

# Biography

Adrian Zalten was born in Poland on July 7, 1980. A year later his parents decided to move to Germany. Growing up in Germany, at the age of eight, Adrian started to play an electric organ that his father bought home. At the age of ten, at the music school, Orgel Studio Neid, he began music lessons on the electric organ. Later he began studying piano, where he explored classical piano literature to enhance his technique. While doing this, he found interest in playing the church organ, and took a few private lessons with Andreas Petersen at the Christus Kirche in Mannheim. In 1995, Adrian joined a choir lead by Wolfgang Schubardt, church organist and conductor in Mannheim, Germany. Here he would learn how to teach, sing and work with a choir and also how to lead a choir while playing the church organ. At an American Baptist Church in Mannheim, Germany, he was introduced to gospel music. He arranged the music for the Sunday church services, rehearsed with the choir and worked on a Gospel Concert attended by more than 800 people. After graduating from high school, Adrian decided it was time to do something different. Having been accepted for study abroad, Adrian arrived in the United States in 2002. Enrolled for two semesters at the historic, traditionally black Knoxville College, Adrian took jazz lessons from jazz pianist Charlie Rule. While there, he joined Mt. Olive Baptist Church East, a church with a great congregation and known for its choir program. Adrian toured with the choir, playing concerts in Nashville and Memphis. He also was active accompanying the youth choir and developed a strong feel for gospel music and improvisation. In 2004, Adrian transferred to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. His purpose for transferring was to study with acclaimed musician/mentor Donald Brown, formerly a member of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and currently a professor with the School of Music. He enrolled in the Jazz program and was accepted into College Scholars, an Honors Society that allows students to create their own major. Here he combined jazz studies and electronic media/design, with mentor Eric Smith, a photographer, designer and educator with the university.