Good afternoon/evening!  Today/Tonight, we're going to celebrate Oktoberfest, the world's largest beer festival. This 16 to 18 day folk festival is held annually in Munich, Bavaria, Germany from mid or late September to the first weekend in October, with more than 6 million people from around the world attending the event every year.  We thought you might like to know a little about this festival before we begin the music.

Octoberfest originated in October 10 when Crown Prince Ludwig, later known as King Ludwig I married Princess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen on October 12, 1810. The citizens of Munich were invited to attend the festivities held on the fields in front of the city gates to celebrate the royal event.

At the 100th anniversary of Oktoberfest in 1910, an estimated 120,000 litres of beer were consumed.

Beginning in 1950, the festival has always been opened with the same traditional procedure: A twelve-gun salute and the tapping of the first keg of Oktoberfest beer at 12:00 p.m. by the incumbent Mayor of Munich.  The Mayor then gives the first litre of beer to the Minister-President of the State of Bavaria.

Today, if you were in Munich, you would see fourteen large tents and twenty small tents at the Oktoberfest. The tents are wooden non-permanent structures which are constructed for and only used during the festival.  The largest "tent" seats 6,900 people, while the small tents seat, on the average, about 300 people.  Each tent is uniquely designed.

So, this afternoon, we'll open our Octoberfest with a traditional Octoberfest song - "Ein Prosit der Gemutlichkeit" which means translated "A toast to cheer and good times."  So, if you have a beverage in your hands raise it high during the song and at the end of the song, please take a drink. Here we go!