

[Blog home](#) [COVID-19 Support](#) [Job Market](#) [Adzuna News](#) [Tips & Advice](#) [Recruitment](#)

[Just For Fun](#) [All Categories](#)

[Jobs](#) »

[Browse Adzuna Blog](#) »

The Salaries of Famous Composers

May 27, 2016 By [Tora Turton](#)



Once you've found out how much Mozart was worth why not find out how much you're worth with [ValueMyCV](#) or find out [how to ask for a pay rise?](#)

Last month we looked at what some of history's [most famous scientists would earn](#) if they were being paid today. As it was so much fun we decided to revisit the topic, but instead took a look at some of the most iconic composers from Europe (and one from America).

It was more difficult to put a modern day figure on the likes of Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner than Einstein or Curie for a few reasons. For a start, a lot of the musicians we took a look at were paid in long dead currencies such as thalers, ducats and florins – then there's the fact that composers were also more likely to have made supplemental income from compositions and tutoring.

Nevertheless, even with the usual caveats – there are admittedly a few problems with comparing 18th century incomes with 21st century incomes – we still thought you'd want to know if you're out-earning the musical superstars of their day. So without further ado, why not take a look at the modern day incomes of famous composers:

≡ MODERN DAY ≡

INCOME OF FAMOUS COMPOSERS



JS Bach
1685-1750

INCOME IN
1750

WORTH
€28,000
TODAY

★ TOCCATA AND FUGUE IN D MINOR

i Bach was paid 700 thalers as a schoolmaster in Leipzig from 1723-1750. Room and board was paid for, and he is thought to have made extra money on the side from composing and personal tuition.

★ FIFTH SYMPHONY

i Beethoven was paid 4,000 florins a year from 1809 on the condition that he remained in Vienna for the rest of his life. This allowance was originally paid by three patrons, but after the death of Prince Lobkowitz and Prince Kinsky, Archduke Rudolph paid the amount in full until Beethoven died in 1827.

INCOME IN
1809-1827

WORTH
≈€100,000
TODAY



Ludwig van Beethoven
1770-1827



Richard Wagner
1813-1883

INCOME IN
1849

WORTH
€28,598
TODAY

★ BRIDAL CHORUS

i Wagner was paid a salary of 1,500 thalers in 1849 - the same year that he fled Dresden with debts of 20,000 thalers.

★ THE "RIDER" QUARTET



i Haydn was hired by the wealthy Esterházy family as a 'Kapellmeister' (essentially a director of music). A contract from 1761 showed he was paid 400 florins a year, received in quarterly payments, and with food and lodgings provided.

INCOME IN
1856



WORTH
≈€10,000
TODAY



Joseph Haydn
1732-1809



Scott Joplin
1868-1917

INCOME IN
1909



WORTH
€10,959
TODAY

★ THE MAPLE LEAF RAG

i Sales for Joplin's most famous piece are thought to have hit 500,000 in 1909. Assuming royalties earned Joplin one cent per copy, he would have earned around \$600 from this one piece of music alone.

★ CLAIR DE LUNE

i The height of Debussy's total income was over 45,000 francs a year in 1910 and 1912, which included composing in London for 200 guineas (5,000 francs). However, his lavish lifestyle meant he spent around 20,000 francs a year even when he was earning much less (under 5,000 francs in 1907 for example), and he died in 1918 with a debt of 66,235 francs.

INCOME IN
1910



WORTH
€206,997
TODAY



Claude Debussy
1862-1918



Clara Schumann
1819-1896

INCOME IN
1855



WORTH
€32,381
TODAY

★ PIANO TRIO IN G MINOR

i Schumann was largely responsible for supporting her children and husband who, himself a famous composer, was unable to play his own pieces. From 1854-1856 she earned a total of 5,000 thalers - more than her husband over a 4 year period.

★ POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE MARCH NO. 1

i As musical director at Powick Country Lunatic Asylum, Elgar earned a flat rate of £30 a year. He topped up his income with compositions, which would've earned him around 5 shillings a piece.

INCOME IN
1879



WORTH
£3,362



Edward Elgar
1857-1934



**Pyotr Ilyich
Tchaikovsky**
1889-1953

INCOME IN
1866

WORTH
€5,429
TODAY

★ SWAN LAKE

i Tchaikovsky's role as Professor of Music Theory at the newly opened Moscow Conservatory came with a modest 50 rubles per month salary, but his career was already on the up: the appointment coincided with the first public performance of his work at Pavlovsk Park.

★ DON GIOVANNI

i Mozart's income from teaching, performance and publication is thought to have averaged 3,000-4,000 florins in the decade before he died. This would've afforded him an upper middle class lifestyle in 18th century Vienna - a far cry from the popular view that he died a pauper.

INCOME IN
1781-1791

WORTH
≈€100,000
TODAY



**Wolfgang Amadeus
Mozart**
1756-1791



Antonio Vivaldi
1678-1741

INCOME IN
1703

WORTH
€10,000
TODAY

★ FOUR SEASONS

i Vivaldi made 100 ducats a year as the Maestro di Capella at the Ospedale della Pietà, a girls' orphanage in Venice, as well as bonuses for the composition of new works. Tourists are said to have flocked to hear Vivaldi leading the Ospedale orchestra.

SOURCES

<http://www.bl.uk/ebj/1985articles/pdf/article2.pdf>
<http://www.cyberussr.com/hcunn/gold-std.html>
<http://www.ilgiardinoarmonico.com/vivaldi-gloria/>
<http://www.classicfm.com/composers/beethoven/guides/archduke-rudolph/#o42MmAdZWuYRuOmF.97>
<http://www.gustav-mahler.eu/index.php/personen-2/718-tschaikowsky-pjotr-lljitsj-1840-1893>
<http://artsalive.ca/en/mus/greatcomposers/vivaldi/vivaldi.asp>
<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/11/business/economic-scene-mozart-s-money-misunderstanding.html>
<https://www.sovereignman.com/finance/historical-figures-salaries-in-gold-mozart-and-beethoven-15554/>
<http://www.w3r-us.org/history/library/seligreptde6.pdf>
<http://www2.nau.edu/tas3/leipzig.html>
<https://jamesboldin.com/2010/08/19/how-much-did-haydn-earn/>
<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/resources/inflationtools/calculator/flash/default.aspx>
https://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/press_releases/2012/crowns_and_ducats.aspx
<http://www.davemanuel.com/inflation-calculator.php>
<http://fxtop.com/en/inflation-calculator.php>
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/default0.asp#mid>
<http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>
<http://www.xe.com/>

Rethinking Debussy, edited by Elliott Antokoletz, Marianne Wheeldon
 "King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and His Era, by Edward A. Berlin"
 Richard Wagner: The Last of the Titans, by Joachim Köhler

adzuna
www.adzuna.co.uk

Richard Wagner: The Last of the Romans, by Johann Kerner
"Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman, by Nancy B. Reich"
Classical Music: The Era of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, by Philip G. Downs
Money and exchange rates in 1632, by Francis Turner

JS Bach – £28,000

Bach was paid 700 thalers as a schoolmaster in Leipzig from 1723-1750. Room and board was paid for, and he is thought to have made extra money on the side from composing and personal tuition.

Ludwig van Beethoven – Nearly £100,000

Beethoven was paid 4,000 florins a year from 1809 on the condition that he remained in Vienna for the rest of his life. This allowance was originally paid by three patrons, but after the death of Prince Lobkowitz and Prince Kinsky, Archduke Rudolph paid the amount in full until Beethoven died in 1827.

Richard Wagner – £28,598

Wagner was paid a salary of 1,500 thalers in 1849 – the same year that he fled Dresden with debts of 20,000 thalers.

Joseph Haydn – nearly £10,000

Haydn was hired by the wealthy Esterházy family as a 'Kapellmeister' (essentially a director of music). A contract from 1761 showed he was paid 400 florins a year, received in quarterly payments, and with food and lodgings provided.

Scott Joplin – £10,959

Sales for Joplin's most famous piece are thought to have hit 500,000 in 1909. Assuming royalties earned Joplin one cent per copy, he would have earned around \$600 from this one piece of music alone.

Claude Debussy – £206,997

The height of Debussy's total income was over 45,000 francs a year in 1910 and 1912, which included composing in London for 200 guineas (5,000 francs). However, his lavish lifestyle meant he spent around 20,000 francs a year even when he was earning much less (under 5,000 francs in 1907 for example), and he died in 1918 with a debt of 66,235 francs.

Clara Schumann – £32,381

Schumann was largely responsible for supporting her children and husband who, himself a famous composer, was unable to play his own pieces. From 1854-1856 she earned a total of 5,000 thalers – more than her husband over a 4 year period.

Edward Elgar – £3,362

As musical director at Powick Country Lunatic Asylum, Elgar earned a flat rate of £30 a year. He topped up his income with compositions at a rate of 1s. 6d for an accompaniment to a Christy Minstrel song and 5s. per polka or quadrille.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky – £5,429

Tchaikovsky's role as Professor of Music Theory at the newly opened Moscow Conservatory came with a modest 50 rubles per month salary, but his career was already on the up: the appointment coincided with the first public performance of his work at Pavlovsk Park.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – Nearly £100,000

Mozart's income from teaching, performance and publication is thought to have averaged 3,000-4,000 florins in the decade before he died. This would've afforded him an upper middle class lifestyle in 18th century Vienna – a far cry from the popular view that he died a pauper.

Antonio Vivaldi – £10,000

Vivaldi made 100 ducats a year as the Maestro di Capella at the Ospedale della Pietà, a girls' orphanage in Venice, as well as bonuses for the composition of new works. Tourists are said to have flocked to hear Vivaldi leading the Ospedale orchestra.

[Jobs for Music Teachers](#)

[Summer Internship Jobs](#)

[Jobs in Digital Marketing](#)

[Jobs in Teaching](#)

[How do recruiters feel about creative CV's?](#)

May 27, 2016 By [Tora Turton](#)

Tagged under: [Creative Design Jobs](#), [infographics](#), [salaries](#).

Also in **Just For Fun**:

Top 10 jobs for Boris that aren't Prime Minister

[Read article »](#)

What would the Bridgerton characters earn?

[Read article »](#)

Over 26,000 Christmas jobs still available, with bonuses up to £2,000

[Read article »](#)

Search all blog posts:

Search

Find out what you're worth

It takes 2 minutes and it 's free. [Try ValueMyCV now »](#)

[© ADZUNA LTD](#) [ABOUT US](#) [GIVE US FEEDBACK](#) [API](#)

- [© ADZUNA LTD](#)