



University of North Texas  
College of Music

Master's Recital | Tuesday, April 15, 2025 | 8:00 p.m. | Lab West

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**Kai Wagner, jazz bass**

**Natalie Wagner, alto saxophone and voice**

**Kenji Wagner, trumpet and double bass**

**Wes Case, guitar**

**Isaiah Nygard, piano**

**Isaac LaVigne, drumset**

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Love Thy Neighbor (1934).....	Harry Revel (1905–1958) Lyrics by Mack Gordon
Waltz for Natalie (2021) .....	Kai Wagner (b. 1999)
Rainbow Connection (1979) .....	Paul Williams (b. 1940), Kenneth Ascher (b. 1944)
No Doubt (2018).....	Braxton Cook (b. 1991)
317 E 32nd St (1952).....	Lennie Tristano (1919–1978)
Mela (2008) .....	Esperanza Spalding (b. 1984)

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*Program six hundred one of the 2024–2025 season  
Photography and videography are prohibited*

## Program Notes

### Love Thy Neighbor

I recently came across this cheerful tune from the musical *We're Not Dressing*, originally sung by Bing Crosby. The most famous jazz recording since then is John Coltrane's version from *Stardust* (1963), and I believe it to be a delightful set of melody and lyrics that has gone severely overlooked. This is my own version, somewhat in the style of the Jeff Hamilton Trio, to feature the bass; the piano hits state the true melody of the tune, while the bass contributes its own interjections.

### Waltz for Natalie

This was my first composition of which I felt proud, but I have not yet had a chance to perform it publicly, ever since having written it far too early into my relationship with Natalie. Unlike how I often write, the title came first; I then wrote harmony that helped me to express the many ways that she makes me feel, and a melody that calls out "Natalie" throughout. The opening chorus of the head echoes the way I sat at the piano to compose this melody as a solo piano piece, but I am very happy to share this composition first as a trio.

### Rainbow Connection

This 1979 Muppets Movie hit is one that many have covered, often as a carbon copy of the original tune. The juxtaposition of its extraordinarily introspective lyrics against its tender delivery makes the original a deeply affective and personal piece of music for anyone. I set this piece entirely *rubato* – outside of time – to capitalize on this aspect, embellishing some of the harmony to acknowledge and expand upon the sweetness of the original version. Like "Love Thy Neighbor," this arrangement continues a long tradition of using songs from musicals and popular genres as a vehicle for personal expression in the jazz idiom.

### No Doubt

Since moving to Denton, I have gotten to work with many musicians that have a heavy influence from gospel, neo-soul, funk, and other genres in their jazz playing. This modern composition that includes so many different genre elements would be a great depiction of some of the other music besides the straight-ahead jazz that I love to play. Besides the contrasting genre, I also aim to present significantly different melodic language.

### 317 E 32nd St

This tricky Tristano head is one that I have often heard, but never on the bass (and there may be good reason for it). Putting this duet together is a great pleasure for me, seeing as both of us have come a long way on instruments that started out as secondary instruments. I enjoy the openness of a group without a chordal instrument, and I figured this would be a fun way to feature the double bass. This is a *contrafact*, or a new melody on familiar changes, in this case, on "Out of Nowhere." The title refers to Tristano's address for his studio where he taught lessons and hosted jam sessions.

### Mela

Esperanza Spalding is one of my bass heroes that got me playing the instrument in the first place, and ever since I have started playing this music and listening to her writing, playing, and singing, I have been hooked. This is one of her compositions off of her album *Esperanza* (2008), titled after drummer Francisco Mela with whom she recorded her debut album and played in a quartet alongside McCoy Tyner and Ravi Coltrane. This latin-infused, energetic finale also serves as my thank you to my bandmates, fellow students, teachers, family, and greater community with whom I have had the pleasure of growing together.