

## FOR SSO MUSICIANS – TIPS FOR DETERMINING WORKS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

**Basic Guideline:** Music published with a Copyright Notice of 1924 or earlier is in the public domain in the United States. The dates for public domain are different in other countries, just FYI.

1. Is it originally published before 1925? **OK TO USE**
2. Is it originally published after 1924? **NOT OK**. Works published 1925 – 1977 have a 95 year term of copyright; works first published 1978 and later basically have a copyright term of 70 years past the death of the last surviving author. So that's a long time.
3. If you can't figure it out and it appears on the cusp: **DON'T USE IT**

### Questions you may have:

#### What if I don't know when a work was published?

- Try looking it up on [IMSLP](#) here. Use the general search engine and enter the work. A listing will appear with the dates you need.
- If the work is NOT in the public domain, or if there are any special circumstances regarding the work, it will appear within a box at the top of the listing. [Click here](#) for an example of a Stravinsky piece that has a flagged listing.
- If you don't see the abovementioned box and the dates fit the guidelines, you are good to go.

#### What if I want to perform a work by a living composer?

- In general, without express permission from the owner of the work, that would not be a good idea, especially if using a well-known contemporary living composer's work who may wish to collect for your performance.
- HOWEVER, many of you many have friends and colleagues on faculty or staff at your institutions who are wonderful composers. Many of them are happy for their works to be played and shared far and wide and are willing to give full permission for a scenario such as this. In this case, this would be OK.

### RESOURCES:

IMSLP has many pages pertaining to what is in public domain and what is not. A basic page to start with would be this one (summarized above): [https://imslp.org/wiki/IMSLP:Copyright\\_Made\\_Simple](https://imslp.org/wiki/IMSLP:Copyright_Made_Simple)

Additional reading: [https://imslp.org/wiki/Public\\_domain](https://imslp.org/wiki/Public_domain)