

21st Century Patronage

FAQs

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How much does commissioning music cost?

The cost depends on the size of the new composition (whether it is written for soloist, small ensemble or orchestra), the length of the composition, and the reputation and career level of the composer. Below is a chart prepared by Meet The Composer based on research conducted in 2003. This guide can help you estimate costs.

Instrumentation	Under 10 min.	10-25 min.	Over 25 min.
Solo or Duo	\$2,000-6,500	\$3,500-15,000	\$9,000-20,000
Trio or Quartet	\$4,000-10,000	\$8,000-25,000	\$15,000-35,000
Chorus	\$4,000-15,000	\$8,000-30,000	\$15,000-40,000
Chamber or Jazz Orchestra	\$7,000-21,000	\$12,000-46,000	\$19,000-63,000
Full Orchestra	\$9,500-26,000	\$14,000-66,000	\$30,000-103,000
Concerto: add (20-30%)			
Opera/Music Theater	One-Act \$20,000-116,000	Full Length \$56,000-465,000	

The cost of a commission is determined by a number of factors including the composer's reputation, the length of the proposed work, and the number of performers. The table above lists midrange commissioning fees. Young composers receiving their first commission may accept lower fees, while a number of highly accomplished and seasoned composers may well command higher rates. It is important to keep in mind that these figures do not include the fees paid to the performers of the new work.

Administrative Fees: Meet The Composer (MTC) can assist individual donors, composers, performers and institutions in a variety of ways to develop and manage commissioning projects. An administration fee is charged (20%-30% of the total project cost); this fee, as well as costs for copying the music, are included in the estimates above.

How can I find a composer who's right for my project?

Meet The Composer can provide help in identifying the right composer for your project. MTC has a long history of commissioning hundreds of works in all styles and genres, and has knowledge of and access to the most interesting composers writing music today. (Composers interested in being considered for a commission should click [here](#).)

How long does it take a composer to write a piece of music?

A good "rule of thumb" is to allow 18–24 months from the signing of an agreement until the work has been completed and is ready to be given to the musicians to prepare for performance. A smaller scale work, for example a set of songs for piano and voice, might be written in a few months. Another time factor to consider is how soon the selected composer is available to begin work on your project.

What else do I need to know about the commissioning process?

Just as a play needs actors to translate the playwright's words into a theatrical performance, music requires performers to bring to life the notes on a page. Identifying a soloist or ensemble is one of the first steps in the commissioning process. Meet The Composer can work with the commissioner to identify performers with a

commitment to performing new work. Something else to keep in mind is that once the piece is composed, a master score and parts for the performers must be prepared by a professional copyist; the costs for copying the music have been calculated and included in the fee ranges on the opposite page.

Who actually owns the music?

It is standard practice that composers retain the rights to their own work, and so the legal ownership of the piece remains with the composer. However, the commissioner is acknowledged in many ways—on the first page of the musical score, on any official recording, in the performance program and often in other written materials. It is customary that the commissioner is given a presentation copy of the completed score, almost always specially inscribed by the composer. An archive tape may be provided as well. Most of all, the commissioner experiences a satisfying sense of participation in the creation of a new work of music.

Is commissioning tax deductible?

Yes, but only when a nonprofit organization, such as Meet The Composer, is part of the project.

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