

Clive Gillinson, Carnegie's top executive, says stagehands have huge and varied jobs to carry out, far more so than at halls like the Met.

through generations, benefit from a powerful union, Local 1 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, one of the city's oldest organized labor bodies. A Local 1 stagehand strike in 2007 closed most Broadway

shows for 19 days. On Broadway stagehands earn a minimum of \$1,225 to \$1,600 a week on a long-running show, although those numbers don't apply to Carnegie Hall stagehands, who have a separate contract. The Carnegie stagehands benefit from a generous agreement that has evolved over decades at one of the busiest halls in the country. They are paid fixed performance fees for the shows they work, along with hourly rates for work connected with the shows. After 40 hours a week, they receive overtime at one-and-a-half, double or triple time. The tax returns list their average work week at 80 hours. Their compensation includes vacation pay (few take much time off) and a large amount connected to recordings made in the hall.

"It's pretty amazing what the total comes out to be," said Lois Gray, a professor emeritus at [Cornell University's](#) School of Industrial and Labor Relations and an expert on labor relations in the arts and entertainment industries. "But it reflects bargaining power and one's economic position. You don't pass moral judgments on these things. Baseball players are scarce, and talent is scarce."

While substitute sopranos and solo violinists can easily be found, the show cannot go on without the men in the suits.

"They can't be replaced in the short run," Ms. Gray said. "In the long run they can be replaced. None of these entertainment venues is willing to wait for the long run."

The power of the stagehands is palpable in the nervousness shown by people in the industry when talking about them. Carnegie officials declined to provide details about the contract; the stagehands and Local 1 officials declined to be interviewed for this article.

"The last thing I want to do is upset the people at Carnegie Hall," said Kelly Hall-Tompkins, a violinist who played a recital at Weill earlier this month. "I'd like to have a lifelong relationship with them."

Ms. Hall-Tompkins said she begrudged the stagehands nothing. "Musicians should be so lucky to have a strong union like that," she said.

Carnegie declined to say what portion of its \$70 million budget (down from \$84.5 million two seasons ago) was devoted to stagehand costs, and it is not clear how much those costs contribute to, say, a \$154 top-price ticket for a [Boston Symphony Orchestra](#) concert next week.

Renters of the hall's main Stern auditorium and the smaller Zankel Hall are generally charged extra for the stagehands, depending on the needs; the minimum charge for stage labor at Weill Recital Hall is \$540 per performance. In rent alone, outside presenters can pay from \$1,475 at Weill on a weekday afternoon to \$15,600 for a weekend evening at Stern.

Ellen Hamilton, president and founder of the Florida International Piano Competition, recently rented Weill for a competition recital and paid the labor minimum. "It did seem high to me," she said. "I don't know if that's because we're in Florida, and that's New York."

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