



AACT Resource Library

## Rights for “Pay What You Will” Performances

By Michael Cochran

**The theatre I work for** offers a “Pay What You Will Preview” performance for each of our shows, from our regular run. As with any performance with an audience, rights and royalties are involved, but initially, it wasn’t clear to me how to proceed. I decided the best way to get answers was to reach out to my licensing representatives at the royalty houses.

Here are responses from Dramatic Publishing and Music Theatre International.

### Dramatic Publishing

Carrie Blomquist, Professional Leasing Director

*Dramatic Publishing charges amateur theatre’s a pe- performance rate based on the average ticket price. There is a section in our application to provide notes regarding ticket pricing and structure. A customer might write:: “Seven of our performances are at an average rate of \$20 per ticket. The last performance is a ‘Pay What You Can’ structure, and historically we have been receiving an average of \$15 per ticket for those performances.”*

*We typically factor that into the average ticket price for the run. However, there have been times where it made more sense to have two separate royalty rates for the two types of ticket pricing. We just always recommend that if you are in doubt, reach out to us directly. Our Amateur Leasing Director, Brianna Young, is always willing to discuss rates and applications with our customers and is very prompt in her response time.*

### Music Theatre International

John Prignano, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Education and Development

*Our licensing teams are always happy to work with customers on their license offers and royalties. If there are ever any questions about their royalties, customers can always call or email us to discuss. Typically for “Pay What You Will” productions, we will base the royalties on the “suggested donation” price. However, that does not always work the same way for each group. Sometimes there is a “minimum donation price,” while other times the performance is essentially free but attendees can make an optional donation to the organization. If there is a minimum donation price, then that would be what we*

*base the royalties on. If the performances are free, however, we can work with that instead.*

*Further complicating things is that, based on the organization type, there may be different rate structures. Customers may also use a Guarantee vs Percentage structure.*

With the changing landscape of pricing from free, to pay what you will, to fixed, to dynamic pricing, royalty companies are working hard to make sure that they give theatres the best quotes they can. In this age of online royalty quotes, sometimes it's still best if you pick up the phone and talk to the representative when you're not sure how to answer the questions in the online form.

Developing a relationship with your licensing rep has the added benefit of giving you a go-to person to talk to when you have a show that doesn't sell, or if you have to cancel or change a planned performance run.



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