



Whippoorwill Arts, In Partnership With The Center For Music Ecosystems & 4A Arts, Delivers Landmark Recommendations For Live Performance Pay & Professional Protections For Working Musicians

“Live music performance is labor and it should be compensated.”

[Download Guidelines Here](#)



BERKELEY, Calif. (Sept. 12, 2023) — On Labor Day this month, non-profit artist advocate group **Whippoorwill Arts**—in partnership with the **Center for Music Ecosystems** and **4A Arts**—delivered its **Recommendations for Live Performance Pay and Professional Protections For Working Musicians**. Access the guidelines **[HERE](#)**.

Pay Recommendations are crucial, as income streams to 90% of working musicians have been declining since the 1980s and remain in a downward spiral. **These musicians are the lifeblood of high quality live music in our communities, yet they are often asked to play for free, pay to play, or paid a pittance (\$50 for a three-hour gig)**. Many simply cannot afford to continue. Musicians who tour come home in debt as a result of uncompensated travel, lodging and expenses. As gig workers, these musicians do not have a safety net nor professional protections, making them vulnerable to discrimination and instability in times of poor health or injury.

“The question of what to pay, how to determine pay scales has been a real obstacle to moving forward with reforms,” says **Hilary Perkins, musician and co-founder, Whippoorwill Arts**. “With the help of the savvy researchers at the Center for Music Ecosystems and 4A Arts, we can now provide suggested pay scales as well as case studies modeling guaranteed pay to musicians and concrete steps to protecting them in their workplace. We are very excited about releasing these recommendations; they are a tremendous resource for arts funders, venues and organizations interested in the ethical treatment of working musicians. In the past two years, we have already begun to see transformation in the music ecosystem. Organizations like Northwest Folklife, led by musician and visionary leader Benjamin Hunter, are changing decades old practices around expecting artists to play for free.”

The Recommendations follow Whippoorwill Arts’ groundbreaking three-month-long 2021 research project, **[Turn Up the Mic, Tune Up the Future](#)**, enlisting Chicago-based, arts-focused Slover Linett to conduct industry interviews, focus groups and survey more than 1,200 working musicians across multiple categories.

Based on the research analysis and findings, three priorities emerged *identified by musicians* in order to survive and thrive:

1. Guaranteed pay and professional protections
2. Help with the cost of doing business: travel, lodging, gas
3. More opportunities to perform for small listening audiences

“Our pay recommendations are the fulfillment of an internal promise we made to the working

musicians who participated in our national survey,” Perkins adds. “There was such despair among these folks who give us so much. We applaud our partners at CME and 4A Arts for their rigorous data-based research and creative ideas, as well as the Whippoorwill team for framing the questions. The bottom line is that live music performance is labor and it should be compensated.”

Gavin Lodge, Executive Director of 4A Arts, says, “We all know live music fills the souls of individuals and the cash registers of businesses, and that musicians should be paid well. With Whippoorwill’s study, that ‘should be paid’ can be turned into a ‘will be paid’ thanks to evidence-based comprehensive research. This is why 4A Arts is thrilled to have partnered with Whippoorwill to put numbers behind what we all know in our hearts - that musicians should - and can - be paid adequately so they can keep making music.”

Tiara Amar, Whippoorwill Arts Program Manager for Advocacy, adds, “We collaborated with several important organizations to hone the pay and professional protections for musicians across lines of ability, gender & sexuality, race & ethnicity, caste, and marital & parental status. For instance, Lawrence Carter-Long with DisArt, alongside Gaelyn Lea and Precious Perez of RAMPD, helped us shape recommendations to address the priorities of musicians with disabilities. With the input of many collaborators, we have provided model creative interventions for the well-being of working musicians, with attentiveness to the needs of disabled, queer, and BIPOC musicians. This document is a living document we want to workshop with organizations that share our values, we know it will grow and deepen with further community collaboration.”

“This work is urgent, detailed, comprehensive and needed,” adds **Shain Shapiro, Executive Director, the Center for Music Ecosystems**.

Acknowledgements:

This report was commissioned by Whippoorwill Arts and is a project of Whippoorwill Arts, the Center for Music Ecosystems and 4A Arts.

The report was authored by:

Tiara Amar
Whippoorwill Arts

Lawrence Carter-Long
DisArt

Whitney Christiansen
4A Arts

Angharad Cooper
Center for Music Ecosystems

Michelle Conceison
Mgmt and Middle Tennessee State University

Hilary Perkins
Whippoorwill Arts

Shain Shapiro
Center for Music Ecosystems

The report was reviewed by a panel of musicians and sector experts, including focus group discussion and individual surveys with working musicians, who also served on the Whippoorwill Arts Ethical Pay and Professional Protections Guidelines Advisory Committee:

Ellen Angelico, Musician
Benjamin Hunter, Musician and Artistic Director, Northwest Folklife
Lilli Lewis, Musician
Jim Nunally, Musician
Precious Perez, Musician and President, RAMPD
Rachel Rodriguez, Musician

With additional review and support from Whippoorwill Arts Advisory Committee members:

Michelle Conceison, Manager at Mgmt and Associate Professor at MTSU
Chelsea Crowell, Musician and Advocate

Aaron Fowler, President, American Federation of Musicians, Local 1000
Mario Guarneri, Artist, Founder Jazz in the Neighborhood, Independent Musicians Alliance
David Holland, Western States Arts Federation
Beverly Keel, Dean of the College of Media and Entertainment, MTSU
Gaelynn Lea, Musician and co-Founder, RAMPD
Erin MacAnally, Musician and Advocate
Aric Steinberg, Sweet Relief Musicians Fund
Kamara Thomas, Musician and Founder, Country Soul Songbook
Chris Wadsworth, Founder, Freshgrass Foundation

Sector Experts Who Contributed Case Studies:

Hanna Doreen Brown, Sound Affects
Daniel Levy, Composer and Musician
Elizabeth Cawein, Music Export Memphis
Anaïs Lukacs, MobiCulture
Rachel Chanoff, Artists at Work
Tomasz Madajczak, Artist
Jesse Elliott, CACHE
Bryce Merrill, Bohemian Foundation
Aaron Fowler, Local 1000
Hilary Perkins, Whippoorwill Arts
Mario Guarneri, Independent Musicians Alliance
Preston Poindexter, CACHE
Benjamin Hunter, Northwest Folklife
Corinne Sadki, Ctr. ntl. de la musique

About Whippoorwill Arts:

Whippoorwill Arts invests in the creativity and lives of working roots musicians through ethically paid live and online performances including a festival, the Music aLIVE grant program, and COVID Safety Guidelines for Working Musicians; uplifts those artists through Artist Awards/Fellowships, and seeks to transform the music ecosystem to be more equitable through data-driven research and strategic partnerships. For program information, please visit www.whippoorwillarts.org.

Follow Whippoorwill Arts here:

Website: <https://www.whippoorwillarts.org>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/whippoorwillarts/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/whippoorwillarts>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WhippArts>

For more information, please contact:

Hilary Perkins | hilary@whippoorwillarts.org

Share this email:



[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt out](#) using TrueRemove® Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails. View this email [online](#).

jackie@marushkamedia.com
Nashville, TN | 37204 US

This email was sent to .
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.