I want to tell you a little bit about how the Music Performance Trust Fund came to be. Its history goes back to the first half of the 20th century and the gradual erasure of musician jobs. For example, there were once around 22,000 jobs across the country for musicians in movie theaters, performing live accompaniment; those jobs were all lost when “talkies” entered the scene in 1927, replaced by only about 200 jobs in Hollywood for musicians to record film scores. Similarly, musicians used to be employed in radio and television stations; these jobs too were being replaced with records.

Finally, after decades of erosion to our jobs, convinced that musicians who made phonograph records were "playing for our own funerals," we decided to fight back, and we went on strike. Musicians in this country struck the record companies for OVER TWO YEARS! The strike lasted for 28 months, through most of World War II. It is still the longest strike in the entertainment industry in U.S. history. The AFM Recording Ban was a huge deal. This was a nationwide strike, and our density among musicians was very high—almost ZERO recordings with instrumentalists were made during that time. The only exceptions to the recording ban were specifically to make V-discs—victory discs that were made to send to soldiers overseas. Our union ignored pleas from the National War Labor Board to return to work. We ignored personal requests from President Roosevelt. We did not end the strike until the Record Companies agreed to share in the responsibility for the unemployment of musicians caused by recording, by contributing royalties from record sales into a fund that would employ musicians for admission-free live public performances. And that fund, as you can see, exists to this day! Every time you buy an album or song that was recorded under a union contract, a penny or two from that sale goes to the Music Performance Trust Fund. In turn, MPTF allots millions of dollars a year as grants to pay musicians scale wages to do performances that are free and open to the public.

We want to thank MPTF for cosponsoring this event, but most importantly we thank our forebears for having the courage and fortitude to withhold their labor for two years to win something that would not only benefit them, but successive generations of musicians.