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Editors

**Margaret Macintyre Latta**  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, U.S.A.

**Christine Marmé Thompson**  
Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.

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## **The YouTube Effect: How YouTube Has Provided New Ways to Consume, Create, and Share Music**

Christopher Cayari  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

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### **Abstract**

This case study about a teenage musician, Wade Johnston, suggests how YouTube has affected music consumption, creation, and sharing. A literature review connects education, technology, and media. Informal learning, digital literacy, and twenty-first century technology are also connected in the review. Data reveals how Wade started his channel, gained popularity, interacted with others, and promoted his musical career through YouTube. Original songs, covers, collaborations, documentaries, self-interviews, video blogs (vlogs), and live performances are observed by the researcher. Interviews with the subject, key actors in his life, fans, and first time listeners were transcribed and results were used to triangulate. Previous musical media research is expanded upon to include YouTube and video sharing. The idea of amateur and professional musician, musical venue, and audience member are being changed through YouTube. Current practices of how YouTube is used in the classroom are discussed, and future research is suggested.

## Background

*Teens evidently don't see computers as technology. It's as if they have developed an innate ability for text-messaging, iPodding, gaming, and multitasking on multiple platforms. They can share their life story on Facebook, entertain each other on YouTube, muse philosophically in the blogosphere, contribute to knowledge on Wikipedia, create cutting-edge art on Flickr, and compile archives on Del.icio.us. (Hartley, 2009, p. 129)*

## YouTube Has Affected Music

Educators and artists alike are seeing new ways to express their art through technological means. Digital technology has brought with it new media. This article examines how YouTube, one such media, has become a powerful space that affords new ways to consume, create, and share music. Because of YouTube and similar media venues, music performance and education have been changing. These media are resources to educators and artists that allow them to refine, augment, and transform their crafts.

YouTube has become the third most visited website in the world (Alexa, 2011) – behind Google and Facebook<sup>1</sup>: Since its creation in February, 2005, YouTube saw rapid growth; sixteen months after its creation, 100 million clips were being viewed per day (comScore, 2006). In October 2008, the site attracted 100 million American viewers a day, estimated to be over two thirds of the internet users in the United States (comScore, 2008).

This article explores how YouTube users have developed a community in which technology has enabled new kinds of musical creativity. In other words, since YouTube is a technology that challenges the way we perceive music, musician and audience (Thibeault, 2009), these phenomena deserve to be studied and understood within music performance and education. The first section of this article will examine literature about the interplay between art and technology, the relationship between technology and music education, and the diverse approaches toward research regarding YouTube. The second section presents some of the findings from an in depth case study of YouTube musician [Wade Johnston](#) and the community of his YouTube channel<sup>1</sup>. The final portion of this article will include discussion and conclusion that connect the observations and data of the research with previous literature; also ideas for future research and implications for music performance will be suggested.

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### Reviewing Research Connecting Education, Technology, Media, and YouTube

*Wholly new content will emerge from being digital, as will new players, new economic models, and a likely cottage industry of information and entertainment providers. (Negroponte, 1995, p. 18)*

Technology affects the way people create, consume, and share art, media, and performance. Benjamin (1937/1968) discussed how art forms changed through the use of mechanic reproduction, allowing the mass production and consumption of artwork. Benjamin claims that an original artwork has an “aura”; this means it is unique in time, space, and beauty. He noted that man-made art has always been reproducible, and argued that each reproduction strips the original art of its aura. Even though Benjamin’s view on art without an aura is complex, he noted that mass reproduction allowed art to be accessible to the masses. It also allowed for art to be edited like the piecing together of a film.

Since the digital revolution, the masses have been able to view or listen to digitalized artwork from a drive and on the internet, making it even easier for the consumption art. Jenkins (2006) makes the distinction between media, what we see or hear, and technology, the way media is produced and consumed. In Figure 1, a variety of media are identified by their art form as well as the technology that is utilized to create or display it.

<b>Media</b>	<b>Art form</b>	<b>Technology</b>
coins	visual	molds
photography	visual	camera/ negatives/ digital camera
oratorio, symphony (etc)	performing/ aural	sound recorder/ phonograph/ record/ tape/ CD
digital sound (mp3, wav, etc)	performing/ aural	digital sound recorder & player/ sound editing software
film	story telling/ performing/ aural/ visual	video camera/ film/ DVD
digital video (mov, mp4, etc)	story telling/ performing/ aural/ visual	digital camera/ video editing software/ digital viewing device (TV, computer, etc)

Figure 1: Forms of Media, Art, & Technology

Though this table is not an exhaustive list, one can see how modern media includes more art forms than its predecessors. Coins and photography are visual art media. They both could be used to display important figures such as famous people, places, and things. What changed was the technology that produced visual art. In the past, aural and performing arts such as the oratorio, symphony, and sacred mass had to be live. That media was eventually recorded by sound recorders and heard through phonograph cylinders, records, tapes, and compact discs (CDs). In the digital age, the same art form and media can be created and consumed via digital sound recorder and players. The sound film contained aspects of storytelling, performing, aural, and visual arts. Technological evolution brings the film to digital video allowing the same art to be created and consumed on a computer.

Katz (2004) argued that the phonograph was the first technology that drastically changed the way people consume, create, and distribute music. The phonograph was a widespread mechanism that allowed for the recording and playback of music. Katz called the process in which technological advances have changed the music industry a “phonograph effect” (p. 4). The emergence of the digital era and the invention of the internet brought about a new phonograph effect. In the digital era, Negroponte (1995) discussed how media had changed from a passive form into a more interactive form; Negroponte postulated that combining media would be the new trend of technology as society entered the new millennium; these new multimedia forms would allow users to have more control over their consumption of information and media. Jenkins (2006) furthered this claim by explaining how media companies were encouraging consumers to interact more by converging multiple media. This interactive culture created on the internet had made a social link between people who have never met face to face. These new technologies have enabled the internet to become an interactive media technology. These new media allow art to take on a new form while these new technologies allow art to be consumed, created, and shared like never before.

In response to these advances, Thibeault (in press) notes the gradual media and technological change over the past one hundred years have resulted in what he characterizes as a postperformance world. He notes that recording and face-to-face live performance accounts for only a small percentage of one’s musical experience. The ideas of music, musician, and audience have been changed. Thibeault encourages educators to continue to hold live performance in high regard; however, because of the transformation and availability of resources, educators should teach students about media and technologies that aid in the creation and consumption of music.

### **Technology's Affect on Amateur Music Making and Educators' Responses**

Thibeault's optimism was not always shared by his predecessors. Since humanity has been able to capture sound and mechanically reproduce sound, various cultures have been inundated with high quality musical recordings. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sousa (1906) predicted that recordings would kill the amateur musician. Green (2002) suggested that the majority of people are "alienated from ... music-making activities" (p. 3). Many non-musicians have an elitist view of performers who are often well trained, well rehearsed, and required to be technically precise and creative (Bailey & Davidson, 2005). Richards and Durrant (2003) suggest that many 'ordinary' people are intimidated by music making because they feel threatened by their solo voice being heard. Some music therapists have found that this fear, perhaps caused by the quality of recorded music, inhibits parents from singing to their children (Bunt, 1994). Through studying why people choose to be a part of a community chorus, Richards and Durrant (2003) reviewed a number of studies that show how the commercialization, increased professionalism, and specialization of musical performance actually discourages people from believing that they are able to make music and perform successfully.

In efforts to counteract the declining numbers of amateur music making, some music educators find ways to link popular music making to the classroom. Green (2005) presented observations and data collected from a pilot study that allowed students to bring in music of their choice to a music class, form friendship groups, and create their own rendition of a song. These informal learning techniques were also developed into a curriculum and used experimentally in a number of English schools (Green, 2008). The projects that Green (2005, 2008) described focus on putting the learner at the center of the education and discussed the benefits of the inclusion of informal learning in the traditional classroom. Students appreciated freedom in their education, and their choices resulted in confidence of musical abilities. Green (2002) suggested that there is a natural continuum of informally learning music. This continuum includes memorizing, copying, jamming, embellishing, improvising, arranging and composing. Green's continuum can be experienced through consumption and creation on YouTube, and will be discussed more in depth in the third portion of this article.

Informal learning practices have also been researched in other artistic venues. Jenkins (2006) presented his case studies on writers who have been changed through the use of fan fiction sites and blogs. Jenkins described that children and adults interacted together in fan communities. Informal learning occurred through encouraging, tutoring, and sharing as well as editing each others' works. Technology has opened up doors that lead to skill development where these possibilities were never even considered decades earlier. Similar to these fan fiction sites, YouTube contains a myriad of videos that allow a viewer to learn informally through watching songs or lessons.

In the classroom, technology allows educators to incorporate innovative ideas into their curriculum. It is fitting for educators to find technologies that make their jobs more efficient and making their student's learning more engaging. Many cultures seem to have turned into internet based societies with people who are stimulated by the screen. Computer and television screens entice today's youth culture. These technologies also use text to capture audience attention. Blogs and prose are readily available to anyone who cares to access them.

In higher education, professors are teaching undergraduate music education students how to develop projects that center around how to use technology effectively and not technology programs and software. Greher (2006) has designed projects that focus on self-exploration while giving students strategies for applying technology in their future classroom; Thibeault (2009) has created projects that focus on inter-departmental collaborations, creating resources for the profession through the public domain and creative commons, and providing students with future classroom ideas; Webb (2007) has explored the potential of cross-media listening in the music classroom and how including visual stimulation enhances the listening experience. These visual enhancements expand media and musical understanding through aural and visual analyses. Juhasz (2008) created a "virtual classroom" that was conducted almost exclusively on YouTube. Juhasz admits that teaching a class based on YouTube was a difficult task, but it did allow students to learn how to use the medium. Juhasz acknowledged that having a class about YouTube on YouTube was not as successful as originally anticipated. The proper technology and curriculum is essential to the successful convergence and incorporation between classroom and technology.

### ***Web 2.0: Technology Creates Interactive Media***

As many of the above authors suggest, the users of technology shape the technology's purpose as the technology shapes the users' culture. Understanding how YouTube got to the point of reaching hundreds of millions a day is important. Negroponte (1995) suggested that the internet was becoming more socially oriented in the 1990s. His postulations were supported with the development of what DiNucci (1999) called Web 2.0: interactive content, consistent updates, and a more reliable and constant real-time connection to other people. Manovich (2008) stated that before 2000, the web was mostly a publishing medium, and since has become more communication oriented.

Web 2.0 has opened up the possibility for a large amount of user-generated content. Since anyone can post what they would like, some researchers are calling this the democratization of art. Manovich (2008) discussed the user prototypes that have emerged to become Web 2.0 content generators identifying them as amateurs, prosumers (professional consumers), and pro-ams (professional amateurs). Likewise, many innovative Web 2.0 artists consider

themselves amateurs at the time they start creating their web spaces. Richard (2008) discussed the quality products and vast knowledge these amateurs produce calling these untrained video makers “media masters”. According to Richard, these technically savvy YouTube users create videos by incorporating skills they have informally learned through producing their own videos. This innovation is important to the foundation of Web 2.0. The creation of YouTube videos requires a certain level of digital literacy; however, the internet does not distinguish between literacy and publication (Hartley, 2009). Hartley argued that digital literacy includes the ability to not only consume but contribute; one must understand how the internet works and how to create with it. YouTube is a site that allows many people to not only consume, but also create.

The body of literature about YouTube is small but growing. Works cited in YouTube research tended to be websites, magazine articles, and blogs about the website. However, a number of scholarly studies done in a variety of disciplines are starting to accumulate. Juhasz’s (2008) pilot “YouTube only” classroom pointed out that mainstream reports did not take the idea of a YouTube classroom seriously, portraying the ideas and students of the class as rudimentary. Mainstream media’s biases treated the class and YouTube as a joke.

Burgess and Green (2009) discussed a number of paradoxical practices where television news would report on how YouTube has inspired many and, soon after would air a condemning documentary about cyber bullying, leading the viewer to consider that YouTube is to blame. Palfrey and Gasser (2008) suggested that most of the problems people face on the internet are rooted in real space; the internet is just one of the many venues bullies and predators use. At times, the way the mainstream media portrays YouTube does not represent the way the millions of daily viewers use the site (Manovich, 2008). Some schools have responded by blocking the YouTube website from their campuses. Because of this extreme, all-right or all-wrong attitude, advocates such as Hartley (2009) and Palfrey and Gasser (2008) encourage school systems and legislators to understand new technologies and media instead of quarantining them; by educating children, teenagers, and adults to achieve digital literacy, society will start to better understand and utilize digital resources like YouTube.

Some researchers ask the question “What is YouTube?” The answer will change depending on the user and the time of the study (Burgess & Green, 2009). Kinder (2008) summed up the power of the on-line video by noting its four purposes: conference, exhibition, precursor, and research. Quantitative research can allow for the understanding of gross trends as well as show the breakdown of what types of videos are being made and how people are using the website. One study (Cheng et al., 2007) developed a system that crawled through YouTube and gathered data about videos twenty-seven times throughout the course of three months. The large sample of videos ( $N = 2,676,388$  of the estimated 42,000,000 videos available on YouTube) were grouped into their user assigned categories and generalizations made. This

data should be used with caution. Users can put their videos into any category they choose, and no attempt is made to regulate accuracy. In addition, these broad categories are created by YouTube and are intentionally broad. This study discussed the affects of video length, categorization, and popularity.

Burgess and Green (2009) focused on the popular videos of YouTube by sampling from six days across two weeks in three consecutive months in 2007. With the aid of a mechanical crawler, the researchers turned up videos from the “Most Viewed”, “Most Favorited”, “Most Discussed”, and “Most Responded” for the day, week, month, and all time categories on the website. After analysis, Burgess and Green noted that user-created content dominated the sample overall and more specifically, the “Most Discussed” and “Most Responded” categories. This was because of the large number of vlogs (video blogs) and music videos. The “Most Viewed” category was dominated by traditional sources. A large portion of these traditional source videos were uploaded by users who have no affiliation to the creators, and usually upload videos that infringe on copyright. The “Most Favorited” category contained approximately the same amount of user and traditional source generated content.

While these studies focused more on the numbers and categories of videos, other researchers have looked to qualitative means to show how YouTube is affecting culture and society. Lange (2008), an ethnographic researcher, discussed a number of misconceptions people have about YouTube. Lange noted that YouTube is more a social network site than a video sharing site. Lange also argued that studying ordinary users would be quite uneventful; YouTube is weighted toward the non-ordinary, and studying the typical user would prove to be inconclusive. Therefore, when choosing subjects, researchers should seek out the extraordinary.

There is also a growing amount of literature about the way people utilize YouTube. Manovich (2008) wrote about the interplay between everyday media and YouTube. He claimed that most modern media products are being designed explicitly for user customization; sites allow users to communicate where content, opinion, and conversation meld together and cannot easily be separated. Manovich discussed how YouTube video makers reduce content, news, and media into tokens that allow viewers, as well as the creator, to later use to further communication. The utilization of tokens allow for video makers to hook viewers into their art.

YouTube video makers also use a digital, social driven vernacular. Vernacular video is a term expanded upon by Sherman (2008). Sherman discussed and explored vernacular video idiosyncrasies: short video clips that encourage short attention spans; use of canned music; sampling of popular music; and collage and montage to name a few. Sherman stated,



“Vernacular use of a medium pushes content over form” (p. 163). This vernacular media creation lends itself to the formation of a diverse mural of artistic creations that affects the art world of virtually all artists.

### ***YouTube is Many Things to Many People***

To some, YouTube is seen as a website full of amateurs wasting their time posting poorly made videos, while others see YouTube as their chance at stardom, their most understanding teacher, or their meeting place with closest friends. YouTube does allow for all these things to happen. It serves as a virtual coffee house where people can share ideas and gather with likeminded and contrasting individuals to discuss ideas, art, and music. There is a separate place that allows others to learn from more experienced players. Another section shows professional videos of signed artists. In the back, there is a room that everyone seems to know about that has music videos that were ripped without the proper permission. Once in a while, the establishment or authorities discourage people from watching or posting those videos. But it seems that others always find a way to bring another version or even a replica back to make it available to all.

Musical users’ needs range from wanting to hear a rendition of a popular song, to remixing existing popular content, to wanting to share their original songs with others. They want to learn how to play their favorite lick on guitar or what fingers to use for a complicated chord progression on the piano. They advertise EPs and watch their favorite music video. They cover their idol’s song and collaborate with musicians across the globe to perform Christmas carols. They sing karaoke or play the recorder for the sole purpose of showing off their musical skills. The possibilities of this video sharing virtual world are only bound by the imaginations of the users and the terms of service of the webspace provider. In the following section of this article, a deeper look will be taken into how one YouTube musician has utilized YouTube to create, develop, and sustain his musical career.

### ***How YouTube Changed One Musician’s Life***

*[YouTube] makes me try harder. It makes me want to write songs more. It makes me want to be a better musician. I want this to be my ticket to the real deal. It makes me want to try so hard (W. Johnston, interview, May 11, 2009).*

### **Method**

The research from this article originates from an unpublished study conducted by the author (Cayari, 2009). The researcher conducted a case study of YouTube musician, Wade Johnston to better understand how YouTube affects the way people consume, create, and share music.

The choice to use case study to study trends in YouTube was based on Stake (1995) for whom case study can be used to lay the ground work for researchers to identify trends in culture.

### ***The Subject***

Some information that has been gathered is available via the internet; observations of [Wade Johnston's channel](#) are a portion of this case. In an attempt to triangulate and understand Wade and his channel, data was collected through the following means: interviews with Wade conducted via online conferencing (SKYPE) were recorded and transcribed; e-mail conversations and interviews were conducted with key actors in Wade's life and other YouTube musicians. Live interviews were also conducted in an effort to establish Wade as a credible musician, entertainer, and potential educational resource; three panels of three individuals each were established and consulted. Through these panels, the researcher was able to observe nine audience members listening to and watching Wade Johnston's music for the first time while noting their viewing patterns, responses, and preferences.

### ***Selection of the Subject***

Wade was selected as the subject of this case study for the following reasons. Wade was a relatively new and popular YouTube musician. At the time of selection (January 2009), he had approximately 4,000 subscribers. Therefore, he had a strong fan base. He was by no means "ordinary," as is the case of most successful YouTube artists, as Lange (2008) suggests. Wade had covers of professional artists and original songs. He was promoting his own merchandise through his channel. He collaborated with other YouTube artists on his channel. His innovative ideas made him a good candidate who used YouTube in a number of typical and ground-breaking ways.

### ***Triangulation through Panels***

One panel consisted of experienced music educators who were currently in the doctoral program at a major research university, another panel was of undergraduate music education majors who were around the same age as Wade, and a final panel was of undergraduate elementary education majors who were currently taking a music integration class. Panel participants were asked a number of questions about their YouTube usage and to listen to one song from Wade's demo CD and view two of his YouTube videos ([Time](#) and [I'm Yours](#)).

### ***Observation and Reaction***

The final data gathering means was an observation of a live performance by Wade Johnston. At this performance, Wade performed for approximately an hour. After the performance, one

of Wade's friends, three audience members, and two fellow YouTube musicians who also performed with him at the event were interviewed about their reaction to Wade's performance. This observation of live performance was done to contrast Wade's recorded performances available on YouTube.

### ***Known Biases***

It should be known by the reader that the researcher was a fan of Wade Johnston. Members of the panels were not familiar with Wade Johnston's music; however, they personally knew the researcher. The members of the elementary education major panel were students of the researcher. The music educator panels, both future and current, included class members of the researcher. All panel participants were assured that participation in this study had no affect on any grade. Most participants seemed reluctant to be blunt in a negative way. This is probably because of their compassion for young people who are trying to follow their dream. A copy of this article was also submitted to Wade to insure nothing was misrepresented. He did not respond with any concerns. The remainder of this section will be dedicated to answering questions on how Wade has used YouTube to consume, create, and share music.

### **Data**

***How Did Wade Get Started On YouTube?*** To most, Wade would have been considered the typical high school musician. He was involved in the school's musical, he performed at church, and he spent countless hours jamming with his friends. He grew up in a musical home with a family who supported the arts and a father who encouraged him to develop his musical talents. On March 22, 2008, at the age of 17, Wade created his YouTube account to subscribe to Mark and Jerry's channel. A group he came across while surfing the internet. He did this so that he could receive personal updates whenever they posted a new video. Later that year, Wade's father showed him a video of YouTube artist, Jacqueline, a ukulele player who was known for her covers of popular music; Wade quickly subscribed to her as well. Wade decided he wanted to post his own music on YouTube. Even though Wade was worried that peers would make fun of him if they saw his music online, it did not stop him from wanting to post his original songs. Being inspired by YouTube musicians coupled with the purchase of a new computer, ukulele, and guitar, Wade posted his first video on July 24, 2008.

***How Did Wade Use YouTube To Share His Music With The World?*** At the time of his first posting, Wade had close to twenty songs written with countless others half done in his music notebook where he keeps all of his lyrics and chord progressions. His first video was [\*Gimme Some Sugar\*](#), a blues song where he sings accompanied by his guitar. Within a month, he posted four songs. [\*Jane\*](#) included harmonica, guitar, and voice with an opening dialogue. Panel members described the song as simple and "a song I could listen to while driving down

the countryside.” In [Breaking All the Rules](#), Wade and his best friend, Clyde, sing a duet they wrote together. [The Middle](#) was the first song Wade wrote on ukulele. This was also the first video that Wade produced that included outtakes, a technique common of YouTube performers where they purposely include clips of themselves messing up while recording; these clips usually are presented either before or after the main performance.

As Wade’s musical style, video editing, and digital literacy grew, so did the caliber of his original videos. Wade added two more original songs in the first half of 2009 to his YouTube channel. [Tip Jar](#), an original song, included a lengthy description of his inspiration after his musical performance. [Time](#) was the first of Wade’s original songs that he tracked. Tracking is an editing technique where more than one video or audio track are laid on top of each other; Wade used this technique for almost all of his cover songs. Because of the tracking, [Time](#) is the work of which Wade is most proud of. [Time](#) was one of the two videos the panel participants were asked to view. The video was played from the beginning, and the viewer was instructed to stop the video when the song was finished. While watching, most had a physical reaction to the use of finger cymbals in Wade’s performance; they smiled, laughed, or nodded their head. Those who decided to explore the webpage while listening to the song were drawn back to the video with the first sound of the finger cymbal. The reactions from the panel reflected a variety of responses from, “I would have stopped listening to it long before the end of the song” to “I plan on subscribing to him.” Some viewers found it awkward that Wade was staring into the camera while others felt drawn to him because of it. One remarked, “Direct eye contact is a little weird because you would have that direct view of a person.” Others, consisting mostly of future elementary educators, felt that this was a practice that made the video special. One person commented that she did not like it when he closed his eyes because it broke that connection.

When asked about whether they thought [Time](#) was a typical YouTube video, a variety of responses were given ranging from, “No... most of the other amateur music making is mostly a ‘music minus one’ thing where somebody is playing along with a track and it sort of highlights a certain instrument” to “I’ve seen a lot of other videos out there like this ... There’s so much variety out there... I’d say it’s typical.” One participant stated that though he felt it was not typical of YouTube videos; it was typical of what college students do in their dorm rooms. A future music educator noted that typical on YouTube is impossible to define.

What’s typical on YouTube? I guess I would say yes, because there’s no limit on what you can put on YouTube unless it’s inappropriate. That’s what YouTube is for; for people like this to put their own videos on the internet. Free exposure.

A number of participants picked up on the idea of exposure stating that Wade's video was altruistic and self-centered. However, his purpose was clear as he stated, "I use YouTube to promote myself as number one, a musician, number two a person, and most importantly a songwriter."

***How Did Wade Become "YouTube Famous"?*** Less than a month after his first group of songs were uploaded, Wade decided to post a video of himself doing a [cover](#) of one of Jacqueline's songs. Attempting to grab Jacqueline's attention, Wade stated her name nineteen times in the first forty-five seconds of the video. At the end of the video, he expressed to Jacqueline and the world how much he loves her music. There were two simultaneous rationales for Wade's video. The first was to attach himself to someone who was already well known on YouTube and was already established as a popular musician. The second was to create a tribute to one of his idols. Wade admitted that he was attracted to her spontaneity and personality, but more importantly he stated:

What I wanted to do with that video is grab her attention... I wanted her to notice me so I would get noticed. I did the big extravagant thing in the beginning which I thought was fun and cute... I thought she might feature it in a video or something... It worked.

His video brought about a number of opportunities and benefits that Wade did not even imagine. Jacqueline noticed his video. She also featured it on her YouTube channels. This brought a number of viewers to Wade's channel and his subscriber count climbed exponentially, from 64 to 390 seemingly overnight. It was Wade's obsession with a famous YouTube artist, his determination to get noticed, and his willingness to take risks that brought him that lucky break. His fan base exploded, but that was not the only thing that gaining Jacqueline's attention did for Wade.

***How Did Wade Use YouTube To Connect With Other YouTube Musicians?*** Shortly after Wade's cover video, he received notification from YouTube that he was invited to perform live with Jacqueline at YouTube Live! 2008. YouTube and Jacqueline, being a pioneer on YouTube as a ukulele artist, selected a number of YouTube ukulele players to create a ukulele orchestra to perform one of Jacqueline's songs. In November 2008, the five players of the orchestra met in San Francisco to practice and perform. Wade met not only the other ukulele players in the group, but also a number of YouTube celebrities and fans including Mark and Jerry. In an attempt to share his experiences of this momentous occasion, Wade created [eight videos](#) that document his trip. These videos show Wade's interactions with the orchestra, meeting favorite YouTube celebrities, and practice and performance footage at the event.

Through meeting all of these other artists, Wade started developing an idea for a collaborative project which he called [YouTube Christmas Extravaganza 2008](#). This collaboration eventually became an eight part series with different musicians who guest starred on Wade's channel to perform Christmas songs. It was his goal to include a variety of instruments, musicians, and styles. Some of the instruments included were harmonica, ukulele, guitar, accordion, melodica, violin, bells, and synthesizer.

During his two-week winter break from his freshman year in college, Wade worked tirelessly with his YouTube friends to create videos that combined the talents of musicians that were hundreds or even thousands of miles apart. He worked so hard that there were days he started working on the project at ten o'clock in the morning and ended at three o'clock the next morning, forgetting to eat some meals in between. Wade worked with musicians he knew from YouTube Live! and others of whom he was a fan. Some of the artists were more popular than he, while others were not, thus reciprocating the feature that Jacqueline offered him earlier that year. By this time, Wade had thousands of subscribers. Some of his collaborators had barely any subscribers and were helped by being featured. Wade indicated that "[One collaborator] had 600 subscribers when I did the YouTube Christmas thing. Then she got featured and she blew up. She has more than I do now."

At the time of the interview, Wade had around 9,000 subscribers. Wade's popularity grew because of this endeavor. By linking himself to other artists, he was able to reach their fan bases. He again tapped into the audience of Jacqueline as well as Mark and Jerry and others to gain more subscribers.

Despite Extravaganza's success, Wade commented throughout the interviews on a number of difficulties. The first problem was the time constraint. To conceive, record, and edit that many songs with that many artists in a two week time span was impossible for Wade to do by himself. Wade was grateful that his collaborators did a fair share of the editing, and in some videos, did almost all of it. However, the burden of being the common link was too great to complete the original project of twelve songs. The physical distance between the performers was also a problem. It was difficult to make schedules match up. With some partners, there was a three-hour time difference. A final issue was that some of the files became quite large. One of the videos was so heavily edited and contained so much information that it took multiple attempts to transfer and upload; Wade eventually gave his collaborators on that video his password to YouTube allowing them to upload it from their computer.

***How Did Wade Use YouTube To Gain Fans?*** The Extravaganza brought Wade a large number of subscribers. However, the evidence shows that there is one other thing that brought even more views to his website: covers. Wade carefully chose which covers he would present. "If I chose a popular song then it's obviously going to get a lot more popularity than one's

[sic] that people haven't heard of," stated Wade (Bregman, 2009). His rendition of Jason Mraz's song [I'm Yours](#) has brought him more views than any of his other videos. He created this video to submit to the [Bushman World Ukulele Contest 2008](#), the contest which Jacqueline won the year prior. By entering this contest, he linked his name to the company's website as well as a number of other entrants. This video is a good example of how complex a tracked music video is. In Appendix A, one can see how the six distinct video and audio tracks interact to create a completed multitrack video. These layers are superimposed upon each other to create the illusion that Wade is playing with a band. However, it is only he who is performing. One panel participant remarked that by using this technique, it allows the viewer to see Wade's creative process.

Wade does not plan his arrangements out. Granted, he has an idea of what he wants a song to sound like, but he records in a trial and error style. He will add and subtract portions of music and video until he is satisfied with the final product. Regarding this approach, Wade commented, "I kind of wing it... I'll record the ukulele and the vocal track and just see what I want to do with it."

This "wing it" attitude seems to spill over to the quality of performance. Wade admitted that his videos are not as polished as they could be when he said:

I under-produce my videos. I think it could be so much better produced. But this is for free. Anybody can see it. I'm not looking to make profit. I am just going to have fun with it. I think it's more about fun than about profit.

Even though his videos are not as close to perfect as those professionally produced in the mainstream, viewers seemed to flock to *I'm Yours*.

One night it had a few thousand views. The next morning I woke up, and it had 25,000 views... And my subscribers were going up ridiculously as well. And it just kept going up and up and up, and before I knew it, it was over 100,000 views. Then it was over 200,000 views a couple months ago. It is just an astonishing thing to see how it gained popularity. Wade does not take all the credit.

It's really about [search engine] algorithms... If people look up I'm Yours, there was a period of time where I was the first song that would come up out of the 'I'm Yours' songs; which is really big. And I got a ton of views from that. When people search it, sometimes my video will come up on the first page, and they will click that and that gets me a lot of views.

These algorithms and contests helped Wade accumulate even more views and fans with his covers. As his audience grew, Wade had to decide how to deal with those who were attempting to interact with him on YouTube.

***How Did Wade Interact With His YouTube Audience?*** With 11,000 subscribers, Wade had hundreds of thousands of channel views and approximately 1,000,000 video views<sup>3</sup>. Wade had an interactive audience that rated and commented on his videos. He had hundreds of comments on most of his videos and 3,000 on his most discussed video. Wade stated that he reads every comment that is on his YouTube channel and videos, though he rarely responds.

His viewers' comments tend to fall under certain categories; comments that idolize him, seek motivation from him, send him a personal message, ask a question about his music, or ask a question about his personal life.

Wade tries to not allow comments to affect him personally, which he demonstrated by saying:

I think both [positive and negative comments] can be good and bad. Positive stuff, if it's too positive, can be a bit creepy. It can boost my ego, which is not good. If it's negative, I can get offended or take it the wrong way. But it can give me good constructive criticism... Most of the time I let [the negative comments] roll off my back, but sometimes I get comments that are so random and unnecessary, I'm like, 'Really? Come on.'

Wade tends to not watch response videos unless something special is brought to his attention. There are three videos that he found noteworthy. The first was of a ukulele player who covered his song *Time*. It was a special gesture that Wade felt was an honor. The second video was created by Wade's fellow students at his university. The girls recorded themselves in their dorm room lip-syncing and dancing to one of Wade's cover songs. The final noteworthy video response was of a video that mocked one of Wade's covers. Wade remarked, "The only other thing that I remember is the mocking video that was just ridiculously crazy. I didn't get it at all and I thought it was ridiculously funny."

Another interactive portion of Wade's channel was his inclusion of a question and answer session he entitled [Cup 'o Love](#). When Wade hit 5,000 subscribers, he promised his audience a question and answer video. Fans were encouraged to send him questions. He then chose a number of those questions to put in a video where he interviewed himself.



Interaction between audience and performer is immediate. Fans get to know Wade on his channel through his dialogue before and after his songs, through his question and answer video, and documentaries like the ones he created about YouTube Live!

***How Does Wade's YouTube Performance Compare To His Live Performance?*** Since YouTube is a digital venue, fans have a view of Wade that is two-dimensional. He presents himself how he wants to be perceived. However, as all the six subjects who were interviewed at the Bushman Ukulele Luau stated, Wade's personality is the same on screen and off. When it came to his music, one fellow YouTube musician said,

I much prefer his live performance because YouTube has this way of putting people on a pedestal. Even though you know they are a real person, they are somewhat unrelatable. I much rather watch live music as a compliment to listening to it in a different medium.

One of the future music educator panel participants was so impressed with Wade's videos that he decided to see Wade's performance at the Luau. He remarked:

I wasn't sure if he was going to own up to the videos, because there is only one of him live and he can't overdub himself ... It was really good live. He is someone who can also play in front of an audience and the camera. He had a great stage presence... As far as his video performances go, that is just a completely different venue and genre. It's like he's doing things for the camera. He's overdubbing himself, which adds another artistic element to it. But I don't think that the fact that the songs were on video first took anything away from his live performance.

Wade's father, Wade's childhood best friend, and a college friend who has all seen Wade perform live a number of times commented that he is the same person on YouTube as he is on stage. According to Wade, the only real difference between live performance and his YouTube channel is the way it sounds.

***How Does Wade Use YouTube To Promote Himself?*** Wade's live performance and YouTube channel are both venues that allow him to promote his music. He understands that his music is a business, and therefore he must find ways to make a profit. Wade advertised his EP, or demo CD, on his YouTube channel. He encouraged his fans to visit his Facebook, MySpace, and Eventful by telling them to "stalk" him. He uploaded a video to sell his first ukulele. The video explained the bidding procedure. He decided to use YouTube, the place where his fans were viewing him, as an auction site instead of a site like eBay. The winner was instructed to wire Wade the money on PayPal, and Wade sent them the ukulele. This video was taken down by Wade after the sale was finalized. Wade announced upcoming

concerts at the end of a number of his videos as well as added links to the venues' websites on the sidebar.

Wade used YouTube to distribute his music to his fans for free, in hope that they will purchase one of his CDs or go to one of his concerts and donate money in his tip jar. He shared his songs with the world in hopes of being discovered by a talent scout or band manager who will sponsor him. He used YouTube to promote himself as a musician, person, and song-writer.

### Discussion

*Digital technology gives everyone the means to express themselves, and it empowers them to speak... in ways that previous generations could only have imagined. Creators no longer need to rely on the old gatekeepers like professional agencies, editorial boards, and producers. Digital technology allows creators 'to route around' the traditional intermediaries by using the hardware and software in their dorms and homes. (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008, p. 125)*

Digital technology has indeed changed the way musicians distribute their music. YouTube allowed Wade to be accessed instantly by millions of viewers. As his subscription and view count climbed, so did his success. Most of the techniques he uses were learned informally; this included skills in technology, music, and marketing. By using YouTube, Wade changed the way he consumed, created, and produced music. In the following section, parallels will be drawn between what Wade has done on YouTube and the literature described earlier. Discussion of new ideas will be based on the information gathered in the case study that will help readers better understand how YouTube has affected culture, music, and technology. Finally, suggestions about future research will be made.

The bulk of this study centered around Wade Johnston and how he developed his channel on YouTube. By watching his videos, especially the ones that he performed by himself, the viewer may be under the impression that he does all of the work himself. A YouTube video can create the illusion that an artist is a completely self-sufficient entity. By playing ukulele, shaker, snapping, singing three lines, and adding an extra visual feed to enhance humor, Wade was able to create a finished video that the viewer can identify as *I'm Yours*. He did all the editing. He uploaded the video. It is on his channel. Wade has essentially become, in the eyes of his audience, a digital renaissance man. However, even though Wade did all those things, he is not alone in the production of his art. The concept that no man can create art alone was heralded by Becker (2008/1982), a leader in the discipline of case study. He developed case

studies that centered on various artists and then discussed how characters, situations, and events developed an artist's art world. He wrote:

Imagine, as one extreme case, a situation in which one person did everything: made everything, invented everything, had all the ideas, performed or executed the work, experienced and appreciated it, all without the assistance or help of anyone else. We can hardly imagine such a thing, because all the arts we know, like all human activities we know, involve the cooperation of others (Becker, 2008/1982, p. 7).

Becker would state that Wade had an art world that contributed to the creation of his art. In this art world, a myriad of people would be contained. Wade had to gather inspiration. He did this by watching videos done by Jacqueline and other YouTube musicians. He has gotten feedback from those he trusts like his father, band members, and at one point, his best friend Clyde. Professionals also contribute to his art world: his CD producer, writers of the songs he covered, and hardware and software designers of the computer and editing programs he used. The people who made and sold his ukulele, guitar, and shaker were required for his performance, for without them, he would have had no instruments. Fellow musicians helped him create his collaborations. His audience had to watch his videos; without them, his art would have not been experienced. Some of those people became fans and critics who loved, appreciated, and evaluated his music. His roommates and family are part of his art world, even if their only job was to stay quiet or out of the room while he was recording. Although not an exhaustive list, this should give the reader an idea of how Wade's art goes beyond just one man.

It is also important to understand how this young musician developed his skills. By viewing Wade's YouTube videos, one can see parallels to Green's (2002) continuum of how a popular musician learns. Memorization was achieved through viewing countless hours of YouTube videos and sources to listen to music, such as CDs. Copying and arranging are apparent in the number of cover songs Wade performed. Composition is seen in his original songs<sup>4</sup>. In the interview process, Wade talked about how he and Clyde would show each other riffs and chord progressions on the guitar before they were playing complete songs. Eventually, the duo started jamming, improvising, arranging, and finally writing songs. This process was very similar to what Green (2002) reported in a multiple case study of popular musicians.

Wade, like many YouTube musicians, posted original songs before he posted cover songs. It could be suggested that this is so that the artist can develop their own identity before they are tied to another artist's music. Green (2002) noted that many live popular music performers feel the need to establish their own identity with original works before performing covers. This process of establishing identity is important to most young people. As discussed in

Palfrey and Gasser (2008), most digital teens use their profiles on social network sites as an expression of who they are. Burgess and Green (2009) note that who someone subscribes to on YouTube can become part of one's identity. Therefore, since Wade subscribed to Jacqueline, it should be no surprise that his first cover was of one of her songs. By linking himself to her, he was able to draw a number of her fans to his channel, which was apparent through his quick rise in popularity from the time Jacqueline featured him on her channel to the time they performed together at YouTube Live!

As Wade's popularity and musical skills grew, so did his digital literacy and digital proficiency. Viewers of Wade's channel can see how he evolved from a media amateur to a media master, the terms developed by Richard (2008). His first few videos were single-track songs that had very little editing and dialogue. However, as Wade started to experiment, videos were produced with multiple tracks being used simultaneously. Collaborations were developed. Editing techniques became more advanced and sophisticated. In one of the YouTube Live! videos, Wade spliced together the orchestra playing the same song in five different locations. The finished product was a mashed-up run through of the performed song. The panel agreed that Wade's video editing techniques were impressive, and the same techniques won him an honorable mention in a worldwide contest.

Wade also included techniques which are common in many YouTube videos. Wade's use of tokens confirms Manovich's (2008) claim that YouTube video producers use hot topics, people, and ideas to bring themselves more viewers and interaction. This can be seen when Wade created a token out of Jacqueline, YouTube Live!, and Christmas in the *YouTube Christmas Extravaganza 2008*. Wade is also known for including tokens in his vlogs. This ranges from silly tokens like discussing how much he loves grapefruit in *Time* to making fun of celebrities in his *Cup 'O Love* question and answer session. Similar to tokens are tags. Tags are keywords that allow a video to be found in a search. By including tags that are popular, for example *I'm Yours*, the algorithms of YouTube's database would turn up Wade's video increasing his view count.

Wade's videos were used for conference, exhibition, and research; all discussed by Kinder (2008). Wade, through the use of vlogging, conferences with his audience. He exhibits his art through his music videos. He also procured video footage through documentaries that can be seen in his YouTube Live! videos. By allowing his channel to be studied, he is even fulfilling the final on-line video rationale Kinder suggests: Research.

YouTube has allowed Wade a number of opportunities to consume, create, and share music. As Katz (2004) discussed, recording technologies have affected our way of life. Katz's ideas of how music has been affected by recording technology should be expanded upon to include

the use of YouTube and other similar media sharing sites. In reference to music's tangibility, the YouTube music video sets up a dichotomy. As Negroponce (1995) suggested, digital space is just bits of digital information. Therefore, the YouTube video seems tangible because one can see it, but there is no physical representation, thus making it intangible like all digital media.

The YouTube video enhances a number of other musical aspects Katz mentioned. The first is portability. One can access YouTube on any computer that is linked to the internet, whether it is played on a desktop, laptop, or hand held device. YouTube also increases the availability of music. The digital revolution exploded a plethora of ways to access mp3s, wavs, and other digital audio files. However, YouTube allows listeners to hear music for free unlike pay services such as iTunes and Napster. It also is much more reliable than peer-to-peer (p2p) programs like limewire and torrents which tend to contain corrupt files and viruses. Thus, YouTube makes access to music more affordable. YouTube allows for repeatability, not only of the same version but of multiple versions by different artists.

YouTube also allows for the manipulability of music. Mash-ups and sampling are common practices on YouTube. Burgess (2008) discussed how Tay Zonday's song *Chocolate Rain* has been taken off YouTube by many artists and remixed in their own art. He also noted how songs like *Ultimate Cannon Rock*, an electric instrument driven version of Pachelbel's Canon in D, are created. An editor would take multiple versions of the same song performed by a number of artists and combine them into one video performance. Temporality is affected by YouTube because of the imposed time limit on most songs. Chiang (2007) and Burgess and Green (2009) discussed how video trends are affected by this limit. One final YouTube effect is the visibility of music. The on-line music video reintroduces a visual aspect back to music that was lost with the emergence of audio only recordings.

As suggested earlier, YouTube users are able to guide how and why YouTube is being used. Two of the major purposes are for social networking, as one can see through Wade's development of relationships with his fellow YouTube musicians and audiences, and exhibition; in Wade's case that is seen in his user-generated content. Wade is one of many who create music for YouTube in a bedroom studio. YouTube allows many bedroom musicians to produce their craft to audiences. A number of companies, such as Bushman Music Works, are encouraging amateur music making through contests. Owner of Bushman, John Hall saw the potential of YouTube and said in the interview process:

Have you ever seen people with passion like these uke people? They get excited about their instruments. I get excited watching them. I thought, man, if we could bring that together, that would be great. And that's what we did.

In 2007, Bushman launched not only its Bushman World Ukulele Contest, but also a blues contest for harmonica players. In 2008, the ukulele contest included nearly 200 entries. On a larger scale, Burgess and Green (2009) discussed the contest created by the Grammy's in cooperation with the Foo Fighters that encouraged musicians to do a cover of the song *The Pretender*. Contests like these are plentiful and available for most instruments. Educators and parents need to learn about these new opportunities and technologies that allow children to completely transform the way they consume, create, and share music. A call for action is suggested by many authors (Burgess and Green, 2009; Negroponte, 1995; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). It starts by learning more about what YouTube is and how it is used.

When new technologies emerge, a line seems to be drawn where educators stand on either side being enthusiasts or skeptics. Collins and Halverson (2009) discuss how education in the age of technology needs to be rethought. They coined the term Informational Revolution, a time where information is readily available on the internet; educators need to teach students how to acquire this information thus enabling them to become lifelong learners. They project that learning has been and will be moving away from the traditional classroom, listing the rise of workplace and homeschool learning as contributing factors.

Educators like Green (2002, 2005, and 2008) are pioneering the way for informal learning in the traditional classroom. Green's project for students to create their own live musical cover performance could be expanded upon to a YouTube video creation. Teaching young musicians how to create, produce, and share their music videos on YouTube could help students learn about music, the industry, and other interdisciplinary studies. By performing their song, they incorporate music education at its core: musical performance. Recording and editing their songs tap into technology utilizing hardware and software. Teaching students about how to purchase software, public relations, copyright, and sales of recordings incorporate marketing and accounting. Designing website, layout, and visual graphics can develop artistic and web design skills. Preparing vlogs and written text can link creating a YouTube to the language arts. Studying site statistics and noting where views are coming from can connect a YouTube video project to mathematics and geography. The possibilities to teach students by using a YouTube video as a springboard are endless.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Future research needs to have breadth and depth. Case studies like the one conducted for this article are just the beginning. Not only do researchers need to go deeper into individual cases, a number of case studies should be conducted with artists of different ages, instruments, demographics, and countries. By observing these YouTube artists, the music education community can better understand how people are learning music informally as well as

consuming, creating and producing music. By observing the panel participants, the researcher was able to note that for a number of viewers, their time on YouTube was somewhat of a ritual and followed a routine. One subject had to have the video box at the top of the screen while others had to have the page scrolled up to the top of the website; some insisted on using the full screen function. If either participant scrolled to read comments, they made sure that their preferred view was achieved when they returned to watching the video. Do these rituals have ties to obsessive-compulsive disorder or attention deficit disorder, conditions that make it almost impossible for many YouTube viewers to watch an entire three-minute video without multitasking or leaving any video that does not catch their attention within twenty seconds? Do the short time limits on videos encourage short attention spans? Historical and ethnographical research can be done on contests and channels. These studies can be helpful for a number of reasons: understanding culture; noting the affects of YouTube on music, education, society, and culture; monitoring trends of media making and user-generated art. Music psychology research can include subjects that show the affect of social networking sites like YouTube on musical identity, motivation, and listening preferences.

Beyond the research, music educators can start to incorporate YouTube into their classroom. Books like *YouTube in Music Education* (Rudolph and Frankel, 2009) help give educators ideas on how to introduce and incorporate YouTube into their classroom. They walk the reader through the following: creating and managing an account; playback and sound quality; legal uses and copyright; equipment for recording; YouTube musical lesson plans; and what to do if you are blocked from YouTube. Books like this help educate teachers, administrators, and parents on the usefulness of this technology.

In this post performance world, educators like Thibeault (in press) claim, “Educators have a critical role to play in helping to ensure that our engagement remains meaningful, that we do not lose track of the values of live performance, and that we allow ourselves as a profession to enlarge our conception of music, musician, and audience.” YouTube music making should not take the place of live performance, but offer an enriching experience for students to witness and participate in postperformance music making. If educators start to help their students learn how to create and share music on sites like YouTube instead of just consume music, how will that change their students’ lifelong musicianship? YouTube not only gives students an outlet to express their art in a multimedia fashion, but also allows them to gain access to large audiences and instantaneous feedback. Audience and feedback are not necessarily attained for all YouTube videos; however, if educators team up to share ideas, projects, and students, a network of YouTube savvy teachers and pro-am (professional-amateur) students will begin to form. Students from across the world can share multi-tracked covers, original compositions, or even create vlogs and hold discussion about concerts they

have attended. Collaborative projects like the [YouTube Symphony Orchestra](#) and [Eric Whitacre's Virtual Choir](#) can happen on a smaller scale between schools across the world.

YouTube allows performers to have a global audience. It allows for creative students to exhibit their talents and have a new venue for their art. YouTube can be used as a source of information and inspiration. Music listening examples can be played to show both good and bad technique allowing students to critique and discuss. The possibilities are only limited by a lack of imagination and sometimes a fire wall. It is the responsibility of educators to learn about how it works, how to use it, and how to teach its potential uses to their students.

YouTube can be seen as a large canvas that allows millions of artists to place their own mark on a digital mosaic. The performers on it have their own opuses and experiments. Because of its interactive qualities, YouTube is an art medium; a technology which allows listeners to become singers, watchers to become actors, and consumers to become producers creating new original works and supplementing existing ones. It allows everyone to have a voice that can be heard and a face that can be seen. YouTube is constantly pulling for viewers' attention and entertainment.

As education moves farther into the twenty-first century, new technologies will become popular. YouTube is a young technology; its longevity has yet to be proven. As Palfrey and Gasser (2008) suggested, tomorrow's popular site may not even be created yet. Like the gramophone, record player, cassette tape, CD, and digital audio file, YouTube has affected the musical art form. This can be seen through how people access music videos. It is apparent in the billions of videos available that show performances, mash-ups, and tributes. Many YouTube artists use the site as a sounding board for their original songs, to sell their merchandise, and share their music with their friends. The YouTube effect has changed art and the way people consume, create, and share music.

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### **End Notes**

1. The following websites were also listed in Alexa's top ten most popular websites: 4, Yahoo!; 5, Blogger.com; 6, Windows Live; 7, Baidu (the leading Chinese search engine); 8, Wikipedia; 9, Twitter; 10, QQ.com (the largest free instant messaging system in China).



2. Pseudonyms for all actors in the case study except for Wade Johnston and John Hall of Bushman Ukuleles who requested their real names and business be used.
3. Statistics of Wade Johnston's YouTube channel compiled on July 11, 2009.
4. Jamming, embellishing and improvising are not as apparent on Wade's YouTube channel. However, there are a number of other YouTube channels that show artists jamming on a given chord or embellishing a familiar melody.

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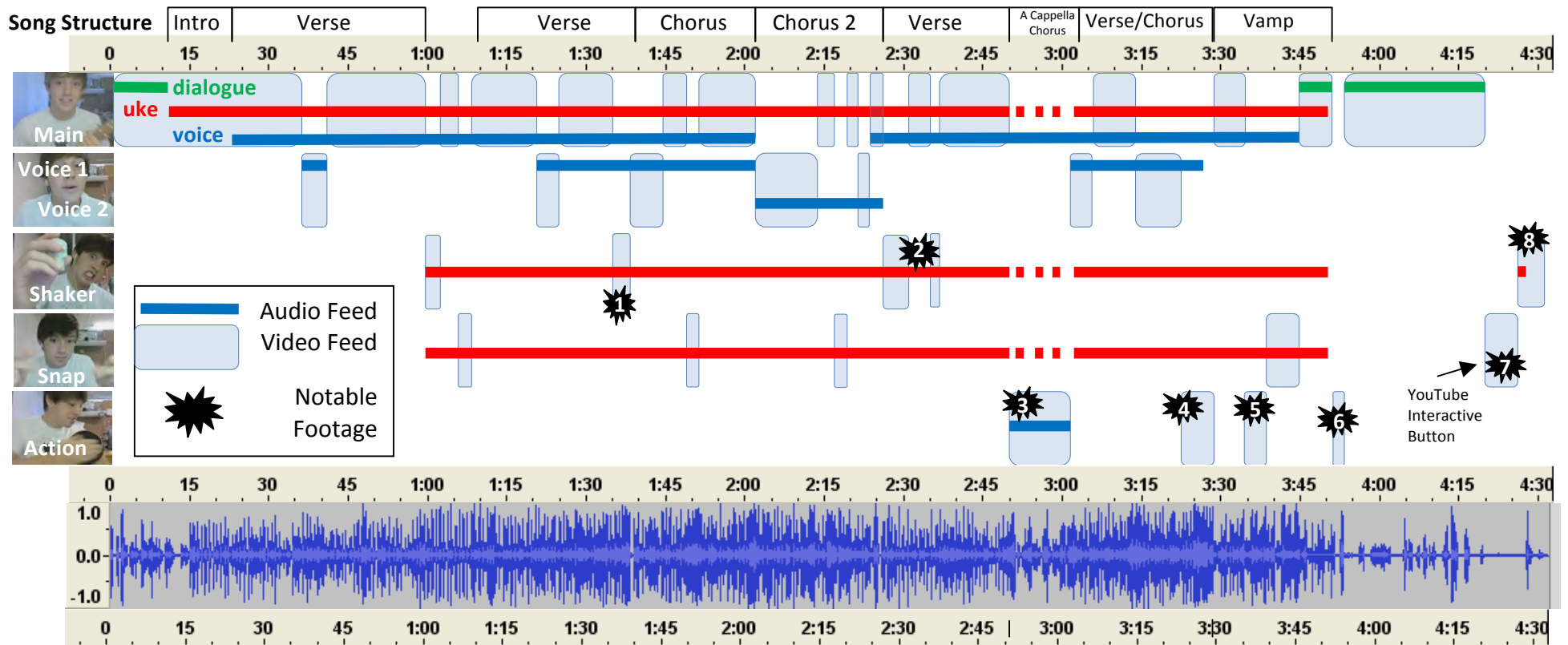
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### **About the Author**

**Christopher Cayari** is a K-12 music specialist at Johns Hill Magnet School in Decatur, IL where he conducts choirs and teaches general music. He was formerly at Durand JR/SR High School in Durand, IL where he conducted choirs and taught class guitar and ukulele. Mr. Cayari utilizes YouTube in his public school classroom on a daily basis to enhance student learning through musical examples and special projects such as audio and video editing. He

received his M.M.Ed. from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and a B.A. from Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, IL.

# Analysis of a Multi-track YouTube Music Video



1. Action angle: Dances with ukulele
2. Action angle: pretends to smash ukulele
3. Snap angle: inserts an interactive YouTube button with text, *"snapping your fingers really hurts when you do it for 3 minutes straight."*
4. Shaker angle: mouths, "Number one!" and mimes screaming followed by fainting.
5. Shaker angle: starts mouthing words
6. Shaker angle: appears to doze off while playing ostinato and is then jolted awake
7. Action angle: Sings a serenade to his ukulele holding it like a baby and stroking it
8. Action angle: Cuddles with ukulele

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