

FAIR PAY PLEDGE

for Live Music, Performing Artists & Technical Crew

Musicians, performing artists, and the technical crew who make live performance possible are all professionals. They invest years of practice, thousands of dollars in equipment, and countless hours of preparation to show up and do what they do. They deserve a fair, guaranteed wage. And tips on top of that, not instead of it.

When artists and crew can afford to stay in our community, our community stays alive.

BY SIGNING THIS PLEDGE, WE COMMIT TO:

1. Pay a guaranteed fee and welcome tips on top.

We will not book performers or hire crew with a tip jar as their sole compensation. Every booking includes an agreed-upon minimum payment before the first note is played. Tips from the audience are encouraged as an additional expression of appreciation, never a replacement for fair pay.

2. Actively encourage tipping.

We will make it easy for audiences to tip, whether through a visible tip jar, a QR code, or a verbal acknowledgment from the stage or floor. We understand that normalizing tips on top of a fair wage helps shift the culture for everyone.

3. Agree on terms before the gig.

We will communicate clearly about pay, set length, sound setup, and expectations in advance, in writing whenever possible.

4. Pay at the end of the night.

Artists will be paid the full agreed amount at the end of the event. End of the night means end of the night, not next week, not after the books are settled, not when the owner gets back. If an exception is genuinely needed, it must be communicated and agreed upon in writing before the performance.

5. Honor cancellations fairly.

If we cancel a booking within 48 hours of the performance, we will pay 50% of the agreed fee. The artist has already turned down other opportunities, prepared their set, and arranged their schedule. That has value and we respect it.

6. Respect the agreed set length.

If we ask an artist to play beyond the agreed time, we will compensate the extension at the same hourly rate. Asking someone to play longer is not a compliment. It is additional work.

7. Respect the rate for artists and crew alike.

We will not pressure artists or technical crew to reduce their rate or work for free in exchange for 'exposure,' 'experience,' or 'future opportunities.'

8. Value all roles and formats equally.

Background music deserves the same respect as a headline set. Acoustic solo performers, DJs, full bands, sound engineers, and lighting technicians alike are professionals and will be treated as such.

9. Be transparent about our budget.

If our budget is limited, we will say so honestly and negotiate in good faith rather than misrepresent what we can pay or add expectations after the fact.

10. Support the broader ecosystem.

We understand that how we treat artists and crew ripples outward. When we pay fairly, we help sustain a thriving creative community in Montezuma County and beyond.

SIGN THE PLEDGE

Organization / Venue Name	Date:
Authorized Signatory (Print Name & Title)	Date:
Signature	Date:
Website / Contact Email	Date:

COMMON QUESTIONS

Is this a union?

No. The Pledge is voluntary. ZAI is building a community standard, not a collective bargaining unit. No venue is being compelled to sign and no artist is being organized as an employee.

What if a signatory does not follow through?

Public accountability is the mechanism. Signatories are listed on cortezarts.org. Musicians in this community talk to each other. ZAI will reach out annually to reaffirm commitment. A venue that signs and then treats artists poorly will be known for it.

Does signing cost anything?

No. There is no fee to sign. The commitment is the point.

Can I remove my name after signing?

Yes. Email grow@cortezarts.org and we will remove your listing. We would appreciate hearing why.

For the full FAQ visit cortezarts.org or email grow@cortezarts.org.

Return completed pledge to: grow@cortezarts.org

Signatories will be recognized on cortezarts.org as community supporters of fair pay for artists and crew.

ZU Arts Initiative is fiscally sponsored by Onward Foundation (501(c)(3))