



## Two for the Show Media

Chris DiGirolamo

tel: 631-298-7823 cell: 718-669-0752

[www.Twofortheshowmedia.com](http://www.Twofortheshowmedia.com)

Email: [Chris@Twofortheshowmedia.com](mailto:Chris@Twofortheshowmedia.com)

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# Pianist/Composer Johannes Wallmann releases new jazz album "Love Wins" to celebrate marriage equality

**Johannes Wallmann** (piano), **Rob DZ** (spoken), **Russ Johnson** (trumpet), **Dennis Mitcheltree** (tenor sax), **Dayna Stephens** (baritone sax, EWI), **Kenny Reichert** (guitar), **John Christensen** (bass), **Devin Drobka** (drums), **Sharon Clark**, **Jan Wheaton**, **Keith Borden** (vocals).

Johannes Wallmann's new album *Love Wins* on the Fresh Sound New Talent label documents the marriage equality trials in the pianist/composer's adopted home state of Wisconsin, and celebrates a universal message of love, longing, acceptance, and social justice.

Wallmann and his husband Keith Borden moved to Madison in 2012 for Wallmann to lead the jazz program at the University of Wisconsin. The two had been together for fifteen years and had been legally married for five years; however, the state of Wisconsin did not recognize the marriage that they had taken for granted while living in California, in effect treating them as legal strangers. When Wallmann and Borden heard in 2014 that the ACLU was seeking couples to challenge Wisconsin's prohibition on recognizing same-sex marriages, they agreed to become one of eight co-plaintiff couples in the suit *Wolf v Walker* that led federal courts in the Western District of Wisconsin and the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals to rule Wisconsin's prohibition on same-sex marriage unconstitutional. The US Supreme Court let the lower courts' rulings stand, bringing marriage equality to Wisconsin and four other states on October 6, 2014.

When the state appealed the initial verdict from the District Court, Wallmann was unable to attend the hearing at the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in person; however, the court released the audio recordings from the hearing the next day, and as Wallmann listened to the lawyers' arguments and the judges' questions, he began imagining a new suite of music, incorporating the audio recording of the trial (this became the basis of track 5, "The Seventh Circuit").

For the album's lyrics, Wallmann teamed up with another Madison musician, spoken-word artist Rob Dz, a veteran of Wisconsin's hip-hop community who is also an accomplished improviser equally at home in jazz. Dz was the perfect partner for the project, says Wallmann: "Rob did tremendous research, read up on the history of the movement, and even got to know other plaintiff couples. From that base of knowledge and specificity, Rob crafted a universal message about love, dignity, equality, and hope. In today's uncertain and troubling times, it will remind people that love can indeed win. And it can serve as inspiration for the many battles for equality that still lie ahead."

Featuring eleven performers in varying combinations, the ten tracks of Love Wins mix classic jazz styles with New Orleans second-line and Afro-Cuban grooves, R&B and indie pop influences, odd-meter compositions, and free improvisation. Wallmann and Dz are joined by a core band of experienced, long-time musical collaborators of Wallmann's: Milwaukee/NYC trumpeter Russ Johnson; L.A. saxophonist Dennis Mitcheltree; and a Wisconsin-based rhythm section of Kenny Reichert, guitar; John Christensen, bass; and Devin Drobka, drums. Saxophonist Dayna Stephens was recovering from kidney transplant surgery at the time of the recording, but later added baritone sax and EWI tracks from his home in New Jersey. Sharón Clark (D.C.), Jan Wheaton, and Keith Borden contributed vocals to one track each.

"We made an album that celebrates a moment in time when love and equality persevered," says Wallmann. "Others are documenting the marriage equality struggle in writing or art. But as maybe the only jazz musician so directly involved in this fight, I had a special opportunity to create music for this moment."

Born in Germany, Johannes Wallmann was raised on Canada's Vancouver Island. He studied jazz piano and composition at Berklee College of Music in Boston (B.Mus., 1995) and at New York University (M.A., 1997; Ph.D., 2010), while winning numerous national music competitions and scholarships, as well as two Canada Council artist grants. After moving to New York City in 1995, he quickly established himself as a versatile and in-demand sideman in a wide-range of musical styles.

Among the most experienced jazz educators of his generation, Wallmann taught at New York University (1996-2007) and the New School (2003-2007) before relocating to Oakland to lead the jazz studies program at California State University East Bay. In 2012, he moved to the University of Wisconsin to become Director of Jazz Studies and the inaugural holder of the John and Carolyn Peterson Chair in Jazz Studies at UW's acclaimed Mead Witter School of Music.

Wallmann has recorded six critically acclaimed CDs as a leader: The Johannes Wallmann Quartet (1997), Alphabeticity (2003), Minor Prophets (2007), The Coasts (2010) and Always Something (2015). His 2015 quintet album, The Town Musicians (Fresh Sound New Talent FSNT-469), was named an Editors' Pick by DownBeat Magazine, which called it a "stunning collage of jazz styles and genres" and "a harmonious album from a lifetime of diverse sounds and experiences." Midwest Record called The Town Musicians "a sizzling session of sitting down jazz" and "music that meets on the corner of complex and accessible," and the UK's Jazz Journal wrote, "If I were responsible for an album as good as this, I'd be shouting about it."

Wallmann has toured extensively throughout North America, Europe, and Asia, including several national tours with the Dennis Mitcheltree Quartet, and performances at Massey Hall (Toronto), Carnegie (Weill Recital) Hall, Merkin Hall, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Brooklyn Conservatory, Renee Weiler Hall, Steinway Hall (New York City), the Hong Kong Coliseum (HK), Pacific Coliseum (Vancouver), SkyReach Center (Edmonton), the Taj Mahal (Atlantic City), and in major jazz clubs throughout North America and Germany (Birdland, The Blue Note, the 55 Bar, Yoshis, The Rex, the Upstairs Jazz Bar & Grill, The Green Mill, Baker's Keyboard Lounge, The Jazz Estate, The Jazz Gallery, Café Coda, and many more). Wallmann has recorded or performed with trumpeters Ingrid Jensen, Brian Lynch, Ralph Alessi, and Russ Johnson; saxophonists Gary Bartz, Seamus Blake, Phil Dwyer, Dayna Stephens, Pete Yellin, Dennis Mitcheltree, and Russ Nolan; tubaists Howard Johnson and Marcus Rojas; guitarist Gilad Hekselman; vibraphonist Christian Tamburr; bassists Jeff Andrews, Matt Penman, Sean Conly and Martin Wind; drummers Danny Gottlieb, Tim Horner, Jeff Hirshfield, Terry Clark and Donald Bailey; jazz singers Kevin Mahogany and Jackie Allen; operatic tenor Dr. Francois Clemmons and the Harlem Spiritual Ensemble; Four Other Brothers (IL); the Billings Symphony Orchestra and Canto-pop star Faye Wong.

Johannes Wallmann is currently available for interview

For more information visit: [www.johanneswallmann.com](http://www.johanneswallmann.com)

