

To the Board of Directors of the Jessie Ball duPont Foundation:

I am honored to write this letter in strong support of Dr. Michael Ray Fitzgerald and his important work documenting and preserving the rich musical and cultural history of Jacksonville.

Since 2024, I have had the privilege of working with Dr. Fitzgerald on several projects. Through our collaboration, I have come to know him as an exceptional documentarian, historian, and storyteller whose dedication to preserving Jacksonville's cultural heritage is both inspiring and invaluable. His work shines a light on the people, places, and traditions that have shaped the city's identity and ensures that these stories will continue to educate and inspire future generations.

As a personal friend of the late Ray Charles, I have a special appreciation for Dr. Fitzgerald's efforts to champion Ray's enduring legacy and his deep connections to Jacksonville. Dr. Fitzgerald has also proposed that the City of Jacksonville honor Ray Charles by naming a street in his memory—a thoughtful and deserving tribute to one of America's greatest musical icons and a meaningful recognition of Jacksonville's place in his remarkable life and career.

The Jessie Ball duPont Foundation has long demonstrated a commitment to strengthening communities and supporting initiatives that enrich the cultural life of Jacksonville. Dr. Fitzgerald's work aligns closely with that mission. By preserving the city's musical heritage and elevating the stories of artists whose contributions have too often been overlooked, he is helping to build a stronger sense of community, pride, and historical understanding.

I wholeheartedly support Dr. Fitzgerald and respectfully encourage the Foundation to recognize and support his efforts. His work is an investment in Jacksonville's cultural legacy, and its impact will be felt for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

James E. Jenkins

Musician, Jacksonville Symphony