Goals of publishing

- Make money
- Get exposure as a publisher
- Find someone to play my music

The good news!
As a composer, there are more cost effective options than ever for making your music available.
Ways to publish

- Traditional Publisher (ex: Hal Leonard)
- Retail Self-Publishing Program (ex: Digital Print Publishing)
- Other Self-Publishing Programs (ex: Score Exchange)
- Do it Yourself

Customer Exposure

- Large
- Small

Royalty %

- 10%
- 100%

Marketing support

- High
- None
The best channel for you depends on the size of your market and how you best reach it.

Factors to consider:
• How broad is your target market? Big markets favor publishers.
• How connected are you to your target market? Not well connected favors publishers.
Considerations for what will be the best channel for you.

• Where are your potential customers?
  • Don’t expect customers that aren’t friends and family to visit your composer website. You want your product available where potential customers shop.

• Going beyond your existing networks is key if you want to get more exposure as a composer.

• How “mainstream” is your product.
  • The more potential buyers that are out there, the more benefit you will get from broad distribution networks and traditional publishers.

• How strong is your network.
  • If you know every potential buyer for your product, you may as well do it all yourself. That is not usually the case.
  • For very specialized pieces, you may have a stronger relationship to potential buyers than some publisher.
More considerations

• **Ownership of copyright**
  • With a traditional publisher, you typically relinquish control of your copyright.
    • Traditional publishing is a “all or nothing” decision.
  • With other publishing models, you retain control of your copyright.
    • You have more ability to experiment with sales channels if you retain your copyright.

• **Your time**
  • Your time is likely your biggest limitation.
  • Make sure you spend your time on your highest payback activities.

• **Your costs**
  • Highest cost when you do it yourself, especially if you offered printed product.

• **Print versus digital**
  • Overall, it is more expensive to publish a physical copy of sheet music rather than a digital piece of sheet music. If you self publish, you will bear that cost.
  • Some customers prefer the quality of professionally published piece.
  • Digital is much lower distribution cost and gives you access to a world-wide market.
Pricing

• If you are working with a traditional publisher, they will probably set the price.
• If you are self-publishing, you have the opportunity to set the price.
  • How much do similar titles go for? Look at instrumentation, title length and ability level.
  • How competitive is the market for your composition? You will need to price another piano/vocal arrangement for Jingle Bells more aggressively than an original composition for clarinet quartet.
  • Don’t under price! Most buyers will buy your piece because they want to play it, not because it is $1 less than another piece that might play. Only in the most competitive situations will you make more through volume by lowering price.
Marketing your product

• Use your network
  • Get reviews from your network on the channels of distribution – reviews help sell product!

• Make your title findable on Google
  • Your product should exist somewhere on a Google indexed website.
  • Product data – comprehensive product information – instrumentation, genre, style, length of composition.
  • Product description – describe the music with keywords that your target customer is likely to look for – what are similar composers, what are appropriate events for it to be played out, is it tied to a season of the year? Why will someone want to play it?

• Allow people to sample
  • Sample pages – very, very important. Unlikely to sell a new piece if there are no sample pages.
  • Sound clips – very important – titles with sound clips far more likely to sell than those without.
Bad product marketing

- **From customer point of view:**
  - can my group play this? Is it a good arrangement?
  - Will I like this piece? How long is it – will it fit in my service? No one will buy this piece unless they know before looking that they want this exact title.
Good product marketing

• From customer point of view
  The difficulty level is clear. The customer can view 5 sample pages, and listen to it, to see if they like the arrangement and song. There are references to composers and styles that may appeal to specific users.

• Sold with no promotion to a music library.
Summary

• Today is a great time to publish sheet music – there have never been so many options.

• Your best publishing option may vary by piece.

• You will have most success by being thoughtful on what channel you use to publish your piece.

• Making your piece available is only the first step. You still need to price and market your music.