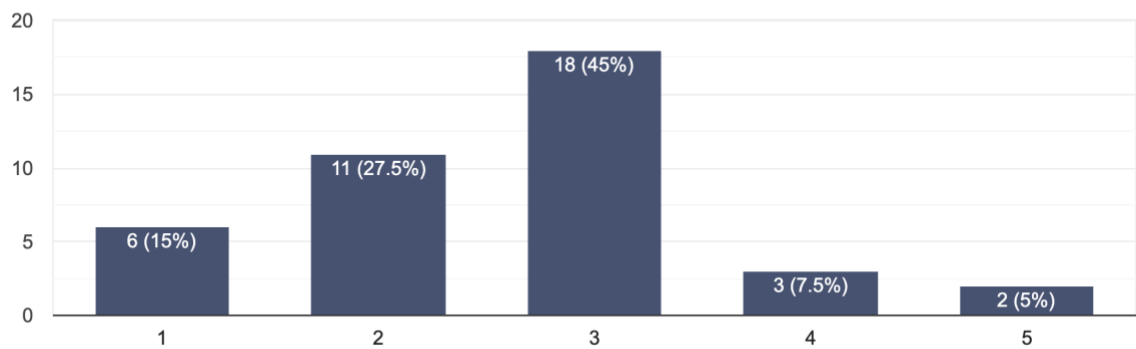
### How have you promoted your music?

40 responses



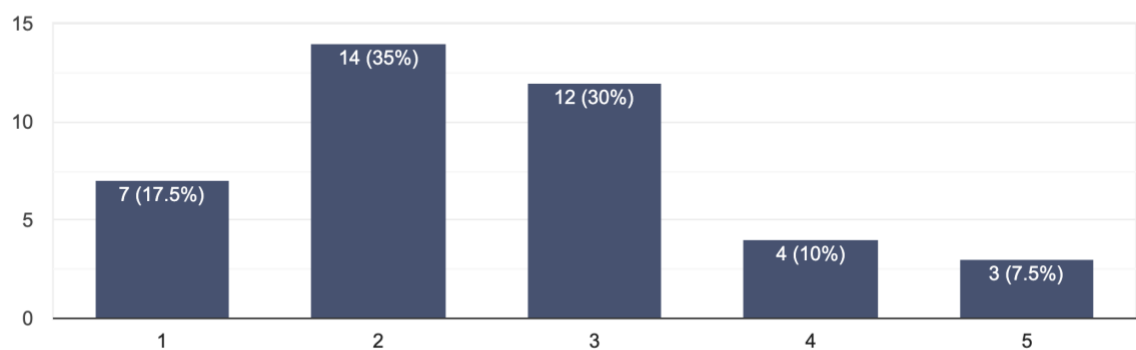
### On a scale of 1-5, how effective would you say you promoting your music has been in selling them?

40 responses



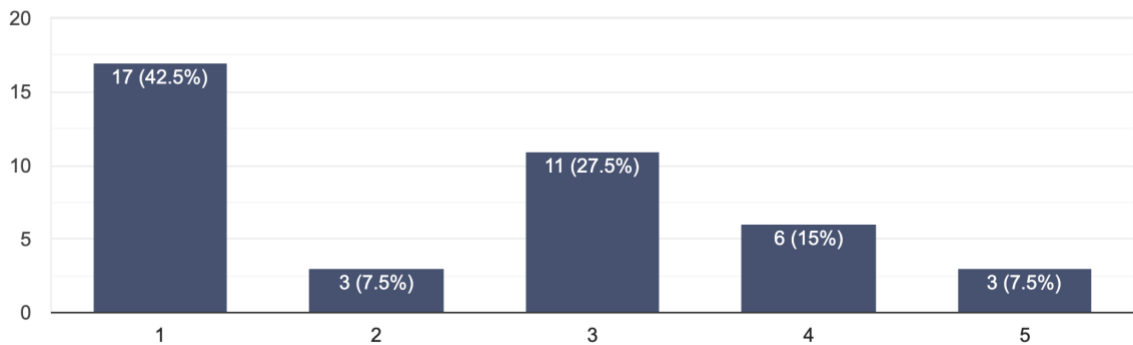
### On a scale of 1-5, how easy is it to search for your music on the web?

40 responses



On a scale of 1-5, how frequently has your music been purchased directly from yourself?

40 responses



Question: What would you say would be the hardest aspect about self-publishing, such as printing issues, promoting music, editing/engraving, etc.? Please explain.

40 Responses:

promotion

Promoting music

For me I want quality in what I sell so it is time consuming engraving in Finale, editing, creating the parts, editing and proof reading them. To make sure everything is good I play everything and record the parts to make sure there are no problems and get a recording of the finished work to include on the JW Pepper and Sheet Music Plus websites for people to hear what it sounds like.

Promotion

People are stuck thinking they can only get music from traditional publishers or that only traditional publishers sell music of value. The largest road block I think is people's outdated perception of sheet music.

Self Promotion, publicity

Engraving and promoting

Promoting. You have to do all of your own advertising.

Promoting music

rising above the huge plethora of options to show oneself as distinct and desirable marketing

having to wear many hats and doing it all

Creating a catalog of my music

None

Promotion/ building an audience

Definitely printing and shipping.

Self-promotion. I hate it.

Promotion and advertising are by far the most difficult -- nearly every other aspect of self-publishing is something I was already doing in some form, and so was already well-versed in.

Updating my website

Commission from sites like SMP and MusicaNeo

I don't like self promotion but it's required to get started. Ideally, having others spread the word about your music is best as it validates and advertises at the same time. It feels like new music from current composers are a dime a dozen so sifting through it all to find music that fits the ensemble is quite challenging. Granted, it's very rewarding, but it seems that many directors want to play things that they "know" will work (either from their own prior experience or from a colleague's verbal stamp of approval). Doing this whole process consistently well is the biggest challenge, in my opinion.

Spreading word

Getting live recordings and promoting

Marketing

Writing the music is the hardest part. It is relatively easy to keep my website current and process payments through PayPal. I do all my own score preparation with Sibelius and sell the music only as PDFs. So everything, with the exception of composing, is much easier than dealing with a publisher.

Being recognized out of the myriad of choices

Promoting would be the hardest. Printing/engraving I definitely prefer doing myself as most 'professional' publishers don't follow standard rules or consistency.

As a vocal and choral composer and self-publisher, copyright laws and dealing with royalties for copyright permissions contracts. It is extremely difficult for an individual who is not already an attorney or someone who is deeply established with a mainstream/traditional publisher, to do this paperwork.

Advertising my music on social media and Sheet Music.com

Cutting through the big suppliers, getting Copyright Clearance

Cover design and getting live audio recordings

I don't promote my music much, if someone finds me and is interested in my music, then that is great, but I don't really have any resources other than talking to folks I know.

Promotion is the top issue for my self-published works. It is almost impossible to find them, and I don't have the time to put them out there.

The greatest challenge in self-publishing is the time involved, which includes composing or arranging (the most enjoyable aspect); editing; engraving and formatting score and parts; "packaging" score, parts, and a cover page; producing an mp3 demo; producing a video demo; writing a description/program note/website copy; creating a page for the piece on my personal website; uploading to Sheet Music Plus; uploading a video to Youtube; uploading a video to a post on my Facebook page; uploading a video to a post to a Facebook group.

Promoting, but mostly because I am lousy at promoting.

Promotion is difficult. Websites like JWPepper put your self-published music at the end of the search engine.

Promoting music. I think people often just skip over posts about music for sale, especially since some composers post too often and drown out others' voices.

Promoting is the most challenging. Understanding and applying a business model that anticipates demand is pure guesswork.

Question: What made you choose to sell your music yourself?

37 Responses:

It seemed easier than trying to find publishing companies and hope they accept my pieces to publish.

I was writing more than the publishing companies had room for in their upcoming catalogues. I also wanted to write for more specific instrument sizes and groupings that were less "marketable" to everyone. Ultimately, I wanted my music to be out there for others to have access to and I could more quickly and readily do it myself.

It's a hobby, not a job. Publishers wouldn't accept my works anyway because there's too small of a market for them. I'm also not a fan of the low commissions traditional publishers offer and, most importantly, the fact that they take my copyright.

I tried one major publisher and was rejected. I then tried to sell my music myself...

Rejection from publisher, but friends asking to purchase it

Control over product and pricing.

Too hard to get published by the majors

students local proximity

Existential forces

necessity

I want some independence. Also, it's hard to get a deal with a publisher

I prefer to keep control over my creations

No real alternative any more.

I started self-publishing during the pandemic, when I could get out music that handbell groups really needed, and in a much faster time-frame than a traditional publisher (a traditional publisher can take from 4-18 months from acceptance to have a piece in print, while for my self-published works, it can be less than a week), as well as to publish pieces a traditional publisher won't accept because they're not likely to recoup their expenses. The (drastically) higher royalty rate is just a nice bonus.

I compose for fun and want to maintain rights over my music so I CAN grant purchasers the rights to record and post performances, arrange, etc.

Publishers rarely accept new composers

This keeps me, the composer, in control of the rights to my music. I didn't want to write something and get pennies on the dollar for my work.

I want to retain rights to my music, not have to go through my publisher to do anything different with it.

Better profits and control of my works

Control

More control

At the time, it was my only option.

The big publishers and retailers do very little to promote my earlier music. It is often difficult for people to obtain my music from publishers. The companies that published my earlier music NEVER pay me any royalties even though I know that my published pieces have been performed. The publishers do not communicate with me, and I find it nearly impossible to get any response from them when I try to communicate with them.

Easier than dealing with a publisher

Highest quality typesetting, print on demand, and larger profit margin, plus no links to others - completely independent.

keep control

In most cases, self-publishing is the only way I will get second performances of my music.

Music publishers have told me "no" more times than they have "yes."

Too many rejections from publishers

To keep more of my own profit. Publishers take min 50%

Dissatisfaction with the options for school orchestra

Complete control

Ease of access and low enough interest that its easy to manage on my own

Initially, I specialized in sacred music arrangements for small ensembles (brass quintets) and instrumental solos with piano/organ accompaniment, and I did not envision much opportunity to submit to a publisher. I enjoy the freedom to write/arrange what I choose; I prefer to maintain control of my copyright; I enjoy a greater profit than if I sold through another publisher; and I enjoy the relationships I have established through email with individuals and ensembles that have purchased music on my website. I now also publish music for concert band (mostly young/developing band Grades 1-3) and some choral and vocal music.

I can track what sells best, and I actually see money.

Didn't fit the standard mold of publishing, too much of a niche composition/arrangement, or someone else just published a similar arrangement.

Better royalties and more control. Plus there seem to be very few publishing companies who take unsolicited manuscripts. How do you even get a foot in the door with that?

I didn't like the royalty rates or terms of agreement that were thrust upon me from other publishers. In selling my music myself, I find it a challenge to "pay myself" an appropriate rate while managing costs, wholesale discounts, shipping costs and administrative time. But my self-publishing company and catalog are still quite small, and quite eclectic.

## General

Question: If you are also a music educator, how does your teaching profession affect the way you write your music? If so, please explain.

36 Responses:

N/A

Not a music educator

Some pieces I write for specific things students are working on.

I wrote for my students in mind.

The skill level of ensemble

I have written music specifically for my ensembles, with or without a clear educational component.

I understand student abilities

Not a "music educator"

I dont write deliberately difficult music without a serious artistic req.

It doesn't.

It limits the time I have to write. However, it also keeps me in practice regarding the appropriate technical demands at each grade level.

I want my music to be available for students

Must be rhythmically clear

I occasionally write for specific instances related to my job, but most of my compositional work is for fun outside of it!

I feel I know what is needed from the music for the performer

I teach middle level bands. Knowing how band programs work, and understanding pedagogy and sequence, it informs my work and keeps my music as being very approachable (meaning that many bands can play it, experience success, sound good, and have fun doing it).

Basically, I write what works...not just what I want to hear.

I'm more apt to write with student abilities in mind

I am retired, but I had a better idea of what was educational and met my program needs.

I write music with lots of details BECAUSE of my teaching background

I taught at a university for 35 years and was able to grow immeasurably as a composer because my performer colleagues were eager to play my music themselves and had their students perform my music as well. I rarely write music expressly for students.

I often arrange a piece for a specific student then I publish the piece for students in that level of difficulty.

I write for the ensembles I have to make the music I need sound the way I want it to sound

I initially write my music FOR my ensembles, then make them available for sale afterwards. I don't write music just to be a 'money spinner'.

playable for the various levels

I like to write useful music

I have been a music educator in the past. I know the strengths and weaknesses of voice types for a variety of age groups like the back of my hand.

I have taught high school music for 30 years and so I know the capabilities of that level best.

I try to make my music accessible to school players. I take into mind the technical requirements and the type of music they like to play.

It heavily informs my writing. My goal is to make accessible, fun, engaging, and educational pieces, in that order

In writing small ensemble music, I have always strived for accessibility — music that is relatively easy to rehearse, moderate in instrument ranges and technical demands, and satisfying to both performers and listeners. As a band director, I have written a number of warm-ups, chorale settings, and technical studies for middle- and high-school bands; and as an arranger, I have leaned toward music for young/developing band, using scoring techniques I have learned from experience with my own bands and from books, articles, online resources, and clinics.

Absolutely! I wrote with educational purposes in mind - specifics needs of my students and trends of key instructional topics.

It completely influences and inspires my writing. I'm close to retirement age but I may teach a few more years because being in the classroom fuels my creativity.

I teach private students as opposed to a school position, but it still affects how I think about writing for that level. And I'm more likely to want to write for them.

I am not an educator. However, I have modified my music to better conform to the expectations of the JW Pepper editors and to conform to a category.



Question: If you are a music educator, how does your teaching profession affect how you publish your music?

29 Responses:

N/A

I don't think it does for me.

No time to self publish

Level

It doesn't

Not a "music educator"

it has little effect.

It doesn't.

With limited time, it is nice to have someone else promote and handle orders.

Not a music educator.

It does not.

N/a

I do MUCH less publishing now. In fact I even cancelled my website. I still have my business license and sell only via word of mouth. But I learned that the self promotion thing just wasn't for me.

None

Understanding student's abilities at various levels.

It doesn't

It really has nothing to do with how or why I publish my music myself.

I often arrange a piece for a specific student then I publish the piece for students in that level of difficulty.

I'm more consistent about formatting

NA

Greatly - my music always needs educational values and concepts, but by enjoyable by the performers, and be presented professionally

I prefer to share in the IMSLP

It's very frustrating how many people tell you you cannot sell your music because you are not an "approved vendor." For many schools, the only "approved vendor" is JW Pepper, and to have my music distributed through them, I have to give up a 50% cut for digital sales and a 66% cut for print-on-demand sales.

I try to engage school directors but we are drowned out by big publishers.

Regardless of copyright, I think most most music educators photocopy parts when they need them. With self-published, downloadable PDFs, permission to print/photocopy scores and parts is granted to the purchaser (usually with the purchaser's name and purchase date watermarked on the music). On my music for young/developing band, I try to format everything on 8.5x11-inch pages so that it is easy to print and copy without needing to manipulate scale on the printer or copy machine.

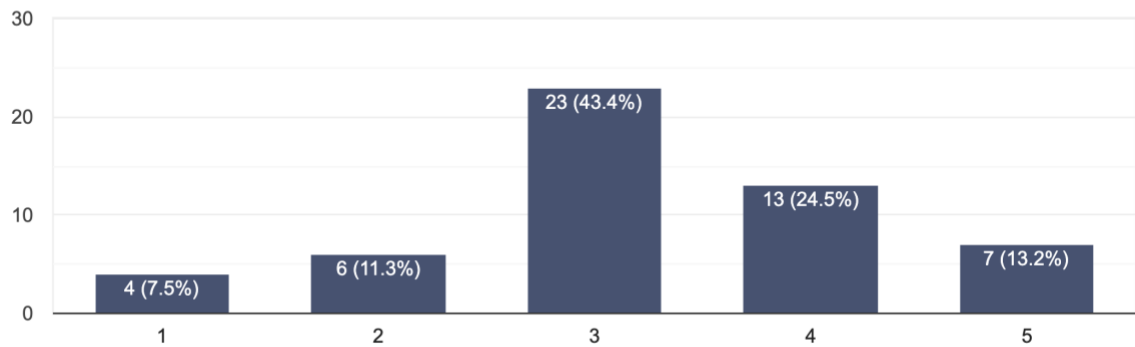
Teaching is very time consuming so it doesn't always allow for composing and editing and proofing time.

It gives me the opportunity to self-publish and use in the classroom. I also offer my music for free to other teachers in my district before submitting to standard publishers. I don't generally try to market or sell the pieces until I realize they won't fit a publisher's needs.

As a private teacher, it doesn't affect me in this way.

Which publishing method would you recommend to future composers/arrangers?

53 responses



Question: If you could give one bit of advice to future composers/arrangers about publishing, what would it be?

45 Responses:

Write the type of music you like and know. Strive for quality in your work. If you can get in with a publishing company, great, if not, don't be afraid to self publish.

Write for the music - not the marketability.

Give all sections good stuff to play

Never ever give up your copyright. You'll lose all control over your artistic work, letting it be swallowed by a black hole.

Understand copyrights

Quality and reputation is important

Make sure your music gets heard, regardless of venue

If you self publish, get a website. Also, any music you want to protect should be registered with the Copyright Office.

pursue a contract with a known publisher with determination, but be prepared to self-pub.

Do your homework; work with publishers your work will fit.

Relationships are the key to selling music in the twenty-first century.

Do your homework and go with what you feel is best for you. Both methods work for many people. It all boils down to the specific needs and desires of specific people.

just do it

Try to find a deal with a traditional publisher, but also do self publishing in the meanwhile.

There could be some pieces that you just keep your copyright for. Eventually, you might get more money with it than you would get with a traditional publisher

Start early and create a system that works for you. Consistency, accessibility, quality, and quantity are all keys to success. If you can, actively find groups to perform your music.

Stick with long established, well known publishers

Find someone to work with that understands you and your music and how to distribute it the right way.

Your education should include some basic business classes. Graphic design wouldn't hurt. Traditional publishing is still a worthwhile endeavor, as doing so helps you get your composing chops honed, shows you what it takes to publish, and gets your name recognized and respected in your respective field. Once you're established, self-publishing becomes viable as musicians will already know your name and the quality of your work, and thus will pay attention to your self-published pieces.

Make sure you understand all the rights that you have as the composer before you sign any of them away!

Massive amounts of music will bring more attention to you

Make your music playable, accessible, and fun. Write frequently. Like playing an instrument, you'll only improve your craft if you do it ...a lot. Write everything firm. Even simple ideas...write it all down. Keep backup copies. Digitally or otherwise. Have friends and colleagues play your music, even for sight reading, just to get word out there. If it's good, people will want it. Be open to feedback. Be willing to change and improve yourself and your work. Nothing we write is perfect. Don't take it personally when people don't buy your stuff. This is harder than it sounds. Directors need music that fits the band, their schedule, and the energy and ability of those in the music making process.

It's a new world now.

Start with a publisher to make a name for yourself and then gradually do self publishing. I was getting published for 18 years before I tried self publishing.

Do lots of work. The more you do, the better you will get.

Always keep writing and learning.

Self publishing is best for most composers of classical music.

Compose and arrange with a specific target buyer and audience in mind.

Always write or arrange even when it's bad

Have someone else proof the files so that the score and parts match. Composers have trouble proofing their own compositions.

Learn about the history of music typesetting to help understand why we follow certain rules (it's not always just about the right dots on the page).

Learn how to promote; network; don't be obnoxious

If you have business skills, self publish

Point out the white supremacy of the way we deal with music publishing.

Minoritized/Marginalized artists do not enjoy access to traditional publishing the same way our white educated counterparts (some of the people we go to college with) do. In a time where we have more composers than ever composing more music than ever, we need to demolish the barriers that exist to hold up the elitist and sometimes racist culture of classical music. Traditional/Mainstream publishers also have a part in the demolition.

To sell your music you must be a good composer as well as technological proficient.

Be brave!

It's not necessary but you sometimes get a small check in the mail

Be patient and keep at it

Vet each company to make sure that they are a good fit for you. Publishing isn't for everybody, and it is a big deal to essentially forfeit your ownership of your art.

Develop your own style and compose or arrange what is satisfying to you, without regard for what is saleable; but at the same time, be realistic about what kind of music people buy. The more extra-ordinary your music is, the more limited your market may be.

Get the rights first

Keep at it! If writing for educational purposes make sure you write recognizable Melodies with good educational backbone. Understand the instruments you are writing for and more specifically the capabilities on students at various levels and why.

Try to have real students play your music and get feedback from the teacher and students. I give my students music under a different name because I want honest and real feedback. My latest piece, one student said, "That piece isn't too bad." I laughed because I know she would have said something very different if she knew I had written the piece. Also, score study.

There are so many great composers right now. Just go to JWPepper or one of the major websites and look at scores and listen. You can learn a lot about structure and the constraints of writing for students. Finally, many publishers list their grade level requirements. Excelcia Music has some of the most specific lists. <https://excelciamusic.com/excelcia-music-submission/>. Finally, finally - keep writing, keep editing and keep trying.

Choose yourself - don't wait for permission from the gatekeepers. There are so many ways to get your music out there now. Even if you want to publish with a traditional company, you can still self-publish until you get to that point.

Unless you are famous as a composer, you will be lumped into a very large group of competitors. Many publishers don't promote music from all their composers equally. Anything you can do to make your music stand out and be noticed is a plus. Know your "audience".

That is, know who you are writing music for and learn what makes that kind of music successful. I like writing more eclectic works, but I think that detracts from more commercial success.

Question: Anything to suggest? All feedback is welcomed!

20 Responses:

Good luck.

( I have a few pieces to be published by my church publisher however none are published yet and this this makes some questions regarding current purchase, promotion and sales biased) Don't give up.

Self publishing is a pain in as much you must be available 24/7 to respond to potential buyers. This is another big advantage of a national print publisher - they have at least normal office hours.

there is a serious oversupply of self-published musics. Composer/arrangers be warned...

I also self publish; there's no way to answer both sets of questions.

Good survey!

It's all about marketing.

Good survey. Good luck!

If there is a real mass market for the kind of music you write (basically choral music and educational band music), then a publishing company may be a good partner for you. If your are writing classical concert music, I think you can do best for both distribution and profit by publishing your music yourself on line. You need to use Sibelius or other state-of-the-art music notation software and have and maintain a website.

I hope you will publish the results of this survey where we can see it.

Great survey

ask how many works published; how many have been purchased

The gender portion I found offensive as a trans woman. Is there any way to update the gender section to not separate "Transgender Female" from "Female" and "Transgender Male" from "Male"? If not, can you at least change "Female" to "Cisgender Female" and "Male" to "Cisgender Male"? This could also be amended by creating a "Select all that apply" option. Non-binary, I think, should also be an option. You'd have to ask a non-binary person if they think GNC is sufficient. If I created the form, I would leave it as: Female Male Non-binary (Fill in the Blank) If you wanted to know if they had trans respondents, then yes, they can make it a separate question: Do you identify as transgender? Y/N

Keep trying!

Unfortunately, no one really cares about what we do. So, do whatever makes you happy Find the balance between creativity and marketability, it does exist but is challenging to achieve

Some of these questions were confusing or not applicable. For example when asking which publishing method - I've only experienced one method which skews my answer. Also I published with so many publishers that the answers are varied.

Your question about royalty rates doesn't take into account the basis on which royalties are calculated. Retail price? Wholesale price? Advances? Guaranteed promotion or priority treatment. Maybe look at composer/publisher agreements and their terms.