

Musician

Introduction

As a Musician you will perform live at concerts and festivals. You'll also record music for sale to the public. You'll spend a lot of time auditioning and practising for performances. You might also get involved in teaching or writing music.

Also known as

- Composer
- Rock Star (Musician)
- Pop Star (Musician)



Work Activities

As well as performing, you will spend a large amount of time practising, rehearsing, auditioning and planning performances. These activities are often combined with composing or teaching music.

Classical music

As a Classical Musician, once trained, you will gain experience and develop contacts by taking part in competitions, festivals and concerts. If competition is severe, you might use professional Agents to promote you and your work. The majority of recently trained Musicians perform a variety of solo, choral/orchestral and ensemble work.

As an Orchestral Performer, you can work your way up to the top of the profession, to become an Instrumental Soloist. You'll have to invest in a high quality instrument and travel around with the orchestra.

Popular music

As a Non-classical Musician, you will usually start out by performing at live gigs to build up a following and send demos to record companies. Representatives from record companies' Artists and Repertoire (A and R) departments listen to bands' demos and go to live gigs, offering some Performers a record deal.

Increasingly, new Artists/bands are promoting and selling their music themselves through the internet, so this is something you could consider.

Early in your career you will usually need to find a Manager. The Manager usually takes responsibility for organising financial backing, finding suitable venues and helping you to promote yourself effectively.

You might make a living playing live gigs in pubs, clubs, hotels, holiday camps, etc. You'll usually specialise in a particular kind of music, eg, rock, pop, jazz, etc. You could use local entertainment agents to help you to find work. Or you might promote yourself, eg, by putting up posters, handing out leaflets, and getting featured in the local press. You may perform one-off gigs in different places, or play a whole summer season in one venue.

As a Musician you can expect to travel to venues locally, nationally and maybe internationally.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Musician, you need to have:

- talent and creativity
- a love of music
- commitment and discipline
- physical and mental stamina

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

Pay rates for Musicians vary widely depending on the type of venue you play, your level of skill, and other factors.

As a self-employed Musician, you will rely on individual performance payments and music sales. These can be very unpredictable.

As a successful Musician in a pop/rock band, you can make high earnings from live performances and royalties from record sales and merchandising.

As an employed Orchestral Musician you can expect to earn between £25,000 - £35,000 a year, and higher salaries are possible. Freelance Musicians' rates vary depending upon the type of contract agreed. A list of fees for different types of contracts is on the Incorporated Society of Musicians' (ISM) website (www.ism.org).

The Musicians' Union and the ISM offer advice and information on fees to members.

You may face long periods without work. To help, you may be able to claim benefits. Take a look at our information article on Universal Credit to see if you might qualify.

Hours of work

Musicians work irregular hours - so you can expect to have early starts, late finishes as well as working at weekends and public holidays.

Where could I work?

Employment is available in fields such as performing (including session and freelance work), composing, conducting and teaching. Musicians perform at a variety of venues including clubs, pubs, parties, charity balls, theatres, festivals, cruise ships and recording studios.

Opportunities occur for Musicians to work in other countries, usually on tour or at festivals.

Self-employment

Many Musicians are self-employed.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised on web sites such as The Stage (www.thestage.co.uk), StarNow www.starnow.co.uk and Arts Professional (www.artsprofessional.co.uk).

However, new entrants normally have to promote themselves by contacting promoters, agents, music clubs and concert organisers.

Social media websites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook, are a great way to network, find vacancies and get in contact with possible employers. Make sure that your profile presents you in a professional manner that will appeal to potential employers.

Take a look at our General Information Article 'Finding Work Online'.

Entry Routes and Training

Popular music

Many entrants to pop, rock and other styles of music are self-taught. They often start out by playing versions of other Artists' work before developing their own material and style.

On the whole, university degrees treat music as an academic subject. However, the foundation degree in popular music (available at a number of centres around the country) has a practical emphasis, and there are usually plenty of opportunities to gain experience in student and amateur performances.

Classical music

Classical Musicians usually start lessons between the ages of five and ten. Most young Musicians combine their normal school studies with music lessons, long hours of practice and participation in local music groups.

Classical Musicians usually take a specialist course at a music college, or a degree in music at university. Some take a degree in performing arts.

Students who reach the exceptional standard required to pursue a performing, composing or conducting career usually go on to a postgraduate/advanced course at music college.

Once full-time training is complete, they will continue to study under private tuition while building up a reputation in their particular field through, for example, solo and/or ensemble work. As many students will not reach this standard, music colleges also provide modules on preparation for teaching or other work in music-related fields.

Work Experience

Many successful entrants have gained skills and abilities over a considerable period of time. This could be in orchestras, giving church or charity concert performances, or in bands on the local club circuit, which could be really useful for this career.

Qualifications

For entry to a degree course in music, the usual requirement is:

- 2/3 A levels, including music
- GCSEs at grade C/4 or above in 3 other subjects

Other qualifications could be considered, such as:

- BTEC Level 3 qualification in music
- the International Baccalaureate Diploma could also be considered. Entry requirements for degree courses vary; check prospectuses carefully.

Degree applicants are usually expected to attend an audition before securing a place. However, entry requirements vary - check college/university prospectuses/websites for details.

Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A level.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

The usual upper age limits for entry to armed forces music services are 39 years for the RAF, 32 for the Royal Marines and 33 for the Army.

Experience

Many successful entrants have gained skills and abilities over a considerable period of time. This could be in orchestras, giving church or charity concert performances, or in bands on the local club circuit.

Courses

Many colleges and music schools relax the normal entrance requirements for applicants with substantial musical/performing experience, paid or unpaid.

Distance learning

Distance learning courses are offered by The Open University (MA in Music), and The Open College of the Arts. Bath Spa University offers a Masters degree in Songwriting, which is available by distance learning.

Funding

Financial support for study is available from:

- The Worshipful Company of Musicians www.wcom.org.uk
- The Finzi Trust www.geraldfinzi.org
- Help Musicians UK www.helpmusicians.org.uk
- The EMI Music Sound Foundation www.emimusicfoundation.com

Further Information

Contacts

- **ScreenSkills**
Skills for the creative industries
Email: info@creativeskillset.org
Website: www.creativeskillset.org
- **Creative Choices**
Publisher: Creative & Cultural Skills
Email: info@creative-choices.co.uk
Website: www.creative-choices.co.uk
- **Open University (OU)**
Tel: 0845 3006090
Website: www.open.ac.uk
- **Creative & Cultural Skills**
Skills for craft, cultural heritage, design, literature, music, performing arts and visual arts
Email: london@ccskills.org.uk
Website: ccskills.org.uk
- **Creative Scotland**
Scottish enquiries
Email: enquiries@creativescotland.com
Website: www.creativescotland.com
- **Arts Council England**
Tel: 0845 3006200
Website: www.artscouncil.org.uk
- **Arts Council of Northern Ireland**
Northern Ireland Enquiries
Tel: 028 9038 5200
Email: info@artscouncil-ni.org
Website: www.artscouncil-ni.org
- **Equity**
Tel: 020 7379 6000
Email: info@equity.org.uk
Website: www.equity.org.uk
- **Equity (Scotland)**
Scottish enquiries
Tel: 0141 2482472
Email: scotland@equity.org.uk
Website: www.equity.org.uk

- **BPI: British Recorded Music Industry**
Tel: 020 7803 1300
Email: general@bpi.co.uk
Website: www.bpi.co.uk
- **Open College of the Arts**
Tel: 0800 7312116
Email: enquiries@oca-uk.com
Website: www.oca-uk.com
- **Musicians' Union (MU)**
Tel: 020 7582 5566
Email: info@theMU.org
Website: www.musiciansunion.org.uk
- **Worshipful Company of Musicians**
Tel: 020 7496 8980
Email: clerk@wcom.org.uk
Website: www.wcom.org.uk
- **Musicians Benevolent Fund**
Tel: 020 7239 9100
Website: www.helpmusicians.org.uk
- **EMI Music Sound Foundation**
Tel: 020 7795 7000
Email: enquiries@emimusicfoundation.com
Website: www.musicfoundation.com
- **Conservatoires Admissions Service UK (CUKAS)**
Tel: 0871 4680470
Website: www.cukas.ac.uk
- **Scottish Music Centre**
Scottish enquiries
Tel: 0141 5525222
Email: info@scottishmusiccentre.com
Website: www.scottishmusiccentre.com
- **Royal Marines Bands**
Website: www.royalmarinesbands.co.uk
- **Corps of Army Music**
Website: www.army.mod.uk/music/23254.aspx
- **Royal Air Force Music Services**
Website: www.rafmusic.co.uk
- **Equity (Wales)**
Address: Third Floor, 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9SD
Tel: 029 2039 7971
Email: wales@equity.org.uk
Website: www.equity.org.uk
- **UCAS**
Address: Rosehill, New Barn Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ
Tel: 0871 4680468
Email: enquiries@ucas.ac.uk
Website: www.ucas.ac.uk

Related Careers

- Disc Jockey
- Music Manager
- Stage Manager
- Theatre Lighting Technician
- Make-up Artist
- Theatre Sound Technician
- Stage Crew
- Actor/Actress
- Dancer
- Singer