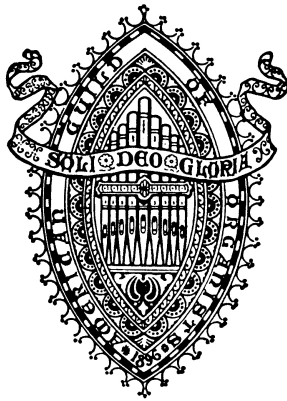


Guidelines for Compensation

of Musicians

Employed by Religious Institutions

2007



Lehigh Valley Chapter

American Guild of Organists

Lehigh Valley Chapter

[www.lvago.org](http://www.lvago.org)

Dean	James Matz
Placement	Doris Hetzel
Certification and Continuing Education	Maria Prochnau, AAGO
Professional Concerns	Pauline Fox, AAGO

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not to discriminate on the basis of sex, age, disability,  
race, color, religion, marital status, veteran's status,  
national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.

Guidelines revised 2007  
by Pauline Fox

## PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS

### Contracts

A carefully prepared contract benefits all parties by outlining the mutual expectations for a stated period of time, the compensation arrangements, and the termination guidelines, thus reducing the possibility of future misunderstanding. The contract should detail areas of responsibilities of the employee and of the employer, as discussed in the interview process. The wise candidate will ensure that verbal agreements concerning office help, teaching privileges, and copyright ownership are clearly stated in the contract. It should be stated that the right to play for all weddings and funerals includes the expectation that services of other organists will be used only with the permission of the incumbent, who shall still receive his/her normal fee.

Model contracts that can be tailored to individual situations may be downloaded at no charge from the Guild web site [www.agohq.org](http://www.agohq.org) under Career Development.

### Codes

Guild members are expected to abide by high standards of professionalism and competency in preparation, performance and relationships with colleagues. The Code of Ethics and the Code of Professional Standards are printed in each member's Yearbook and are also available from the Guild web site under Professional Development.

The Guild also offers resources for Education and Certification, and publications such as Interviewing for a Job, and the Professional Concerns Handbook.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is hoped that this 2007 revision of *Guidelines for Compensation*, prepared for the Lehigh Valley Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, will be useful both to musicians and to those who hire and work with such musicians—search committees, clergy, worship committees, and councils.

During the preparation for the 1993 guidelines, a survey of Chapter members revealed a high degree of satisfaction concerning relationships in the workplace and in the work itself. Unfortunately, that satisfaction was not as high in regard to compensation, which many organists and choir directors felt was below a fair standard for their educational backgrounds, skills, experience, and hours of work. The relatively lower salaries paid to the musicians sometimes appeared to be inconsistent in comparison with total yearly budgets of many religious institutions. Since then, members have continued to indicate satisfaction concerning their work and workplace relationships. Yet, an inconsistency in salary seems to remain.

This booklet presents topics in order from writing the initial job description to finalizing a contract. Most Chapter members are part-time musicians. Fair compensation will help assure employers of high standards of music and performance, and will attract young people to study sacred music. The Guild also encourages members to constantly strive to improve skills and to uphold a high level of commitment to the ministry of music.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

## SUGGESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS AND AUDITIONS

An interview for any position is most informative if all parties clearly articulate their expectations of each other's roles. Before announcing an opening, the search committee should decide what skills are most important – such as hymn playing, conducting, performance on organ or other instrument – and set the criteria that will determine the final decision. Written job descriptions and identical audition requirements (including any specific music) should be sent to all candidates well in advance. The candidate will find it helpful to become familiar with denominational background, range of ages and interests within the congregation, etc. The interviews/auditions should be held with all committee members present, and within a short enough period of time that all candidates can be compared effectively. All applicants should be notified of the final decision.

The following points contribute to a mutually satisfactory understanding:

1. Practice time on the organ should be made available before the audition. At least two contrasting pieces, plus accompaniment of hymns or chant, should be demonstrated. If a finalist is asked to conduct a rehearsal or service, compensation should be paid. The committee may also wish to attend a service where the candidate is presently employed.
2. Compensation should be discussed openly, stating what is offered, increments of payments, withholding of taxes and pension, vacations, and benefits. Discussion should clarify responsibilities concerning provision for maintenance of the organ and other instruments, procedures regarding budgets, and the availability of office secretarial help. Other matters for discussion include the right to play for all weddings and funerals, the granting of teaching privileges using the institution's instruments, the hiring of substitute organists, and copyright ownership by the musician of any compositions created by him/her during the employment.
3. All parties should openly discuss expectations concerning musical styles, repertoire, performance media, lines of communication, accountability, budgets, and procedures for annual reviews, re-negotiation, or grievances.
4. It is very desirable that the finalist(s) meet the clergy staff, with opportunity to clarify mutual expectations of each other's roles. A tour of the building, choral library, and offices is helpful.

## SUGGESTED FEES FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

*Mileage of 33 cents per mile may be charged if rehearsals and services exceed 20 miles per round trip.*

*The charge for contracting singers/instrumentalists should be no less than \$15 per person hired.*

*Higher fees are reasonable for unusual requests.*

### WEDDINGS

*Couples should be encouraged to view an early consultation with the service musician as a valuable foundation for wedding planning.*

*The fee is often agreed upon and paid directly between bride and musician.*

1. \$100-\$350 Wedding service
2. \$35-\$100/hour Additional time at the wedding rehearsal or with other musicians

### FUNERALS

*The employer should be responsible for communicating the musician's fee to the funeral director and for ensuring that payment is received.*

1. \$100-\$200 Funeral service
2. \$35-\$100/hour Additional rehearsal with other musicians

### SUBSTITUTES

*Worship services may include a brief pre-service choral warm-up or review of music learned and rehearsed previously.*

1. \$100-\$250 Organist only, one service  
\$50-\$150 Organist only, additional service not requiring extra preparation, in one time frame
2. \$150-\$250 Organist-director, one service  
\$75-\$175 Organist-director, additional service not requiring extra preparation, in one time frame
3. \$35-\$100/hour Rehearsal fee, depending on responsibility and amount of preparation required

## THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

The American Guild of Organists is a national professional association whose purpose is to promote the organ in its historic and evolving roles, to encourage excellence in the performance of organ and choral music, and to provide a forum for mutual support, inspiration, education, and certification of Guild members. Founded in 1896, the AGO now serves more than 21,000 members in 350 chapters throughout the world.

The Guild publishes learning resources, offers a series of examinations for professional certification, sponsors competitions in performance and composition, and holds national and regional conventions. The official monthly journal *The American Organist* provides practical and scholarly features as well as timely news concerning sacred music.

Local chapters hold regular meetings featuring performances and seminars, and offer placement services and substitute referrals. A valuable benefit of Guild membership is the network of communication that provides contact with local and national colleagues. All AGO members are guided by the Guild Code of Ethics and a Code of Professional Standards.

The American Guild of Organists National Headquarters  
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1260  
New York, NY 10115  
Telephone: 212-870-2310  
Fax: 212-870-2163

[www.agohq.org](http://www.agohq.org)

[info@agohq.org](mailto:info@agohq.org)

DETERMINATION OF SALARY

Two considerations are essential in the determination of salary for the organist and/or director. The first is an understanding of the extent of the expected responsibilities, reflected in the average number of hours required per week, whether in the worship service, in the institution or home office, or elsewhere. The second is the musician’s training, skills, and experience.

The work of a church or synagogue musician covers a broad spectrum of activities, some visible and some not. Visible activities such as worship services and choral rehearsals require preparation. For example, in academia a typical expectation is that three hours of preparation are necessary for every hour of class or “visible work.”

The following example shows one method of estimating average time requirements for the preparation of music. Such preparation includes the items on the following page, “Responsibilities of the Musician.” Employers need to consider that while it sometimes appears to laypersons that summer schedules may require little preparation time, other seasons of the year such as Christmas, Lent, and Easter require many more hours of planning and preparation.

Sample Formula for Estimating Workload

<u>Visible activity</u>	<u>Average weekly hours</u>
One worship service	1.5
Pre-service choral warm-up	.5
Mid-week choral rehearsal	2.0
Staff/planning meeting	<u>1.0</u>
	<u>5.0</u> visible hours

For organist only, multiply by 2 or more.  
 For organist/director, multiply by 3 or more.  
 Actual weekly work time would be 10-18 hours.

An expanded example of this formula is found in “Time Requirements Worksheet” under Professional Development at [www.agohq.org](http://www.agohq.org).

2007 Guide for Annual Base Salary Range  
 Adapted for Lehigh Valley Chapter (-2%, rounded) from national AGO recommendations

NOTE: Benefits valued at 20-30% of base should be added.

<u>Level of Training</u>	<u>Full Time (35+ hrs.)</u>	<u>3/4 (30 hrs.)</u>	<u>1/2 (20 hrs.)</u>	<u>3/8 (15 hrs.)</u>	<u>1/4 (10 hrs.)</u>
Associate degree, private study, or Service Playing Certificate	\$45,200 \$33,710	\$33,710 \$24,820	\$24,820 \$18,080	\$18,080 \$13,170	\$13,170 \$9,490
Bachelor's degree in Organ/Sacred Music, or CAGO Certificate	\$56,030 \$42,560	\$42,560 \$30,800	\$30,800 \$22,370	\$22,370 \$16,240	\$16,240 \$11,640
Master's degree in Organ/Sacred Music, ChM, or AAGO Certificate	\$64,660 \$48,420	\$48,420 \$35,540	\$35,540 \$25,900	\$25,900 \$18,700	\$18,700 \$13,480
Doctorate in Organ/Sacred Music, or FAGO Certificate	\$72,780 \$54,540	\$54,540 \$39,990	\$39,990 \$29,110	\$29,110 \$20,990	\$20,990 \$15,330



## HOW TO USE THE BASE SALARY GUIDE

1. Using the worksheets on pages 4-5, determine the number of hours the position requires.
2. Determine the category comparable to the training level of the musician, realizing that other studies/experience may be equivalent to a degree.
3. The suggested base salary range is at the intersection of the level-of-training and the required hours. Persons with experience of five years or less would lie at the lower salary, and those with more experience at the higher. The Guild also suggests additional increments (e.g., 5 years) for periods of further experience.
4. Benefits such as pension or insurances to be added above the base salary should be commensurate with those received by other employees of the institution. For part-time positions where by mutual agreement such benefits are not provided, a 20-30% adjustment should be added to the base salary to cover needs of the musician's personal situation.

Generous allowances for housing, memberships, expenses for employment-related driving, music supplies, sabbaticals, or continuing education (recommended \$900 for expenses of music conferences, such as registration, lodging, meals, and travel) are especially attractive.

Vacations, sick days, and possible unanticipated sick-leave should be provided. It is also expected that the musician may use the building facilities for private teaching and will play for all weddings and funerals.

According to data from area Planning Commissions, Chambers of Commerce, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Research and Statistics, and the national Consumer Price Indexes, current trends in local salary changes are characterized by (1) increases in allowances and benefits in lieu of raises in actual salary, (2) rewards for merit rather than for mere longevity, and (3) annual average wage increases that are below the national increase.

While the statewide median annual individual income across all occupations was \$36,322 as of April 2007, local medians ranged from \$33,075 (Monroe Co.) to \$36,890 (Lehigh Co.). Musicians' salaries in this Chapter area lagged about 2% under national AGO recommendations. It was also reported that the nationwide cost of living rose by 26% from 1998 to March 2007.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MUSICIAN

Musicians in religious institutions commonly perform the following tasks. Search committees will find it helpful to approximate the number of hours per week required by each task, whether visible or invisible.

	<u>Hours</u>
a. Time spent in actual rehearsals and services	_____
b. Practice of repertoire and technique	_____
c. Preparation for weekly ensemble rehearsals, e.g., scheduling, marking scores, preparing folders	_____
d. Meetings of staff, committees, etc.	_____
e. Administrative duties, e.g., filing music, ordering supplies, preparing announcements	_____
f. Planning for weekly services	_____
g. Planning for seasonal programs and special services	_____
h. Planning for concerts and festivals	_____
i. Rehearsing with instrumentalists/vocal soloists	_____
j. Continuing education	_____
k. Publicity and recruiting	_____
l. Review of new works, editions, and recordings; reading professional journals	_____
m. Overseeing maintenance of instruments	_____
n. Pastoral, counseling, or supervisory duties	_____
o. Teaching in religious education program	_____
p. Composition and arrangement of music	_____
q. Custodial work, e.g., preparing rehearsal space	_____
r. Social interaction, e.g., dinners, coffee hours	_____
s. Attendance at concerts of other organizations	_____
t. Other _____	_____

## SKILLS OF THE MUSICIAN

The AGO awards certificates to members who pass examinations in specific skills. The exams last from four to eight hours and are scheduled over two days. Except for Service Playing and CAGO, they include both written tests and organ playing or choral conducting. While these certificates do not exactly equal academic degrees, the holder of a bachelor's degree in organ or sacred music should have little difficulty passing the CAGO or ChM tests; a master's of organ or sacred music, the AAGO; and a doctorate in organ or sacred music, the FAGO.

1. Service Playing (SPC). Organ test only, considered by the Guild to be the minimum standard for measuring proficiency. The candidate must demonstrate skill in playing hymns, organ repertoire, and choral accompaniments of moderate difficulty.
2. Colleague (CAGO). At the organ the candidate must demonstrate skill in performing designated works of moderate difficulty, accompanying choral and vocal works, and hymns. Proficiency must also be shown in harmonization, transposition, and improvisation.
3. Choir Master (ChM). The candidate must rehearse and direct a choir in selected music, utilizing proper choral training methods, and demonstrate basic keyboard ability. In the written section, the candidate must answer questions on music theory and history, chant, and choral repertoire and training, as well as write music from dictation.
4. Associate (AAGO). At the organ the candidate must demonstrate skill in performing designated works of recital-level difficulty, sight reading, realizing harmony and figured basses at sight, playing from open (vocal) scores, and transposing. At the written sessions, the candidate must analyze excerpts from any era of music history and of 18<sup>th</sup>-c. fugal style in particular, write music from dictation, demonstrate skills in composition, and answer questions that may cover liturgy, organ construction, choral music, organ repertoire, and contemporary trends.
5. Fellow (FAGO). Tests at the organ are similar to AAGO but more advanced. In addition, the written tests cover orchestration and contrapuntal styles.

*Further information is available at the Guild web site [www.agohq.org](http://www.agohq.org) under Education and Certification.*

After determining the level of training of the candidate and the number of hours required per week, several further variables include the experience and special talents of the candidate and any unique requirements or benefits of the employing institution.

### IRS: "INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR" or "EMPLOYEE"?

Occasionally churches or synagogues will hire musicians as independent contractors instead of employees. According to IRS guidelines, however, workers are generally considered employees if they:

- Must comply with the employer's instructions about the work
- Receive training from or at the direction of the employer
- Provide services that are integrated into the business
- Provide services that must be rendered personally
- Are aided by assistants hired, supervised, and paid by the employer
- Have a continuing working relationship with the employer
- Must follow set hours of work
- Work full-time for an employer
- Do their work on the employer's premises
- Must do their work in a sequence set by the employer
- Must submit regular reports to the employer
- Receive payments of regular amounts at set intervals
- Receive payments for business travel expenses
- Rely on the employer to furnish tools and materials
- Lack a major investment in the facilities or equipment used
- Cannot make a profit or suffer a loss from their services
- Work for one employer at a time
- Do not offer their services to the general public
- Can be fired by the employer
- May quit work at any time without incurring liability

*According to these guidelines,  
the majority of church and synagogue musicians are employees.*

