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## Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree  
in Music

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## Abstract

*Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories* is a dissertation in the form of a collection of short stories and YouTube videos. Each story stands alone, but when read or viewed in its entirety, all the pieces connect to create a full picture of the project. The purpose of this research is to explore forms of “musicking” that are beyond the realms of music performance and composition by engaging with YouTubers who are *subtly* musical. North American music education has largely only recognized performance as a way of being musical, with composition and songwriting beginning to receive more attention. People who perform or write music are *clearly* musical, but we can learn from those who are subtly musical or musicking in ways beyond performance and composition. Various forms of engagement could and *should* be recognized in all kinds of music teaching and learning spaces.

For this study, I worked with three different creators: Bryan creates karaoke videos with details that surpass lining up words with music; Mark is a music critic who reviews songs, albums, and the Billboard Hot 100 and discusses the historical, social, and cultural significance of the music scene; and James makes art in video form about a variety of topics and carefully curates music for every moment. We spent time hanging out as each creator made a video, having conversations about their music background, YouTube, and creation processes, and producing collaborative videos.

Three different pathways—*storytelling*, *participatory culture*, and *reflective and reflexive practice*—guided this narrative inquiry. While each pathway can function alone, they gain significance when they overlap, weave, and converge. Participatory culture creates space for new stories; reflective and reflexive practice can help us think through how we can or should engage

with participatory culture; reflective and reflexive practice can also guide us through past stories and challenge us to confront questions such as: “Who and what is missing in our stories? Why did we lose certain stories? Where could we encounter new stories?”

Bryan, Mark, and James show us that we can listen to, analyze, write about, discuss, research, curate, and edit music, that these forms of engagement *contribute* to our musicianship, and that our musicality need not be determined by music performance or composition. These YouTubers can help music educators think more broadly about music education, musicking, and what might be possible within our music teaching and learning spaces. Collectively, music teachers could create new classes or opportunities that focus on other types of musicking, and/or expand our current structures to be more inclusive of different musicking preferences. In its entirety, this project wants to work towards a world where instead of asking “Are you a musician?” we can ask each other “How do you music?”

**Keywords:** YouTube, music education, YouTubers, stories, videos, musicking, storytelling, participatory culture, reflective and reflexive practice, narrative inquiry

## Summary for Lay Audience

*Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories* is a dissertation in the form of a collection of short stories and YouTube videos. Each story stands alone, but all the pieces connect to create a full picture of the project. The purpose of this research is to explore forms of “musicking” that do *not* involve playing instruments, singing, or writing music, by working with YouTubers who are *subtly* musical. North American music education has made it seem like performance and composition are the only ways to “music.” People who perform or write music are *clearly* musical, but we can learn from those who are subtly musical as well. Different forms of engagement could and *should* be recognized in all kinds of music teaching and learning spaces.

For this study, I worked with three creators: Bryan creates karaoke videos with details that surpass lining up words with music; Mark is a music critic who reviews songs, albums, and the Billboard Hot 100 and talks about the historical, social, and cultural aspects of the music scene; and James makes art in video form about a variety of topics and carefully selects music for every moment. We spent time hanging out as each creator made a video, having conversations about their music background, YouTube, and creation processes, and collaborating on videos.

Three different pathways—*storytelling*, *participatory culture*, and *reflective and reflexive practice*—guided this narrative inquiry. While each pathway functions on its own, they all become stronger when they work together. Participatory culture creates space for new stories; reflective and reflexive practice can help us think through how we can or should engage with participatory culture; reflective and reflexive practice can also guide us through past stories and

challenge us to confront questions such as: “Who and what is missing in our stories? Why did we lose certain stories? Where could we encounter new stories?”

Bryan, Mark, and James show us that we can listen to, analyze, write about, discuss, research, curate, and edit music, that these forms of engagement *add* to our musicianship, and that our musicality does *not* have to be related to playing instruments, singing, or writing music. These YouTubers can help music educators think more broadly about music education, musicking, and what might be possible within our music teaching and learning spaces. Collectively, music teachers could create new classes or opportunities that focus on other types of musicking, and/or expand what we currently do to be more inclusive of different musicking preferences. Overall, this project wants to work towards a world where instead of asking “Are you a musician?” we can ask each other “How do you music?”

*To Mom—you're a rockstar.*

*To Jim and Robert—you're the reason I love YouTube.*

*To Johnny—you da best.*

*To everyone who doesn't believe they're musical—you are.*

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my co-supervisors, Dr. Ruth Wright and Dr. adam patrick bell, for their time and encouragement. I wanted to do something different, and they supported my vision. Thank you to my second reader, Dr. Basil Chiasson, for your mentorship and enthusiasm. Music and media studies make a good team, and I hope more collaborations happen in the future. I would like to acknowledge my Western friends and colleagues—thank you for always being willing to listen and help out in any way.

I wouldn't be here at all if it weren't for my time at Arizona State University (ASU). I would like to thank Dr. Stauffer, Dr. Schmidt, Dr. Tobias, and all my ASU friends and colleagues for everything—you literally changed my life.

I would also like to acknowledge Eric Carr, a YouTuber who helped with the pilot study that informed this project. I learned so much from that experience and am grateful that he was willing and eager to participate. As adam once said to me, “Eric was the spark that started this campfire.”

Finally, thank you, thank you, THANK YOU to Bryan, Mark, and James. You made all this possible and I hope that you know how truly inspiring you are. Thank you for sharing your ideas, expertise, and stories. I hope you had fun along the way.

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## **Preface**

To understand our own places and placed-ness, to begin to acknowledge them in others, and to develop mutual understandings in and of the places-in-between us, we rely on linguistic and gestural communications that articulate time, space, and experience: we tell stories.

–Sandra L. Stauffer, “Place, Music Education, and the Practice and Pedagogy of Philosophy”

“He Sang with Joy on his Face: A Tale of Violence and Death in a Life Filled with Music”

Affordable and lightweight  
It kills efficiently  
Debbie shot me I love you  
Big gentle boy  
He loved music  
He just wanted to love people  
Bridging diversity  
Building community through music  
Differences aside  
We do something wonderful  
Emotions shared and embraced through singing  
Struggle accomplishment purpose  
We come together  
Music the glue that binds us  
Squeaky squawky cracky  
Changing voices challenge  
Mouth shut  
Won't sing another note  
Responsible risks to  
Keep boys trying  
Take a chance I'll help you  
Beyond the forest  
Of tone deafness  
We have been through War together  
They emerge Singing like nobody's business  
Off task off pitch seeking attention  
Did I do alright today?  
Wonderful so wonderful  
Good tears flow  
Smiling face at last! At last!  
“Bye Joel” Thank you Mrs. Simpson  
Joel was shot  
He is gone  
Why why why did this happen?  
In trouble, look to your helpers  
I'm mad, hurt. I don't understand  
Past, present, passed. For now, farewell  
Song of community. Community of song.  
Music was a hope for healing  
To move forward in our lives  
Fighting emotion. Tom sang for Joel  
A hug, a big long hug  
Like she was hugging her son  
Responsibility, burden. Without time to grieve

Who was there for Mrs. Simpson?  
It was a tough tough time  
What words? What actions? What music?  
Who helps music teachers manage grief?<sup>1</sup>

I heard the story above at a virtual conference in February 2021. It was a co-constructed story between Mrs. Simpson, who was Joel’s teacher, and Katherine Norman Dearden, the researcher. During this presentation, I and many others were crying. It was at this moment, that I felt the impact of narrative inquiry and was drawn to it as a methodology.

I began reading as much as I could *about* narrative inquiry and examples of it within and beyond music education. Overall, what I found were works that were structured like most research texts: They started with an introduction, described their use of theory, explained their research methods, created a “story” about the participant/(s), and concluded with some type of discussion, analysis, or implications section. To me, the *narrative* part of narrative inquiry was severely lacking. It felt like one part was interesting, creative, and “story-like,” but the rest could have come from many other methodological frameworks. I decided that if my critique of most narrative inquiries was that it was not “narrative enough,” that I needed to push the boundaries in that respect.

As I was thinking through how to make this work “more narrative,” I stumbled upon Patricia Leavy and I’m so glad I did. The original version of this dissertation was fine, but something didn’t feel right. *This* version of the dissertation was inspired by Leavy, and the traits narrative inquiry might share with “fiction-based research” or “creative nonfiction.”<sup>2</sup> After

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Norman Dearden, “He Sang with Joy on his Face: A Tale of Violence and Death in a Life Filled with Music,” (presented at Desert Skies Symposium on Research in Music Learning and Teaching, Tempe, AZ, United States, February 19, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> “Fiction-based research, similarly to narrative inquiry, is about *truthfulness*, more than “truth” . . . Moreover, fiction opens up a multiplicity of meanings and allows readers to bring their own experiences and interpretations to the work.”  
Patricia Leavy, *Method Meets Art* (Guilford Publications, 2015), 58.

reading a chapter of Leavy's book *Method Meets Art*,<sup>3</sup> I checked out another book they wrote titled *Low-Fat Love*. It was a story written like any other work of fiction—we were introduced to characters and taken on a journey that explored their relationships and connections to each other. It was highly engaging, and I read through it rather quickly. In the Preface, Leavy explains:

*Low-Fat Love* is grounded in a decade of research and teaching about gender, relationships and popular culture, which informs the pop-feminist undertone of the book. Over the past decade, I have conducted numerous interviews with young women about their relationships, body image, sexual and gender identities. Additionally, I have taught many college courses on the sociology of gender, critical approaches to popular culture and human sexuality and intimacy. These courses have sparked wonderful discussions with my students about identity. All of these experiences and conversations informed the writing of this book.<sup>4</sup>

*Low-Fat Love* helped me realize that by playing with format and genre, I could honor the narrative in narrative inquiry *and* create a more accessible dissertation, which was always one of my goals. Here, the word “accessible” means that anyone interested in music teaching and learning, musicking, and/or YouTube can easily “access” this work. Many dissertations traditionally use scholarly language that is difficult to understand and follow a structure that is rigid and, in my opinion, rather uninviting to people outside of academia or a particular discipline. The goal of this project is to prove that music belongs to *everyone*, so it was important to write in an approachable and engaging manner. The short story format also allowed me to portray the complexity of lived experience and contexts in ways that suited each creator and the overall project more so than what I had seen in conventional dissertations.

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<sup>3</sup> Through fiction we are able to express ourselves freely, reveal the inner lives of characters, and create believable worlds that readers enter. Fiction as a research practice is well suited for portraying the complexity of lived experience because it allows for details, nuance, specificity, contexts, and texture; cultivating empathy and self-reflection through relatable characters; and disrupting dominant ideologies or stereotypes by showing and not telling (which can be used to build critical consciousness and raise awareness).  
Leavy, 55-56.

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Leavy, *Low-Fat Love* (Sense Publishers, 2011), xii.

For all of these reasons, *Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories* is a dissertation in the form of a collection of short stories. Each story stands alone (maybe some more so than others), but when read in its entirety, all the pieces connect to create a full picture of the project. Throughout this document, you are encouraged to engage with different videos that will provide further detail and context to the work.

The interconnected pathways that guide this project are *storytelling*, *participatory culture*, and *reflective and reflexive practice*. “Once Upon a Time” is a short story that explores storytelling, “YouTube: A Global Campfire” delves into participatory culture, along with musicking<sup>5</sup> and networked publics, and “Journal Entries” represents reflective and reflexive practice. While each pathway can stand on its own, the pathways gain significance when they overlap, weave, and converge. Participatory culture creates space for new stories; reflective and reflexive practice can help us think through how we can or should engage with participatory culture; reflective and reflexive practice can guide us through past stories told through and within music education, and challenge us to confront questions such as: “Who and what is missing in our stories? Why did we lose certain stories? Where could we encounter new stories?”

The stories titled “Backstage” and “Final Curtain” are written like program notes from the director of an onstage production. “Searching for Voice” mimics an online library search catalogue with brief descriptions and discussions of the sources. While this explanation might sound like an annotated bibliography at first glance, I see this story as an intense grappling with the inherent problems and tensions that surround the concept of “voice.” As I go through my

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<sup>5</sup> To me, musicking means engaging with music in *any* way. For example, if you put together a playlist for a workout session, that’s musicking. If you promote a concert on social media, that’s musicking too. Throughout this work, I’m particularly interested in people who are musicking on YouTube in ways that *don’t* involve playing an instrument, singing, or writing music. Instead of working with those who are *clearly* musical, I want to promote the *subtly* musical and the variety within musicking that Bryan, Mark, and James represent.

search to “figure out” voice, I only find that it gets more complex and I do my best to represent Bryan’s, James’s, and Mark’s voices in multiple ways. “The Focus Group,” “The Narrative Turn,” and “The Last Campfire” are simulated conversations. The intention behind these pieces was to create an engaging discussion where you could clearly feel the different people and sources “talking” to and building on each other’s perspectives. By creating an atmosphere that resembled a metaphorical campfire, this was a way to further engage and include the reader as well.

Before I started writing, I outlined what kinds of sections were included in other narrative inquiries, and then created a chart to compare those with the ideas I had for my own. Every example had some kind of introduction to set up the study, so I wrote “The Draw of the Campfire” to introduce readers to Bryan, James, and Mark. I addressed my research questions and positionality throughout the story called “Backstage” and the recruitment process with “I Need Your Help, YouTube!” Most traditional dissertations have a literature review, which was my inspiration for “The Focus Group.” The other narrative inquiries also reviewed the theory or theories that informed their work—“Once Upon a Time,” “YouTube: A Global Campfire,” and “Journal Entries” are the three theories or “pathways” that enlightened this project. “Lights, Camera, Action” details my research methods and “The Narrative Turn” is my methodology section. “Words Are Hard” and “Searching for Voice” could be considered part of the findings because these aspects emerged throughout the research process and could not be ignored. “Final Curtain” is a story about member checking and positionality (again). Every dissertation has an implications and discussion section and mine appear in “Dream Doors” and “The Last Campfire.” Finally, every narrative inquiry I read had a section dedicated to highlighting the participants. Mark, Bryan, and James each get their moment in the “spotlight” during “Mark

Grondin aka Spectrum Pulse: Not the Music Critic We Deserve, but the One We Need,” “Karaoke Trailblazer,” and “Curiosity Killed the Cat.” While these short stories include the components of more standard dissertations, they are presented in reimagined formats that are accessible, creative, and ask readers to think differently.

Another critique I had of most narrative inquiries was that the participants were introduced too late and not often enough. Over and over again, I found myself wanting to hear more from the participants’ perspectives and ended up feeling like I knew the researcher’s voice better than anyone else’s voice. For this entire project, Bryan, James, and Mark are the main characters. Other voices are featured here and there, but everything always comes back to these three creators. I also made the conscious choice to put many scholarly sources in the footnotes.

This was done in an effort to promote the participants’ voices and to put them “front and center.”

Henry Jenkins once commented that:

Surely the academy does have valuable kinds of expertise that are needed in a variety of conversations at the present moment, but in order for that expertise to be mobilized it has to adopt a language which doesn’t just play to other academics, it has to play to a wider public. This means rethinking academic rhetoric. And it means recognizing that there are other kinds of expertise that also bring something to the table in that conversation. . . . The problem is that the academy has cut itself off from dialogues that it should be part of. So it’s not that I totally devalue academic knowledge; when I turn to fans and say that we could learn something from them, I’m not saying that we know nothing. Somehow people see this as a zero-sum either/or game where either we as academics have all the power or we have no power.<sup>6</sup>

By placing scholars in the footnotes, my intention is not to “devalue” their knowledge, but to emphasize what the YouTubers “bring to the table.” While Bryan’s, James’s, and Mark’s thoughts and experiences are at the center, the literature is an important element that develops

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<sup>6</sup> Henry Jenkins, “Excerpts from ‘Matt Hills Interviews Henry Jenkins’” in *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (2006), 34.

their ideas further. Altogether, the work is a critical collection of stories about rethinking “what counts” in music teaching and learning.

Please enjoy the work and thank you for joining us.



### **The Draw of the Campfire**

I am the Spirit of the Campfire. I hide myself in the limbs and stumps of trees. I do not come forward, until you set me free with the glowing match. I crackle and dance before you. I cook your food for you when you are hungry, dry you when you are wet, warm you when you are cold, protect you as you sleep and become the center of laughter as you crowd around me for song and story. I, the Spirit of the Campfire, bid you welcome.

–Dawn Nowicki, “Campfire Opening Readings and Poems”

Bryan is no stranger to camping. It all started when he first moved to Austin. His brother invited him to hang out with a group of people who all went by nicknames when they were out in the woods. Apparently, Travis didn't have a nickname, which logically led everyone to call Bryan "Travis's brother." After about a year, Bryan remembered an online chat with a friend. It must've been around the time when Lil Wayne's *Free Weezy Album* came out (2015), because the friend self-proclaimed that they were now Weezy and that Bryan could be "Breezy." He's comfortable with both names, but in the woods, Breezy feels right.

He gets the fire going and takes a seat. As Breezy watches the flames, he hears the crunching of footsteps. "Are you Bryan? It's nice to meet you, I'm James." As the two get acquainted, they begin to tell each other about the origin of their YouTube personas. James or kolpeshtheyardstick (pronounced kolpesh the yard stick) shares, "Like Apollo with the gift of prophecy . . . I had a D&D campaign that I got roped into my freshman year of college, a bunch of strangers I didn't know. I didn't want to be there. They started this thing on Discord, I didn't even know what that was." Bryan laughs, "Oh, I lurk on our Discord all the time. It's so reminiscent of old chat rooms to me, I love it." James smiles and continues, "Yeah, so whatever, it needs a nickname. Empty field. All those cute little Wumpuses around it and without a thought in my head . . . kolpesh the yard stick."

The fire is strong, and their conversation is quietly accompanied by the crackling sound of the flames. As they continue to chat, another creator walks up to the campfire and introduces himself, "Hey there, I'm Mark." After some introductions, James asks, "So, Spectrum Pulse. How did that name come about?" "Well, it has a few different meanings. One meaning is entirely rooted in the physics background—that's what I majored in at the University of Waterloo. Another is it's a more poetic cultural background, like a pulse on a spectrum in terms of how

cultural climate shifts. You're capturing blips in a moment. I came up with it in 2012, and a lot of that year was a large haze of walking through woods and blogging. In a way, this is bringing me back to that time."

## **Backstage**

I've always wanted to work backstage. I think it comes from my fascination with anything having to do with "behind the scenes." Once I finish a movie or TV show that I loved, I'll go online and try to find any information I can about the process and how it was made. After seeing a musical or stage production, I'll *wonder* about how they did certain things, but realize I'll most likely never know the answer—like magicians, they don't want to reveal their secrets.

In many ways, I've been transitioning from onstage to backstage throughout my life. As a kid, I was often onstage with a violin, or dancing, or in one super embarrassing production of "Freaks and Geeks" in high school. As a teacher, I started with the dream of being onstage and "on the podium" in front of an orchestra. Over time, I tried to fade more and more into the background, playing piano off to the side so that every student could be seen

clearly. A few times, a student wanted to be the conductor, so I went into the ensemble. My favorite times were when I organized a gallery-type concert experience: students prepared different types of musical projects and spread out across the school to share their work. Audience members could feel free to wander from group to group. In those moments, I tried to be nearly invisible.

For this project, I started to think early on about what my role would be. I kept coming back to one idea: if the participants are in the spotlight, that would put me somewhere backstage. My role is important, but it's *behind the scenes*. In the end, I want people leaving this "production" talking and thinking about Bryan, James, and Mark and their musicality. Within the world of YouTube, my role might be more like a "Creative Director," whose goal is to "Maintain the creativity of every single piece . . . and ensure all content is made with

the creator's brand and style in mind."<sup>7</sup> Still important to the channel, but still behind the scenes.

As I began working backstage, I had so many questions about what to do, how to do it, and why I wanted to do certain things in certain ways. *There was so much I wanted to know.* What were the lived experiences of a YouTuber?<sup>8</sup> How does a YouTuber engage with music beyond performance and composition? What experiences, if any, prepared them for what they do on the platform? What skills, knowledge, and understandings are at play when they engage with music on YouTube? How was each developed? How would a YouTuber reflect on their K-12 school-based musical experiences? How about musical stuff from

outside of school? How and in what ways might they think about engaging with music through YouTube for others who want to do the same? What ideas and recommendations would they offer to music educators? With these questions in mind, I set out to find people who could provide answers . . . and be onstage.

I met Bryan first. He watched a recruitment video I made<sup>9</sup> and sent me an email:

I did watch your intro video &... honestly, I think I may be what you are looking for. I'd be happy to chat about what i do. I was impressed with how much detail you noticed that the youtube creator you gave an example of does. The guy has to come up with possibly the music, but definitely the routine, the flow of it, etc. That was the reason i decided to throw my lot in if you wanted to talk about the karaoke videos I make. Generally speaking, basic karaoke videos, in my opinion, are boring. Text on a screen that swipe with the

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<sup>7</sup> Hannah Doyle, "Unpacking Your Next Job in the Creator Economy," in *The Publish Press*, November 6, 2022, <https://www.thepublishpress.com/creator-economy-report/>.

<sup>8</sup> "The narrative approach is more than exploring the life of an individual. What I want to focus on when I use the narrative approach is to *understand* and *imagine* the life of an individual."

Rose Ann Torres, "Storytelling: A Critical Narrative Approach" in *Critical Research Methodologies*:

*Ethics and Responsibilities* (2021), 80. Emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup> Donna Janowski, "I Need Your Help, YouTube! Recruiting Musical YouTubers," YouTube, March 29, 2023, 0:00 to 3:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JM9wWUjGI> 8.

song. Don't get me wrong, that basic stuff is a good amount of work. but, still kind of boring and static. some of my stuff will range from standard top 40 to literally my own personally made remix of a song. The amount of thought and detail i put into each video i make varies, but each one was made with intention. For example, the latest, "Shia Labeouf Live" is a graphical update of one i made back in november, is one where i "remastered" the music because i purchased the stems. In reality, i don't think anyone out there goes to the extent that i do in each video, from the individual title cards to how the lyrics go. And i honestly don't think anyone should, its very... time consuming. which brings me to the other point of what i wanted to message you about. While, i have no problem showing you "ALL" the things, sometimes, the video "creation" part, is long, repetitive and tedious. I think the quickest one ive made was the 100 gees which took me about 3 hours? i don't remember, but some of the more "creative" ones took days. Hi Ren took about 4 days, Trippin' took several days, it just kind of depends. Granted, i think my work speaks for itself, no one does what i do really.

Next, I heard from James. He's not easy to categorize—some might say he makes "video essays," but I think James would prefer to think of them as art in video form. He wrote to me:

As someone who is also pursuing higher education in the arts, I was

immediately intrigued, but examining further I find myself surpassing intrigue into full-blown interest! Surface level questions spring up like . . . when this would precisely occur (your schedule is as important to me as my own!), but ultimately I just want to convey my desire to participate as well as my appreciation for the very thought. Cultivating and selecting music is an essential part of my creative process that I take a lot of care and consideration in doing, so I hope you're okay with my yammering 😊 . . . You just tell me what you need from me. I'm an open book, so ask whatever you need/want/wonder.

James, who is pursuing a degree in playwriting, once made the comment that he loves a "three-act structure." Maybe I was unconsciously also drawn to the number three because I really wanted to find a third creator for this work.

After a lot of searching, Mark came onto the scene. He's a music critic who reviews songs and albums, but he keeps his tagline open to give him some flexibility: "Where we talk about music, movies, art, and culture." Mark reached out and said:

I'm interested in what you're looking at here, but I have a few more questions.

1. A lot of my work is predominantly built around discussion and critical analysis of music / art / culture, not so much creating or playing music. I did watch your video and that does seem to be in line with what you're looking for, but it is an idiosyncratic process and it might be tough to contextualize – I've been active in this space for about a decade and I have a very established routine in how I create videos, both short and long-form, but I do think my process is a bit dry. Does that fit within your expectations? Do you have a set of questions that you're looking to explore, anything that I might be able to address early so you have a better idea how I work?
2. I'm fine with in person interaction and observation, but again, a lot of my work overlaps with my full-time work from home job (I kind of have two jobs between being an FTE and YouTuber), and in addition, there are days and videos that are much more involved when it comes with scripting / filming / editing / promo, so what would you be looking to explore? . . . I'd be happy to assist in this with a bit more context and information.

With Mark onboard, I finally had the answer to one question: “Who would take the stage?”

Throughout this project, I wanted to create stories based on my time with Bryan, James, and Mark.<sup>10</sup> I also tried to leave space for you, the reader, to interpret the stories in your own ways and to formulate your own takeaways. I felt strongly about not dictating your experience. Coles wrote, “the novel inspires in each reader a different series of thoughts, memories, images—and not always those the teacher sees.”<sup>11</sup>

However, this became a struggle that I've had to wrestle with throughout the project. In many ways, a dissertation is a test. A test to see if you understand theories, methodologies, research methods, and forms of analysis. Most tests are straightforward—here's the question, tell us the answer so we

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<sup>10</sup> Polkinghorne calls this narrative analysis, where the analysis “produces stories.” Donald E. Polkinghorne, “Narrative Configuration in Qualitative Analysis” in *Life History and Narrative* (1995), 6. Emphasis added.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination* (Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 66.



can assess your knowledge on the subject. Typically, this doesn't leave a whole lot of room for creativity or narrative. I found that to demonstrate my understanding in certain areas, I needed to insert myself more into the foreground. For example, during "The Focus Group," I had to guide, clarify, and piece together parts of the discussion. This section, "Lights, Camera, Action," and "Final Curtain" center my voice more so than others. Even with my desire to stay backstage, there are moments where I felt compelled to come out of the shadows. Sometimes the backstage crew needs to help with a transition or to move around set pieces for the actors—we try to stay invisible by wearing all black and staying quiet, but the audience knows we're there.

Stories like "The Narrative Turn" and "The Last Campfire" made me feel "alive" working backstage. I compiled different themes, made connections between people, and strategically mapped out the order and balance of voices. I always wanted Bryan, James, and Mark to be the "main" voices, but the others enhanced the conversation and added new dimensions. I hope these conversations make readers feel like they're a part of the dialogue and that we're all learning from each other.

I'll let the rest of the stories take it from here, but before you continue, I just want to say it was a pleasure to work on this production. Thank you, Bryan, James, and Mark. Your work is truly inspiring.

**I Need Your Help, YouTube!**

Hey YouTube! My name is Donna or a lot of people call me DJ. I'm making this video because I need your help with some YouTube research. Let me explain: I'm a music teacher. One of my favorite classes to teach was called "Musicking." We had so much fun in that class—we did different musical projects and the class changed based on what the students wanted to do. It was really *open*. And I'm wondering if more music spaces—inside and outside of school—can be more open and I'm hoping to explore that on YouTube.

I think there are a lot of musical people on YouTube . . . of course, we all know about the awesome YouTube musicians who play instruments, sing, or write their own music. I love those YouTubers. But I'm actually looking for people who maybe don't even *realize* that they're musical. I'll give you an example.

This is Zumba Sulu.<sup>12</sup> In Zumba Sulu's videos, you do not see them singing or playing an instrument (unless it's air piano). What we *do* see, is Sulu dancing. That might seem easy, but trust me, there's a lot going on to create one of these videos. First, Sulu has to create the choreography and hopefully find movements that "work" for each song. Certain movements definitely "flow" better than others. Second, Sulu has to match the energy of the music to the intensity of the workout. Some tunes are meant to be upbeat, while others are supposed to be more of a "cool down." Sulu also has to transition from one song to the next, which can be clunky if you're not careful. I'm not sure if Sulu creates or helps to create the mix that they dance to, but whoever does this is thinking through a TON of musical decisions. They have to answer questions like, which songs should be used? Which songs should be at the beginning and end? What effects or instruments do we want to add? Zumba Sulu is musicking in lots and lots of ways . . . even if they're not playing an instrument, singing, or writing the music.

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<sup>12</sup> Ayhan Sulu, "Zumba Sulu," YouTube, February 3, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/@ZumbaSulu>.

I'm not sure how Zumba Sulu feels, but Zumba Sulu *is* musical. Actually, I think everyone is musical. So here's the thing . . . I'm looking for YouTubers who are musical like Zumba Sulu. Maybe you know another YouTuber who dances. Maybe you know a YouTuber who analyzes music and makes commentary videos about songs or albums. Maybe you know a YouTuber who uses music in the background of their videos or uses music for funny or serious moments. It could be dancing, analyzing, editing, or engaging with music in any number of ways—those are the YouTubers I'm looking for and that's why I need your help! I have a list of YouTubers, but I'm sure there are some awesome creators out there that I might not know about yet. With each YouTuber, I'd like to watch them create a video, have interviews or conversations with them, and collaborate on a video together! I'm interested in traveling to each YouTuber and their workspace, but things can also be done virtually. The study will probably take about two weeks, and the time spent each day will depend on the YouTuber and their schedule. If you know a YouTuber who you think might be a good fit, please leave a comment with your suggestion or share this video with other people who you think might have suggestions! Also, I can only work with YouTubers who post “public” videos, not unlisted or private ones. If *you're* a YouTuber watching this and you're interested in getting more information, go ahead and email me directly. Email is in the description below.

Thank you so much, YouTube! And see you soon.

## **The Focus Group**

**Backstage:** Alright, let's get started. Thank you all for being here. I've organized this focus group because I'm interested in any links between YouTube and music education. You've all done research on this topic, so I was hoping you could help me by answering some questions. I'll start with this: Have you done any musical YouTube lessons or projects with students and what was that like?

**Ching-Chiu Lin:** We [Sherri and I] conducted a case study with a group of middle-school students to investigate their making of video documentaries using YouTube™ as a source of inspiration and reference material.<sup>13</sup>

**Sherri Polaniecki:** The collaborative video documentary project, which was the main emphasis of the eighth-grade art curriculum, required students to make three to five-minute videos on topics of their choosing, presenting multiple viewpoints throughout their videos.<sup>14</sup> Justin and Keith made their video about the War on Terror, primarily using a collection of still photographs of 9-11 and American soldiers in Iraq, together with interviews with their classmates about the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Keith had a fair amount of exposure to this topic because his sister was in Iraq at the time the video was made.

While Keith was motivated by a sense of obligation to raise awareness in the school by informing young people about the War on Terror, Justin's motivation was his frustration with what he perceived as misguided media priorities with respect to their coverage of the war in Iraq, as well as his view that this topic should be openly discussed. As he remarked, "I feel it's kind of a shame that we have stories about celebrities on the front pages of the important newspapers and the side note about the soldiers who died in Iraq." Like the other students in our study, Justin's personal motivations led him to conduct self-directed research and use the tools at his disposal, specifically YouTube, in a way that may not have been possible if the project topic had simply been assigned.<sup>15</sup>

**Ching-Chiu Lin:** Both of them felt that making this video documentary was rewarding despite the occasional frustrations, such as the time their interview footage was accidentally deleted by another group. In Justin's words, "It was worth [it] to put in all those efforts because the video turned out well. The way we flowed music, words, and pictures really made everything work together for our movie." Keith remarked that listening skills are essential for making a successful video: "It's not about putting a bunch of clips together; to get the messages across, I had to listen over and over and edit it."<sup>16</sup>

**Sherri Polaniecki:** Lucy, Anna, and Kelly's video project, "Cutting," discussed the phenomenon of self-injury among teenagers.<sup>17</sup> While watching relevant online videos, Lucy focused on arrangements of images and soundtracks, the use and connotation of metaphors, and the use of interesting framing angles. Through this video, Lucy and her team attempted to raise awareness among parents that young people may be wrist-cutting themselves, in the hope that knowledge of

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<sup>13</sup> Ching-Chiu Lin and Sherri Polaniecki, "From Media Consumption to Media Production: Applications of YouTube™ in an Eighth-Grade Video Documentary Project" in *Journal of Visual Literacy* (2009), 93.

<sup>14</sup> Lin and Polaniecki, 97.

<sup>15</sup> Lin and Polaniecki, 98.

<sup>16</sup> Lin and Polaniecki, 99.

<sup>17</sup> Lin and Polaniecki, 100.

the problem would lead to a solution. With this intent in mind, Lucy heavily edited her video to assemble the needed images, sound, and research data.<sup>18</sup>

**Backstage:** Hmm, so even though this wasn't a music class, it seems like music ended up being an important part of their documentaries.

**Ching-Chiu Lin:** In the age of YouTube, we believe that a visually literate individual must have the ability to critically distinguish the quality of information, whether that information is provided in the form of written text, visual imagery, or other sensory information. No matter what level of engagement with media they have as consumers or creators of mass media, individuals must develop the ability to analyze and critique social conditions as represented through the digital form of media text and to question and examine the semiotics underlying various social practices.<sup>19</sup>

**Backstage:** Thank you, Ching-Chiu and Sherri! This reminds me of Marc Prensky who wrote a piece about why YouTube matters. Prensky said that instead of focusing so much on reading and writing, that schools should focus on the *communication of ideas* in whatever medium. How do we put ideas out there, clearly and succinctly, for other people, and how do we take them in?<sup>20</sup> What other projects or lessons have you all done with YouTube and music?

**Christopher Cayari:** In both my performance and general music classes, I have daily listening exercises for my students that are pertinent to what we are studying. They critically reflect in their music listening journals on a variety of genres from medieval and renaissance music to atonal and Broadway. They are instructed to discuss a variety of things, which include musical elements, expression, and preference. About two weeks before I have my students start their video creation process, I turn to my favorites list on YouTube. In this playlist, I keep examples of musicians using YouTube to create art: a single take video of a person strumming on a guitar and singing to the computer screen; a video where a boy uses multiple tracks of his own voice to create a choir; or an original song recorded by a young woman who created a stop motion music video using more than a million pictures. These listening exercises serve as inspiration. Students consistently note “the cool factor” of the examples. Some even express interest in wanting to attempt to make music videos themselves. Their chance is coming soon.

I share the good news with my students, “You are going to create your own music videos! So by next class, I want you to have an idea of who will be in your group and what song you'd like to do.” In a project like this, [Lucy] Green suggested starting students off by “throwing them in the deep end,” or in other words, providing relatively little guidance on how to create their project. They only know they need to create a music video. I give them no parameters initially to allow them to create anything they want. They just have to have every group member create music in the finished project. I arm them with school laptops and flipcams, and they are off.<sup>21</sup> Similar to the outcome Lin and Polaniecki found in an art classroom, students were more critical of online

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<sup>18</sup> Lin and Polaniecki, 101.

<sup>19</sup> Lin and Polaniecki, 96.

<sup>20</sup> Marc Prensky, “The Longer View: Why YouTube Matters” in *From Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom: Hopeful Essays for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning* (2012), 146.

<sup>21</sup> Christopher Cayari, “Using Informal Education Through Music Video Creation” in *General Music Today* (2014), 19.

videos having created one themselves. They went from passive consumers to active participants.<sup>22</sup>

**Backstage:** Going from passive to active is such a huge part of participatory culture. You also did a similar project with undergraduate music majors, right?

**Christopher Cayari:** The undergraduate project procedure was similar to the process I used with grade 6–12 students. The students had to complete a digital music video in four weeks which included spring break to allow more freedom in filming and collaborating. Students were directed to read the case study I wrote about Wade Johnston to help them understand the potential of YouTube videos in music education. Exemplar YouTube videos were shown at the beginning of almost all class periods throughout the semester, which met twice a week. Students had already completed projects with digital audio workstation software including Audacity and GarageBand. Students were allowed to work alone or with a partner. One group elected to work as a trio with my consent. Students were given the option to publish their video online or keep it confined to the classroom.<sup>23</sup>

When sharing the excerpts of their videos, a theme emerged: a sense of accomplishment and solidarity leading to a feeling of community that included encouragement and celebration of performance through video.<sup>24</sup> While some students looked forward to sharing their project with their peers, others were not as enthusiastic. The most common negative response about sharing videos with classmates had to do with nerves. These nerves were similar to the stage fright one might get from live performance. Similarly, comparing one's video to classmates' videos also seemed to add to the anxiety of some students. Some also chose to share their videos with others outside of the classroom. One student discussed how he shared his video by capitalizing on the networking capabilities of social media.<sup>25</sup>

When discussing how it felt to be “thrown into the deep end,” nearly all students described an initial apprehension, followed by a period of searching for guidance and structure that culminated in a celebration of freedom. The project was not without its complications. Three types of challenges emerged: technical, musical and pedagogical challenges. One technological challenge the students found was audio and video synchronization. The participants found lining up video with pre-recorded audio was a bit troublesome and took a lot of time for those who attempted the technique. Transitioning between video takes, finding appropriate software and file formatting were also technical issues that proved challenging. The musical challenges included deciding which song to use and dealing with perfectionism in musical performance. The pedagogical challenges students noted were finding the time to collaborate with others, gaining access to preferred resources and accepting the teacher's lucid, yet high expectations. As is the case with most collaborative work, scheduling time to meet together can prove to be difficult. Some students wanted access to more sophisticated hardware and software; however, if they

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<sup>22</sup> Cayari, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Cayari, “Participatory Culture and Informal Music Learning Through Video Creation in the Curriculum” in *International Journal of Community Music* (2015), 44.

<sup>24</sup> Cayari, 51.

<sup>25</sup> Cayari, 52.



were unable to gain access to those things, they used the resources that were available to them. Some wanted to have more guidance and be told what to do.<sup>26</sup>

**Backstage:** Thank you for being honest about some of the challenges. Anyone else want to jump in?

**Thomas Rudolph:** There is a plethora of videos on YouTube, many of which can be useful in the music classroom.<sup>27</sup>

**James Frankel:** *YouTube in Music Education*, the book [by Thomas and I], was written with both the beginning and experienced YouTube user in mind. Its intention was to provide music educators with a clear understanding of how to use YouTube and implement some of its many pedagogical applications in the music classroom.<sup>28</sup>

**Thomas Rudolph:** In early March 2009, James posted a request on the e-mail discussion board for the Technology Institute for Music Educators (TI:ME), as well as on the Music Technology in Education blog he hosts, for music educators to submit ideas and strategies on how they use YouTube in their music classroom and rehearsals.<sup>29</sup>

**James Frankel:** Of those teachers who are allowed access to YouTube, many submitted strategies illustrating their use of the site when teaching music. Teachers also submitted links to some of the numerous videos that they use with their students.<sup>30</sup>

**Thomas Rudolph:** Graduate students in Dr. Frankel's Intermediate/Advanced Application of Music Technology course at Columbia University were asked to write a lesson plan based around using YouTube in the music classroom.<sup>31</sup>

**James Frankel:** Three exemplify the types of learning activities that can be facilitated by the website: "One Is the Loneliest Number: Creating a One-Man Barbershop Quartet on YouTube" by Stephanie Gravelle,<sup>32</sup> "Film Scoring Lesson Plan" by Pamela Golkin,<sup>33</sup> and "Using YouTube for Performance Critique" by Daniel Antonelli.<sup>34</sup>

**Backstage:** Nice! I noticed that the lessons include the MENC National Standards, which have been updated since 2009, but teachers could definitely use YouTube in similar ways and cite the newer standards if their district requires that. What else?

**Janice Waldron:** YouTube videos can be categorized by how producers and users in online music affinity groups employ digital videos for music learning and teaching. YouTube in online music communities fall into one of the following three categories: 1. Amateur peer-to-peer

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<sup>26</sup> Cayari, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Rudolph and James Frankel, *YouTube in Music Education* (Hal Leonard Books, 2009), xiii.

<sup>28</sup> Rudolph and Frankel, xiii.

<sup>29</sup> Rudolph and Frankel, 151.

<sup>30</sup> Rudolph and Frankel, 152.

<sup>31</sup> Rudolph and Frankel, 222-223.

<sup>32</sup> Rudolph and Frankel, 223.

<sup>33</sup> Rudolph and Frankel, 226.

<sup>34</sup> Rudolph and Frankel, 228.

performances, either for sharing with the community for commentary or e-mailing to a tutor for critique, 2. Professional/semi-professional performances, for example, recordings from concerts and/or festivals, used by community members for informal music learning and/or for sharing commentary, and, 3. Professional musician-instructors who use YouTube specifically for teaching reasons—in other words, their videos are intentionally structured lessons.<sup>35</sup> Examples of how videos from these three categories are used for music teaching and learning in online music communities come from the Banjo Hangout (BH), and the Online Academy of Irish Music (OAIM), two online affinity groups that I have studied and continue to research. The Banjo Hangout, or BH, is an open online music community, devoted to “all things banjo” and which includes a variety of banjo music genres and playing styles. The OAIM differs from the BH because it is an online music “school;” members pay to belong to the site in order to access teaching videos, forums, and OAIM tutors. Both sites do, however, act in similar ways to encourage members’ involvement and their engagement with music learning and teaching.<sup>36</sup>

**Backstage:** I just got a banjo, so I’ll have to check out the Banjo Hangout! Ok, so far, we’ve talked about students making music videos or documentaries, different lesson plan ideas, and music teaching and learning videos. Since most people associate music on YouTube with music videos, let’s dig more into that. What’s the significance of music videos?

**Jean Burgess:** In the light of our earlier discussions about the importance of understanding YouTube as part of everyday media use, it is especially significant that music videos were prominent in the Most Favorited category.<sup>37</sup>

**Joshua Green:** Music was central to the formation of other social networking services and social media platforms like MySpace, where it played a significant role as a marker of identity in user profiles, particularly of teens. The appearance of music videos as a significant content type of Most Favorited videos in early YouTube was a sign of things to come: whether in the form of Top-40 official music videos or bedroom guitar covers, as of 2017 music remains one of YouTube’s strongest “verticals,” and YouTube dominates online music streaming overall—making up 46% of all online music streaming time according to an industry report.<sup>38</sup>

**Backstage:** Hmm, I wonder what the percentage would be now. Jean, I know you wrote the preface to one of Holly, Joana, and João’s 2023 books about YouTube and music. Any updates you want to share from that?

**Jean Burgess:** Back in 2007, when we were both postdocs, Joshua and I thought it might be fun and interesting to work together on a content analysis of the then new video-sharing website YouTube. It started out as a very basic, curiosity-driven, empirical project: we wanted to systematically describe the kind of content that was being shared and consumed on YouTube, and who was sharing it—a set of tasks that turned out to be a lot harder, but also more fascinating, than we first imagined. Even back then, the pace of change at which new genres were emerging felt dizzying, and traditional producer-consumer roles were being rapidly

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<sup>35</sup> Janice Waldron, “Participatory Culture in Online Music Communities: New Media Systems, YouTube, and Music Learning” in *Music and Media Infused Lives: Music Education in a Digital Age* (2014), 129.

<sup>36</sup> Waldron, 130.

<sup>37</sup> Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Polity Press, 2018), 76.

<sup>38</sup> Burgess and Green, 76-77.

reconfigured in all kinds of disorienting ways. Little could we have imagined that fifteen years later that, not only would YouTube still exist, and not only would it have become a culturally dominant platform, but also that there would still be so much more to say about it—as a digital media institution, as a cultural shaper and as a site of everyday consumption and creative practice. It is now inarguably Big Media, and TikTok has largely taken its place as the hotbed of the latest viral trends. But one thing has remained remarkably consistent, and even intensified, over the life of YouTube as a platform and as an object of scholarly attention: the central role of music in the platform’s business model, its appeal to audiences and its role in popular culture more broadly.<sup>39</sup> There is no doubt in my mind that scholarship on YouTube’s role in music cultures is not only alive and well but ready to set off in all kinds of exciting new directions.<sup>40</sup>

**Backstage:** [Smiles]

**Joana Freitas:** Nowadays, music holds a central role in YouTube’s continued success: and the platform itself has become a central creative hub for music exploration and innovation.<sup>41</sup>

**João Francisco Porfírio:** YouTube’s role in the constant flow of production, circulation, transformation, and longevity of musical-related practices positions it as a central agent of a complex and diverse networked music and cultural industry.<sup>42</sup>

**Backstage:** So that right there sounds like we’re looking at musicking that goes *beyond* creating or watching music videos. I want to come back to that for sure, but I know a lot of work in your book was related to music videos.

**Juri Giannini:** By considering the performance of music as a dynamic current cultural practice rather than a historical monument, [my] chapter extended previous investigations through a close study of a classical music pianist who performs nearly exclusively on digital channels.<sup>43</sup> Like other “crossover” classical performers, Astanova uses her own YouTube channels as a platform for her persona, but her methods of presentation and *representation* are also unique in several ways: as a classically trained pianist, she performs nearly exclusively on YouTube and other digital spaces and her videos evidence her adoption of new audiovisual performance formats and DIY strategies more typical of net influencers than traditional art-music concert performers.<sup>44</sup> New kinds of “musical personae” expressing themselves through musical selfies pave the way for a new culture of liveness, as Ignazio Macchiarella writes: “It looks like music is not (is no longer) something that one listens [to], but more and more something to own via smartphones and digital devices,” with the goal of stimulating “media conversations,” likes and dislikes. For sure, music videos on YouTube have several functions: serving as part of archives, as a label’s

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<sup>39</sup> Jean Burgess, “Preface” in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), xi.

<sup>40</sup> Burgess, xii.

<sup>41</sup> Joana Freitas and João Francisco Porfírio, “Foreword” in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), xx.

<sup>42</sup> Freitas and Porfírio, xx.

<sup>43</sup> Juri Giannini, “‘Musical Personae’ 2.0: The Representation and Self-Portrayal of Music Performers on YouTube” in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 43.

<sup>44</sup> Giannini, 46.

promotion and so forth. But uploading music videos and interacting with them is mainly part of what Macchiarella describes as the “contemporary musicking process.”<sup>45</sup>

**Backstage:** For sure. There are so many interesting connections between musicking and participatory culture. Were there any other chapters on music videos specifically?

**Emily Thomas:** The music video for “MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name),” opens with: “In life, we hide the parts of ourselves we don’t want the world to see. We lock them away. We tell them no. We banish them. But here, we don’t. Welcome to Montero.” *MONTERO* is the transmedial pop-rap world of Lil Nas X’s debut album. Uploaded first to the artist’s YouTube channel, the music video can be experienced as a discrete form. But it also plays with the platform’s aesthetics of participation, DIY processes, mash-up and its interoperability with other social media platforms to develop its themes and metaphors across numerous interconnected paratexts.<sup>46</sup> The choice of YouTube as the project’s technological conduit is deeply significant. Promoted as a democratized and open space that encourages multiple voices through user interaction, the platform allows Lil Nas X to promote his self-proclaimed “gay agenda” through the parody and remediation of popular cultural forms, including music videos, vlogs, celebrities’ pregnancy announcements, Twitter feeds, and Instagram stories.<sup>47</sup>

**Backstage:** Social media comes so naturally to Lil Nas X. It’s almost like he’s a native speaker of “social media” language.

**Eamonn Bell:** [People who are] interested in the relationship between online audiences, digital media technology, music and mass culture would do well to turn to YouTube: both a top-flight distributor of music in the twenty-first century and a lively forum for user-generated discussion about music and musical culture, hosted in its notorious comment section. YouTube has, since 2008, allowed users to easily create links that navigate directly to a given fragment of an online video.<sup>48</sup> The link skips the user directly to the moment in the video cited and (optionally) starts playback at that point.<sup>49</sup> I call them time-coded comments (TCCs). I summarize their use in a large (over 1 million) set of TCCs responding to about 200 popular music videos on YouTube.<sup>50</sup>

Buried within individual TCCs are deep emotional and affectual responses to music videos—both their visual and sonic content—expressed without the technical vocabulary of cinema and music.<sup>51</sup> TCCs can also help us understand the social construction of musical structure: how structurally significant moments in particular genres reflect not only salient musical features that inhere in sound but also conventional and affectual functions shared by a group of listeners.<sup>52</sup> Users often use time codes to give a temporal structure to their observations about the imagery in music videos, supporting hearings of the music with concrete reference to the accompanying

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<sup>45</sup> Giannini, 60.

<sup>46</sup> Emily Thomas, “Quare(-in) the Mainstream: YouTube, Social Media and Augmented Realities in Lil Nas X’s *MONTERO*” in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 65.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas, 69.

<sup>48</sup> Eamonn Bell, “Exploring Time-Coded Comments on YouTube Music Videos of ‘Top 40’ Pop 2000-20” in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 255.

<sup>49</sup> Bell, 255-256.

<sup>50</sup> Bell, 256.

<sup>51</sup> Bell, 262.

<sup>52</sup> Bell, 263.

video.<sup>53</sup> Another common TCC type is the “listening log”-type comment. Here, a user either simply states a date and time we assume corresponds to their local time while listening or appeals to other users to determine who else is “out there” listening at the same time.<sup>54</sup>

**Backstage:** I love that in the comment section we can see what music videos *mean* to some people. I used to love watching the Top 20 Countdown on CMT (Country Music Television) and now I can probably go to all those videos on YouTube and have a conversation about them. Anything else about music videos?

**Christopher Cayari:** Publishing user-generated performance videos on the Internet has become a popular activity for many amateur music makers, and websites like YouTube are inclusive of musics that transcend genre and performance style as anyone with an account can upload to the website regardless of their musical ability.<sup>55</sup> In light of philosopher Walter Benjamin’s claim that the popular use of media afforded “an increasing number of readers [to become] writers,” I have previously suggested that “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.” However, considering YouTube merely as an art medium falls short of capturing the complexity of the website’s uses and potential. The affordances of video streaming on YouTube have allowed performances by amateur music makers to become accessible to the virtual masses—an instantaneous global audience.<sup>56</sup>

**Backstage:** I wonder what “musical ability” would mean if we step away from performance. Speaking of that, now let’s talk about videos that are *musical* but aren’t music videos of an artist performing.

**Jean Burgess:** One of the early viral hits of YouTube, the “Hey” clip,<sup>57</sup> illustrated both the mainstream media perspective on YouTube—the articulation of youth, gender, and DIY celebrity—and the vernacular creativity perspective, where, through digital media platforms, formerly private media consumption and cultural production were being remediated as part of the cultural public sphere. In the video, Israeli twenty-somethings Lital Mizel and her friend Adi Frimerman lip-sync, dance, play air guitar, and generally goof around to the Pixies song ‘Hey.’<sup>58</sup>

**Joshua Green:** The video was clearly shot in several takes and has undergone extensive editing so that each cut is precisely in time with the beat of the song.<sup>59</sup>

**Holly Rogers:** Journalistic videos—like music review channel ARTV and AJayII’s videos—and cultural video essays about music—such as those found on Adam Neely’s video channel—

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<sup>53</sup> Bell, 264.

<sup>54</sup> Bell, 265.

<sup>55</sup> Christopher Cayari, “Music Making on YouTube” in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Making and Leisure* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 468.

<sup>56</sup> Cayari, 468-469.

<sup>57</sup> Tasha Dishka, “Hey Clip,” YouTube, August 24, 2005, 3:31, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-\\_CSolgOd48](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_CSolgOd48).

<sup>58</sup> Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Polity Press, 2018), 40.

<sup>59</sup> Burgess and Green, 40.

deliver musical commentary and opinion that can provide access to, and inform, the public's opinion of different kinds of music.<sup>60</sup>

**Backstage:** Yes!

**Carol Vernallis:** Lyric videos are endemic—nearly every pop song has one—and they're often made by fans using inexpensive downloadable software and uploaded to YouTube.<sup>61</sup> The visual track might point to one or two musical features at a time, like a guide. For while music envelopes us, visual features more often focus our attention momentarily, especially if they're showcasing the song.<sup>62</sup> Features of the text alone—colour, thickness, size, shape and placement—can help communicate the song's and musicians' vision.<sup>63</sup> Music videos and lyric videos . . . are their own genres, with overlaps and particularities. Music videos might seem linked to karaoke, but lyric videos' connections seem intuitively stronger (and today there's a large variety of self-identified styles of karaoke on YouTube). But lyric videos encompass much more than those that remind us of karaoke.<sup>64</sup>

**Backstage:** Hmm. I would love to get a karaoke creator's perspective on that.

**Virginia Kuhn:** The difference between moving lyrics and those that are relatively static is stark when one considers them side by side.<sup>65</sup> The movement of the words seems to punch up the beat. The technique creates a wonderful sense of unity which is difficult to describe until one encounters the same song with static lyrics.<sup>66</sup>

**Backstage:** Agreed. Do we have more to say about non-performance videos?

**João Francisco Porfírio:** YouTube is a space for music consumption, circulation and many other forms of engagement with musical content: there are official music videos by artists ranging from the mainstream British and North American pop industries and K-pop to Indonesian Gamelan groups and Zimbabwean Mbira ensembles. Countering this professional content is an enormous database of user-generated uploads in the form of live fan footage and videos that remediate pre-existing musical material to produce new content, such as lyric videos and humorous/meme versions of well-known songs. Within this broad set of music videos, one type has remained under the critical radar: music videos produced to integrate into daily domestic routines—falling asleep, taking a bath, cooking dinner, cleaning the house, or reading a book. These videos can be based on music, natural noises—rain, sea, wind, birds, crickets, even frogs—or the sounds of household appliances—vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, washing

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<sup>60</sup> Holly Rogers, "Introduction: 'Welcome to Your World': YouTube and the Reconfiguration of Music's Gatekeepers" in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 18-19.

<sup>61</sup> Carol Vernallis, "m©Re tH@n WorD\$: Aspects and Appeals of the Lyric Video" in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 149.

<sup>62</sup> Vernallis, 150.

<sup>63</sup> Vernallis, 151.

<sup>64</sup> Vernallis, 154.

<sup>65</sup> Virginia Kuhn, "m©Re tH@n WorD\$: Aspects and Appeals of the Lyric Video" in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 158.

<sup>66</sup> Kuhn, 159.

machines, dishwashers, fans and air conditioners.<sup>67</sup> Some are exclusively dedicated to producing YouTube content; others are created by individual users, without any economic or commercial pretensions, who compile compositions from other channels into playlists representative of their individual experience.<sup>68</sup>

**Holly Rogers:** The revoicing of creative material is of course no new thing, and visual and moving image histories have been reconfigured across their many styles, articulations, and mediums. The multiple histories of music have also been driven by repetitions and remediations. But with the unfolding twentieth century and the loosening of Modernism's drive for innovation and originality, came an emerging sensibility for explicit creative borrowing.<sup>69</sup> Fundamental to all these cultures of sonic remixability is the loosening hold of traditional music education over musical creativity. Technology enabled wider access to the tools of music composition and performance. This activated different groups of musicians and fuelled the surge of bedroom music culture and an increased presence of women in music technology environments and practices.<sup>70</sup> The idea of remediation and remixability plays with social media's aesthetics of virality, sharing and growth. If something is endlessly replicated through shares, adaptation, and reference, it suggests that it has entered the popular psyche to such an extent that it can be manipulated and parodied, while still being instantly recognizable. It allows people to personalize things within a universal framework of signs, references and allusions.<sup>71</sup>

**Joana Freitas:** Our authors [in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music*] consider the spreadability and remediation of sound through a variety of YouTube's most popular forms, including memes, fanvids, cover songs, protest videos, mashups, reaction videos and flashmobs.<sup>72</sup>

**João Francisco Porfírio:** YouTube's extraordinary range of users, tools and (co)creative possibilities not only provides an incessant flow of resources, but also reinforces the idea that cybercommunities perform vital and energizing interventions into the ways in which music and sound are created, disseminated, and engaged with in the twenty-first century.<sup>73</sup>

**Backstage:** I really enjoyed this book and I think overall, this book explored forms of musicking beyond performance more so than *YouTube and Music*. Do we have some of the authors from *Remediating Sound* here? Awesome, go ahead.

**Christine Boone:** The recent rise in popularity and sophistication of AI has many musicians wondering, how long until these computer algorithms replace humans in the creation of new

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<sup>67</sup> João Francisco Porfírio, "YouTube and the Sonification of Domestic Everyday Life," in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 210.

<sup>68</sup> Porfírio, 214.

<sup>69</sup> Holly Rogers, "Introduction: 'I feel like I've heard it before': The Audiovisual Echoes of YouTube" in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 6.

<sup>70</sup> Rogers, 7.

<sup>71</sup> Rogers, 20.

<sup>72</sup> Joana Freitas and João Francisco Porfírio, "Introduction: 'I feel like I've heard it before': The Audiovisual Echoes of YouTube" in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 30.

<sup>73</sup> Freitas and Porfírio, 30.

music? Will tomorrow’s musicians be competing with robots for the top of the Billboard charts?<sup>74</sup>

**Brian Drawert:** We explore the concept of AI-created art with regard to a single genre of music: mashups.<sup>75</sup> The most scathing critiques of mashups tend to reference Theodor Adorno, pointing out that the modular nature of popular music makes it both simple and lazy to create a mashup. Connoisseurs of the genre know that the process is usually more nuanced than critics claim, and that the best mashup creators are true artists, crafting genuinely original works using finished songs as raw material.<sup>76</sup>

**Edward Katrak Spencer:** During the rise of Web 2.0, musical memes began to play a major role in reconfigurations of public consciousness via their online propagation and mediation.<sup>77</sup> In a basic sense, musical memes are catchy clips or soundbites that can be found in imitative and mostly audiovisual user-generated content (UGC), with YouTube being the most prominent “breeding ground” for musical memes online.<sup>78</sup> In some ways, music has always been a memetic medium, but its enmeshing with participatory culture on YouTube since 2005 necessitates careful reflection on issues of agency, sonification and sociality. Who are the web users responsible for the genesis and growth of musical memes on YouTube?<sup>79</sup> Tardean imitation (in the strict sense of the term) is thus of great relevance to musical memes understood as creative practices.

**Backstage:** Hmm, can you say more about Tardean imitation?

**Edward Katrak Spencer:** The strength of a Tardean approach lies in its close attention to imitation-as-opposition—to an inter-psychological and more-or-less-conscious creative act that does not merely replicate but rather recalibrates (or resists, or replies or reacts).<sup>80</sup> Looking beyond score reading skills, memetic musical literacy is going to be vital to the survival of music disciplines, and it will foster a greater understanding of how YouTube music becomes used as a conspiratorial dog whistle by “professional” (and highly dangerous) Internet trolls.<sup>81</sup>

**Backstage:** Replicate vs. recalibrate . . . I feel like we don’t always recognize this distinction, but it’s important. What else?

**Michael Goddard:** Almost every reaction video on YouTube begins with “like, comment, and subscribe.” They collectively constitute a strange ecology of affective labour and cultural

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<sup>74</sup> Christine Boone and Brian Drawert, “‘Technology Allows More People to do Things’: Artificial Intelligence, Mashups and Online Musical Creativity” in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 35.

<sup>75</sup> Boone and Drawert, 35.

<sup>76</sup> Boone and Drawert, 38.

<sup>77</sup> Edward Katrak Spencer, “From Contagion to Imitation: On Bass Drop Memes, Trolling Repertoires and the Legacy of Gabriel Tarde” in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 51.

<sup>78</sup> Spencer, 51-52.

<sup>79</sup> Spencer, 52.

<sup>80</sup> Spencer, 56.

<sup>81</sup> Spencer, 53.



translation that merits further attention.<sup>82</sup> In these reaction videos, creators react directly to music videos of their choosing, albeit influenced by subscriber requests and suggestions, without any expert mediation. Typically, this involves minimal context being given in advance to genres and styles of music that are relatively unfamiliar to the creators, even if there are multiple exceptions to this tendency.<sup>83</sup> The affective labour of reactors therefore is not only in performing a “sincere” reaction to the archival material, but also translating it in various ways to a new and often very different time period and cultural context.<sup>84</sup>

**Backstage:** “Reaction” is such a huge community or genre on YouTube and there’s more to it than we usually realize. Are there any other *Remediating Sound* authors we haven’t heard from yet?

**Júlia Durand:** Many YouTubers seek library music that can be specifically licensed for YouTube and other video sharing platforms of Web 2.0. Also known as stock or production music, library music is composed for future use in all kinds of media and audiovisual creations. It is currently found in online catalogues, where it is categorized by mood, emotion, instrumentation, and genre, among other possibilities.<sup>85</sup> An examination of YouTube content that uses library music brings to light the importance of library music’s role in how YouTubers shape the meanings and messages of their videos.<sup>86</sup> Alex Black, CEO of Sonoton Music claims a significant number of libraries are still focused on “servicing the professional videomakers’ needs,” thereby neglecting “newer media and newer platforms.” For Black, this inevitably puts royalty-free libraries at an advantage, for, as he states, “there are a finite number of professionals working and choosing music in audiovisual, but there’s an infinite number of hobbyists.” It is this “infinite number of hobbyists” that has prompted the development of libraries such as the Swedish company Epidemic Sound, whose founder claimed “when the explosion of vlogging and online video took off, we created an offering for these types of storytellers too and we hit the point where our music was consistently being played 20 billion times a month on videos across YouTube and Facebook.”<sup>87</sup>

**Backstage:** I’ve noticed *lots* of creators—especially workout or fitness YouTubers—give credit to Epidemic Sound for the music in their videos. Did you find YouTubers who used other sources?

**Júlia Durand:** YouTube itself, in its Studio Area where creators can manage their channel, offers a large number of tracks in a section called Audio Library. Many of them are by Kevin MacLeod, a North-American composer whose free library music is astoundingly ubiquitous in

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<sup>82</sup> Michael Goddard, “Sincere, Authentic, Remediated: The Affective Labour and Cross-Cultural Remediations of Music Video Reaction Videos on YouTube” in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 73.

<sup>83</sup> Goddard, 74.

<sup>84</sup> Goddard, 76.

<sup>85</sup> Júlia Durand, “Library Music as the Soundtrack of YouTube” in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (2023), 203.

<sup>86</sup> Durand, 205.

<sup>87</sup> Durand, 208.

YouTube videos.<sup>88</sup> Interestingly, however, the immense popularity of MacLeod’s music sometimes prompts YouTubers to avoid it for deeming it “overused.”<sup>89</sup>

**Backstage:** For a while, it seemed like Kevin’s music was the only option, or maybe the easiest one.

**Júlia Durand:** In two Facebook groups where beginner YouTubers interact, library music is a frequent topic of conversation, with members of the group asking the same recurring questions to their peers: where should they source library music from, how should they use it in videos and why.<sup>90</sup> A few fundamental points can be gleaned from these discussions: firstly, music is seen as an easy way of adding production value to a video and making it appear more professional; secondly it is recommended as a means of retaining viewers’ attention; and thirdly, the most often mentioned reason by these YouTubers for using library music, it is praised for quickly setting the tone of a video and conveying its intended message. However, most discussions around library music were based on these YouTubers’ shared concern of having copyright claims on their videos. The word “safe” features more prominently than other terms that might connote more aesthetic considerations in their search for library music.<sup>91</sup>

**Backstage:** It’s upsetting that YouTubers feel a need to pick music that’s “safe.” As a music teacher, I’d love for them to be able to make musical decisions without that fear.

**Holly Rogers:** The prevalence of remediated sonic and audiovisual content on YouTube suggests that the criteria for historically or culturally significant music (or music that is included in a canon), which has traditionally included originality, complexity, innovation, and longevity, may need to be rethought to include citation, version, and reuse: and the focus on single musicians opened out to make room for collaborative creativity and different skill sets.<sup>92</sup>

**Backstage:** Well said. And just to reiterate, “remediated” is what Holly meant by “citation, version, and reuse.” There should be room for people who want to “remix” something that already exists, rather than create something from nothing. Another connection between YouTube and music education that springs to mind for most people would be music tutorials. What do you all know about that section of YouTube?

**Nathan B. Kruse:** We [Kari and I] examined instrumental tunes of the genre or genres referred to variously as North American traditional, folk, or roots music. The Banjo Hangout, The Fiddle Hangout, The Flatpicker Hangout, The Mandolin Café and YouTube were analysed for their pedagogical and musical content.<sup>93</sup>

**Kari K. Veblen:** Video selection and categorization included banjo, fiddle, guitar and mandolin instructional videos posted between the years 2006 and 2010. These four instruments were

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<sup>88</sup> Durand, 211.

<sup>89</sup> Durand, 214.

<sup>90</sup> Durand, 215-216.

<sup>91</sup> Durand, 216.

<sup>92</sup> Holly Rogers, “Introduction: ‘Welcome to Your World’: YouTube and the Reconfiguration of Music’s Gatekeepers” in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (2023), 28.

<sup>93</sup> Nathan B. Kruse and Kari K. Veblen, “Music Teaching and Learning Online: Considering YouTube Instructional Videos” in *Journal of Music, Technology and Education* (2012), 80.

chosen because they are customarily used for this kind of music. Video selection was limited to those that included verbal instructions from teachers. Videos that simply presented the playing of a folk tune for aural purposes only were not used in this study. However, such videos no doubt are used to compare and learn tune variations.<sup>94</sup>

**Nathan B. Kruse:** Banjo videos were the longest, followed by mandolin, guitar, and fiddle. In terms of instructor talktime, banjo instructors were more verbal than any other instrument category, although mandolin instructors held the highest percentage of talktime in relation to total video length. The majority of lessons were geared towards beginners, followed by intermediate and advanced lessons. Additionally, 100 per cent of the lessons were part of a larger series of instructional videos; no video stood alone as a solitary entity. In terms of filming location, the most common backdrop was a professional studio, followed by individuals' homes, shops or music stores, offices, and finally, an outdoor shed.<sup>95</sup>

**Kari K. Veblen:** An overwhelming majority of teachers were male. Only 20 per cent of videos included female instructors, although banjo lessons incorporated more female instructors than any other instrument category. Moreover, 100 per cent of the sampled videos featured white instructors, who were predominantly middle aged. Fiddle videos, however, included a higher number of younger teachers. An overwhelming majority (73 per cent) of content centred on technique, which included bow holds, finger placement, posture, picking and strumming patterns, hammer-ons and pull-offs, and scale patterns. Banjo lessons invariably focused on some form of technique, particularly finger dexterity. Theory and melody also were addressed frequently, as the chief purpose of the videos was to teach a folk tune. Theory included general issues such as note names, chord progressions, key signatures, and their relation to the tune. Fiddle and mandolin videos tended to highlight melodic teaching objectives, while banjo and guitar videos tended to highlight harmonic teaching objectives.<sup>96</sup>

**Nathan B. Kruse:** In terms of teaching method, 100 per cent of the videos included some form of aural reinforcement or modelling. The majority of teachers demonstrated both correct and incorrect ways of playing the instrument and provided pedagogical advice for addressing problematic passages or finger dexterity. Rarely did teachers model with their voices. Several instructors used repetition as the predominant tool for teaching phrases, verses, and chord progressions. In most instances, instructors initially presented melodies and chord progressions in their entirety and at full tempo before isolating them at slower tempi for the viewer. Physiological prompts such as hand shape, feel and placement were common themes of instructional style. Information related to the historical context of tunes, the use of equipment (e.g. picks, tuning pegs, straps, bridges) and references to iconic players were included to a far lesser degree.<sup>97</sup>

**Kari K. Veblen:** Recommendations for further research include (1) examining other musical genres within our ever-expanding online landscape, (2) considering the teaching attributes that speak most to online learners, (3) studying the self-directed techniques that online learners

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<sup>94</sup> Kruse and Veblen, 80.

<sup>95</sup> Kruse and Veblen, 81.

<sup>96</sup> Kruse and Veblen, 82.

<sup>97</sup> Kruse and Veblen, 83.

develop in order to supplement online learning and (4) investigating how instructors approach teaching improvisation in videos and how online learners acquire these skills.<sup>98</sup>

**Backstage:** Thank you! It would also be interesting to talk to the people who create the tutorials *and* to people who use them as students.

**Josef Hanson:** YouTube offers many potential benefits to students: alternative explanations, interactivity, 24/7 access, and the ability to pause, rewind, and repeat lessons. It may enable teachers to serve students more efficiently—to act as facilitator of many learning resources rather than as the sole dispenser of knowledge. However, as an open-source platform, YouTube enables both valid and invalid information to proliferate; often, it is difficult to separate fact from fiction. Thus, the purpose of [my] study was to assess the educational value of beginning instrumental music tutorials. A panel of judges—the author plus two outside experts—assessed eight dimensions of value: credibility, use of modeling, efficiency, audio/visual quality, engagement, musicality, appropriateness, and overall value.<sup>99</sup> With average scores ranging between three and four on a five-point scale, the judges found the sample of videos to be of average to good utility. Nearly every video met technical adequacy in terms of video and sound quality. However, the videos’ ability to engage the learner and provide overall educational value varied considerably, though the same could be said of traditional, face-to-face instruction.<sup>100</sup>

**Backstage:** Good point.

**Josef Hanson:** Additional research, including teacher-driven action research, is needed to further validate YouTube video content as a viable and effective complement to traditional instrumental instruction. Perspectives of school band and orchestra students using YouTube to acquire instrumental skills should be collected and analyzed.<sup>101</sup> Internet video is not a substitute for in-the-flesh, in-the-moment interaction between teachers and students. However, based on the findings of this study, instrumental music teachers hoping to extend their pedagogical reach may find YouTube video content to be a beneficial and relevant supplement for their students.<sup>102</sup>

**Emmett James O’Leary:** While existing research has examined community ukulele groups and opportunities for curriculum integration, YouTube as a specific platform for learning the ukulele and the content available through it have not been explored.<sup>103</sup> [My] study is a content analysis of YouTube channels dedicated to ukulele instruction through tutorial videos, including the following facets of the channels: (1) the types of videos produced, (2) musical content of the videos, (3) video characteristics and teaching methods, and (4) audience interactions.<sup>104</sup> Across the channels, musical content was varied. With 79 per cent of the songs included in videos appearing on just one channel, it is clear that despite the hosts of the channels all teaching the same instrument, there was not a singular repertoire from which they were drawing from. This

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<sup>98</sup> Kruse and Veblen, 84.

<sup>99</sup> Josef Hanson, “Assessing the Educational Value of YouTube Videos for Beginning Instrumental Music” in *Contributions to Music Education* (2018), 140.

<sup>100</sup> Hanson, 149.

<sup>101</sup> Hanson, 151.

<sup>102</sup> Hanson, 152.

<sup>103</sup> Emmett James O’Leary, “The Ukulele and YouTube: A Content Analysis of Seven Prominent YouTube Ukulele Channels” in *Journal of Popular Music Education* (2020), 177-178.

<sup>104</sup> O’Leary, 178.

could also reflect different audiences being engaged in the channels and perhaps the creators' efforts to be responsive to viewer interests. Of the most viewed tutorials, the influence of popular culture on viewers' interests is clear. Over half of the selections have strong associations in popular culture to the ukulele either through the original recording or through other media such as movies and television.<sup>105</sup> The remarkable popularity of these channels should be of interest to music educators. While the findings in this study support these ukulele channels as sources of self-directed learning and of musical interest for viewers, music educators might also examine what leads so many to turn to YouTube as a source of learning rather than, or in addition to, school music offerings, community musicians and other traditional venues for music education.<sup>106</sup>

**Backstage:** Yeah, I remember students talking about tutorials of all kinds being the thing they went to YouTube for most often. Thank you all, this is really helpful! Going back to Nathan and Kari's study, I find it interesting that you looked for videos on YouTube and a bunch of other websites. It seems like there are music teaching and learning communities on YouTube specifically, and online in general. Has anyone else seen that happening? Janice, you mentioned community earlier with the Banjo Hangout and OAIM.

**Janice Waldron:** Because YouTube can act as either 'thing' or 'place,' this accounts for its significance as a key component in online community creation.<sup>107</sup>

**Christopher Cayari:** [Bob] Stebbins suggests that core musical activities can be performed in various spaces. A space becomes a *place* when the participant or participants have a meaningful experience. As the practice of publishing music videos on YouTube has become more prevalent, the website has provided a space for a variety of core musical activities including but not limited to musical practice and performance, audio and video recording, sound mixing, and video editing.<sup>108</sup> [Yi-Fu] Tuan suggested, "Place is security, space is freedom." He continued to posit that places are centers of value where needs are met. For virtual artists, the *space* YouTube provides can become a *place* as musical expression, artistic experimentation, and social interactions abound.<sup>109</sup>

**Backstage:** It reminds me of the difference between a house and a home. Having space can be important, but a place has *meaning* to people. It also seems like a space is a starting point. If we provide students with a space that feels creative, freeing, productive, and whatever else we want to foster, that space could turn into a place—it could become a version of "home." And lots of people find a home online too.

**Janice Waldron:** One of the most prevalent theories used by researchers to frame examinations of online communities from a learning perspective is Wenger's 1998 CoP [Communities of Practice] social learning theory. The primary focus of CoP is on "learning as social participation"

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<sup>105</sup> O'Leary, 185.

<sup>106</sup> O'Leary, 187.

<sup>107</sup> Janice Waldron, "Online Music Communities and Social Media" in *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music* (2018), 120.

<sup>108</sup> Christopher Cayari, "Music Making on YouTube" in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Making and Leisure* (2017), 469.

<sup>109</sup> Cayari, 474. Emphasis added.

that is comprised of four components—meaning, practice, community and identity—integrated with the following three interlocking dimensions: 1. Mutual engagement of the participants. 2. The negotiation of a joint enterprise which is defined by the participants in the very process of pursuing it. 3. A shared repertoire.<sup>110</sup> The rapid rise of YouTube from its humble beginnings as media curiosity to its current place as significant but accepted conventional part of everyday living brings up multiple issues regarding its production and use, particularly when considered within the context of user-generated content (UGC), online participatory culture, and music learning and teaching.<sup>111</sup> Although motivations for creating and posting UGC vary among content producers, [Wolfgang] Schweiger and [Oliver] Quiring argue that reasons for uploading “homemade” content falls into one or more of the following categories: (1) dispersing information and ideas, (2) self-presentation through messages, (3) maintaining or initiating social content, (4) debating issues within groups and (5) helping other people who need guidance. They also note that motivations for posting UGC are always intertwined with and/or within a social context; indeed, for meaning(s) to develop from UGC involves some type of interaction with others in online groups; for example, YouTube communities, online affinity groups, and social media sites such as Facebook.<sup>112</sup> YouTubes [or YouTube videos], through instigating discourse, act as agency [for users] because they enable participant understanding as meaning(s) emerges and evolves through collective discussion.<sup>113</sup>

Regardless of type of content, all of the YouTube videos posted on the OAIM also serve as discourse “starters” on the site’s discussion forums, and this is consistent with Jean and Joshua regarding the importance of YouTube as discursive tool for music learning and agency in online community.<sup>114</sup> In virtual music groups like the BH, YouTube videos serve a dual purpose, their most apparent and pragmatic function being useful straightforward music teaching and learning aids. However, YouTube videos also act as vehicles of agency to promote and engage participatory culture through discourse in online community, thus also fulfilling a significant teaching role, albeit in a more nuanced manner than as a direct but informal music-learning resource.<sup>115</sup> One of the major themes to emerge from the data was the convergence of the online with the offline community, and this was tightly interwoven with music learning and teaching in both on- and offline settings.<sup>116</sup> As a field, music educators have not fully understood or utilized the power of the Internet in facilitating informal music learning in convergent on- and offline communities. As a profession, we have a lot of catching up to do. But we also have shining examples available to emulate that are literally at our fingertips.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Janice Waldron, “Conceptual Frameworks, Theoretical Models and the Role of YouTube: Investigating Informal Music Learning and Teaching in Online Music Community” in *Journal of Music, Technology and Education* (2011), 192-193.

<sup>111</sup> Janice Waldron, “User-Generated Content, YouTube and Participatory Culture on the Web: Music Learning and Teaching in Two Contrasting Online Communities” in *Music Education Research* (2013), 257.

<sup>112</sup> Waldron, 258-259.

<sup>113</sup> Waldron, 259.

<sup>114</sup> Janice Waldron, “Conceptual Frameworks, Theoretical Models and the Role of YouTube: Investigating Informal Music Learning and Teaching in Online Music Community” in *Journal of Music, Technology and Education* (2011), 197.

<sup>115</sup> Janice Waldron, “YouTube, Fanvids, Forums, Vlogs and Blogs: Informal Music Learning in a Convergent On- and Offline Music Community” in *International Journal of Music Education* (2012), 94.

<sup>116</sup> Waldron, 97.

<sup>117</sup> Waldron, 102.

**Backstage:** We do. I especially like the point about discourse because this reminds me of more discussion-based classes I've taken and taught. We can learn so much from each other—students love learning from other students and as a teacher, *I* love learning from students. And with YouTube, now we can learn from people who aren't physically in our classroom—the community always has room to grow. Any other comments about community?

**Christopher Cayari:** As a virtual vocal ensemble creator, [Dan] Wright amassed a following of viewers and commenters. This virtual community formed as Wright posted video performances on YouTube, establishing an online performance venue. By using YouTube as a venue to perform virtual vocal ensembles, Wright amassed an online audience community that interacted with him via private messages and text comments, yielding feedback, debate, and conversation among a global Internet community.<sup>118</sup> There were five mediated collaborations Wright produced on his YouTube channel, each time adapting his process to fit his collaborator's process of creating virtual barbershop quartet videos. By participating in these collaborations, regardless of how much work they were, Wright entrenched himself into a community of virtual singers who shared audiences, created music together, and interacted socially on YouTube.<sup>119</sup> One may assume that virtual vocal ensembles discourage personal connections and community. However, the community that emerges from virtual vocal ensembles allows for an asynchronous line of communication that focuses on intermittent musical discussion and post-performance feedback that can last for years.<sup>120</sup> Creators of one-person virtual vocal ensembles exhibit a musical community that often includes critique, mentorship, and feedback.<sup>121</sup>

**John Moore:** In November 2019, Julianne Grasso delivered a paper to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual meeting of the Society for Music Theory in Columbus Ohio (SMT42) entitled "Like, Comment, and Subscribe: Amateur Music Theory as Participatory Culture." The paper primarily focused on YouTubers who create music theory content, an interest born out of her observations that many of her theory students were turning to this type of online material to supplement their learning outside of the formality of their college-level courses. Sections of the talk were live-tweeted during the event. What followed was a flurry of controversy. Grasso received tweets from both content consumers and creators in the Music Theory YouTube (MTYT) community that criticized her referral to music theory YouTubers as "amateurs," a designation widely perceived as having derogatory connotations. Following the furore, Grasso contacted some of the YouTubers she had discussed in her paper to clarify her meaning and intent and in turn opened up a dialogue between the comparatively insular world of academic music theory with the more public space occupied by the MTYT creators. Speaking about the incident in a subsequent chapter co-written with prominent music theory YouTuber Cory Arnold aka 12tone, Grasso explains that the use of the word "was incorrectly, but understandably, interpreted as an insult": the term was not intended to be pejorative but rather "[the] goal was to elucidate a vibrant music theory community outside of the walls of the conference, not alienate it."<sup>122</sup> The backlash against

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<sup>118</sup> Christopher Cayari, *Virtual Vocal Ensembles and the Mediation of Performance on YouTube* (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2016), 147.

<sup>119</sup> Cayari, 175.

<sup>120</sup> Cayari, 373.

<sup>121</sup> Cayari, 374.

<sup>122</sup> John Moore, "The New Language of Music Theory in the Digital Age" in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (2023), 133.

Grasso showed the fervency with which both creators and consumers on MTYT are willing to defend their community.<sup>123</sup>

**Joana Freitas:** YouTube, then, is more than an audiovisual repository: it is a (musical) social network that can help to destabilize cultural barriers.<sup>124</sup>

**João Francisco Porfírio:** Community creation takes place through shared *affective* experiences of interacting with and listening to musical content.<sup>125</sup>

**Backstage:** Definitely. And if we take Adam Neely’s channel<sup>126</sup> as an example, they have over a million subscribers. 12tone has over 700,000.<sup>127</sup> We don’t know for sure, but this probably means that people who aren’t just formally studying music or music theory at the university level are watching these videos, so they’re merging communities and different groups of people. We should also keep in mind that not everyone clicks “subscribe,” so in theory [laughs] even more people are watching! Alright, let’s open up the discussion even more. Very broadly, what else have you found in your research of YouTube and music teaching and learning?

**Kirstin Dougan:** The current college student population has always lived in a world with computers and relies increasingly on smartphones and other mobile computing devices. In using them for personal and academic information, they do not necessarily see a boundary between the two. This is the context in which music is being researched, taught, and learned. Therefore, it stands to reason that YouTube and similar sites are having an effect on teaching and research in music. [My] study examined university music faculty members’ use and perceptions of YouTube for teaching and research. It also [sought] to determine whether a faculty member’s music subdiscipline, such as performance or musicology, is a significant factor in his or her use or perceptions of tools like YouTube. It also asked faculty to compare YouTube to their institution’s library collections and their use of both.<sup>128</sup> For faculty in performance, music education, conducting/ensembles, and ethnomusicology, the area of biggest concern is poor quality of recordings, while faculty in theory/composition and musicology find poor quality of content to be the biggest concern.<sup>129</sup> Faculty in jazz studies cited concerns with copyright and poor quality of content most frequently, while “Other” faculty respondents cited concerns with copyright and poor quality of recordings with equal measure.<sup>130</sup>

**Backstage:** Hmm, that’s interesting. I wonder if this would be an opportunity for professors and students to analyze YouTube videos that students find helpful, and to critically uncover why some might be of “poor quality.” This also goes back to Ching-Chiu and Sherri’s study—all of us need to be *critical* of what’s out there.

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<sup>123</sup> Moore, 134.

<sup>124</sup> Joana Freitas and João Francisco Porfírio, “Introduction: ‘I feel like I’ve heard it before’: The Audiovisual Echoes of YouTube” in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (2023), 24.

<sup>125</sup> Freitas and Porfírio, 24.

<sup>126</sup> Adam Neely, “Adam Neely,” YouTube, February 4, 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/@AdamNeely>.

<sup>127</sup> Cory Arnold, “12tone,” YouTube, August 14, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/@12tone>.

<sup>128</sup> Kirstin Dougan, “Music, YouTube, and Academic Libraries” in *Notes (Music Library Association)* (2016), 492.

<sup>129</sup> Dougan, 501.

<sup>130</sup> Dougan, 501-502.



**Kirstin Dougan:** The comments provided by faculty also show that they believe there are benefits to using YouTube. Ease of access is the chief positive aspect cited by faculty in all areas except for jazz (wide range of materials) and ethnomusicology (useful to find material unavailable in the library or elsewhere). Another perceived benefit of YouTube and similar sites is vastness of content.<sup>131</sup> Some faculty seem to have outright negative perceptions of the library as collector or as service. At the same time many faculty voiced concerns about students' use of YouTube to exclusion of other sources (e.g., the library). Since this is obviously a concern shared by librarians as well, the question remains how faculty and librarians can approach and solve this together—making sure students (and faculty) know what the library has to offer, and at the same time making use of the best of what YouTube has to offer.<sup>132</sup>

**Backstage:** Right. The more resources, the better.

**Ann Werner:** Songwriter Chris Robley underlines the site's importance for music, calling it the new version of several previous media formats and functions (YouTube: the new radio, the new MTV, the new record store, the new music magazine, the new everything): according to Robley, YouTube is convergence media, framing user-generated content, a conclusion also drawn by scholars. Therefore, the site is invaluable to musicians wanting to reach their audiences, and to audiences communicating with musicians and each other, or starting their own music careers.<sup>133</sup>

While the guidance of the interface from “music” leads primarily to professionally produced content, prominent artists signed to record labels, YouTube's music content was much larger than merely professionally produced music videos. When one leaves the links of genres and channels overtly promoted by the site, instead searching or following recommendations in the right-hand column, a different YouTube becomes visible: one where amateur video and user engagement, memes, and parodies are central to what music is. If the search words included the title of a song, results could include videos posted by users or record companies, professionally produced videos, sound files illustrated with a photo, fan videos, and clips from television shows. For example, a search for “John Legend All of Me” in 2014 produced a top-12 result including two advertisements, the professional music video for the song, a remixed video, two videos of the song being performed live by the artist, and two videos of unknown people singing cover versions, one of them a homeless man performing on the street. The example illustrates how the performances of non-professional singers also could spread through YouTube, and how the site could be employed for grassroots musical creativity *alongside* commercial music content.<sup>134</sup> Three main aims have guided the discussion to determine how music is presented by YouTube's structure, how music is organized by YouTube, and what meanings in music are negotiated on YouTube.<sup>135</sup> Since the structure of the website invited both artists and teenagers dancing in their bedroom to participate, videos of professional and DIY origin thrive off each other.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Dougan, 503.

<sup>132</sup> Dougan, 506.

<sup>133</sup> Ann Werner, “YouTube and Music Video Streaming: Participation, Intermediation and Spreadability” in *Streaming Music* (2018), 128.

<sup>134</sup> Werner, 134.

<sup>135</sup> Werner, 141.

<sup>136</sup> Werner, 142.

**Backstage:** That’s what I love—there’s room for everyone. I just want to repeat part of what Ann said: *grassroots musical creativity*. Even though we’ll find performances that fit this description, we’ll also find more of the musicking that goes *beyond* performance and we can use these examples to rethink music teaching and learning. I’ve seen firsthand that not everyone wants to sing or play an instrument. Any other thoughts?

**Lauri Väkevä:** I [have] argue[d] that (1) digital technology introduces new economic conditions for musical production and consumption, (2) these conditions imply new understandings of what music education is and what it could be, and (3) such new understandings have political underpinnings that should be acknowledged in music education research.<sup>137</sup> I [have also] discuss[ed] the implications of the commodification of music-related practices and identities in social media, highlighting the need for music educators to understand the complexity of cultural consumption and production in such environments.<sup>138</sup> The traditional model, where musicians were first compensated for their services and then received more income from royalties, has made room for new kinds of profiting schemes, where making music might not be compensated at all.<sup>139</sup> As music education institutions are still mostly tied to the traditional view of musical labor, an artist aspiring to a digital career is required to hone her marketing skills by herself or lean on commercially available services that help musicians to survive in the digital domain. Hence, pressure is put on music education institutions to develop programs that help future professionals to thrive in the midst of the rapidly changing conditions of the new music economy.<sup>140</sup>

**Backstage:** Wow, thank you all. So, just to recap, we started with what students could learn by making videos themselves and how music teachers might use YouTube in the classroom. Then we covered music’s centrality and importance on YouTube, which led to talking about music videos and their role in musicking. I know music videos are what first spring to mind for lots of people when we think about the link between music and YouTube, but a bunch of you recognized lip-sync, journalistic, lyric, and “natural” or “ambient” sounds as other musical types of videos. We also chatted about the significance of “remixability” or remediation through topics like mashups, musical memes, reaction videos, and library music. Tutorials was another main theme, which makes sense because that’s another prominent intersection between music education and YouTube. Then tutorials led us to discussing communities on YouTube, which led to YouTube as a resource, YouTube as a place for grassroots creativity, and YouTube as a part of “the new music economy.” Overall, it seems like a lot of work has been done with the products—the videos on YouTube. It also seems like a lot of studies have been done by lurking or hanging out online. What about “behind the scenes”? Has anybody talked to or worked closely with any YouTubers? How do they *do* what they do?

**Christopher Cayari:** [I selected] David François’s YouTube channel, David Wesley,<sup>141</sup> because of its extraordinary qualities as they might contribute to our understanding of virtual

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<sup>137</sup> Lauri Väkevä, “Educating Musical Prosumers for the Economic Conditions of the 21st Century” in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Media and Music Learning* (2020), 645.

<sup>138</sup> Väkevä, 645-646.

<sup>139</sup> Väkevä, 652.

<sup>140</sup> Väkevä, 653.

<sup>141</sup> David Wesley, “David Wesley,” YouTube, March 14, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/@DavidWesley>.

ensembles.<sup>142</sup> As François created more virtual a cappella vocal ensembles, he solidified a process he called the *David Wesley Treatment*, a series of practices he developed for creating videos. First, François selected a song, often one that was stuck in his head that he was excited to perform. Second, he arranged the song. François migrated to notating his arrangements because it allowed him to create more complex performances.<sup>143</sup> Preparation for recording came next. Regardless of whether he created his arrangements by ear or made a score, François created MIDI files with a click track to guide his recording process. François simultaneously recorded his vocals on his laptop and video on his camera. After the audio was mastered, François turned his attention to the visual portion of his virtual performance. François also added a coda to the end of each video; a tag that included the audio of one of his performances, his brand's logo, which had a clickable annotation that directed viewers to his Facebook or to subscribe, and clips of past videos with clickable annotation links. The final step in François's process was producing his video. He uploaded his performances to YouTube and wrote important information in the description box such as links, copyright information, the arranger, composer, and announcements.<sup>144</sup>

**Backstage:** Nice. I was also wondering if you could tell us a bit more about Wade Johnston.<sup>145</sup> It's too bad that his channel isn't active anymore!

**Christopher Cayari:** 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 [Patricia] Lange 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. His innovative ideas made him a good candidate [to exemplify] who used YouTube in a number of typical and ground-breaking ways.<sup>146</sup> 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.<sup>147</sup>

**Backstage:** Hmm. I'm wondering about performance being the core. I agree that performance is the core of music education *right now*, but should it be? And if we decide that performance *should* be the core, what layers do we want around it? What about all the people engaging with music in other ways? What about people who *want* to engage in other ways, but maybe don't realize or know what they could do?

**Susan A. O'Neill:** During a speech at a recent event sponsored by Youth Music UK, Jen Long was referred to as a youth music entrepreneur and a "young, fresh music talent from outside of

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<sup>142</sup> Christopher Cayari, "Connecting Music Education and Virtual Performance Practices from YouTube" in *Music Education Research* (2018), 363.

<sup>143</sup> Cayari, 368.

<sup>144</sup> Cayari, 369.

<sup>145</sup> TheNewsRecordOnline, "Wade Johnston – 'Tip Jar,'" YouTube, October 16, 2009, 4:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PE3ZyL2hZWU>.

<sup>146</sup> Christopher Cayari, "The YouTube Effect: How YouTube has Provided New Ways to Consume, Create, and Share Music" in *International Journal of Education & the Arts* (2011), 10.

<sup>147</sup> Cayari, 22.

the normal channels.” By the age of 22 years, Jen had already presented her first radio show for the BBC, and was writing about, promoting, recording, and managing new bands—mostly young unsigned, undiscovered, and under the radar musicians. In her speech “Music careers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” Jen reiterated a common assumption that researchers have been advancing for several decades—that music is important in the lives of young people, it shapes their identities, and for many it is a “passion.” She went on to describe wanting to “play in a band” but didn’t think it was something “you could learn;” rather, she thought it needed to happen “organically and through practice.” She also didn’t think being able to play an instrument or sing was the only way young people could express themselves musically. Her only memory of music at school was playing the recorder, which was in stark contrast to the rich musical life she was discovering outside of school.<sup>148</sup> Many young people no longer perceive their music engagement as a discrete activity or as part of a single music-learning context. Rather, they are increasingly involved in multimodal and multi-arts forms of communication and expression, as found in new media convergence and online participatory cultures. Youth are *remaking* and developing their own unique and multifaceted roles and personal meanings associated with music and media with increasingly fluid interconnections.<sup>149</sup>

**Renée Crawford:** 1. There is a tension between what schools understand as valued knowledge in education and what students actually value. 2. One of the problems of school music is that it is not considered to be authentic by students, in that, it does not relate to real-life experiences and is therefore not significant. 3. Teaching and learning practices should be a reflection of current society, which is multidimensional/non-linear. To provide opportunities for authentic learning in the classroom it is important to identify the nature of valued knowledge. In turn, teaching and learning in a non-linear/multidimensional praxis signifies a reflection of current society, making learning authentic and thus recognizes what is valued knowledge. We must recognize that our technology and media infused lives encapsulate that we live, work, and play in a setting that requires complex interaction on a multidimensional level.<sup>150</sup>

**Backstage:** I think your emphasis on music teaching and learning being a “reflection of current society” speaks to the importance of “bridging the gap” between musical practices inside and outside of school. I remember reading an article where the authors kept using the term “life-wide.”<sup>151</sup> I had to look up what that meant and one source said life-wide learning is “student learning in real contexts and authentic settings to achieve targets that are more difficult to attain through classroom learning.”<sup>152</sup> After thinking about that definition, I wondered, are classrooms not *real*? Are they not *authentic*? Why do we often consider school to be separate from the rest of our lives? School, for many people, is a significant and huge part of their lives! As teachers, we should want students to find their education relevant and meaningful and helpful. And part of

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<sup>148</sup> Susan A. O’Neill, “Introduction: Music and Media Infused Lives” in *Music and Media Infused Lives: Music Education in a Digital Age* (2014), 6.

<sup>149</sup> O’Neill, 10.

<sup>150</sup> Renée Crawford, “Technology Used to Engage Young People in Purposeful and Meaningful Music Education: A Critical Case Study” in *Music and Media Infused Lives: Music Education in a Digital Age* (2014), 179.

<sup>151</sup> Radio Cremata and Bryan Powell, “Online Music Collaboration Project: Digitally Mediated, Deterritorialized Music Education” in *International Journal of Music Education* (2017), 302-315.

<sup>152</sup> The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China, “Life-Wide Learning,” Education Bureau, January 5, 2024, <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/curriculum-area/life-wide-learning/index.html>.

that could be building learning experiences centered around or inspired by our “current society.” We might have to rethink the boundary lines we have—or *feel* we have—set up around school and education and music education.

**Susan A. O’Neill:** What this means for young music learners is that the boundaries around their particular musical worlds may not be perceived as bounded at all but rather surrounded by a zone of entangled or interwoven pathways.<sup>153</sup>

**Backstage:** Pathways . . . I like the sound of that.

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<sup>153</sup> O’Neill, 11.

## Once Upon a Time

The reason that YouTube excites me, versus something like those traditional film festival, academy award arenas, is because if the story ends up being 25 minutes, I can upload it. If the story ends up being an hour and a half, I upload that too. If it's 6 hours, which *no* film festival would allow, *no* academy award would be given to, you can upload it. That in itself, is more interesting to me creatively, at this time in my life or at this point in YouTube's development, than anything that's happening in those other spaces.

–Kevin Perjurer,<sup>154</sup> YouTube channel: “Defunctland”

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<sup>154</sup> Following Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre,

I thought simultaneously with everyone's ideas as I attempted to make a different sense of the object of my inquiry. So separating their comments into different sections of the report no longer made sense; in fact, I couldn't do it . . . I have used comments from everyone I could find, from published researchers and theorists, from participants, from colleagues, from characters in film and fiction, from anyone and everyone to help me think hard.

Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre, “Afterword: Decentering Voice in Qualitative Inquiry” in *Voice in Qualitative Inquiry: Challenging Conventional, Interpretive, and Critical Conceptions in Qualitative Research* (2009), 231.

## Story #1

*Backstage:* In the fall semester of 2013, I took a course on Mexican American history. We had a visitor one day, John Valadez, a documentary filmmaker. He told us a story about a trip where he met a group of people who made a campfire, sat in a circle, and told stories all night. John shared that he was saddened by this experience. He felt like we, as human beings, did not carry on this tradition as much as we (perhaps) should. After more reflection, he came to the conclusion that he was previously mistaken. We, as human beings, *do* carry on this tradition. We go to the movies *to listen to a story*. We watch television shows *to learn, laugh, and grow with our favorite characters*. We log on to YouTube *to engage with stories in numerous ways*.<sup>155</sup> These are modern *versions* of storytelling, but it is storytelling nonetheless. This realization is what inspired John to become a filmmaker.<sup>156</sup>

## Story #2

*Bryan:* I hate thinking it, but when you listen to professional wrestlers talk about pro wrestling, especially the older ones are like, “We tell stories.” And . . . that’s not wrong. Really good wrestling matches, like *really good ones*, they have a throughline of what they’re doing. They set up things, there is a storytelling aspect to it. But . . . it seems very highfalutin to go like, “We tell stories.” Like, oh god, that’s how I feel when I go about mine. It’s like, “Well, the story of this video...”<sup>157</sup> That’s how I feel! I feel so pretentious to a certain extent, but it’s just what I was thinking.

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<sup>155</sup> On YouTube’s “About” page, it says: “We believe that everyone deserves to have a voice, and that the world is a better place when we listen, share and build community through our stories.”

YouTube, “About YouTube,” <https://about.youtube/>.

<sup>156</sup> “Sharing and creating common stories surely holds us together as a species as firmly, if not more so, as our shared knowledge of the world.”

Jerome Bruner, “Narrative and Law: How They Need Each Other” in *Life and Narrative: The Risks and Responsibilities of Storying Experience* (2017), 9.

<sup>157</sup> Rather than storytelling, some might think Bryan is “storymaking” with some of his karaoke videos. “Although many scholars use the term ‘storytelling,’ we find the term in relation to digital technology somewhat problematic,

### Story #3

*Backstage:* I was in Bergen, Norway for the 8th Narrative Inquiry in Music Education (NIME) conference. After the first presenter of the day finished, she asked the next speaker, “Do you need help setting up your computer?” The reply was, “No, I’m going old school today.” We emptied the room for a short break and when we returned, the meaning of “old school” became clear. There was no computer or screen with a title slide projected—just a woman sitting in a chair with some paper in her hand.

She began to tell us a story about a research project she had facilitated with young children. One of the students questioned the validity of the arts-based study by asking, “Drawing can be research?” They discussed the concept of research and discovered that the word “research” has the word “search” within it. “Questions” begin with a “quest.” Our storyteller shared another striking quote from a student who asked, “Why do you care about what we think?”<sup>158</sup>

The presentation struck me.<sup>159</sup> It was about more than the story itself, which was written in a captivating way that appeared to have us, the conference audience, on the edge of our seats. As someone who has attended many conferences, there was something unique about her choice to go “old school.” It did not feel like a presentation—it felt like story time—and not in a way that was pedestrian or condescending. It was also not a presentation where the presenter acted like an

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since telling primarily refers to speech . . . ‘storymaking’ . . . encompasses speech and writing as well as other modes, such as visual, audio and gestural modes . . . with the aim of composing something new, storymaking is, arguably, a more functional term.”

Ewa Skantz Åberg, Annika Lantz-Andersson, and Niklas Pramling, “Children’s Digital Storymaking: The Negotiated Nature of Instructional Literacy Events” in *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy* (2015), 171.

<sup>158</sup> “The critical educational storyteller is out to prick the consciences of readers by inviting a reexamination of the values and interests undergirding certain discourses, practices, and institutional arrangements.”

Thomas E. Barone, “Beyond Theory and Method: A Case of Critical Storytelling” in *Theory into Practice* (1992), 143.

<sup>159</sup> Margareth O’Sullivan, “Small Stories Contain Worlds: Storying Moments of Music Making and Learning,” (presented at NIME8 Conference: Narrative Inquiry in Music Education, Bergen, Norway, June 15, 2022).



“elementary teacher” with a high and bubbly voice and pretended we were “children.” It was simply engaging.<sup>160</sup>

#### Story #4

*Mark:* Welcome y’all to Class Warfare . . . and the bro-country story . . . If you want to talk about the historical roots of bro-country, you should probably go back to the late 90s. This was when the Digital Millennium Telecommunications Act was signed that opened the doors for radio consolidation, but also when Billboard decided to open up the Hot 100 to being closer to an all-genre chart. And as the late 80s/early 90s neotraditional revival had cooled into adult contemporary and easy listening crossovers, suddenly the Hot 100 was awash in the softest and least threatening country music imaginable, with a few upstart exceptions like Shania Twain, the Dixie Chicks and Toby Keith—keep an eye on them, their stories might intertwine at some point. Now there’s a lot that could be said to come out of this moment, much of it bad . . . mostly because across chunks of the 90s Billboard was a shitshow as always, and radio consolidation would only further centralize power on Music Row, although that would take longer to fully manifest. What it seemed to signal was that country was going to get very boring very fast . . .

And then 9/11 happened, and as a whole, country was the genre that reacted the most strongly to that event, given its roots in storytelling and its willingness to embrace politics—including the endorsements of neoconservative movements at the time, and its very American branding and centralization. This got very messy very quickly—if you want a broader snapshot,

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<sup>160</sup> Narrative approaches do not focus on the discovery of one “real truth,” but “aim at meaning . . . and convince through lifelikeness or *verisimilitude*.” Ultimately, “the power of narrative inquiry lies in the possibility of troubling certainty, and once troubled, in the possibility of change.”

Sandra L. Stauffer, “Narrative Inquiry and the Uses of Narrative in Music Education Research” in *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research in American Music Education* (2014), 1. Stauffer, 19.

check out my review of The Chicks' 2020 comeback album *Gaslighter* that touches on a lot of the complexity . . .

Thus far I've spent a lot of time talking about the older acts, many of whom had established careers but would pivot towards bro-country in the early 2010s building on the country rap formula, but they're only half of the story. The other half were the younger guys who may have come to the sound with a little less mercenary calculation, where they may have heard what Jason Aldean was doing but had a different approach or different influences.<sup>161</sup>

### Story #5

*Backstage:* In a course about curriculum, our professor asked us to pick a favorite quote from the readings we were assigned each week. One of my choices was: "In this way, Coles draws attention to the ethical responsibility involved in narrative, noting that 'their story, yours, mine—it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them.'"<sup>162</sup> If the assignment allowed us to pick more than one sentence, I might have chosen this section: "Similarly, Le Guin speaks of the ageless nature of storytelling as she reminds us of the enduring draw of the campfire. As generation after generation circle round the fire, stories flow endlessly, gathering us together. Le Guin writes that as we 'huddle closer,' the stories we tell one another bear witness to our lives."<sup>163</sup> Even when

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<sup>161</sup> "Not only does the art of storying ring in sympathetic vibration with the art of music, narrative inquiry as a means of music education scholarship echoes back to us our lived experiences as teachers and learners. We hear ourselves and map our location in its reverberations." "We share this story about this person at this time, while knowing that this story is really about all of us, at any given time."

Jeananne Nichols and Wesley Brewer, "Why Narrative Now? Marking a Decade of Narrative Inquiry in Music Education" in *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* (2017), 7.  
Nichols and Brewer, 9.

<sup>162</sup> Janice Huber, Vera Caine, Marilyn Huber, and Pam Steeves, "Narrative Inquiry as Pedagogy in Education: The Extraordinary Potential of Living, Telling, Retelling, and Reliving Stories of Experience" in *Review of Research in Education* (2013), 218.

<sup>163</sup> Huber et al., 214.

there is no physical campfire, the essence of that experience is often present. I invite you to come and “draw in a little closer around the campfire.”<sup>164</sup>

### Story #6

*James:* Can I tell you a story? We were in Springfield—we were getting a connecting bus on a trip to New York. And there was this guy, he walked up and said, “Hey. Can you subscribe to my YouTube channel? I’m starting to get a little bit of traction and I just want to keep the ball rolling.” And he went from person to person, getting people to subscribe to his YouTube channel. And he had gotten 1,000 or so. And I was like, it’s so weird, it’s not like I’m a fucking legend or anything, but I have a channel that’s five times as big as his and I’ve never gone canvassing, I’ve never gone door to door. But he was running around the parking lot, getting signatures basically. He wants it *so* badly. And if you look at his channel, there’s not really anything on it. He has a short about a peacock he saw in the wild one time . . . and his name isn’t really catchy . . . and his profile picture is a blurry picture that has no strong color scheme, so he’s not doing anything right. But he’s got 1,000 subscribers—that’s not nothing. And he’s got a lot of heart, and he really wants it. And it’s so interesting to me because he has this dream that he’s like, “I will go door to door to everybody to make this dream happen.” It’s fascinating how some people live their lives making YouTube videos. It’s wild.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin, “It Was a Dark and Stormy Night; Or, Why Are We Huddling about the Campfire?” in *Critical Inquiry* (1980), 194.

<sup>165</sup> “Want a different ethic? Tell a different story.”

Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (House of Anansi Press, 2003), 164.

### **YouTube: A Global Campfire**

I think that's the transition in entertainment from this passive experience to this active experience. I'm searching for Andrew Schulz, I'm *actively* wanting to participate in the content. I can comment and be like, "that was hilarious" and talk to someone else in the comments. So it's an *active* role...I *want* it to feel more like I'm there—I don't want to passively view this anymore.

–Samir Chaudry, YouTube channel: "Colin and Samir"

**Notes from backstage:** This short story is about participatory culture. YouTube is one of the best examples of a thriving participatory culture, so I wanted to mimic the platform as closely as possible in written form. A participatory culture is like a drum circle,<sup>166</sup> which “offers constant mutual visibility of all other participants—whatever their level of creational skills. This is a crucial attribute that made YouTube so compelling for inviting participation and sociality.”<sup>167</sup> The boxes of text represent the outline of a video you might be watching—the “main events,” which are anchored by James’s, Bryan’s, and Mark’s thoughts about YouTube. By rotating their voices, it shows that “the value of any bit of information increases through social interaction . . . meaning is a shared and constantly renewable resource and its circulation can create and revitalize social ties.”<sup>168</sup> Off to the side, there are “recommended” text boxes of links to various YouTube channels that are referenced by/related to the three creators’ ideas. You can think of the footnotes as the comment section, which adds another layer of context and conversation to the “videos.” Altogether, “the drum circle metaphor suggests that video sociality benefits from inviting disparate creative voices into an integrated, participatory whole.”<sup>169</sup> I hope you enjoy this specific “participatory whole.”

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<sup>166</sup> It is important to acknowledge there are different types of drum circles and some are more inclusive than others. The drum circle analogy here is about those that invite anyone and everyone to participate.

<sup>167</sup> Patricia G. Lange, *Thanks for Watching: An Anthropological Study of Video Sharing on YouTube* (University Press of Colorado, 2019), 34.

<sup>168</sup> Henry Jenkins, “Excerpts from ‘Matt Hills Interviews Henry Jenkins’” in *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (2006), 140.

<sup>169</sup> Lange, 34.

“I think every YouTuber has a document of ‘Videos I Want to Do.’”<sup>170</sup> James looks through his own list and realizes some ideas don’t make sense to him anymore, some need to be deleted, and some ideas are too big: “I’m not the one to make these.”<sup>171</sup> Being on YouTube helps him express his desire to be a documentarian.<sup>172</sup>

For example, he so badly wants to create a documentary about storage units. He would start by pointing out how many there are (primarily in North America) and how 90% of them are independently run. Couldn’t these units be used to support individuals who are homeless instead of holding on to our “extra” stuff?

James is also fascinated by Newman’s Own and the packages that say,

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<sup>170</sup> Participatory cultures share many characteristics with community music groups: “In a spirit of generosity, community music welcomes the stranger, invites everyone’s contributions and, as so powerfully stated by Lee Higgins, the act of music-making becomes ‘an act of hospitality ... a chance to say ‘yes.’” Lee Willingham and Glen Carruthers, “Community Music in Higher Education” in *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 602.

<sup>171</sup> In participatory cultures—like drum circles, jam sessions, or YouTube—people belong to a community that welcomes participation in any form and the *opportunity* to join in is always present. Patricia Lange writes, “Not everyone brings the same skill set to the activity, but all are encouraged to feel as though they could contribute and that each contribution is welcome.”

Lange, 67.

In the same study, Lange’s “interviewees insisted that contributing comments was just as legitimate and important to sociality on the site as was video creation.”

Lange, 38.

Engaging with music can take many forms, just as “being ‘participatory’ with media takes many forms, ranging from internal, conceptual engagement with mass media to creating one’s own works, as well as points in between.” So, if James isn’t the one to make these videos, maybe someone else will.

Lange, 37.

<sup>172</sup> James’s work reminds me of Henry Jenkins’s conceptualization of fandom and fan culture, the roots of which eventually grew to become participatory culture—a feature that makes YouTube *YouTube*: “A fan aesthetic centers on the selection, inflection, juxtaposition, and recirculation of ready-made images and discourses. In short, a poached culture requires a conception of aesthetics emphasizing borrowing and recombination as much or more as original creation and artistic innovation.” While James does a lot of “original creation” and “artistic innovation,” the music he uses is “ready-made” and he “selects, inflects, juxtaposes, and recirculates.”

Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (Routledge, 2013), 223-224.

“100% profits to charity.” He would love if this were true, but how is this possible? And if it is possible, why aren’t more companies set up in this way?

When it comes to YouTube “drama” between creators, James thinks, “We’re coworkers! We work in the same office!”<sup>173</sup> YouTubers are powerful and they can focus their energy on other things.

**Recommended:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/@AdventuresWithPurpose>

“YouTube’s fine, it’s the only real game in town it seems like, really.<sup>174</sup> It’s that kind of thing. It works fairly well.” Before he started creating videos himself, Bryan would “watch stuff on there every now and then. Mainly whenever I would watch any type of longer form stuff, it would be, like if it was a video game site, I would try to use their stuff ‘cause it was . . . I won’t say better in the quality, but at least better in . . . it did what I wanted it to do.”<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Christopher Small writes, “all art is action . . . and its meaning lies not in created objects but in the acts of creating, displaying, and perceiving. It is an activity in which humans take part in order that they may come to understand their relationships—with one another and with the great pattern which connects.” Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (University Press of New England, 1998), 140.

<sup>174</sup> There are platforms like Nebula (<https://nebula.tv/>) and Dropout (<https://signup.dropout.tv/about/>) that are starting to compete with YouTube, but not everyone knows about them yet. At this point in time, everyone seems to know about YouTube.

<sup>175</sup> Christopher Cayari notes that “participatory culture provides opportunities for fans to create content and produce it on the internet as grassroots, alternative societies emerge.” Whether on YouTube, video game sites, or other platforms, participatory cultures are all over the internet.

James might be the first person to use their acting and playwriting degrees for YouTube. “I had an acting teacher who would tell us to imagine a bubble. As an exercise, they would change what world would exist inside of that bubble. We would literally step forward like we were walking into the bubble and we’d have to act inside that particular world. Then we would step out and the teacher would tell us to imagine a different world. Visualizing the world I’m in helps me realize the character.<sup>176</sup> I know it’s right when it feels natural.” Sometimes he’s the “meme teacher.”<sup>177,178</sup> Other times he’s a *Love Island* superfan.<sup>179</sup> Once he was a philosopher considering the question “how much control do you have over who you are?”<sup>180</sup>

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Christopher Cayari, “Fanception and Musical Fan Activity on YouTube” in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Media and Music Learning* (2020), 16.

<sup>176</sup> In addition to fan-made music videos—which were created and circulated *before* YouTube—fan communities participated in “filking” or “fan music-making” at various conventions. Participants would gather to sing songs that were often written “from the perspective of fictional characters, singing in their voices, and expressing aspects of their personalities.”

Jenkins, 252.

Jenkins illustrates a filking scene:

The filking preserves no formal separation between performance space and spectator space . . . whoever wants to play a song starts whenever there is an empty space in the flow of music. Sometimes, there are gaps when no one is ready to perform; more often, several fans want to sing at once and some negotiation occurs. Other filksings are organized as what fans called “bardic circles,” a practice which is also called “pick, pass, or perform.” Here, each person in the room is, in turn, given a chance to perform a song, request a song to be performed, or simply to pass, insuring an even broader range of participation.

Jenkins, 256.

<sup>177</sup> James Echols, “Are You Winning Sisyphus? (Behold! A Meme! - Ep. 1),” YouTube, January 14, 2022, 43:56, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jxt8kzNNPc&t=1s>.

<sup>178</sup> James Echols, “Don’t Talk To Me Until I’ve Had My Son (Behold! A Meme! - Ep. 2),” YouTube, November 25, 2022, 1:04:19, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80-1cK48VSE&t=1s>.

<sup>179</sup> James Echols, “A Love Island Video Essay,” YouTube, June 7, 2023, 21:24, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c9H5DA8WyI>.

<sup>180</sup> James Echols, “How Much Control Do You Have Over Who You Are?” YouTube, February 14, 2022, 10:47, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qjh2-vXLEeI&t=98s>.



Mark remembers that back in the day, “YouTube was there, but it was not a major part for me because I didn’t have film equipment. That’s the weird thing because when you start looking at early YouTube a lot of it is there for people who wanted to start making short films, or smallish video essays, or little pieces that would fit well on a platform . . . like the first vlogs were there. I was aware of people who did online video, I thought it was cool. There were a lot of critics around that time, like the whole Channel Awesome scene, a lot of the . . . LoadingReadyRun was a Canadian comedy sketch troupe that I followed. There was a big thing whether they’d move over to YouTube only when YouTube got high-definition video. I watched a lot of stuff on The Escapist, which was an offshoot video game site, so again, I was aware of sites that were adjacent to YouTube before YouTube became a mono-platform,<sup>181</sup> which was interesting because you saw a lot of these sites that were competing with YouTube, but they had to get around YouTube’s content ID nonsense and that became such a huge bulwark for a lot of critics around that time. I’m like it’s cool, I can see myself *wanting* to do this, and I can see how my critical style would’ve been shaped by

**Recommended:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@ChannelAwesome>

**Recommended:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@loadingreadyrun>

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<sup>181</sup> Mark is referring to YouTube as a mono-platform because of how massive and dominant it has become.

people who were in those spaces, but at the same time, it was going to be a lot of work for me to do any of that.”<sup>182</sup>

“We should want to foster brilliant people on YouTube, not just what’s popular for kids.”

James loves the creator, CJ The X. “There was one month where they uploaded 3 videos

in a month. One was about water, one was about a ladybug show, and one

was about something I don’t even remember. And I was like, what the fuck? And then 4

months went by. CJ is one of the smartest people I think on this earth right now and that

feels like such hyperbole, but . . . you could *study* them. They have the power to change

lives. They are a philosopher, honest to god.”<sup>183</sup>

**Recommended:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@cjthex/videos>

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<sup>182</sup> Mark is talking about various spaces that are different yet connected. Kazys Varnelis and Anne Friedberg describe the connectedness of our networked world with a scene from a café: “On one level, what we observed in Starbucks was a generic space of anonymity, its caffeinated habitués lost in the crowd. But on another level it is a place where these individuals share their proximity with others similarly engaged in a place that is networked and elsewhere.” Kazys Varnelis and Anne Friedberg, “Place: The Networking of Public Space” in *Networked Publics* (2008), 20.

<sup>183</sup> David J. Elliott says,

To survive in a given time and place, a group of people must adapt to and modify their physical, social, and metaphysical environments. In this “situated” sense, the culture of a social group is its shared program for adapting, living, and growing in a particular time and place. Culture is generated by the interplay between a group’s beliefs about its physical and social circumstances and the forms of knowledge it develops and preserves to meet its needs. Hence, culture is not something that people have but something that people make.

Cultures live in the physical world and online. This thinking could apply to YouTube as an entire platform, or to the cultures fostered on specific channels or sections of YouTube (e.g., gaming). Nevertheless, creators like CJ The X, James, Bryan, and Mark are *making* culture on YouTube.

David J. Elliott, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 185.

Bryan sighs, “It’s one of those, it works well *enough*, but I think it could be so much better.

But it’s one of those they don’t need to fuss with it because they’re really the only game in town. Like everyone knows YouTube right now.”<sup>184</sup>

“I was a YouTube addict. There were these guys their old show was THE ETC SHOW,

now the new show is Internet Today. They were under the Machinima

umbrella. They were the first media conglomerate of YouTube basically. And they had

bought, acquired, and created like 1,000 channels or something like that. A wide variety

of stuff. I think Red Vs. Blue was a Machinima series to start with. It was literally a

network of channels being managed by this one central thing. Well, Machinima got shut

down, they ran out of fucking seed money. So all these channels, it’s like ok, so who

owns it? Turned out Machinima, not the people who made it. They own nothing. So all

this stuff got deleted. Gone. Disappeared. Years and years and years of stuff, deleted.

So these guys now basically do the same show, they very rarely refer to Machinima,

**Recommended:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@InternetTodayTV/videos>

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<sup>184</sup> Sure, everyone knows YouTube, but participatory culture can be found in all kinds of places. In music teaching and learning spaces, Evan S. Tobias advocates for a participatory culture-inspired approach, where students can engage with music by covering, parodying, and remixing original songs. These covers, parodies, and remixes *could* live on YouTube, but they don’t have to.

Evan S. Tobias, “Toward Convergence: Adapting Music Education to Contemporary Society and Participatory Culture” in *Music Educators Journal* (2013), 30.

partially for legal reasons, partially because you know . . . you don't want to talk about the weird boss that you had six years ago. But I've watched them since their show first started when I was in junior high. I watched their news show. I watched every single day. I stopped watching for like, 7 years, and I just thought, you know what I kinda miss? So now I don't scroll and I get my internet news from them. They sum it up in an hour, they're childhood personalities for me, and that was just *a* show that I watched. I was hooked on Sourcefed, I was *huge* on that stuff. The lore is miles deep." James definitely knows his YouTube history.<sup>185</sup>

"There were creators I admired, people like Lewis Lovhaug, he's a comic book reviewer that's still active today . . . Todd in the Shadows, who did a lot of pop song review structures."<sup>186</sup> If you know Todd and Mark, the connections are

**Recommended:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/@AT4W>

**Recommended:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/@ToddintheShadows>

<sup>185</sup> Like YouTube, participatory culture has a history. Jenkins started with *fan* culture:

Fan culture . . . is transmitted informally and does not define a sharp boundary between artists and audiences. Fan culture . . . exists independently of formal social, cultural, and political institutions; its own institutions are extralegal and informal with participation voluntary and spontaneous. Fan texts . . . often do not achieve a standard version but exist only in process, always open to revision and reappropriation; filk songs are constantly being rewritten, parodied, and amended in order to better facilitate the cultural interests of the fan community.

Jenkins, 273.

Later on, Jenkins echoes these ideas and fully defines the various attributes of participatory culture. These include: "relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations with others, some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices, members who believe that their contributions matter, and members who feel some degree of social connection with one another."

Henry Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture Media Education for the 21st Century* (MIT Press, 2009), 5-6.

<sup>186</sup> Mark and Todd show us that "music is not simply a collection of products or objects. Fundamentally, music is something that people do."

Elliott, 39.

apparent.<sup>187</sup> “I had watched a bunch of those guys do the video form and I was doing the blogging stuff, and the blogging stuff was moving, but it wasn’t getting tons of traffic because like, I hadn’t SEO optimized very well. I’m like YouTube is a platform I can utilize to get additional audiences in and I thought, let’s give it a shot.”<sup>188</sup>

James was “obsessed with this stuff, because everywhere you look there’s a world. A *world* of brilliant, creative people who are on the forefront of something. Now I wasn’t old enough to watch when the Justin Bieber videos were going viral or when you would rank videos on a star system, but in terms of YouTube becoming

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<sup>187</sup> Christopher Small believed that music was more than a musical work. Small coined the term “musicking” and argues music is “not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do.” Small, 2.

For Small, musicking or “*to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.*”

Small, 9. Emphasis in original.

Small stresses that *everyone* at a musical event is musicking. This includes the people who are collecting tickets, setting up the stage, and cleaning up after the show. YouTubers are musicking in many ways beyond performance and composition as well. Various forms of engagement could and *should* be recognized in all kinds of music teaching and learning spaces. After all, “if everyone is born musical, then everyone’s musical experience is valid.” Small, 13.

<sup>188</sup> “Although networked music fans met fierce resistance from the recording industry, they have profoundly influenced music itself, reordering production and distribution in ways that have expanded understandings across genres. Definitions of the most basic terms—song, songwriter, musician, performance—have changed.” Mark, Bryan, and James challenge these definitions. Are they musicians? Are they “performing” in their own ways on YouTube?

Adrienne Russell, Mizuko Ito, Todd Richmond, and Marc Tuters, “Culture: Media Convergence and Networked Participation” in *Networked Publics* (2012), 71.

something you watch on TV instead of TV, that's what I grew up on.<sup>189,190,191</sup> I was incredibly *aware* of YouTube basically as long as I can remember. It's a fixation. I find it endlessly fascinating. Because people really just . . . you watch them form their identities, like they'll be kids or in their late teens and they have something to say. And here's a platform where you can say whatever you want."<sup>192</sup>

“In my undergrad, I studied acting but I did a ton of mass media stuff. Like I worked live broadcasts and took classes that did not contribute to my major at all, but I wanted to do them, so I did them. *All* because I wanted to start a YouTube channel. That's what I wanted to do, I wanted to make really good YouTube videos. And I

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<sup>189</sup> Jenkins explains how YouTube/participatory culture is different than TV because it “contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship. Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other.”

Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>190</sup> Interestingly, “Here are two crazy stats to illustrate how massive this whole YouTube thing really is → Nielsen announced yesterday that YouTube has now been the #1 streaming service in the U.S. for a full year. Also: YouTube just shared that viewers around the world are now watching over 1 billion hours of YouTube on their TVs every day.”

Hannah Doyle and Nate Graber-Lipperman, “And the Streamer Award Goes to...,” in *The Publish Press*, February 21, 2024, <https://news.thepublishpress.com/p/streamer-award-goes>.

This new trend might make it seem like YouTube is just *becoming* TV, but “starting in the next few weeks, viewers will have the option to slightly shrink videos in order to make space for comments, descriptions, and metrics such as likes and views on their TVs.” Even on our television screens, the interactive part of YouTube will be there.

Hannah Doyle and Nate Graber-Lipperman, “Platform Roundup: More Living Room Options for Creators,” in *The Publish Press*, March 15, 2024, <https://news.thepublishpress.com/p/whats-actually-going-tiktok>.

<sup>191</sup> For another conversation about “YouTube vs. TV,” check out: Colin Rosenblum and Samir Chaudry, “The Full Story of Michelle Khare (Challenge Accepted),” YouTube, May 31, 2022, 15:42 to 17:43, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qoe2qhcZ-Y>.

<sup>192</sup> Whatever you want . . . to a certain extent. For more information, you can check out YouTube's Community Guidelines: <https://www.youtube.com/howyoutubeworks/policies/community-guidelines/>

was committed to not starting a YouTube channel until I was going to be good at it.

Like I didn't want to be the webcam person, or a react person, I wanted to *make* things.

And for me, making things on YouTube was viable.<sup>193</sup> I saw people that I was like,

honestly these people remind me of me, like they're young, they're excited, they're

good at what they do—I just need the good at what they do part. So, everything else,

I'll figure it out.”<sup>194</sup>

“We're in such a more connected world.<sup>195</sup> And a lot of artists, especially the younger

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<sup>193</sup> “Though performance-focused programmes integrating popular music and informal learning practices offer new directions . . . additional courses that do not have performance or instruments as a main focus offer additional avenues worthy of exploration.” Could we have YouTube classes? Could we create music teaching and learning spaces that are so open they would welcome *any* form of musicking?

Evan S. Tobias, “Hybrid spaces and Hyphenated Musicians: Secondary Students’ Musical Engagement in a Songwriting and Technology Course” in *Music Education Research* (2012), 330.

<sup>194</sup> Janice Waldron, Roger Mantie, Heidi Partti, and Evan S. Tobias explain:

Adopting aspects of participatory culture . . . opens spaces for additional forms of engagement . . . people might engage with music and media in ways that are not reliant upon or connected to performing . . . others might engage in ways that do not include making music, such as generating and sharing transcriptions of music in varied notation systems ranging from ocarina fingerings for a mobile app, to tablature, creating and sharing playlists, analysing and discussing similarities and differences between music, or sharing their perspectives through text, video recordings, or multimodal media.

This list of examples is important, but not all encompassing. Mark, James, and Bryan engage in some of these forms of musicking but go beyond them as well. Could we figure out how to work with learners like them?

Janice Waldron, Roger Mantie, Heidi Partti, and Evan S. Tobias, “A Brave New World: Theory to Practice in Participatory Culture and Music Learning and Teaching” in *Music Education Research* (2018), 291.

<sup>195</sup> danah boyd states that networked publics

are simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice. Networked publics serve many of the same functions as other types of publics—they allow people to gather for social, cultural, and civic purposes, and they help people connect with a world beyond their close friends and family. While networked publics share much in common with other types of publics, the ways in which technology structures them introduces distinct affordances that shape how people engage with these environments.

danah boyd, “Social Networks Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications” in *Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture on Social Network Sites* (2011), 39.

ones, they've grown up online and they catch fire in a second." When talking about

Lil Nas X, Mark brought up that "he's good at the one thing that I think is really important. He's good at the performative irony and being able to not

take himself that seriously, but also get to very real honest emotions along the way . . .

and not place himself in a situation where he puts himself down as a result of that. A

lot of people online they're specifically like well, I'm a piece of shit so I can be a piece

of shit to everyone else. He's like no, I'm awesome and I'm gonna fuck around with

all of you. You gotta carry yourself with a little bit of that energy, kind of regardless,

like it's that slightly chaotic, anything can happen, might as well ride it out.<sup>196</sup>

**Recommended:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@lilnasx>

"Jacob Geller—now *there's* a video essayist." James continued, "He's had researchers

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YouTube is a networked public since it is a space "constructed" by technology and because there are numerous "imagined collectives" on the site—the collective on YouTube as an entire platform, the collectives that live within YouTube's "Explore" section (e.g., Gaming, Sports, Fashion & Beauty, etc.), and the collectives that coalesce around specific creators and their channels. In our current world, "people are no longer shaped just by their dwellings but by their networks." This may be for better (community-building), or for worse (silos and echo chambers). While echo chambers *are* communities, they could be potentially harmful to those inside and outside of them. As C. Thi Nguyen explains, "An echo chamber doesn't destroy their members' interest in the truth; it merely manipulates whom they trust and changes whom they accept as trustworthy sources and institutions."

C. Thi Nguyen, "Escape the Echo Chamber," *Psyche*, April 9, 2018, <https://aeon.co/essays/why-its-as-hard-to-escape-an-echo-chamber-as-it-is-to-flee-a-cult>.

boyd, 42.

<sup>196</sup> For a scholarly "take" on Lil Nas X, check out: Emily Thomas, "Quare(-in) the Mainstream: YouTube, Social Media and Augmented Realities in Lil Nas X's *MONTERO*," in *YouTube and Music: Online Culture and Everyday Life* (2023), 65-89.



say they couldn't cite him even though they wanted to."<sup>197</sup> When asked

about what this project should look like in the end, James responded, "I

think whatever you write, the spirit of 'you have to watch the video' should be there. The

missing piece or the integral piece *has* to be on YouTube. It would stress the importance

of the medium."

**Recommended:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@JacobGeller>

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<sup>197</sup> James is referring to universities, professors, and perhaps, policies that restricted researchers' abilities to cite YouTube videos as "reliable" sources.

## Journal Entries

The more preparedness that I got was afterward, essentially, with the band . . . that prepared me a little bit more. The school stuff, at least at the time, was not necessarily focused on modern music or anything like that . . . It was not music “of the day” in my elementary or any of those classes . . . I would say an appreciation for music, sure. But actually knowing about what’s halfway decent out there . . . no they didn’t prepare for shit about this stuff. I’m still the worst at finding new stuff and whatnot.

–Bryan Frolick, YouTube channel: “Breezy’s Studio Karaoke”

You know what’s interesting . . . YouTubers learn the most when they’re away from YouTube. That has been my experience with everyone that I’ve talked to . . . it is always when they take a step back that they reflect on what they’ve been doing and they put it together. They piece what’s been wrong, what they’ve been trying to solve.

–James Echols, YouTube channel: “kolpeshtheyardstick”

It’s very easy to start fights, it’s very difficult to step back and say, “Ok, maybe I missed something. Maybe I got it wrong.”

–Mark Grondin, YouTube channel: “Spectrum Pulse” and “Billboard BREAKDOWN”

**Journal Entry<sup>198</sup>**  
**Bryan**  
**July 22, 2023**

I was pretty sheltered as a kid, musically speaking. I grew up in a Southern Baptist household with the oldies like the Beatles. My mom was into early 90s country and my dad was the type of guy who thought rock 'n roll was the devil's music. The first rock band I listened to was Stone Temple Pilots and I still love them. I would listen to VH1 before school. It's probably because of that, that I mostly heard standard pop and nothing really obscure.

I remember learning the recorder in elementary school music and then I played clarinet in middle school. I did band for 1 year in high school, but I quit. I was tired of the seating arrangement, orchestra politics bullshit and I didn't jive with the directors. My senior year I did *Little Me*. Right after graduation, the theatre teachers did one of their trips to New York and I got to go. They had everyone buy tickets to *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* and *Stomp* and whatever else you wanted to see was up to you. I ended up seeing *Chicago*—it was so awesome. I also saw *The Dinner Party* with Neil Simon, Henry Winkler, and John Ritter! I found out years later that I saw the original cast and that was one of John Ritter's last performances. The last show I got to see was *The Music Man*. I love that show. I have gone to see that show so many times in so many different states. It's right up my alley of it's such a dumb show. It's so stupid. That's what catapulted me into this stuff.

When I got to college we did *Pirates of Penzance*—it's real stupid too. I need to keep an eye on shows. I've done enough theatre where it doesn't matter what show it is, I will cry at the end of every single one of them just because I know the hard work it takes to get to the end of a show.

My high school was a very weird hybrid. Everyone kinda knew everyone. There weren't cliques like in *10 Things I Hate About You*. I think it was partly because theatre was such a big deal and everyone kinda did it. They tried to be as inclusive as possible. If you wanted to help, you just had to show up. They did it outside of football and baseball season, so we had people on those teams who were in the dance crew and all of that jazz. Musical theatre was always a part of my whole thing—it just kinda ended after college. I realized that I couldn't afford school without working and I couldn't do theatre with a job. The end goal didn't seem worth it.

I sort of drifted after that, became a roadie for a local band. Then I fell into this karaoke stuff.

**Journal Entry**  
**James**  
**August 9, 2023**

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<sup>198</sup> Note from backstage: Just to clarify, I did not ask Bryan, James, and Mark to keep journal entries during their time with me. These pieces mostly feature direct quotes with some added details based on my notes.

It's funny because I've had such a long life of doing music at every stage of my life. I was in a boys' choir for 8 years, I was in theatre with Red Mountain, then I was doing high school theatre, then I went to school for acting. Music has always been involved, but when I think about my family, there's none. My dad sings at church, but not loudly, not remarkably. My mom doesn't play instruments or sing. My granddad played the piano—he was the only influence I can remember.<sup>199</sup> I always feel so different from my family because I fell into this art life. Music has always been a given because I do theatre, and music is always going to be involved.

I was 8 years old when I started the boys' choir and stayed until I was 13. At Red Mountain I did junior high choir and then high school choir. I joined a choir during my undergrad. I miss it all the time. I love being in choirs.

## **Journal Entry**

**Mark**

**August 2, 2023**

My childhood was musical. I was into singing at a very early age. I took piano lessons when I was 8 or 9 until I was 16 or 17. I got up to RCM grade 6 in piano and theory grade 2. I don't think I have a tremendous amount of playing talent—hand-eye coordination has never been my thing. But singing and that sort of thing was always happening in the house. My parents liked music (they were never super nerdy about it), but there was music in the house. Every Sunday after we cleaned up after dinner, we would do karaoke as a family. We got used to singing as a family. It was different, but it was a lot of fun.

My mom was huge into soft rock, classic rock, 70s, 80s. Little bit more alternative. My dad was into R&B, disco, and soul music (bit of a different split there). I inherited all of their vinyl and around the late 80s, early 90s, they started getting into country music. My mom especially heard a lot growing up. That was a good time to get into it—country was really good in the 90s. Karaoke was a split. There was a lot of country, I was into the boy band stuff, and then a lot of pop, 60s, 70s, a lot of hits, not a lot of deep dives. A lot of easy listening, not very heavy stuff. My parents were also weary of stuff like Eminem. I could only get the censored version of the album, which still had a lot of swearing and risqué content. They cut the most contentious song but replaced it with an extended *South Park* skit—as if *South Park* is better!

## **Journal Entry**

**James**

**August 9, 2023**

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<sup>199</sup> Note from backstage: It's interesting that James is so performance focused when he thinks about his family's involvement (or lack thereof) in music. Maybe this is because he started as a performer . . . or because that's how most people in society talk about music. This comment also came up during our first day of working together—would he feel differently now?

Now I'm choosing when to involve music in my life. I'm choosing when these moments will have musical attention. I'll direct a stage reading—there doesn't have to be any music. That's my decision and no one is going to make me. No one's going to ask. If I don't involve music in my life, it won't be there, which has never been the case. I want to start creating music for videos and get back to practicing piano—it's easy to let it slip away. For the rest of my life, I had very structured places to go for music. For 23 years. That's not the case right now. I have to make it, I have to find it. It's my responsibility. It was admittedly a lot easier when other people were looking out for that for me, but this is where we are.

The decline started in undergrad because I didn't join the school choir. I thought I had enough on my plate. I did a musical my first semester and didn't do another one for the following four years. My friends were all in theatre, so I saw all the plays and I involved myself with the scene. I was connected to it, but I wasn't a part of it. So I went from fully connected and a part of it, to connected but not a part of it, to not really connected, not a part of it. I think I'm trying to get that back—that's why I take so much care in picking songs for YouTube. It is so easy to go into the YouTube Studio, pick a Kevin MacLeod song,<sup>200</sup> slam it down, and it's as simple as that. I take a lot of care because it's one of the main ways I interact with music now.

### **Journal Entry** **Max van Manen**

Lived experiences gather hermeneutic significance as we (reflectively) gather them by giving memory to them.<sup>201</sup> Through meditations, conversations, day dreams, inspirations and other interpretive acts we assign meaning to the phenomena of lived life.<sup>202</sup>

### **Journal Entry** **Mark** **August 2, 2023**

The physics concepts I learned, I barely use. They teach you how to think in a different way—that's what I use.

### **Journal Entry** **James** **August 10, 2023**

It's helpful for me to talk through everything. It smoothes out my creative process.

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<sup>200</sup> Kevin MacLeod, Incompetech, 2024, <https://incompetech.com/>.

<sup>201</sup> Note from backstage: James has very clear memories of his musicking, and he remembers specifically when and why “the decline” happened. The significance and impact of these memories have caused him to take extreme care when curating and editing music for his videos.

<sup>202</sup> Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Althouse Press, 1997), 37.

**Journal Entry**  
**Mark**  
**August 2, 2023**

I don't speak Spanish at all. The rise of Reggaeton and the regional Mexican sound—I have discovered a whole language I have very little familiarity with. It's a running joke how bad my pronunciation is gonna be. But the thing is, being able to look outside yourself and realize ok, this person doesn't live everywhere all at once—that's something that I, as a creator have to think about, the average commenter does not.

**Journal Entry**  
**Randall Everett Allsup**

Acting upon our world requires *inaction*: thinking, perceiving, reflecting, reconceptualizing, connecting.<sup>203</sup>

**Journal Entry**  
**Bryan**  
**August 5, 2023**

Banners and all that stuff—I should probably sit down and figure it out. But I'm already bad at figuring out pictures, sizes, mobile versions of everything. It's annoying as shit.

Now that I make more intricate title cards, they have a 2 meg limit and that's not great. I have to render mine and if it's over 2 megs, I have to render it again in a different format.

I wish I had started a fresh channel, but I didn't know! This is my personal one that I would use to show friends of mine videos of the guitar, here are all the Burning Man videos I have. I consider my channel "launch" whenever I made it in the Discord. It would be nice to be able to set a start date or "only count from this spot forward." I will never know if any of my stats are actually accurate because I had a couple of videos that got viewed a couple thousand times over the course of 4 or 5 years. It throws off the amount that you have.

I wish I could shove the tutorials all the way down—it interrupts my flow. The videos are organized by date and I wish I could change that.

I'm not a fan of how they operate their playlist stuff.

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<sup>203</sup> Randall Everett Allsup, "Praxis and the Possible: Thoughts on the Writings of Maxine Greene and Paulo Freire" in *Philosophy of Music Education Review* (2003), 158. Emphasis added.

The biggest problem is copyrights and strikes. My thing is you don't know if you get a copyright strike until you get one. They notify you, but there's not time to take it down, you just get a copyright strike. They don't have the backs of any of the creators, especially for the music stuff. Even when people do stuff that isn't monetized, if there's just one song that somebody doesn't want in there, they can just straight up take it down. The entire thing. With no context about what's going on. This is all just fair use. They should have a better backing on that. You just get a copyright strike and then it's 30 days before it's lifted. And then it's 3 strikes, you're done. And there's no time limit—it could happen to a video that's been up for a year and a half. That's garbage. You should be able to take it down and then no problem. That's one thing that I could see if a competitor to YouTube could figure out better . . . maybe. They have mitigated enough responsibility off of themselves to be successful, but for the people who generate the content, they just throw you to the wolves because they don't want any legal responsibility for it, which is just sad. Everyone is replaceable in that type of thing. YouTube is still making money hand over fist. I have no loyalty to it, it's just easy. It's Kleenex.

**Journal Entry**  
**James**  
**August 15, 2023**

I had to stop and remind myself that the second curiosity video is panic. I kept looking at the beautiful, calming environment and picked music based off of that, but that's wrong. Panic wouldn't sound like that. I went keyword hunting and found a small emotions genre and Hanna Lindgren's music. It's sensitive, but not weak. That's the move.

**Journal Entry**  
**Hilary Brown and Richard D. Sawyer**

Dialogic practice, a poststructuralist form of reflection, engenders a practitioner's critical thinking and meaning making in relation to new images and narratives. Bakhtin stated that as one reads a novel, the reader creates generative spaces in which different images and ideas transact, situating the reader within heteroglossic in-between spaces.<sup>204</sup> These in-between spaces are dialogic spaces in which the text—as generated by the reader/participant—is never stable, but rather representative of multiple shifting meanings.<sup>205</sup>

**Journal Entry**  
**Tia DeNora**

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<sup>204</sup> Note from backstage: One of my goals with this project is to create these “heteroglossic in-between spaces” for the reader. When there is room for interpretation, different readers may have different “conversations” with a text (or video). James had a critical “back-and-forth” with his media and decided that the music wasn't quite conveying the meaning he intended.

<sup>205</sup> Hilary Brown and Richard D. Sawyer, “Dialogic Reflection: An Exploration of its Embodied, Imaginative, and Reflexive Dynamic” in *Forms of Practitioner Reflexivity* (2016), 4.

Musical affect is contingent upon the circumstances of music's appropriation; it is . . . the product of 'human-music interaction,' by which I mean that musical affect is constituted reflexively, in and through the practice of articulating or connecting music with other things.<sup>206</sup> Of interest then is the reflexive problem of how music and its effects are active in social life, and how music comes to afford a variety of resources for the constitution of human agency, the being, feeling, moving and doing of social life.<sup>207</sup> A reflexive conception of music's force . . . considers how aspects of the music come to be significant in relation to particular recipients at particular moments, and under particular circumstances . . . music analysis, traditionally conceived as an exercise that 'tells' us about the 'music itself,' is insufficient as a means for understanding musical affect, for describing music's semiotic force in social life. For that task we shall need new ways of attending to music, ones that are overtly interdisciplinary.<sup>208</sup>

**Journal Entry**  
**Bryan**  
**August 5, 2023**

This is not like the Zumba dance guy where I have to redo the entire dance. Karaoke is nice because it's more static. If you goofed on something, you can go back and fix it more easily. I keep remastering videos because I know they can be better.

**Journal Entry**  
**Martin Dixon, Sarah Lee, and Tony Ghaye**

A challenge with how reflection is practiced within contemporary change management is related to mind-set.<sup>209</sup> One aspect of this is associated with valuing reflection as a must-do process, not seeing it as a luxury, but a necessity. Not done sporadically, privately and in a hurry, but systematically, persistently and with commitment.<sup>210</sup>

**Journal Entry**  
**Mark**  
**August 2, 2023**

One of my biggest reviews I'm not exactly proud of—AJR's *The Click*. I think that album is one of the worst of the 2010s. It's atrocious. But there was a period online where the angry review, full of expletives and swearing, is the one that gets the most traction—that was one of those videos. I filmed it when I was sick and in a horrible mood. I gave the album a fair shake, but honestly, I look

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<sup>206</sup> Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 33.

<sup>207</sup> DeNora, 45.

<sup>208</sup> DeNora, 23.

<sup>209</sup> Note from backstage: Speaking of interdisciplinarity, Martin, Sarah, and Tony talk about reflective practice and reference business, change management, sports, coaching, and positive psychology.

<sup>210</sup> Martin Dixon, Sarah Lee, and Tony Ghaye, "Strengths-Based Reflective Practices for the Management of Change: Applications from Sport and Positive Psychology" in *Journal of Change Management* (2016), 145.



like shit in the video. And that's the one that happens to get nearly 100,000 hits. Again, you cannot control what goes viral.

I wish I was more willing to take more chances. I'm always trying to improve my process.

**Journal Entry**  
**Bryan**  
**August 5, 2023**

Now that I've gotten as good as I have (I'm passable), it's opened me up to now I know how to do this, so I can do this. The idea that I had for "Centerfold" I didn't know how to do in CDG, and video editing was a bit more out of my depth. Now it's not. Now I know how to do it.

**Journal Entry**  
**James**  
**August 14, 2023**

When I look at where I was and where I am now, I see a change. Even from video to video I learn so much. It's crazy how much I've learned, and I feel so happy about it. You can watch yourself age, you can watch yourself grow, you can watch yourself do all these things.

**Journal Entry**  
**Martin Dixon, Sarah Lee, and Tony Ghaye**

Focusing on successes and achievements, not just problems and failures, is seen as deserving a notable place in the discourses of change management. These conversations about what we want more of (i.e. success, fulfilment, joy) not just less of (i.e. problems, stress, feelings of burnout), need to be lived and valued.<sup>211,212</sup> Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory links how we feel with what we can do. In her work she promotes the notion of 'positivity.' Her theory describes and explains the impact a number of positive emotions (e.g. a sense of achievement, joy, interest, pride and love) have on the things we do and how well we do them. A key proposition is that these positive emotions broaden an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire. This

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<sup>211</sup> Dixon et al., 145.

<sup>212</sup> Note from backstage: Feeling burnt out is a reality for many YouTubers. "MatPat" worked closely with his wife, Stephanie, on the channel "The Game Theorists," and recently retired after 13 years on YouTube. In his "goodbye announcement" video, he acknowledged: "For as much as I love you, and I love overthinking things, and I love theorizing, I don't love late nights. I don't love the fact that Steph and I have been work-first for over a decade, where I'm sitting down at dinner with my best friend and we're talking about business logistics." While this quote represents feelings of burnout, MatPat and Steph have been planning this departure for years, which means they had conversations about "what they want more of" and that these discussions are being "lived and valued."

Matthew Patrick, "Goodbye Internet," YouTube, January 9, 2024, 2:54 to 3:15, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8R1\\_TqU68yo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8R1_TqU68yo).

means when we feel positive, we are generally more open-minded, more receptive to new ideas, more adaptive and more flexible.<sup>213</sup> When we focus on problems, we begin to construct a world in which problems are central.<sup>214</sup> They become the dominant realities that burden us every day. To ask questions about our failings is to create a world in which failing is focal. Deficit-based questions lead to deficit-based conversations, which in turn lead to deficit-based patterns of action.<sup>215</sup>

**Journal Entry**  
**James**  
**August 9, 2023**

This took a long time to parse, but my notion of knowledge and curiosity was a sexist notion of it. Knowledge is gatekept by masculine entities like universities and institutions to keep out people who aren't welcome in those spaces, which is historically women. People of color. People who are not supposed to be powerful, masculine people. Curiosity leads to knowledge, knowledge leads to burden. Strong people carry burdens. Burdens aren't born for the weak or the "conceptual" woman. The carrier of the burden is strong, "conceptual" man. The burdenless are lightened, the burdened are weighed down. This plays into suicidal ideation and depression in men, lack of emotional intelligence. They are burdened because the weight of the world is on their shoulders. A lot of men get depressed because they feel like they're supposed to be doing something. I'm supposed to be somebody. I'm supposed to be something when in reality, they're just a person living in the world. But there's a societal expectation for them to be Napoleon Bonaparte or some shit. Your name has to be in the history books. If you're a normal guy working an office job, you get critically fucking depressed because you're supposed to be the guy who's in charge!

**Journal Entry**  
**Hilary Brown and Richard D. Sawyer**

According to Larrivee and Cooper, it has been stated that teachers who develop as reflective practitioners are more likely to continue to challenge the underlying beliefs that drive their behavior.<sup>216,217</sup>

**Journal Entry**  
**Mark**  
**August 2, 2023**

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<sup>213</sup> Dixon et al., 146.

<sup>214</sup> Note from backstage: In a literature review about error detection in music education, it was mentioned that "almost half of rehearsals were dedicated to error correction." If we didn't focus so much on errors, what else could we devote our time to?

Rachel A. Sorenson, "Error Detection in Music Education: A Review of Literature" in *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* (2021), 54.

<sup>215</sup> Dixon et al., 147-148.

<sup>216</sup> Brown and Sawyer, 11.

<sup>217</sup> Note from backstage: James's reflective work "took a long time to parse," but it led him to challenge certain beliefs he had about knowledge and curiosity. This project is specifically for music teachers, but the importance and power of reflection could benefit educators of all subjects and people who work in any field.

I remember our gym teacher, who was like a drill sergeant, and he ran a dance unit every year. I remember getting help with mine from my little sister because she had danced for years. She helped me choreograph a dance and I wound up getting the highest grade in the class. It was also something my gym teacher remembered and he started teaching the routine to later years!<sup>218</sup>

## Journal Entry

Mark

August 2, 2023

I learned a lot very quickly. If you have a bad camera, people will click away. I think there are a lot of people who want to be very visually entertained quickly rather than default to something more dense in terms of content, which is one reason I haven't built something for easy crossover or easy virality. A lot of my stuff gets dense pretty quickly. There are a lot of angles that I'm naturally considering that a bunch of people may not be.

You gotta be prepared to face the wrath of fandoms that aren't used to being talked about and I was not someone who compromised my opinion either, so I didn't really care who I pissed off. There was a time when I would get pretty hefty chunks of dislikes from pretty much every fan base—even when I was positive because I wasn't positive enough. Eventually I realized I didn't care—you roll with the punches. Big deal, a bunch of people online don't like what I have to say, I don't like half the shit they have to say either.

You stop reading the comments very early. It's not even the hate. You'll see a lot of positivity, but the one negative comment pisses you off and you find yourself seeking that out and that's not good at all. It's harder to ignore the one because it stands out.

You cannot predict which videos will take off and which will not. You might think you know, but you don't.

## Journal Entry

James

August 15, 2023

I'm thinking about asking one of my rabbis to weigh in on the Adam and Eve story. Eve's gotta be getting too much heat for this, right?<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Note from backstage: It's worth mentioning that one of Mark's most prominent musical memories from K-12 happened in gym class. I'm thinking there's potential for more interdisciplinary opportunities . . .

<sup>219</sup> Note from backstage: For a very different "origin" story, I highly recommend reading about Skywoman: Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Skywoman Falling" in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (2013), 3-10.

**Journal Entry**  
**Mark**  
**August 2, 2023**

You can't hear everything. I cover on average between 200-350 albums in a year. The vast majority of people will hear 5. A lot of people do not like it when you tell them that. And maybe they heard more albums than that, but can you explain them? Can you articulate what you liked about them? Can you understand what they're gonna do? Do you understand why they work the way they do? Why they're popular and something else isn't? That's a larger conversation that a lot of people aren't great at having.<sup>220</sup>

**Journal Entry**  
**Trevor Gale and Tebeje Molla**

The reflective professional has more capacity for deliberation, with an emphasis on carefully considering the particulars of a context in order to discern what techniques should be applied.<sup>221</sup> Transformative professionals are more reflexive (i.e., critical reflection of self and of the social) than reflective, and are committed to enquiry that contributes to change, not just new understanding.<sup>222</sup>

**Journal Entry**  
**Mark**  
**August 2, 2023**

As a critic, you gotta be willing to understand what doesn't work for you and why it works for someone else. And why something works uniquely for you. I don't think enough critics are introspective enough. Beyond the necessary amount of therapy that every critic should go to on a regular basis given some of the stuff we're exposed to, you have to be willing to drill deeper into why you like this. What makes this special, why does this resonate with you or why not? Why isn't something clicking? And then be willing to admit when it doesn't. We're not all gonna react the same to the same artistic stimuli—that's what makes it interesting. That's one reason why I really hate the culture of ranking and scores and why I got rid of them. A lot of people were missing the conversation. They were missing what was deeper and more interesting. People will go to a score over any sort of discourse and that drives me nuts.

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<sup>220</sup> Note from backstage: Could this be a class? The Art of Music and Communication . . . Music and Debate . . . Music and Language . . .

<sup>221</sup> Trevor Gale and Tebeje Molla, "Deliberations on the Deliberative Professional: Thought-Action Provocations" in *Practice Theory and Education: Diffractive Readings in Professional Practice* (2017), 251.

<sup>222</sup> Gale and Molla, 252. Emphasis in original.

Also, since a lot of music critics and fans are into very experimental stuff, you create this barrier where you have a lot of albums that are rated really, really highly, but are really, really tough to get into. I don't recommend anyone check out Swans if they don't know what's coming!

### **Journal Entry**

**Hilary Brown and Richard D. Sawyer**

As with other forms of reflection, the goal of dialogic reflection is the promotion of self-critique and change in practice. In contrast to other forms of reflection, however, dialogic reflection takes a more embodied approach to reflection. As a form of embodied reflection, the participant involves himself or herself in a process in which he or she disrupts and reconceptualizes their views in relation to their narrative. This process creates the first step to meaningful reflexivity.<sup>223</sup>

### **Journal Entry**

**James**

**August 14, 2023**

I wish I made more friends along the way. I regret not communicating about my process early on to my friends, to my partner especially. Being open about what I was doing. I was very reclusive about it and very private about every stage of the process and insistent upon isolating myself for the sake of originality, when originality is actually something created in communities. That's how you create original things, that's how you create things that are actually beautiful and inspiring, you have to talk to people. You have to have interactions, that's how stories are made. There's no other way.

I wish I was further along on this journey than I am, but it is what it is.

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<sup>223</sup> Brown and Sawyer, 4.

## **Lights, Camera, Action**

**Bryan:** So currently, my schedule is a bit bonkers. i'm in central time zone and mon-fri, i'm working 5pm to 530am. So generally, any time before 430 is good for me. Saturday i'm working a few hours but i'm not sure exactly when. i say we shoot for 12:30-1 & i can answer your questions and at least show you the background of my stuff. I like talking about the details i put into the videos, but those are generally with other creators who know how much work goes into it.

It was almost 2:00 PM. I made sure my computer charger was plugged in and ready to go before I opened the Zoom link. Bryan hopped on and said, "Let's take it from the top." For five hours, he worked on a karaoke version of "Wake Up," a cover by the band, Brass Against. Even though I had no part in the making of the video, he made me feel included by saying "we" a lot ("We are getting this thing done today," or "Now all we have to do is . . ."). I jotted down some notes about his process, what Bryan said or did, and my inner thoughts.<sup>224</sup> I made a note that I should go to live karaoke at some point to see the set-up and to get a sense of the vibe.<sup>225</sup> Because Bryan isn't on camera in his videos and he can create everything within two computer programs, he didn't have to find a filming location, write a script, or set up a microphone, camera, light, etc. However, this doesn't mean his process is any less time-consuming or tedious. Bryan mostly gives himself more work because he loves adding details to his videos and title cards. He loves talking about karaoke and would say, "Go ahead—ask me anything."

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<sup>224</sup> "In the first place, our feelings enter into and colour the social relationships we engage in during fieldwork. Second, such personal and subjective responses will inevitably influence one's choice of what is noteworthy, what is regarded as strange and problematic, and what appears to be mundane and obvious."

Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (Routledge, 2007), 151.

<sup>225</sup> Writers, like all human beings, impose order on the everyday phenomena they observe. Like many writers of academic text, I write my way into understanding, working through my ideas on paper . . . Because I cannot observe and record everything, I choose what to focus on, when an episode begins, when it ends, and I make literary choices that reflect those decisions. Even while writing as quickly as I can to record as much as I can, I often block out something that is happening to finish recording something I just observed. I do not merely impose interpretation on the text after I have created it; the choices I make regarding what to write about, and how to write it, are themselves interpretation. Thinking in complete sentences is interpretation. Choosing between two short sentences or one long one is interpretation. Choosing to write a dependent clause is interpretation. Some forms of interpretation are merely more conscious than others.

Sandra Kouritzin, "The 'Half-Baked' Concept of 'Raw' Data in Ethnographic Observation" in *Canadian Journal of Education* (2002), 127.

**James:** Let's grab lunch on Tuesday, we'll show you around town and do some getting-to-know-you stuff, and we could meet up on Wednesday in the morning for proper work. Is this agreeable?

After eating sushi, checking out a music store, and walking around the local farmer's market, I was already starting to like Northampton. While I was hanging out with James, there were lots of pieces of the process that were a part of "setting the scene" (finding a filming location, working the camera, etc.) and filming.<sup>226</sup> The one thing that James didn't really do was write a script. "I'm comfortable riffing and it takes forever for me to write something I like." He created two Google docs with notes and sources he wanted to reference, but when he pressed record, it was completely improvised.

**Mark:** Hi Donna – I'm thinking 3:30 might be better, I'm just finishing up my script now. Unless you want to be around for me writing lol

Mark recommended that I hang out and watch<sup>227,228</sup> the making of a "Billboard Breakdown" episode. They're similar to his other music reviews and since he films them once a

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<sup>226</sup> In many ways, this felt like "shadowing." Rebecca Gill, Joshua Barbour, and Marleah Dean offer some definitions and summarize,

Key components across these definitions highlight shadowing as following an individual to learn about their everyday experience and practices . . . Advantages of shadowing include that it can provide insight into otherwise invisible aspects of people's work; offer individuals opportunities to explain what they are doing, when they are doing it; allow connections to be observed across dispersed work teams; and yield a holistic understanding of work that may be missed through traditional interviews or observations.

Rebecca Gill, Joshua Barbour and Marleah Dean, "Shadowing in/as Work: Ten Recommendations for Shadowing Fieldwork Practice" in *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management* (2014), 70.

<sup>227</sup> "The word 'observe' is so clinical. It is one of those words that has been carried over from a quantitative paradigm of research. I am not saying that qualitative researchers shouldn't use it, I am just saying that if the word 'observation' were a shirt it would chafe me when I put it on."

Isaac Bickmore, *The Musical Life of Billy Cioffi: A Narrative Inquiry* (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2017), 203. Emphasis in original.

<sup>228</sup> Backstage: As I worked with everyone, it felt closer to "hanging out" and watching a friend put together a video. It reminded me of times during my childhood where my friends and I would take turns watching each other play video games. This approach to research isn't anything new—Norman K. Denzin described "interpretive interactionism" as a method where researchers "attempt to live their way into the lives of those they investigate. . . . The researcher attempts to share in the subjects' world, to participate directly in the rounds of activities that make up that world, and to see that world as the subjects do." Participatory Action Research (PAR) is another research tradition where someone could participate by hanging out. Alice McIntyre indicates that "what is important to and in a PAR project is the *quality* of the participation that people engage in, not the proportionality of that participation. It



week, the process runs like clockwork. His “set” usually stays the same and he has consistent templates in his editing program to speed things up. Throughout the day, Mark drops bits and pieces of information about different artists, the Hot 100, “billboard math,” and the music scene in general. He’s been doing this for a long time, and it shows: “You start recognizing structures—you’ll know the hits when you hear them.”

**Bryan:** only coffee place I know is radio, how bout there?

We met at a popular coffee shop, and it was so crowded we decided to sit outside . . . In Texas. In the afternoon. In the middle of July. Thank goodness there were misters to keep us semi-cool.

Bryan had created tutorial videos for people who were curious about how he did certain things. I watched all eleven and started by asking him questions about anything I didn’t quite understand. I had already seen him work, but our conversation<sup>229,230</sup> naturally progressed to other details related to his process (like where his video ideas come from and how he plans for what’s

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is my experience that the most effective strategy for engaging people in PAR projects is for the participants and the researchers to make use of ‘commonsense’ participation. In other words, to take joint responsibility for developing *the group’s* version of what it means to participate in a PAR process.” Ethnomusicologists often participate while hanging out as well. In a study about Indigenous knowledge, Samuel Curkpatrick recognized, “Through performance, we are encouraged to form living connections and responsibilities—a focus quite apart from knowledge as derived or extracted from observations of patterns in the natural world.” With Mark, Bryan, and James—and with my friends playing video games—it wasn’t just about watching the process or the game. It was also about asking questions, laughing and making jokes, getting to know each other, and learning. With all of this in mind, I decided to abandon the word “observe” and replace it with “hang out and watch” because that felt like a truer way to describe the experience.

Norman K. Denzin, “Securing Biographical Experience,” in *Interpretive Interactionism* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2011), 12.

Alice McIntyre, “Participation: What It Means and How It Works,” in *Participatory Action Research* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014), 2.

Samuel Curkpatrick, “Soundings on a Relational Epistemology: Encountering Indigenous Knowledge through Interwoven Experience,” in *Journal of Intercultural Studies* (2023), 661.

<sup>229</sup> “Chuck the word ‘interview,’ call yourself a friend, [and] call your exchanges ‘conversations!’”

Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination* (Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 32.

<sup>230</sup> Backstage: From my perspective, Coles’s mentor is encouraging the use of “friendly” language during interviews and asking us to rethink the interviewer/interviewee relationship dynamic.

next). We had just gotten to his music background, when we realized it had been three hours and we should probably wrap it up so we could get ready for the karaoke party later that night.

**James:** Yeah, I'm curious about these conversations. Let's go for it.

James was eager to start the conversations, so I hadn't seen much of his process at that point. In the room where he edits and films any shots that include the white board, we sat down and started chatting about his music background and briefly discussed his time on YouTube. After I had left for the day, I checked the recording. A good chunk of our conversation was missing. "Don't worry, I'm happy to answer the same questions if you want—I love talking about this stuff."<sup>231,232</sup>

**Mark:** The tricky thing is that I'm going to be in Montreal for Osheaga from Thursday to Monday next week, so our timeframe might be narrow. Let's target for late Wednesday afternoon, say around 4 pm?

Osheaga is a music festival that's held in Montreal every summer, so Mark was going for fun, but also for YouTube. We hopped on Zoom and the conversation flowed from his music background, to his time on YouTube, to his creation processes.<sup>233</sup> At the end, Mark brought up his idea for a collaborative video:

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<sup>231</sup> "The conversational method is of significance to Indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral story telling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm. It involves a dialogic participation that holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others. It is relational at its core." Margaret Kovach, "Conversation Method in Indigenous Research" in *First Peoples Child & Family Review* (2010), 40.

<sup>232</sup> Backstage: While I spent a lot of time listening, I did contribute in a dialogic way. When people enter an "interview," sometimes the interviewer gets caught up in the questions and/or the interviewee becomes nervous, and a sense of genuine conversation is lost. Conversations are not normally one-sided, so I shared opinions and stories that came up naturally. I found that my part of the dialogue did not take away from the stories or perspectives of James, Bryan, and Mark. If anything, my input helped them share more and sparked new and relevant topics of discussion.

<sup>233</sup> "The researcher is a friend and a confidant who shows interest, understanding and sympathy in the life of the person with whom a conversation occurs; a marked contrast to the interviewer who is portrayed in the texts on formal structured interviewing."

If we want to talk about the country stuff, I will let you know when I have that put together. I need to finish the script first. I gotta be honest, that one's been tough to write because it keeps evolving with country now and their presence on the Hot 100, and like the top 3. Yeah, that makes things a little tougher to talk about . . . I want to capitalize on the timeliness, but I also want to make sure I'm doing it justice.

**Bryan:** ya know, if i were to forced to pick a girl talk track to do... you picked the correct one. thats high on the list for me, so a solid maybe, ill have to give the others a listen.

When I first met Bryan, James, and Mark, I pitched my ideas for the collaborative video.<sup>234,235</sup> I wanted them to know a few things: This is my attempt to give back to you for all your help.<sup>236</sup> I could...

Help you pick a song and offer suggestions for the visuals (Bryan)

Do something with music and help you with writing (James)

Help pick a song or album for a review and offer another perspective (Mark)

Basically, I want the collaboration to be helpful to *you*. If that means I'm more behind the scenes, that's fine. Or if you don't think a collaboration would be helpful at all, that's fine too. If I can help you add content to your channel, I'm happy to do what I can.

I sent Bryan a list of suggestions and he was excited about Girl Talk. As he finished uploading his Brass Against video, he said:

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Robert G. Burgess, "Methods of Field Research 2: Interviews as Conversations" in *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research* (1984), 85.

<sup>234</sup> I also consider the YouTube videos to be products of the research. It is my goal to embrace "a participatory culture aimed at new levels of engagement with potential users from the earliest, design stage of research" and to make "a greater effort in framing information in transferable structures such as storytelling."

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, "Imagining the Future of Knowledge Mobilization: Perspectives from UNESCO Chairs" Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2020, 14. <https://en.ccunesco.ca/-/media/Files/Unesco/Resources/2021/01/ImaginingFutureOfKnowledgeMobilization.pdf>.

<sup>235</sup> Backstage: This part of the project meant a great deal. I wanted to immerse myself in the process to more fully understand what a YouTuber experiences. I wanted the work to be accessible to all users of the platform. I wanted to help YouTubers tell their stories. I *want* these stories to influence the future of music teaching and learning.

<sup>236</sup> Expanding upon the title of their book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer illustrates reciprocity: "Linked by sweetgrass, there is reciprocity between you, linked by sweetgrass, the holder as vital as the braider." Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Preface" in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (2013), 1.

I thought about wanting to do a Girl Talk one before because . . . that would be bonkers. But much like this, I don't know *how* . . . that's what I'm more intrigued about really. How would that *go*? That one would be an interesting one all the way around just based on: what parts would you sing? That's a solid maybe because I've been *really* thinking about doing one of those. But that's kinda what I want. You struck a chord with that one, just like, that sounds *interesting* and maybe super weird. There's a lot more moving parts with that one, you know, that I think you might be interested in seeing because you got a really truncated version of this one, just based on I was already kinda half working on it anyway. I'm going to have to give it a couple listens, for sure. That's a *strongggggg* maybe on that one. We'll work something out I'm sure and it'll probably be the next one that we do. We may have to have dedicated times like 1:00-4:00, kinda extended 'cause it's gonna take a bit. And I don't want to do something boring. I mean boring as in a standard video. That seems a) not really what you're looking for, but also I don't really want to just do a basic one. I want to do something interesting. The Girl Talk one is automatically interesting because . . . I don't know what you would sync . . . that seems very interesting. The next one might take longer in the . . . days category. I won't work on it without ya. You need to deal with the *entire* thing. You saw what, two days of this? You're gonna see more . . . probably.

He was right. "Here's the Thing" took 5 workdays and somewhere between 2 to 4 hours each session.

**Subject line of an email from James:** I'm Shaking and Crying (in a good way)  
Body of email: Ryan Gosling – I'm Just Ken Exclusive (From Barbie The Album) [Official]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru1LC9IW20Q>

James thought it would be fun to do a music analysis video about the song "I'm Just Ken" from *Barbie*. We decided to find a space to film somewhere on James's school campus and stumbled upon a workroom with a white board, table, and chairs that seemed perfect. After filming, he mentioned that this might only end up on Patreon since it wasn't as analytical as his other videos. This was fine, since the point was to help James in any way *he* wanted. What's interesting is that while hanging out during the filming process for his curiosity trilogy, he often asked for my input, feedback, and participation. Just like when Bryan kept saying "we," I felt that same sense of inclusion.

Text from backstage: I just wanted to say hi and see if we could chat soon?

Text from **Mark:** Sure, if you want to give me a call, I'm down

Once Mark had learned I was a fan of country music, he thought a natural collaboration would be to work on a video essay about a genre coined “bro-country.” He initially wanted to interview people like me (fans of country music), artists, and other reviewers who knew the genre. Interestingly, 2023 has been quite a year for country music. Mark’s script begins there:

If you were to look at the Hot 100 in 2023, the all-genre, the presence of certain names in the top 10 might shock you. Morgan Wallen’s ‘Last Night’ has been one of the biggest hit songs of the year sitting at number #1 for months, and Luke Combs’ country cover of ‘Fast Car’ has often been right behind it. The two tracks are country crossover juggernauts unlike anything the United States has seen in decades, and as such, pop music listeners and commentators have struggled to cover them well—and it only got worse from there as the summer has continued with the surge to #1 for Jason Aldean’s ‘Try That In A Small Town’ and the out-of-nowhere eruption of Oliver Anthony’s ‘Rich Men North Of Richmond.’ And it didn’t even stop there, as that was then replaced by ‘I Remember Everything’ from Zach Bryan and Kacey Musgraves as part of an album bomb that shook the charts.

After reaching out to several people about collaborating on this piece about bro-country and capitalism, Mark got a similar response over and over: “We don’t want to have to worry about the backlash on social media that might follow this.” Mark decided that since things might get heated, he didn’t want to put others in the line of fire. Before he made this call, I did review his script and sent him some ideas. I respect his judgment and regardless of what makes the final cut, I hope people engage meaningfully with this one. But “fair warning, it’s a meaty one.”

**Mark Grondin aka Spectrum Pulse:  
Not the Music Critic We Deserve, but the One We Need**

## Notes from backstage:

While Mark is proud of his video essays, his bread and butter are music reviews. After throwing out a few ideas for this short story, we settled on “a review of the reviewer.” Structured like an article that might be reviewing an album, movie, or artist, this piece reviews Mark’s process and his effectiveness as a music critic.

Since most critics and reviewers use scores or ranking systems of some kind, you might wonder why one isn’t being used here. The reason is because Mark doesn’t play that game anymore. Underneath his album review of Semisonic’s *Little Bit of Sun*,<sup>237</sup> @Hello185 commented, “He does not do the scores no more why.” Mark or @SpectrumPulse replied, “Because I got rid of them in 2022. Sometimes representing complicated opinions on albums can’t be reduced for a number and I kind of absolutely hate the scorecard nature of album reviews when I want to talk about art.”

To summarize, Mark isn’t your average music critic. He describes himself as “a hopepunk at heart” who “is planning for major changes and evolution in the decade ahead while keeping his love for great tunes, brilliant writing, and the art that moves a culture at the forefront—and he only hopes you’ll join him on this adventure.”<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Mark Grondin, “Semisonic - Little Bit Of Sun - Album Review,” YouTube, November 7, 2023, 0:00 to 4:49, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpI3CAeMgZg&t=2s>.

<sup>238</sup> Mark Grondin, “About,” Spectrum Pulse, <https://www.spectrum-pulse.ca/about>.

It was the end of June 2023 and Mark had spent about two hours writing his latest script for *Billboard Breakdown*, a weekly series that covers “what’s happening” on the Hot 100. He structures it like a sports talk show or more specifically, “sports commentary meets news, meets critique.” The consistent set-up and backdrop alongside his attire—which usually consists of a sports coat and a Raptors t-shirt—definitely give off those vibes. It is a show that could be pitched to traditional media, like MuchMusic (or what’s left of it). If he wanted to, Mark would go to Much and say,

I’ll run Billboard Breakdown for you as a weekly half hour series. It’s already about 22 minutes long, you have room for your commercial breaks, I can riff on anything to fill time. This is not difficult. You can plug it up with interviews if need be of other Canadian artists who want a platform. You have a syndicated talk show right there. I have 9 seasons of it to prove that it works.

But Mark doesn’t need Much or anybody else—he values his editorial independence and has done well in his own space on YouTube.

His “set” is ready to go—his couch with a Voltorb pillow (an “electric” Pokémon character that perfectly fits his electricity branding), the 3-point lighting system, and a teleprompter. After shutting off the AC so it doesn’t interfere with his audio quality, he’s ready to press record. He takes a seat, claps twice (to ensure the audio lines up with the video during editing), and “just goes.”

This episode of *Billboard Breakdown* started as so many do: “Hey there, folks. I’m Mark, in affiliation with Spectrum Pulse.” After the opening line, Mark continues to introduce the show by saying: “And it’s the Gunna album bomb



episode.”<sup>239</sup> Album bomb is a phrase you’ll hear across music discourse, but you may not have heard that *Mark* is the one who coined the term. When multiple songs from one album “hit” the chart in the same week, you’ve got yourself an album bomb. Whether it’s an album bomb week or not, Mark will consistently cover the top 10, losers and dropouts, returns and gains, his best of the week, an honorable mention, his worst of the week, a *dishonorable* mention, and some predictions. In the comments, fans have created their own shorthand and share their own personal best of the week (BOTW), worst of the week (WOTW), honorable mentions (HM), and dishonorable mentions (DM).

While he wishes he had more experience filming, Mark has plenty of experience in two realms that help him tremendously on YouTube: writing and speaking. He has been writing “persistently in some form since I was a kid.”<sup>240</sup> Mark wrote tons of fan fic (fan fiction), played Dungeons & Dragons, where you “learn how to build dramatic storytelling very strongly through that medium,”<sup>241</sup> and published a book in 2015 called *To Kill a Dragon*. He participated in some drama in high school, but more importantly there was a teacher who taught communications, and that led to debate, which Mark loves (you can tell from his videos).

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<sup>239</sup> Mark Grondin, “Billboard BREAKDOWN - Hot 100 - July 1, 2023 (fukumean, back to the moon, Attention, Classy 101), YouTube, June 27, 2023, 0:04 to 0:06, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pu03YCWM0xI&t=327s>.

<sup>240</sup> Donna Janowski, “Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories,” YouTube, January 7, 2024, 4:54:24 to 4:54:29, <https://youtu.be/cF87Z1Wm80U>.

<sup>241</sup> Donna Janowski, “Behind the Scenes: Episode 1 | Spectrum Pulse,” YouTube, November 26, 2023, 8:19 to 8:28, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSjppFy\\_1Hc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSjppFy_1Hc).

Talking about music can be extremely difficult for many of us, but Mark always finds the right words. Just from this episode, you can tell that he's *incredibly descriptive*:

[Reviewing “FukUmean” by Gunna] So one of the reasons I wanted this all on one track with ‘rodeo dr’ is because while this is the biggest debut from Gunna with a pretty sticky hook off the dreary pianos, flutes, and the constant chirpy backing vocal, it does feel like an abbreviated fragment rather than a cut that can stand on its own.<sup>242</sup>

*specific and gets straight to the point:*

[Reviewing “Bluffin” by Gucci Mane featuring Lil Baby] the song has no hook and Lil Baby is seriously off his game on this verse. It's a bad sign when Gucci sounds more on point, but between flubbing rhymes and a clumsy flow, Lil Baby sounds like he's struggling to pull together bars . . . I can't say I'm impressed by the production either—it's trying to go for bombast but without a hook or crescendo it just feels a little flimsy, more of an interlude than a full song.<sup>243</sup>

*he provides context:*

[Reviewing “Girl in Mine” by Parmalee] I saw folks comparing this to boyfriend country-era Chase Rice, that's a bad sign—and wow, between the faint strumming, the snap beat, and the bargain barrel melody, it's hard not to be reminded of ‘Eyes on You,’ but what jumps out more is ‘T-Shirt’ by Thomas Rhett, which at least had a little verve to it . . . yes, we're scraping the bottom of the barrel here if you can't tell. I will say that the hook feels a little warmer than the average Parmalee song, but everyone sounds so checked out, so it just feels recycled in the worst way possible.<sup>244</sup>

*pays attention to the song (or album) as a whole:*

[Reviewing “go crazy” by Gunna] I've realized that the Gunna songs that work for me is when he refines his formula and hones in on the emotionality balanced out with flow, and this a good example of it. The piano line, the breezy percussion, the crooning over the hook that's not exceptional and honestly makes me wish Rod Wave was doing this

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<sup>242</sup> Grondin, 14:58 to 15:15.

<sup>243</sup> Grondin, 6:00 to 6:45.

<sup>244</sup> Grondin, 8:31 to 9:05.

instead, but there's enough of a hook to make me care. Moreover, for a 'more money more problems' song, it matters that he acknowledges taking losses, that the success isn't really satisfying what he's lost, especially when folks are dragging his name into the mud, and by the second verse confiding in a friend that none of this is going to really save him long-term. So, you can throw up the 'suffering from success' DJ Khaled meme, but I think the angst feels credible here.<sup>245</sup>

*knows the music scene and does his research:*

[Reviewing "Attention" by Doja Cat] Look, I don't want to jinx this for Doja Cat, but she's starting to hit the point of getting restless with her career on RCA and Kemosabe, to say nothing of frustration with judgmental assholes on social media, and that's a fast way to see your radio promotion evaporate in record time, especially with her next upcoming record which is reportedly supposed to be a little wilder and more challenging. This isn't quite that—it's going for more of an early 2000s R&B vibe with the acoustic guitars, fluttery keys, and the chord progressions that feel slightly askew against the richer bass and clattering percussion, and I'll admit I don't love how breathy the pre-chorus and hook are. That said, I do like Doja Cat as a rapper, and her clapping back at a fanbase who has concern-trolled her image changes or pitting her against other women in rap who don't care about the music, with the hook clearly ironic in playing the painted smiles of those who do all of this under the belief that it's in Doja Cat's best interest.<sup>246</sup>

*and he's honest:*

[Reviewing "Classy 101" by Feid & Young Miko] I'm more distracted by how loud and clipping the beat is against the vocals with the melodies a murky warble at the back of the mix. I guess if I were to be positive there are more details in the translated lyrics that paint more of a picture . . . but the production really holds this one back.<sup>247</sup>

After talking to the camera for about 15 minutes, Mark wraps up the filming portion of the process. He goes to his computer and mentions that

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<sup>245</sup> Grondin, 9:27 to 10:12.

<sup>246</sup> Grondin, 11:54 to 12:53.

<sup>247</sup> Grondin, 7:41 to 7:59.

before he keeps working on Billboard Breakdown, he needs to post another review. This one is about black metal band Mesarthim and their album *Arrival* (2023). He admits that, unfortunately, this video will underperform because it's black metal (aka not the most popular genre) and not timely. In the description, he includes his best and worst songs, links to Patreon<sup>248</sup> and social media, and *all* the hashtags. Mark posts to YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, Discord, Patreon, and Tumblr because cross posting builds community.

The whole Billboard Breakdown process is a well-oiled machine by this point (remember, he has 9 seasons of this stuff). Using CyberLink PowerDirector, Mark cuts out all his pauses and inserts album art images (along with some shadow for dimension). During the top 10, he'll play the #1 song in the background ("Last Night" by Morgan Wallen doesn't seem to be going anywhere). For the songs that just debuted on the chart, he usually uses a clip of their hook and prefers to use the "visualizer" rather than the lyric video. If the song doesn't have a hook, he'll find another 13-15 seconds within the song to play, but the bigger the artist, the shorter the clip. Mark fine tunes the audio and puts in his intro and outro, which features a song by Chumbawumba (the band famous for "Tubthumping") called "Amnesia." And with that, he exports and posts another installment of Billboard Breakdown (check out Mark's scripts on his website under the "Archive" tab: <https://www.spectrum-pulse.ca/>).

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<sup>248</sup> Patreon is a platform where people can support their favorite creators financially: <https://www.patreon.com/>

So why is Mark “not the music critic we deserve, but the one we need?” For starters, check out the list from above—not all music critics check *all* those boxes. Secondly, if you spend some time with Mark or his videos, you’ll realize that at the drop of a hat, he can rattle off facts about most artists, most genres, and most music scenes. For Gunna, he mentions that there’s some “cultural sensitivity” to be aware of surrounding the artist’s recent plea deal.<sup>249</sup> And now, with all that said, we can unpack the most crucial point of this review of a reviewer.

Take a look at Mark’s Spectrum Pulse tagline: “Where we talk about music, movies, art, and culture.” Don’t be mistaken, Mark is a *music* critic, but his tagline gives him flexibility and the space to talk about important issues that are relevant to the music review.

I keep my tagline open predominantly because . . . I think art and culture is intrinsic to all of this, and that’s the overarching thing that lets me get away with tangents into philosophy, or sports, or politics.<sup>250</sup> If I put politics in there, I would piss so many people off, even though in all fairness, it probably belongs there. If you’re in a situation where you can avoid politics in the conversation of culture, you don’t realize how political that is.<sup>251</sup>

Unlike other critics, Mark believes you can’t separate the art from the artist.

This is a bold and difficult stance to hold onto, but *that’s* why we need Mark: He

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<sup>249</sup> For more information, you can check out: <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-63984887>

<sup>250</sup> For an example of a political tangent, check out: Mark Grondin, “Billboard BREAKDOWN - Hot 100 - July 29, 2023 (Seven, Try That In A Small Town, What Was I Made For),” YouTube, July 26, 2023, 20:52 to 25:03, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9nLHCMx73Y>.

<sup>251</sup> Donna Janowski, “Behind the Scenes: Episode 1 | Spectrum Pulse,” YouTube, November 26, 2023, 1:04:43 to 1:05:15, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSjppFy\\_1Hc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSjppFy_1Hc).

encourages us to have the tough conversations. He pushes us to listen deeper. He inspires us to broaden our horizons.

What started out as a hobby has turned into a second job for Mark. He's been on YouTube for 10 years and in that time he's created quite a catalogue—here's hoping that he keeps adding to it for another 10+ years. After all, who can keep a finger on the pulse better than Spectrum Pulse?

**Behind the Scenes: Episode 1 | Spectrum Pulse:** [https://youtu.be/cSjpgFy\\_1Hc](https://youtu.be/cSjpgFy_1Hc)



Donna Janowski, photograph, June 27, 2023.

## **Words Are Hard**

Nobody who has an interest in modern society, and certainly nobody who has an interest in relationships of power in modern society, can afford to ignore language.

–Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*

*Once upon a time, a friend asked me about my PhD program.  
He wondered what I had learned, was my experience a grand slam?  
I paused for a moment and caught him off guard,  
My response to his question was, "I've learned words are hard."<sup>252</sup>  
I have plenty of examples of what I mean to share,  
But I'll pause the rhyming for a bit, I hope that seems fair.  
When we learned about qualitative research, I thought it was strange,  
The meanings were different than quantitative, but the words did not change.*

Narrative inquiry is not just a methodology—it is a mindset. As Sandra L. Stauffer argues, “If humans live storied lives, then any story one might tell or hear is not a discrete unit that can be extracted and analyzed, but rather part of a complex, continuous experiential and relational whole that must be considered throughout the research process.”<sup>253</sup> If narrative research is truly relational, then why is so much of the language still being borrowed from the quantitative paradigm? Torill Moen commented that “it is repeatedly argued that other terms than those used within the quantitative research tradition should be used. However, the language and criteria for narrative inquiry are still under development, hence the suggestion that each researcher must seek and defend the criteria that best apply to her or his work.”<sup>254</sup> Perhaps there is comfort in the familiar and “at the outset of a storytelling excursion, the qualitative inquirer may feel anxious

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<sup>252</sup> “Language is fundamentally ambiguous.” Scollon et al. elaborate, “When we say that language is always ambiguous, what we mean is that we can never fully control the meanings of the things we say and write,” mostly because “meaning in language is jointly constructed by the participants in communication.” Ron Scollon, Suzanne Wong Scollon, and Rodney H. Jones, *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 11.

<sup>253</sup> Sandra L. Stauffer, “Narrative Inquiry and the Uses of Narrative in Music Education Research” in *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research in American Music Education* (2014), 9.

<sup>254</sup> Torill Moen, “Reflections on the Narrative Research Approach” in *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* (2006), 8.



and adrift as phenomena flicker without discernible pattern, like phosphorescent jellyfish in the endless sea around him.”<sup>255</sup>

Partway through my PhD journey, I was encouraged to look into the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which helped me understand why I felt an unease about using quantitative words in qualitative research. In an introduction to CDA, Rebecca Rogers focused on each letter of the acronym. When discussing the “discourse” in CDA, Rogers cited two linguists, Gee and Fairclough. They “both recognize how discourse functions to reproduce society (through its social structures, relationships, and value structures) but [it] also has a hand in transforming society as people use discourses in creative and agentic ways.”<sup>256</sup> I wondered how this narrative inquiry might contribute to a change in terminology. In an effort to break away from quantitative (and qualitative) language, I started by making a list of words that seemed to clash with a narrative inquiry frame of mind: observations, interviews, data, data collection, data analysis, research methods. To brainstorm new words, I asked myself: “Think about what you were doing or feeling. What were you *doing* during ‘data collection’?” I had already decided that observations were “hanging out and watching.” For data collection, I responded to my own question with this list: hanging out, getting to know them, talking YouTube, laughing, asking questions, connecting, bonding, becoming friends.<sup>257</sup> For data analysis, I wrote: reviewing, reliving, drawing connections. When it came to the word “data,” I thought about what it really is. It could be facts and information. It could also be pieces, experiences, ideas, and beliefs. In this case, the YouTube videos on my channel are data.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Thomas E. Barone, “Beyond Theory and Method: A Case of Critical Storytelling” in *Theory into Practice* (1992), 144.

<sup>256</sup> Rebecca Rogers, “Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis in Educational Research” in *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education*, (Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 7.

<sup>257</sup> These were the *positive* aspects of the process. I also spent a lot of time waiting for responses and in many cases, waiting and never getting a reply.

<sup>258</sup> Donna Janowski, “DJDoesResearch,” YouTube, January 22, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/@DJDoesResearch>.

During this process, I liked to remind myself of what Ron Scollon, Suzanne Wong Scollon, and Rodney H. Jones shared, “What is most important is to recognize that *this is the nature of language and to develop strategies* for dealing with ambiguity, not to try to prevent it from developing.”<sup>259</sup> These were simply *my* strategies.

Likewise, I knew that interviews felt better as “conversations,” but what does that mean exactly? James mentioned something like, “All good interviews are, is great conversation.” Is that true? I thought back to a semi-structured interview where I did my best to facilitate a genuine conversation, but it could never be natural. Even with the flexibility that “semi-structured” allows, it still felt *structured*, and, in a way, forced. I thought of Torill Moen again, who explained, “in narrative research, stories of experience are shaped through discussions with the research subject in a dialogue.”<sup>260</sup> Speaking of words, the term “research subject” should not be a part of narrative inquirers’ vocabulary, but the word that does resonate here is *dialogue*.

Petra Munro Hendry, Roland W. Mitchell, and Paul William Eaton scrutinized and problematized the act of interviewing, and Hendry specifically saw the lack of dialogue as an issue:

See, this is the thing about qualitative research and narrative, as the researcher I’m not supposed to tell my story, right? I’m there to listen to somebody else’s story, get it on the tape recorder, mine it, excavate it, and then re-present it. Right? And I do the token self-reflexivity bit at the beginning, situating myself, but basically the bulk of the, the story is supposed to be the person that we have interviewed. But if we’re talking about research as being in the world, and as intra-action, and as relationships, then it’s a two-way street. So I have just as much obligation to tell my story and for that person to listen and vice-versa. So that its more of a conversation, then research becomes more of a conversation, than an actual interview.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Scollon et al., 14. Emphasis added.

<sup>260</sup> Moen, 6.

<sup>261</sup> Petra Munro Hendry, Roland W. Mitchell, and Paul William Eaton, *Troubling Method: Narrative Research as Being* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2018), 85.

With James, Bryan, and Mark, I spent most of the time listening, guiding, or clarifying, but that did not stop me from sharing stories, opinions, or thoughts that felt natural and “in the moment.” This was a learning experience and as Thomas E. Barone discusses, “talent at storytelling is not developed best through systematic instruction in the acquisition of standardized moves or proper methods. Writers learn their craft by experimenting, reflecting on their experiments, studying the stories of others and criticisms of their own.”<sup>262</sup>

*After I chose my methodology and began to work with everyone,*

*Our trouble with words was by no means done.*

*First let’s hear from Mark and then the other two,*

*I hope you can appreciate these particular points of view.*

There’s a song by one of my favorite rappers called “Rappers Will Die of Natural Causes.” And it talks about the fact that rappers will become middle-aged. Rappers will start dying, not because they get shot or because of gang violence, but because no . . . they will wait for their children to call them and they’ll die in nursing homes . . . I will also say in terms of content, there are a lot of rappers who have now become parents and have realized, “Ok, there’s stuff we can show our kids, but there’s stuff that maybe isn’t appropriate.” And a lot of rappers have put in the work to try to make stuff that is more pop friendly and accessible. And let’s be fair . . . that’s been around since the very beginning. MC Hammer *was* a thing. Will Smith *was* a thing. Pop rap has been around forever. There is more risqué subject matter, but that’s true in every genre. We don’t criticize rock and the same elements for all the crap that Led Zeppelin got away with when they weren’t stealing from the Yard Birds.<sup>263</sup>

*Next is a short example from Bryan and his channel,*

*What do you think? Should we call in a panel?*

“I make karaoke videos. Some can be argued that they are barely karaoke. You be the judge.”

*Words and their meanings came up with James quite a bit,*

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<sup>262</sup> Barone, 143.

<sup>263</sup> Donna Janowski, “Behind the Scenes: Episode 1 | Spectrum Pulse,” YouTube, November 26, 2023, 59:43 to 1:02:42, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSjqqFy\\_1Hc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSjqqFy_1Hc).

*Sometimes it's difficult to find the right fit.*

In a trailer James created, he included the words: “a kolpeshtheyardstick media experience.” When asked about the phrase “media experience,” he explained that with this particular video, he was creating an experience and felt the audience would go through an experience watching it. Before this conversation, some may have characterized his work as “video essays,” but this one did not fit that description in James’s eyes.

This idea led to a discussion of whether “YouTuber” is the best word to describe James (or Mark or Bryan, for that matter). “There’s a connotation that comes with the word ‘YouTuber.’ I think of someone like Tyler Oakley.”<sup>264</sup> James’s goal is to entertain on YouTube, but YouTube as a platform is not pertinent to what he does. He wants to make video experiences and/or video art that could function on *any* platform. We thought about the term “content creator,” which seemed to James “more acceptable, but content doesn’t evoke time, effort, or talent . . . just something that exists.” For James, there is a difference between creators whose mindset is, “I make videos” versus “I make *YouTube* videos.” To illustrate this point further, he went to YouTube without being logged in: “That’s ‘stereotypical’ YouTube.” As we both expected, MrBeast<sup>265</sup> videos and creators like him were featured all over the page. Perhaps this means that James should *not* be referred to as a YouTuber, but a videographer or artist.

*The term “YouTuber” seems to be a contentious thing,*

*Let’s see what other creators’ perspectives bring.*

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Mia Cole uploaded a video titled “The Dichotomy of YouTube & Art.” She interviewed a bunch of content creators to explore the question “Is YouTube art?”

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<sup>264</sup> Tyler Oakley, “Tyler Oakley,” YouTube, September 19, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/@TylerOakley>.

<sup>265</sup> James Stephen Donaldson, “MrBeast,” YouTube, February 19, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/@MrBeast>.

Mia: So how do people break out of the “YouTuber” mold then? Even when creating on YouTube, how do you get taken seriously as a real artist?

CJ The X: I think the question is whether or not they’re validly more artist than YouTuber . . . If you’re on YouTube all day acting like a YouTuber, then when you go to make art . . . you’ve defined yourself in a sense. It’s kind of simple . . . no one’s confused about whether or not when I go to make art if that’s going to be a serious thing or not. ‘Cause I call myself, I’m an artist and a philosopher. Happen to be on YouTube, but that’s what people refer to me as because that’s how I refer to myself. I don’t call myself a YouTuber.<sup>266</sup>

Kevin Perjurer, better known by his channel name “Defunctland,” also discussed this topic towards the end of his video titled “Disney Channel’s Theme: A History Mystery”:

I love what I do. I get to make videos for a living on subjects that I’m passionate about that people watch. I am so lucky, and I am eternally grateful for every second that I am able to do this. But I’d be lying if there wasn’t a small part of me that *hates* that this is called a video and not a documentary or a film. And that I am referred to as a YouTuber or a content creator and not a filmmaker or a documentarian, or an artist. Because the truth is, that I could do this, make videos on this platform every day until I die, and I would be happy every day. But that small part of me, that selfish, arrogant, pretentious, miserable part of me would not be happy if that were my legacy when I’m gone.<sup>267</sup>

This video made such an impact that people responded strongly to Perjurer’s “sadness” about being a YouTuber. AllGarageMusic wrote, “You mentioned you feel like we see you as just a ‘Youtuber.’ That could not be further from the truth. Only because your documentaries aren’t mainstream, it doesn’t mean they are any less passionate and creative than those that are. Hands down one of the best documentaries I’ve ever seen, anywhere.” Phoebe Case added, “Sobbing into my pasta while watching this. You went to such lengths to answer a question I never knew I had. Your videos are always top notch, but this is next level story telling AND YES, documentary making. Thank you for this.” Another famous YouTuber, Michelle Khare, shared, “The sentiment about being a ‘YouTuber’ instead of an ‘artist’ by society’s standards really hit

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<sup>266</sup> Mia Cole, “The Dichotomy of YouTube & Art,” YouTube, February 12, 2023, 39:02 to 39:54, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gz4z4QZQgZM>.

<sup>267</sup> Kevin Perjurer, “Disney Channel’s Theme: A History Mystery,” YouTube, November 20, 2022, 1:21:01 to 1:21:58, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b\\_rjBWmc1iQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_rjBWmc1iQ).

home for me. Thank you for making such an amazing documentary, and for raising the bar on the platform. Incredible work.” It is fascinating that even *YouTubers* seem to dislike the term “YouTuber,” at least on some level. This may be a “problem” with YouTube research—creators may feel hesitant about working with researchers, especially if they feel like their art is not being respected or taken seriously.

On the last day of working with James face-to-face, he let me erase his famous whiteboard. It was a moment, and I was honored to be a part of his process. We began chatting and James mentioned the show “Hot Ones.” “Did you know ‘Hot Ones’ is on Hulu and TV now? It feels wrong.” Then he posed a simple but serious question: “It feels like, are we [YouTube] not good enough for you?”

*As YouTubers, creators, or artists, there’s lots we can learn from these three and their friends,*

*No matter what, words seem to be complicated in every sort of lens.*

*I’m not sure where this leaves us, but there’s one thing that I know,*

*Words are hard—and they are likely to remain so.*

## **The Narrative Turn**

We return to the campfire with Bryan, James, and Mark. A few others find their way over and they join the conversation.

**James:** So, I had this idea to shoot in the closet. I was thinking hard cut, zoom out, zoom in, then saying . . . “Does anyone else get sad thinking about knowledge?”

**Bryan:** Sounds interesting . . .

**Mark:** Oh, hey there, folks. Welcome. Yeah, come find a seat.

**James:** We were just sharing some stories about music, YouTube, life. Feel free to jump right in.

**Isaac Bickmore:** The first time I met Billy was on the first day of a graduate-level introduction to ethnomusicology class.<sup>268</sup> Ted Solis, the teacher of the course, had asked us to introduce ourselves. The way I remember it, we were sitting in a circle taking turns in counterclockwise order. I began to introduce myself in the usual way, “My name is Isaac Bickmore, I am getting my PhD in music education, I taught kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade general music, and I also ran a 7th and 8th-grade rock ’n’ roll history choir.” Almost before I could finish the sentence, Billy interrupted me, “Rock ’n’ roll history? Music teachers talk about rock ’n’ roll history. I *am* the history of rock ’n’ roll.” Frankly, I was a little taken back. Who was this man with long grey hair, a goatee, and cowboy boots claiming to be the living embodiment of rock ’n’ roll history? Couldn’t he wait his turn? He wasn’t even next in the counterclockwise order of the circle. I learned quickly that Billy didn’t necessarily always wait his turn or adhere to many other conventions. I also began to learn that Billy Cioffi, in more ways than one, is a living embodiment of rock ’n’ roll history, or at least one of many histories of rock ’n’ roll, but more on that later. Throughout the class, Billy and I became friends. I learned that Billy teaches private guitar and songwriting lessons and facilitates student rock ensembles. I learned that he has had an extraordinary career as a guitarist, songwriter, session musician, musical director, and collaborator. He told me stories about touring with Chuck Berry in Brazil, opening for the Lovin’ Spoonful, and returning Jimi Hendrix’s guitar . . . to Jimi Hendrix.<sup>269</sup>

**Mark:** Wow.

**Nasim Niknafs:** Raam’s story is quite different from my own, but we experienced similar hardships and joys along the way, growing musically in our own ways. I had heard about Raam from a friend in 2001, when he was living in Canada, and I was finally introduced to him in Iran in his Studio73 in 2005. When I went there for the first time, I saw another underground music studio that was a vibrant hub for unofficial rock musicians and their unofficial fans. The space was an unused basement in the old northern part of Tehran, with two windows facing the house’s garden. There was a small kitchen and restroom, and a small bedroom. Raam, with the help of his bandmates, had haphazardly added another room inside the original flat with windows

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<sup>268</sup> Note from backstage: I didn’t think it was very natural to have James say, “please share some narrative inquiry studies with us,” but the first three speakers here (Isaac, Nasim, and Jeananne) are talking about different narrative inquiries they’ve done within music education.

<sup>269</sup> Isaac Bickmore, *The Musical Life of Billy Cioffi: A Narrative Inquiry* (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2017), 1.



opening to the inside. This room was supposed to function as the recording room, with walls covered by egg cartons. At this time, I had the opportunity to observe their rehearsals and recording sessions, and spend time with them. I took part in their concerts, danced to their music, and was merrily enjoying a small victory, along with the rest of the musicians and their fans; we were breathing in the music that was prohibited, accompanied by a forceful adrenaline rush. Rock music was our exotic land. It was our escape.<sup>270</sup>

**Jeananne Nichols:** I met Rie in the course of my professional life as a conductor. Rie played the flute in a band I directed, but she was not my student. She projected a funny, fearless persona and I noted her acceptance and popularity with the other band members. I wondered how difficult the gender transition process had been for her, how she navigated the rural midwestern school system in her hometown, and if she had been supported by family, friends, and teachers. I was particularly interested in her experiences with school music, and so I asked her if she would be willing to tell me her story. Ryan agreed to talk with me and we met regularly throughout the fall and winter to record interviews, pore over scrapbooks, listen to his music, and share a few cups of coffee. Ryan planned what stories he would tell me each week and with each session brought me a personal token of his life.<sup>271</sup>

**Mark:** Sorry, just to clarify, are Rie and Ryan the same person?

**Jeananne Nichols:** He requested that for each paragraph in the section subtitled “Rie’s Story, Ryan’s Journey,” I alternate his masculine first name with the name he prefers—Rie. Oscillating between the bounded, dualistic distinctions of gendered language creates momentary disorientations in the textual flow that remind the reader of the central tension of the story. In the interpretive section subtitled “Commentary” that follows his narrative, we decided to use only feminine designations because that is how he identifies in the present.<sup>272</sup> In narrative methodology, power and control is shared with the participant and necessitates a restructuring of the research relationship.<sup>273</sup>

**Nasim Niknafs:** During the entire process of the research, especially data analysis and selection of the stories, I was in constant communication with Raam.<sup>274</sup>

**Bryan:** That’s how I felt for the most part. She was working on some videos and asked if she should cut one down from three and a half hours. I said I’d cut them down for watchability! Three and a half hours is a crazy amount of time.

**James:** She asked me to look over things too. I also told her that I would love to post what she wrote for my patrons once she was happy with it, so I think it goes both ways.

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<sup>270</sup> Nasim Niknafs, “In a Box: A Narrative of a/n (Under)grounded Iranian Musician” in *Music Education Research* (2016), 353-354.

<sup>271</sup> Jeananne Nichols, “Rie’s Story, Ryan’s Journey: Music in the Life of a Transgender Student” in *Journal of Research in Music Education* (2013), 266.

<sup>272</sup> Nichols, 265.

<sup>273</sup> Nichols, 264.

<sup>274</sup> Niknafs, 354.

**Mark:** Same. I ended up deciding that the collaborative video *shouldn't* feature anyone else because the topic might be a bit controversial.

**D. Jean Clandinin:** Narrative inquiry is first and foremost a relational research methodology, and, while it is research, it is also a transaction between people, which makes ethical issues and concerns about living well with others central to the inquiry.<sup>275</sup>

**Vera Caine:** Narrative inquirers begin with an interest in experience.<sup>276</sup>

**Andrew Estefan:** A narrative inquiry . . . proceeds from an ontological position, a curiosity about how people are living and the constituents of their experience.<sup>277,278</sup>

**John Dewey:** Everything depends upon the *quality* of the experience which is had. The quality of any experience has two aspects. There is an immediate aspect of agreeableness or disagreeableness, and there is its influence upon later experiences.<sup>279</sup> The principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after.<sup>280</sup>

**D. Jean Clandinin:** In narrative thinking, temporality is a central feature. We take for granted that locating things in time is the way to think about them.<sup>281</sup>

**Michael F. Connelly:** When we see an event, we think of it not as a thing happening at that moment but as an expression of something happening over time. Any event, or thing, has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future.<sup>282</sup>

**John Dewey:** Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into.<sup>283</sup>

**James:** This reminds me of how my wife and I interview each other on our birthdays. We thought it'd be a cool way of keeping track of time.

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<sup>275</sup> Vera Caine, Andrew Estefan, and D. Jean Clandinin, "A Return to Methodological Commitment: Reflections on Narrative Inquiry" in *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* (2013), 578.

<sup>276</sup> Caine et al., 575.

<sup>277</sup> Caine et al., 575.

<sup>278</sup> Note from backstage: The choice to pursue narrative inquiry is a matter of framing. This study could have been framed as a case study about a "phenomenon"—perhaps the phenomenon of YouTube as a platform for musicians to be "discovered," the phenomenon of music educators utilizing YouTube, or the phenomenon of music students and their use of YouTube. However, I was interested in a different framing. I wanted to focus on the creators behind the videos, their experiences, and how they construct meaning. Essentially, how do they know what they know, how do they do what they do, and what might that mean for music education? As Clandinin and Connelly affirm, "*the person* in context is of prime interest."

D. Jean Clandinin and Michael F. Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 32.

<sup>279</sup> John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (Collier Books, 1963), 27. Emphasis in original.

<sup>280</sup> Dewey, 35.

<sup>281</sup> Clandinin and Connelly, 29.

<sup>282</sup> Clandinin and Connelly, 29.

<sup>283</sup> Dewey, 38.

**Michael F. Connelly:** Narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience. Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it. In effect, narrative thinking is part of the phenomenon of narrative. It might be said that narrative method is a part or aspect of narrative phenomena. Thus, we say, narrative is both the phenomenon and the method.<sup>284</sup>

**D. Jean Clandinin:** It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people’s lives, both individual and social. Simply stated . . . narrative inquiry is stories lived and told.<sup>285,286</sup>

**John Dewey:** The word “interaction,” which has just been used, expresses the second chief principle for interpreting an experience in its educational function and force. It assigns equal rights to both factors in experience—objective and internal conditions . . . The trouble with traditional education was not that it emphasized the external conditions that enter into the control of the experiences but that it paid so little attention to the internal factors which also decided what kind of experience is had. It violated the principle of interaction from one side.<sup>287</sup>

**Bryan:** What do you mean by internal and external exactly?

**John Dewey:** The environment, in other words, is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had.<sup>288</sup> The trouble with traditional education was not that educators took upon themselves the responsibility for providing an environment. The trouble was that they did not consider the other factor in creating an experience; namely, the powers and purposes of those taught.<sup>289,290</sup>

**Bryan:** Gotcha. I can see that happening in schools.

**D. Jean Clandinin:** I recalled country dances where local bands played; I recalled symphony performances, operas, and ballets; I recalled soft music carrying out onto decks and porches on summer evenings; I recalled carol singing at the community hall; I recalled dancing in living

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<sup>284</sup> Clandinin and Connelly, 18.

<sup>285</sup> Clandinin and Connelly, 20.

<sup>286</sup> Note from backstage: It is crucial to establish that narrative inquiry is *not* simply storytelling. Most narrative inquiries are undertaken with a desire to change current practices, push the boundaries, and imagine alternatives, which are very specific intentions that don’t always apply to storytelling. Additionally, in the conversation above (Caine et al.), it was stated that narrative inquiry is a *relational* methodology, which means the researcher has to (or should) prioritize the wellbeing of the participants throughout the process. With storytelling, people can manipulate others or pursue ulterior motives. To summarize, storytelling could just be someone sharing a story. Narrative inquiry is on a mission.

<sup>287</sup> Dewey, 42.

<sup>288</sup> Dewey, 44.

<sup>289</sup> Dewey, 45.

<sup>290</sup> Note from backstage: In acknowledging students’ “powers and purposes,” experiences, musical knowledge, and interests, we can imagine alternatives or additions to current music education practices and programs.

rooms and in country halls. I could *not* recall music classes in school.<sup>291</sup> How many stories of music are silenced or kept secret as the dominant narrative shapes the landscape.<sup>292</sup>

**Margaret S. Barrett:** We hope to make a space in the discourse of inquiry in music education, one in which “troubling” may give pause for thought and prompt the community to consider the many ways in which we know and come to know.<sup>293</sup>

**Sandra L. Stauffer:** “Troubling” in this sense becomes a means to prompt “wide awakeness,” a concept Maxine Greene employs to prompt educators to look beyond the familiar, to attend to the tensions that underlie the surface of experience, and to consider the ways in which we may come to understand alternative accounts of the ways in which lives are lived and storied in and through music and education.<sup>294</sup>

**Wayne Bowman:** *Never trouble certainty until certainty troubles you.* It seems to me that if we’re intent on endorsing an approach to inquiry that commits to troubling certainty, we need to be very clear what it is about certainty that warrants troubling. I make this suggestion because I suspect that without such an understanding, we are at considerable risk of slipping over into more-of-the-same as researchers—into just telling stories, or into telling mere stories—without regard, that is, for their important potential to *unsettle the inappropriately settled*.<sup>295,296</sup>

**Donald E. Polkinghorne:** Narrative thinking can analyze how past events and actions led to a past outcome, it can also be employed imaginatively for planning what actions to carry out to achieve desired future ends. It can construct imagined scenarios about what effect different actions might have in regard to a goal. From the scenarios, judgments can be made about what is the anticipated best action.<sup>297</sup>

**Sandra L. Stauffer:** The “turn”—what makes an account a narrative inquiry rather than a story—is one’s willingness not only to look for connection and consonance . . .<sup>298</sup>

**Margaret S. Barrett:** . . . but also to recognise that different perspectives, voices, and experiences exist and *can inform*.<sup>299</sup>

**Mark:** That reminds me of when I was asked if you *need* a formalized music background to be a music critic. Funnily enough, the answer can be very contentious, because I think it depends on what angle you approach writing or discussing music. If you want to present yourself as a

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<sup>291</sup> D. Jean Clandinin, “Troubling Certainty: Narrative Possibilities for Music Education” in *Narrative Inquiry in Music Education: Troubling Certainty* (2009), 202. Emphasis added.

<sup>292</sup> Clandinin, 202.

<sup>293</sup> Margaret S. Barrett and Sandra L. Stauffer, *Narrative Inquiry in Music Education: Troubling Certainty* (Springer Netherlands, 2009), 2.

<sup>294</sup> Barrett and Stauffer, 2.

<sup>295</sup> Wayne Bowman, “Charting Narrative Territory” in *Narrative Inquiry in Music Education: Troubling Certainty* (2009), 214. Emphasis in original.

<sup>296</sup> Note from backstage: Here, Wayne Bowman makes the distinction between narrative and narrative *inquiry* even more definitive—narrative inquiry is *critical* and questions the status quo, the taken-for-granted, and the traditions.

<sup>297</sup> Donald E. Polkinghorne, “The Practice of Narrative” in *Narrative Inquiry: NI* (2010), 395.

<sup>298</sup> Barrett and Stauffer, 2.

<sup>299</sup> Barrett and Stauffer, 2. Emphasis in original.

consumer's guide or an ascended fan, you don't really need to have the technical knowhow to discuss music because the shared experience and connection to the audience will be far more important. If you're acting as a critic from a place of expertise, the more knowledge *and* the more you acknowledge there's so much you just don't know, is quintessential. Based on their backgrounds, different music critics will bring different perspectives and we want that plurality.<sup>300</sup>

**Maureen J. Murray:** There is no single best way to tell a story. There are at least as many perspectives from which to tell a story as there are key characters within it; literary and journalistic narratives often switch between several such perspectives.<sup>301</sup>

**William E. Smythe:** The epistemological import of multiple narrative perspectives is the suggestion that narrative meaning must be multiple as well. Rather than aspiring to a singular account of reality . . . the narrative domain requires that we live with multiple interpretations of reality.<sup>302</sup>

**Maureen J. Murray:** Some individuals might not respond well to the exigencies of narrative inquiry—that is, to the consequences of being open and reflective about their experience. Likewise, an individual's ability to grasp the notion of multiple narrative meanings might be limited. In our view, understanding this notion is essential to narrative research participation.<sup>303</sup>

**William E. Smythe:** Although the degree of such understanding can never be ascertained with certainty, as narrative researchers we must be prepared to exclude individuals who we believe might have considerable difficulty dealing with the issue.<sup>304</sup>

**James:** Hmm, I don't think I would've thought of that.

**Michael C. Gottlieb:** Postmodern approaches focus on inequalities in our culture and teach us that no one's voice should be privileged over that of another. Unfortunately, in an effort to protect certain participants from harm, Smythe and Murray's recommendation has the unintentional effect of privileging certain voices over those of others.<sup>305</sup>

**Jon Lasser:** For example, we do not support racism, sexism, or homophobia and take a position of tolerance regarding diversity. However, what if it were known that those who maintain intolerant views are also those who are less adept at grasping multiple narratives? If so, the goal of knowing all points of view, or achieving saturation, is seriously compromised because only the voices of the tolerant are heard, a problem not soluble by replication per se. Hence, some

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<sup>300</sup> Note from backstage: Yes, we do! I also want that within music education, but we don't, and we *won't* have much plurality unless we start looking to new people and new perspectives. This especially applies to higher education institutions because they decide who is "allowed" to become a music educator in the first place.

<sup>301</sup> William E. Smythe and Maureen J. Murray, "Owning the Story: Ethical Considerations in Narrative Research" in *Ethics & Behavior* (2000), 326-327.

<sup>302</sup> Smythe and Murray, 327.

<sup>303</sup> Smythe and Murray, 329.

<sup>304</sup> Smythe and Murray, 329-330.

<sup>305</sup> Michael C. Gottlieb and Jon Lasser, "Competing Values: A Respectful Critique of Narrative Research" in *Ethics & Behavior* (2001), 192.

voices become privileged over those of others as a by-product of the effort to protect participants from harm.<sup>306</sup>

**Michael F. Connelly:** One of the researcher's dilemmas in the composing of research texts is captured by the analogy of living on an edge, trying to maintain one's balance, as one struggles to express one's *own* voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants' storied experiences and to represent *their* voices . . .<sup>307</sup>

**D. Jean Clandinin:** . . . all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to, and reflect upon, the *audience's* voices.<sup>308</sup>

**William E. Smythe:** Another important ethical issue—the central ethical problem in narrative research, in our view—narrative ownership.<sup>309</sup>

**Maureen J. Murray:** Who owns the research participant's narrative? That is, who wields the final control and authority over its presentation and interpretation?<sup>310</sup> The issue of the ownership of data scarcely arises in traditional psychological research, where . . . one simply gives away one's data to the researcher as part of the standard research participation contract. However, can one give away one's own story in this fashion, especially when it is so heavily invested with one's personal meaning and sense of identity? A common reaction of narrative research participants to researchers' analyses of their stories is that the analysis fails to capture them fully in their personal uniqueness and individuality.<sup>311</sup>

**Brett Smith:** To date, little attention has been paid to illuminating various tensions—the contrasting perspectives . . .<sup>312</sup>

**Andrew C. Sparkes:** . . . that seem to exist on a close inspection of the burgeoning literature.<sup>313</sup>

**Brett Smith:** We illuminate eight significant conceptual tensions underlying narrative research.<sup>314</sup>

**Andrew C. Sparkes:** Rather than simply laying these tensions out in a manner that suggests they are separate, we aspire to link them. Theme one, labelled 'narrative and the self,' comprises the following tensions: the relation between narrative and self; the unity of self; and the coherence of self.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Gottlieb and Lasser, 192.

<sup>307</sup> Clandinin and Connelly, 147.

<sup>308</sup> Clandinin and Connelly, 147.

<sup>309</sup> Smythe and Murray, 324.

<sup>310</sup> Note from backstage: I had "final control and authority" over this document and the videos on my YouTube channel. However, I always kept Bryan, James, and Mark updated and asked them to please let me know if they were unhappy with how they were represented in any way.

<sup>311</sup> Smythe and Murray, 324.

<sup>312</sup> Brett Smith and Andrew C. Sparkes, "Narrative Inquiry in Psychology: Exploring the Tensions Within" in *Qualitative Research in Psychology* (2006), 170.

<sup>313</sup> Smith and Sparkes, 170.

<sup>314</sup> Smith and Sparkes, 170.

<sup>315</sup> Smith and Sparkes, 170.

**Brett Smith:** Theme two, named ‘ontology or nature of narrative,’ encompasses tensions revolving around: (neo)realism/relativism; interiority or externality; and the term constructionism. Theme three, termed ‘approaches to narrative research,’ contains tensions that include: the whats and/or the hows; and a story analyst who conducts an analysis of narrative and thinks about stories, and a storyteller who performs narrative analysis and thinks with stories.<sup>316</sup>

**Mark:** I think she was feeling a tension of sorts when she asked me about writing. I love writing and am comfortable writing, but I think this was hers to write. That would’ve been too much work to put on us.

**James:** Yeah, I have enough writing for my own grad school stuff!

**Bryan:** Writing? No thanks.

**Andrew Estefan:** We heard people talk about telling good stories, representing research findings as stories, or using stories to tell—in more compelling ways—of problems, encounters, or observations.<sup>317</sup>

**Vera Caine:** These uses of story and narrative appear to have been co-opted under the label “narrative inquiry,” and . . .<sup>318</sup>

**D. Jean Clandinin:** . . . we are troubled by this co-optation.<sup>319</sup>

**Margaret S. Barrett:** We position . . . narrative inquiry in music education within a theoretical and philosophical framework that we have come to call “resonant work. . .”<sup>320</sup>

**Sandra L. Stauffer:** . . . work that reverberates and resonates in and through the communities it serves . . . We define resonant work as having four qualities: it is respectful, responsible, rigorous, and resilient.<sup>321</sup>

**Margaret S. Barrett:** Narrative is also artful and art-full. It is aesthetic in its purposing, its processes, and its presentational products. It is intertwined with the arts in content, practice, substance, and form, and like the arts, narrative seeks communication beyond the immediate or surface meanings, and reverberation past the present moment.<sup>322</sup>

**Donald E. Polkinghorne:** Narrative inquiries produce a storied description of a practice process carried out in a concrete life space. Unlike theoretically driven research, they do not produce a list of techniques or procedures that are promised to work in every setting. They offer their readers a vicarious experience of how a practice was conducted in a concrete situation. From this the readers’ experiential background is enlarged, their repertoire of possible actions is increased,

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<sup>316</sup> Smith and Sparkes, 170.

<sup>317</sup> Caine et al., 575.

<sup>318</sup> Caine et al., 575.

<sup>319</sup> Caine et al., 575.

<sup>320</sup> Barrett and Stauffer, 20.

<sup>321</sup> Barrett and Stauffer, 20.

<sup>322</sup> Barrett and Stauffer, 20.

and the judgments about what might be done in their own practice in similar situations is sharpened.<sup>323,324</sup>

**Jeong-Hee Kim:** Barone and Eisner also justify the use of fictive writing in social science research by problematizing the dichotomous relationship between fantasy and fact that has been prevalent in the Western world. According to them, all activities of human cognition and behavior contain a fictive element, and a synthesis of fact and fiction is indeed apparent in any creation of a work of art. Their belief is that social science can be fictional with the power to disrupt the commonplace and to suggest new ways of thinking, or new possibilities. It is indeed a fascinating idea to straddle the two elements of fact and fiction in a creation of our narrative research work!<sup>325</sup>

**Isaac Bickmore:** My committee asked me to enter into more of a dialogue with readers and research after my dissertation defense . . . I invited five people to read the novella and to have a conversation with me. After having separate conversations with all of the readers, I created a composite conversation in the form of a Facebook chat. Because I created a composite conversation based on my separate conversations with each reader, I was able to imagine what it would be like to include Jacques Derrida in a group chat about the novella.<sup>326</sup>

**Jeong-Hee Kim:** Abbott defines the term genre as “a recurrent literary form” that a text belongs to, while a text can combine two or more genres. I would say narrative research genre is a form that a narrative inquiry text can take, which may include autobiography, autoethnography, biographical research, oral history, life story/life history, Bildungsroman . . . and arts-based narrative research in which researchers integrate the arts into narrative inquiry, such as literary arts . . . and visual arts . . . If we follow Abbott’s thinking about a genre, we can also combine two or more genres in our narrative work.<sup>327</sup> Catherine Riessman observes that attention to form (genre) is largely missing from narrative papers, and wonders why so few narrative scholars attend to form, given that narrative study originated in drama. I concur.<sup>328</sup>

**James:** With the curiosity trilogy, I remember brainstorming different forms. We talked about there being an “easy way out” and the hardest way would be to find a way to knit everything together. Do I make a mega video, re-package the ideas using *Barbie*, or break it down into three shorter videos? Form is always challenging.

**Christopher Small:** All narrative arts, of course, have their conventions and their conventional procedures; it is perfectly possible to analyze novels, plays and films and detect what we may call formal features . . . But to discover the form it is necessary to paralyze the narrative movement. You cannot have narrative, which is dynamic, and form, which is static, at the same time; it is a little like the uncertainty principle in physics, which states that it is impossible to

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<sup>323</sup> Polkinghorne, 396.

<sup>324</sup> Note from backstage: Exactly. I want music teachers to ask themselves: “What can I learn from Bryan, Mark, and James? How might their stories help me reimagine or reinvigorate my music teaching and learning space?”

<sup>325</sup> Jeong-Hee Kim, “Narrative Research Genres: Mediating Stories Into Being” in *Understanding Narrative Inquiry: The Crafting and Analysis of Stories as Research* (2016), 19.

<sup>326</sup> Bickmore, 192.

<sup>327</sup> Kim, 3.

<sup>328</sup> Kim, 4.



know both the position and the velocity of a particle at the same time. One or the other but not both.<sup>329</sup>

**Wayne Bowman:** The need for such perfectionism—for neatness and button-down coherence—is precisely what narrative inquiry would have us “unlearn.”<sup>330,331</sup>

**Bryan:** Is perfectionism the thing to avoid though? I’m thinking about Bo Burnham, I saw him in 2010. It was me and a buddy of mine and we walked out of there going . . . we didn’t see a concert, we didn’t see a comedy show, we saw performance art. I saved a video of him from a different show and there’s a moment in that video where you can hear the audience *get it*. And it’s just, it’s perfect. That moment right there encapsulates him. It was so goddamn impressive.

**Mark:** Me and you will have to chat about Bo Burnham later [laughs].<sup>332</sup>

**D. Jean Clandinin:** We resist telling the good story, the story with beginnings and endings, with resolutions, and with illustrative powers.<sup>333</sup>

**Andrew Estefan:** Life as it is lived is not neat, tidy, or formulaic. Nor does it easily fit within the confines and conventions of the good story. As such, we resist the good story because it does not reflect our ontological and epistemological positions as narrative inquirers.<sup>334</sup>

**Vera Caine:** Instead, being-in-relation guides our work and the stories of experiences that arise from it.<sup>335</sup> As researchers we become part of participants’ lives and are often drawn in to participants’ ways of seeking narrative coherence.<sup>336</sup>

**Mark:** Perhaps at times we have a responsibility to tell the story that people might not want to hear. I’m thinking about the bro-country video essay that I recently uploaded that might be contentious. Or how we only want to separate the art from the artist when it’s artists we *like*.

**D. Jean Clandinin:** This way of researching is different to the practice of interrogating a research text such as a transcript—reaching into it as if it were life—and extracting “the story” that foregrounds experience and voice.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (University Press of New England, 1998), 167.

<sup>330</sup> Bowman, 214.

<sup>331</sup> Note from backstage: While I hope this document is “coherent,” I’m fine with it not being as “neat” as other dissertations. When thinking about the title, I considered “Converging Pathways” instead of “Interconnected Pathways.” I went with “interconnected” because it has a messier connotation that I find appropriate for this research—the pathways, the voices, and (hopefully) the lessons are all over the place.

<sup>332</sup> Mark Grondin, “This Is How We Roll - The Wild ‘Legacy’ of Bro-Country, Then and Now - A Video Essay,” YouTube, December 9, 2023, 3:07 to 4:15, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvRVUB1BBEA>.

<sup>333</sup> Caine et al., 583.

<sup>334</sup> Caine et al., 583.

<sup>335</sup> Caine et al., 583.

<sup>336</sup> Caine et al., 579.

<sup>337</sup> Caine et al., 579.

**Andrew Estefan:** The intersections of who he was, who he is now, where he wants to go, and with whom, transform the betwixt into the becoming, a narrative coherence that is laden, and that becomes an ontological and ethical commitment to a relational mode of research.<sup>338</sup>

**Martina Miranda:** A narrative approach has opened new thinking on the power of one relationship in the midst of many.<sup>339</sup>

**James:** Yes. In high school, I did a play called *Flowers for Algernon* based on the book and I was the main character. And the script is a hundred pages long and I was on ninety-seven of those pages. I left the stage *only* to change my clothes, that was *it*. I *breathed* this play. I slept with the fucking script under my pillow, like maybe osmosis happens. Maybe I can know it so well. And I did know it so well and I acted the shit out of it. I worked my ass off to make it good. And it was a straight play on the main stage because we were doing local theatre stuff, so the theatre was always fucking empty when we performed it at school, and I was always like, I'm going to keep doing my best but it's really hard to see it not getting the appreciation it deserves. Everyone else involved, my classmates, were on stage so little that it was hard for them to get attached to the play, so they would just be in the back with their friends, not watching. And I'm working so fucking hard. Two years later I'm on a bus for a theatre retreat and one of the parents came up to me and said, "Hey, I just wanted to let you know, I think about that performance that you gave in *Flowers for Algernon*, all the time. And every time I see you, I think about it, and I just thought it was so good." And I was like . . . [sigh] to stay in someone's mind, that is what I want. To make things that linger.<sup>340</sup>

**Patricia E. Riley:** I asked the students: How has your experience in South India deepened/broadened your understanding of what it means to be human? My own answer is that I feel close to South India and to the persons I studied with and interacted with while there. I feel a sisterhood with Uma—our voice guru, a mother, and a kind and gentle human being—that I did not anticipate. I feel a closeness, not just through the music but also through our situations as mothers and as teachers. I feel much more of a sameness with Indian persons. I find more of a similarity than difference in our music, and more of a similarity than a difference in our humanness as citizens of the world.<sup>341</sup>

**Rishma Dunlop:** As a poet who teaches creative writing and poetics to aspiring poets, I often tell students that they can improve the quality of their work by listening to music. Specifically, they need to listen to music that reflects the dynamics inherent to fine poetry; these are the dynamics of sound and rhythm that surpass any fixed notion or definition of poetry. In fact, you can hear good poetry read in any language, and know that it is poetry. What we are hearing is the music, the arrangement of sounds and their flow, first in written score, second in performance, and these elements transcend the traditional aspects of rhetoric or narrative. Music, like painting,

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<sup>338</sup> Caine et al., 580.

<sup>339</sup> Martina Miranda, "You're In or You're Out: The Impact of Preconceptions on Social Development in the Kindergarten Music Classroom" in *Narrative Soundings: An Anthology of Narrative Inquiry in Music Education* (2012), 112.

<sup>340</sup> Note from backstage: As music educators, what do we want *lingering* in students' minds?

<sup>341</sup> Patricia E. Riley, "Journey of Self-Exploration: Seeking Understanding through Musical and Cultural Experiences in South India" in *Narrative Soundings: An Anthology of Narrative Inquiry in Music Education* (2012), 228.

can hit us in the gut, a visceral impact that hones a heightened sense, without further interpretation being necessary. It is music that sets good poetry apart from traditional prose. It is music that blurs the boundaries of prose to create lyric prose.<sup>342</sup>

**James:** Sometimes when I'm editing, I'll put in the music, and I feel like I have so much forward momentum. Then once the track stops, I feel like I stop. I *need* the music.

**Patricia E. Riley:** Matt expresses his changed understanding of human existence, and his place in the world through a transformative moment experienced by all the students: While visiting a temple in Trichy, we came across a man selling roses . . . He handed Bridgett a beautiful red flower and said, "When you return to your country, tell them that a man with no money gave you a rose." . . . The rose had been more than a gift; it had been a message. And not merely a message for Bridgett, but a message for America, and Bridgett had been selected to be the messenger . . . What could we say to this man, as he held the flower in his outstretched hand, this flower that represented not only the generosity of spirit of this poor street merchant, but also the selfishness and greed of an entire country? . . . Walking away with tears in our eyes as Bridgett held the beautiful and horrible gift was undoubtedly the most powerful moment of the entire trip.<sup>343</sup>

**Jeananne Nichols:** Barone champions . . . "emancipatory educational storysharing" as a discursive mode of scholarship that fosters moments of epiphany, identification, and understanding.<sup>344</sup> One purpose . . . is to bring forward the voices of those who are typically unheard in mainstream discourse.<sup>345</sup>

**Bryan:** I'm guessing that's one reason why we're here.<sup>346</sup>

**D. Jean Clandinin:** As the dominant narrative of music education begins to shift and change as music teacher educators and researchers take up the challenge of inquiring narratively into the living, telling, re-telling, and re-living of individual's experiences of music education, we need to remind ourselves that what works "for now" depends on each of us remaining open to the possibilities that things can be otherwise.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Rishma Dunlop, "Music Lessons and Other Stories: Partial Inventory" in *Narrative Soundings: An Anthology of Narrative Inquiry in Music Education* (2012), 133.

<sup>343</sup> Riley, 228-229.

<sup>344</sup> Nichols, 263.

<sup>345</sup> Nichols, 264.

<sup>346</sup> Note from backstage: It's probably the *main* reason as to why Bryan, Mark, and James are here.

<sup>347</sup> D. Jean Clandinin, "Troubling Certainty: Narrative Possibilities for Music Education" in *Narrative Inquiry in Music Education: Troubling Certainty* (2009), 208.

## **Karaoke Trailblazer**

## Notes from backstage:

Before you read this section, you should know some things about the formatting. If the text is aligned in the center, you're reading about Breezy's process—his “behind the scenes.” These sections are centered because the process is incredibly important, and we don't always treat the process like it's “center stage.” If the text is aligned to the left with >>>>, these sections are about Breezy going out into the real world to sing karaoke. When the text is aligned to the right and put inside a box, Breezy is online—mostly on Discord or YouTube. There are also lots of footnotes that either direct you to a link or explain the “karaoke speak” that's happening.

In this story, Breezy's voice comes through direct quotes and the narrator's speaking style. To play with voice in a different way, I tried to imitate Breezy so that he's represented in more ways than one. This blurring of the lines between us is intentional—direct quotes are not the be-all and end-all of voice and its characterization.<sup>348</sup>

Another thing you should know is that Breezy often uses words that commonly have negative connotations to mean positive things. Here are some examples:

“This one's gonna be a nightmare” means that he's excited for the challenge.

“This is stupid” translates to stupid cool.

“Look at this mess” is “there's a lot happening on screen and that's awesome.”

“Wow that's crazy looking” means crazy good.

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<sup>348</sup> I want to address the fact that this statement might seem contradictory after using so many direct quotes in stories like “The Focus Group” and “The Narrative Turn.” The reason those stories rely on direct quotes more so than this one and some others, is because I have not met many of those scholars and I did not feel it was appropriate to try and imitate their voices outside of their written work. However, with Bryan, Mark, and James, I spent quality time with each of them and communicated with them regularly, so I know their voices well enough to explore how they might be represented outside of direct quotes.

To summarize: “Whenever I say dumb, it’s a high compliment.”

Description of Breezy's Studio Karaoke channel on YouTube:

Arguably barely karaoke videos.<sup>349</sup> You be the judge. If you like 'em, spread the word, leave a like, share, comment. I do appreciate them.

Look at the playlists for things you may think are missing. Songs are sorted in tiers based on potential distractions in said video. B Tier - Little to No Distractions

A Tier - Possible Various Distractions

S-Tier - You should know the song. It can be wildly distracting.

Breezy has had this song in his back pocket for a while. He had a specific vision for it, and now that he knows more, he can make it happen. During the credits of *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021), a cover of “Wake Up” by Brass Against played.<sup>350</sup> He could see the karaoke video in his mind—now he just had to get to figurin’ and doin’. It was gonna be a nightmare. He had already bought the song, so he went to x-minus<sup>351</sup> to split the stems<sup>352</sup> and remove the vocals. Damn, technology is awesome—we’re livin’ in the future! After taking out the vocal track in Audacity,<sup>353</sup> Breezy Googled the lyrics and double checked them—sometimes they’re wrong. In KBS<sup>354</sup>, he formatted the lyrics into different pages<sup>355</sup> and did the sync.<sup>356</sup> While some karaoke creators are super precise,

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<sup>349</sup> Backstage: I really like this first statement, but Breezy recently changed it to: “‘Best in the world’ Karaoke videos.” You can find the description here: <https://www.youtube.com/@StudioBreezy>

<sup>350</sup> Brass Against, “Wake Up | Rage Against the Machine cover | ft. Sophia Urista,” YouTube, May 18, 2018, 6:01, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JrIKcoD1Qw>.

<sup>351</sup> X-MINUS.PRO, 2023, <https://x-minus.pro/>.

<sup>352</sup> Stems are mixes of individual tracks that are often organized into categories such as drums and vocals.

<sup>353</sup> Audacity, 2024, <https://www.audacityteam.org/>.

<sup>354</sup> Karaoke Builder Studio (KBS) is a program that many karaoke creators use to make their videos.

<sup>355</sup> A page in karaoke is one screen. Some creators put a lot of lyrics on one page, while some purposefully put less text on each page.

<sup>356</sup> The sync involves tapping the space bar for each word in the song. This is how creators get the words to line up with the music.

Breezy prefers to have an accurate sync that flows and doesn't feel robotic or stilted. It doesn't have to be timed to the millisecond because, let's be honest, you should know the damn song. After checking the sync's accuracy, Breezy gets to play around with the displays<sup>357</sup> and removals.<sup>358</sup> To avoid overlap, he starts with removals. Most karaoke videos display the lyrics in time for you to sing, and remove them once they've been sung. Breezy likes to keep the lyrics on screen for a bit longer so that if a singer gets off track, they still have their words. For this song, the removals are going to be timed to snare drum hits. It'll make the video way more *dynamic*. In all honesty, if this were a basic karaoke video, Breezy would probably be done. But this is no ordinary video and we're not dealing with an ordinary creator.

This video is going to have multiple nightmares. Nightmare #1 involves changing the lyrics into matrix symbols. Breezy found a word scrambler to help, but this is still going to be a tedious process (like everything he does for his videos). He thinks to himself, "This is so stupid, but it's gonna look fucking ridiculous." Breezy always goes the extra mile to make his stuff look cool. He tells people that he's lazy or that he'll get sloppy when he wants to just "get it done," but his standards are so incredibly high that Breezy brings new meaning to the phrase "it's all relative."

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<sup>357</sup> When a letter, word, or line appears on screen.

<sup>358</sup> When a letter, word, or line leaves the screen.





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-Rrx11fBko>

Breezy found virtual karaoke to be super weird at first. For one thing, he was usually working when the different creators were hosting. He could hang out in the chat, but that was another issue—he went to karaoke to *sing*, not to watch. Eventually he warmed up to it and especially enjoyed when people pulled up his videos. He’s lucky to have fallen into this community that loves the dumb stuff he does. His joke to everyone is, “I don’t do anything special, I just make shit fly on the screen.”<sup>359</sup>

Breezy makes a lot of decisions based on aesthetics. He’s also the definition of detail oriented. He thinks people won’t notice certain things, but there are tons of examples of

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<sup>359</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/@VelvetGoatcheeseSings/videos>

people appreciating how thorough he is. There's definitely a steep KBS learning curve, but Breezy is past the curve and to the point where he probably knows the software better than its programmers. However, there's always more to learn and that's what Breezy loves about creating karaoke videos. It's an "evergreen" hobby: Something that will stay fresh and interesting. An enduring challenge.

>>>> Sometimes Breezy likes to take his flash drive out to karaoke so he can see how it looks on the "big screen." Singing also helps him catch typos that he can't see while he's working in KBS. Another thing that sets Breezy apart are his title cards.<sup>360</sup> If you look at the list of videos on most karaoke channels, you'll most likely see boxes and boxes of the same image, with the only changes being the featured song title and artist. On Breezy's channel, each title card is unique. For karaoke bars that use YouTube, it's super easy for Breezy to find exactly what he wants to sing.

It isn't a rule, but if you have an idea for a video, it's a good call to check Karaoke Nerds<sup>361</sup> to see if there's a version already out there. If there is, you can always ask the creator in Discord<sup>362</sup> if it's cool to make another one. You also want to make sure you're doing something different with it. If you're just replicating what's out there...what's the point? And just to be clear, corporate karaoke doesn't count (Sing King,<sup>363</sup> KaraFun,<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> A title card is the first image/screen in a karaoke video. It usually displays the title of the song and the artist.

<sup>361</sup> Karaoke Nerds, <https://www.karaokenerds.com/>.

<sup>362</sup> Discord, <https://discord.com/company>.

<sup>363</sup> Sing King, "Sing King," YouTube, November 16, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/@singkingkaraoke/featured>.

<sup>364</sup> KaraFun Karaoke, "KaraFun Karaoke," YouTube, August 8, 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/@karafun>.

Sound Choice,<sup>365</sup> etc.). Pro tip: If you're having a karaoke party, try using Karaoke Nerds instead of YouTube. While all the homebrew<sup>366</sup> videos are on YouTube, they tend to lump karaoke and instrumental videos together, so you don't always get the best results. Also, homebrew videos are way better than the corporate stuff.<sup>367</sup>

Breezy thinks to himself that he's an idiot for doing so much work, but then again, it's more interesting to do ridiculous shit. After doing some checks and tests of the video so far, he thinks it's stupid and gonna look so good when it's done.

He's excited to post this one in the diveBar<sup>368</sup> chat. More and more creators are starting to "pull a Breezy," which means doing something more creative than just a standard karaoke video (shout out to Rose<sup>369</sup>, Mix Tape<sup>370</sup>, and It Might Be Karaoke<sup>371</sup>). It's fun to see things become more bonk (aka bonkers). He wonders, "Did I change the game? Or would they have done that without me?"<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Sound Choice Karaoke, "Sound Choice Karaoke," YouTube, January 6, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/@soundchoicekaraoke5436>.

<sup>366</sup> Individual creators who make karaoke videos.

<sup>367</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@BrilliantTrashMusic/videos>

<sup>368</sup> The karaoke Discord group.

<sup>369</sup> Rose's Garden Variety Karaoke, "Rose's Garden Variety Karaoke," YouTube, April 2, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/@Roses-karaoke/videos>.

<sup>370</sup> Mix Tape Karaoke, "Mix Tape Karaoke," YouTube, March 12, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/@mixtapekaraoke/videos>.

<sup>371</sup> It Might Be Karaoke, "It Might Be Karaoke," YouTube, October 23, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/@ItMightBeKaraoke/videos>.

<sup>372</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke creator: <https://www.youtube.com/@nomadkaraoke/videos>

Gah, why doesn't KBS have a zoom-in feature? It would make fine tuning way easier.

“Wake Up” is for sure going on the YSKTS<sup>373</sup> playlist because of all the bullshit and “distractions.” Breezy knows he's on the right track because he just wants to watch the video and forget about singing. After previewing the ass<sup>374</sup> for Nightmare #1 page 1, Breezy moves on to Nightmare #2. In theory this idea should work, but it's never been done before. Nightmare #1 was about changing the lyrics into matrix code and Nightmare #2 is about having matrix code scroll *vertically* (like what happens in the movies). He starts with the letter “A” and creates one line. He continues with “B” and then joins them together and repeats the process as he goes through the alphabet. He's not sure if KBS has a page limit, but he'll know for sure after this one.

The karaoke creators on YouTube are a niche group. Honestly, the YouTube platform doesn't really matter to this community. If anything, they'd love to find a platform that doesn't hand out copyright strikes,<sup>375</sup> especially since no one is monetized. It's such a problem that the group created a form letter for how to respond to copyright strikes and a list of “Bands to Avoid.” On the plus side, there's a sense of freedom that comes with

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<sup>373</sup> You Should Know This Song (YSKTS). This playlist was recently renamed to “S Tier Difficulty (Advanced)” with the description: “You Should Know This Song first before attempting in a live setting. Difficulty is not ranked based on song, but what the video contains.”

<sup>374</sup> A type of file. Yes, many jokes accompany this name. Some people refer to it as “subtitle.” A few of Breezy's tutorials feature the word subtitle instead of ass because he doesn't want YouTube to get upset.

<sup>375</sup> This happens when a copyright owner submits a copyright removal request to YouTube because their content was used without permission. If YouTube reviews the request and determines that it is valid, the video has to be removed due to copyright law. This is a big deal because after 3 strikes, YouTube can delete a creator's channel, remove all their videos, and prevent them from creating a new channel. Unfortunately, this recently happened to a karaoke creator, and the community is advocating for changes to YouTube's policies: Bryan Frolick, “What Happened to Lemmy Caution - Help us out, link in the description,” YouTube, March 11, 2024, 1:25, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1quie0k7aTk>.

not worrying about monetization and analytics. There's no market for a lot of Breezy's most interesting and complex videos, and that's fine. Breezy and the other creators don't do this for money: "I'm doing the song because I think it's cool as shit."<sup>376</sup>

64 pages so far. The longest one before this was around 40. Breezy wants the vertical matrix code to fall into the first two words: "Come on." To make it more dynamic, he moves the lines into different places on the screen. He knows KBS wasn't built for this type of stuff. He wishes the program could do x, y, and z, but then Breezy remembers, "It's a me problem." KBS isn't going to make a bunch of changes for one overzealous creator. After almost four hours of work in one day, he thinks, "There's gotta be a way to do this quicker." He opens up a notepad in KBS and tries to change the code that way.

It doesn't look like he'll be testing the video at Homer's<sup>377</sup> tonight...

>>>>Breezy gets to karaoke night early to give the host time to upload his new videos. It would be nice if they could delete his old ones while they're at it—Breezy has *standards* and the old videos don't measure up. Homer's is a preferred spot because the rotation<sup>378</sup> is decent. Some karaoke bars, especially the ones that cater to tourists, don't respect the people who have been waiting and let new arrivals jump the queue. It's annoying when hosts can't strike the right balance.

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<sup>376</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke creator: <https://www.youtube.com/@carpykaraoke/videos>

<sup>377</sup> A karaoke bar in Austin, Texas where every night is karaoke night.

<sup>378</sup> The rotation is when singers get their "turn" on the mic.

Oh god, 107 pages. Breezy is being mindful of the formatting in Notepad and tries to keep it consistent. The file is 212 KB<sup>379</sup> so far. He checks it out and while it looks good, he thinks, “There should be more.” Instead of testing it out at Homer’s, maybe he’ll just show some other creators a preview.

>>>>Some karaoke bars use YouTube, but they have some sort of deal with the company and aren’t allowed to use homebrew videos. The diveBar group has a whole Google Drive of files that Breezy would love to offer to local places—even if it’s just a handful from Austin-based creators like It Might Be Karaoke and Pear.<sup>380</sup> Breezy might be biased, but he has proof that homebrew videos are usually higher quality choices. He remembers this Sound Choice version of “My Own Worst Enemy” that was horrific.<sup>381</sup> He could tell it wasn’t the original audio but a bad cover that sounded off key. When he started making his own videos, he began to notice how “off” some covers were. Nowadays, we don’t have to rely on covers, which reminds Breezy of this Patton Oswalt bit where he talks about going back in time to talk to himself in 1999<sup>382</sup>: “Oh, that’s my old Walkman! Take the cassette out and snap it in two. See how big that is now? That’s what you’ll listen to music on—it’ll be that big. Every song you’ve ever heard, or will ever hear, or will ever be written can be put on that thing.” The access we

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<sup>379</sup> Kilobyte and one kilobyte = 1,000 bytes.

<sup>380</sup> Peareoke, “Peareoke,” YouTube, March 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/@Peareoke/videos>.

<sup>381</sup> This version doesn’t seem to exist anymore...maybe they realized it was “horrific” and took it down?

<sup>382</sup> Patton Oswalt, “Obama... And Time Travel... And Coolness... And the Last Racist,” YouTube, September 11, 2015, 0:06 to 1:25, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Me1HcsrLaw>.

have to music now is insane. Breezy was even able to save song stems from *Rock Band*.<sup>383</sup> Damn, what a great game.

Breezy counts out loud to make sure the spacing of the lines is correct. The timing was fine before, but now it's a bit off. He suspects it has something to do with KBS crashing—it wasn't happy with all the pages. Again, "it's a me problem." Breezy spends hours tweaking and adjusting the timing. He starts cursing at KBS. "Save, fuck you!" "I'm getting this done today, motherfuckers." He creates four different types of matrix displays to create variety. Breezy thinks that it probably doesn't matter, but goes ahead and puts in the time anyway. You can see KBS chugging—it does not like working this hard. After hours—scratch that—full days of work, Breezy is ready to compile the bullshit. The first section crashed at 3,214 pages. The second section came to a total of 823, and the third section also crashed at 1,360 pages. KBS is usually stable, but it's not used to running thousands of pages when the average karaoke video is probably somewhere around 20. The final video is 4 MB<sup>384</sup>, which is about 1,000 times bigger than any video he's ever made. He's ecstatic to see that the final page count is 5,700 *even*. "This is so god damn dumb." He prays there are no spelling mistakes and previews the whole thing. He notices one fuck-up, but no one else will notice, and if they do, he has an artistic justification for it locked and loaded.

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<sup>383</sup> "Rock Band" was a video game series where the controllers were modelled after musical instruments. Players could choose from a variety of songs and perform the vocal, guitar, bass, or drum part by following note patterns onscreen.

<sup>384</sup> Megabyte and one megabyte = one million bytes.

Finally, he's ready to work on the title card. Since it played at the end of the newest *Matrix* installment, he figures that the pin-up should look like a Matrix character. Another creator, Monster<sup>385</sup>, really helped Breezy with this part of the process. The AI generator<sup>386</sup> works way better when you start with an image because then you can tweak the prompt<sup>387</sup> from there. He gave Breezy some pin-up model images to use as baselines, which has helped speed up the process. It's still a lot of guesswork, so Breezy starts trying different words in the prompt: high-quality realistic illustration, straight black hair, matrix attire, in city streets at night, trench coat, etc. He thinks the program prioritizes features that show up earlier in the list, so he tries that too. He's happy that he has a broader, more open-ended idea for this one. Whenever he has a very specific idea, it takes forever for the generator to get there and Breezy doesn't quit until it's right. So far, the results are pretty good and include plenty of real estate for the text that he'll insert later. He makes some changes and runs the program to get a second batch of options. While he waits for the results, he clicks through other title cards of his and instantly remembers which ones were easy to get, and which ones were a pain. He usually has better luck separating the pin-up from the background, but these ones are turning out to be pretty great. He's getting particularly lucky with the hands this time around—AI is *not* good at human hands. He saves the images just in case, makes more tweaks, and runs it again. Breezy knows that AI has been a hot topic lately, but he knows from experience that it has a long way to go to “compete” with people. Breezy likes one from this batch and imports it into GIMP, a graphics editing

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<sup>385</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/@MonsterTracksKaraoke/videos>

<sup>386</sup> Stable Diffusion, 2024, <https://stablediffusionweb.com/>.

<sup>387</sup> The prompt is the text that describes the AI image.



program.<sup>388</sup> He tweaks part of the background and adds the song title, artist name, and “Breezy’s Studio.” Just to be safe, he covers the pin-up’s hand with some words. Every

Breezy video is unique, but the next part of the process is standard procedure. He opens up HitFilm, his video editing program of choice.<sup>389</sup> Breezy makes sure to fill the entire screen. He times the loading of the title card and minimizes any blank screen time. If the screen is blank for more than 2 seconds, you have space to fill. He adds his watermark girl and his outro page before exporting the file. He heard that YouTube’s search function uses file names, so when he goes to save the video, he throws in as many keywords as possible: Brass Against Wake Up Rage against the machine female cover Matrix Resurrections karaoke instrumental. Breezy can imagine the ass jokes that’ll come from this one. He’s going to keep it unlisted<sup>390</sup> for now and surprise Mix Tape and It Might Be Karaoke with it live.

It’s done. Breezy starts thinking about his next project. All he knows is that he doesn’t want to do anything boring.

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<sup>388</sup> GIMP, <https://www.gimp.org/>.

<sup>389</sup> Artlist, 2022, <https://fxhome.com/>.

<sup>390</sup> If you upload a video as “unlisted,” only people with the link can watch it.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygzyTT-0GB8>

A brave soul sings Breezy's version of "Here's the Thing" by Girl Talk<sup>391</sup> at diveBar's virtual karaoke.<sup>392</sup> Afterwards, the host and singer go back and forth<sup>393</sup>:

**Host:** I'm gonna be singin' that on the streets of Bloomington this weekend. Breezy...all that Breezy is so amazing.

**Singer:** I love Breezy's stuff.

**Host:** He's the king of text craziness.

<sup>391</sup> Girl Talk, "Here's the Thing," YouTube, December 13, 2014, 4:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HprWys25um4>.

<sup>392</sup> diveBar Karaoke, "diveBar Karaoke," YouTube, December 9, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/@diveBarKaraoke/streams>.

<sup>393</sup> diveBar Karaoke, "Karaoke Singing on a Wednesday Night with diveBar Karaoke," YouTube, July 26, 2023, 31:35 to 32:08, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjMy6NZApr&t=1934s>.

**Singer:** Right?! Did you see all that video in the background?!

**Host:** I made a new track that is an homage with manipulated/animated text for him today...I hope he hangs around, I know he's watching back there.<sup>394</sup>

This song is one of Bryan's favorites and it has a lot of moving parts that make it appealing. The process will start similarly to "Wake Up," but the intro is going to be interesting here. If you know Girl Talk, you know that each song transitions seamlessly into the next throughout the entire album. Instead of cutting an intro from "Here's the Thing," Breezy wants to use the ending of the previous track, "Let Me See You."<sup>395</sup> As he works in Audacity, Breezy is already excited about the challenges ahead. This song has a lot of overlapping lyrics, so he'll have to decide which ones go on screen for the singer. He wants to keep a lot of the backing vocals in there as well—good thing vocal separation magic exists.

This is going to be a YSKTS, for sure. Breezy's chopping up a bunch of stuff in this one, but he knows Girl Talk did the same thing with the samples<sup>396</sup> he used, so he doesn't feel that bad—like he's overediting someone's original work. There's a lot of voice doubling that might be difficult to separate. There may also be spots where he decides

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<sup>394</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke creator: <https://www.youtube.com/@PunkMediaKaraoke/videos>

<sup>395</sup> Girl Talk, "Let Me See You," YouTube, December 13, 2014, 4:03, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMUL7q0w7H8>.

<sup>396</sup> A music sample is a portion of another recording. Artists usually manipulate the sample somehow for their new creation.

to leave in the lead voice to emphasize certain words. Breezy likes to say there's a difference between knowing a song and *karaoke* knowing it. It's no wonder he "karaoke knows" all his songs because he listens and rewinds, over and over and over. After working through each section, he listens to the whole karaoke version and renders a new track. He makes sure the original and karaoke track are the same by comparing the soundwaves. After multiple checks, Breezy pulls up whosampled.com. It should be more accurate to look up the lyrics from each sample than to Google the lyrics to "Here's the Thing." As he scrolls through the lyrics, he already has an idea of what will be accented: "choo, choo," "get buck," and "whoa woo." Breezy does the sync, watches it, adjusts the timing, and watches again. He's also making sure the lines match up with the natural breaks in the song. He changes every "and" to an "&." It's an aesthetics thing, but also a timing thing. It's a Breezy thing.

If Breezy were a character in a movie, the director would have to include "Cult of Personality" as part of his origin story. After falling into the Discord group, he noticed that creators frequently shared their work. At that time, Breezy felt like he only had one good video, so he posted it. The reaction was...shockingly positive. The creators were stunned. How did he...*do all that?* Breezy instantly became a trailblazer—pushing the boundaries of the karaoke genre. It still doesn't make sense to him that he was *first*. No one had done anything like this before he came along. After "Cult of Personality," he kept putting in the time. It was fun when people noticed the smaller details...<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke creator: <https://www.youtube.com/@FunboxKaraoke/playlists>



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bCcy\\_suvA0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bCcy_suvA0)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2DKCTH2m-A>

[@shirakeru](#) 3 months ago

Amazing Track. The work you put into each of your tracks blows me away. From the nod to Computer Blue in the thumbnail to all the amazing bluescreens (not to mention a

working QR code) it is absolutely fantastic. I make karaoke tracks...you make ファック

\*/#---hecking art!<sup>398</sup>

>>>>Breezy did a quick version of “Here’s the Thing” at karaoke. It was fine. The audience had no idea what was going on, but that’s Girl Talk. He never truly knows if the audio is good until he tries it on stage. For example, “The first version [of ‘Wake Up’] needed audio help big time after I took it to Homer’s to play...it just didn’t sound as good as it should.” X-minus had pulled out some horns with the vocal part...and you can’t remove horns from a band called “Brass Against.” After some cutting and pasting in Audacity, he was able to fix it.

Someone on stream did an old Breezy video and it was horrific. Some of the remasters<sup>399</sup> are time-consuming, but they need to be fixed, for sure. Once they’re done, Breezy will be able to sing them again. How is he supposed to sing something if he can’t stand looking at it?<sup>400</sup>

The removals for this one are going to be on the beat, and the displays will somehow be timed to the music. He finds snare drum hits that line up and give the lyrics plenty of time on screen. Breezy often gets ideas while he’s working on a video: “Something’s

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<sup>398</sup> Breezy reuploaded “Blue Screen,” so this comment won’t be under the new video.

<sup>399</sup> Remasters are old videos that creators want to update or upgrade in some way.

<sup>400</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke creator: <https://www.youtube.com/@CloudElevenKaraoke/videos>



gotta be done with this part.” He decides to shorten up some lines to make the timing more interesting.<sup>401</sup> He laughs thinking about the fact that no one has done or would ever do Girl Talk. Enter Breezy.

Breezy fell into the Discord group after spending some time on Reddit.<sup>402</sup> He was pleasantly surprised to find this community of people. Everyone there became a creator because they wanted to sing a song that didn’t have a karaoke version...until now.<sup>403</sup>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyhB7ui57gU>

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<sup>401</sup> For just one example of this, check out: Donna Janowski, “Behind the Scenes: Episode 7 | Breezy’s Studio Karaoke | “Here’s the Thing” by Girl Talk - Part 4,” YouTube, December 4, 2023, 12:50 to 14:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkAdN4YUXQY&t=752s>.

<sup>402</sup> Reddit, 2024, <https://www.redditinc.com/>.

<sup>403</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke creator: <https://www.youtube.com/@Acorlei/videos>

Breezy thinks “This is the most tedious part...well, one of them.” He starts adding gaps and splitting up lines.<sup>404</sup> He might move some words up to emphasize them. Even though Breezy has some self-imposed rules, there are always exceptions, and each song calls for different things. For example, this is a Girl Talk song. Since YSKTS, there are rules that don’t have to be followed. In other words, this crazy song full of samples needs to look crazy. This one *cannot* look basic. Breezy believes that karaoke is equal parts what you want to sing and what you want to see. Eventually, he’s going to move words around, change the colors, and add extra words to make them “pop.” These are all very “Breezy” things to do.

He checks the timing of the removals and thinks it’s pretty ok, but there’s plenty to fix.

He starts splitting more lines, adding fixed text,<sup>405</sup> putting in gaps, and capitalizing words. Breezy puts words all over the screen and rotates a few for an extra effect. As he begins to work on the displays, he thinks about how the timing could eliminate the need for lead-ins.<sup>406</sup> Karaoke should be a go-by, not hand holding. Sometimes the beats surprise him, but he gets to know the song and the individual stems extremely well throughout this process of careful listening.

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<sup>404</sup> Taking a line of text and breaking it into smaller pieces.

<sup>405</sup> When words “pop” onto the screen instantly, instead of being highlighted for the singer.

<sup>406</sup> Lead-ins are some kind of symbol or countdown that help the singer know when to start.



Suddenly, Breezy pulls up a grid that covers the entire screen. He uses this when he needs to line up text in a particular way. It's worth it to get good, crisp, clean text. Once he finds where the words should go on screen, he pulls up a notepad and writes down some numbers he'll need to place other words in the same spot. Sometimes he forgets to do this and thinks to himself, "Work smart, you're already doing something stupid." After finishing the displays, he checks the song from the beginning. "Not bad, but still needs work." He's hoping to do this one right the first time because his list of songs to remaster is already long enough. He wants his own reaction to be "That looks really cool and it fits and it's awesome," not just "Yeah, it works."

It seems like before Breezy, a lot of karaoke creators never thought beyond the basics: "Set it and forget it." Everyone has their own style, but Breezy would love to see more dynamic, high-quality videos. This brings us to: THE CDG<sup>407</sup> VS. ASS DEBATE OF 2023.

"There's a podcast called 'Hood Politics.' He was doing don't be an ol' head, be an OG. An OG is that guy who's been around, he wants to help the young bucks to come up, he's gonna help them, 'don't do my mistakes, do it like this.' Ol' head is the kind of person who's like 'nah back in my day, this is how we did it.'"<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> An old type of file that is commonly used and associated with karaoke videos.

<sup>408</sup> Jason "Prop" Petty, "OG's or Ol' Heads," Hood Politics Podcast, 3:15 to 6:40, <https://player.fm/series/hood-politics-with-prop/ogs-or-ol-heads>.

This episode helps Breezy explain why nostalgia is bad. It's never as good as you remember and "we're livin' in the future." There's a reason why we don't use old phones and cars anymore. It's interesting because it seems like the bigger channels are mostly against upgrading, but if they're worried about views, they would most likely get a "remaster bump" from the algorithm. YouTube likes similar content, so they'd probably get even more views on the newer one. Breezy doesn't care about views and even re-uploaded "Hi Ren" after getting more than 5,000 views on it. Basically, everyone should take the upgrade. Period.<sup>409</sup>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8QQeJFK4ZI>

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<sup>409</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke creator: <https://www.youtube.com/@lopenash/videos>

Breezy decides to “cheat” a bit and insert specific things in post (in HitFilm). He used to think there was a purity to doing everything in KBS, but that program can only do so much. You should use whatever you can to make the most dynamic video. After fixing some punctuation and capitalization, he thinks that “Here’s the Thing” is going to be a timing-based video. He notices one part is too static—it almost feels like notes are missing. Once he commits to the timing, he notices more opportunities for improvement. Should the one section be timed by letter instead of by word? Breezy pulls up a notepad and makes a to-do list of his new ideas. He likes to throw shit at the wall to figure out what works. One thing he knows for sure is he needs to like the song. That’s why he doesn’t really take requests or commissions. Some suggestions are good, but if Breezy can’t listen to it on repeat, it’s not going to happen.

With these remasters and the debate, it comes down to different priorities. Will Breezy lose some views? Yeah, but it’s not about views (although, it’s nice to know the diveBar group will always watch his stuff to see what he did). It’s about creating the best karaoke videos possible. Also, if there’s a “mistake,” Breezy will notice it every time he sings that song and then he’ll stop singing it, which defeats the whole purpose. The point is to sing.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke creator: <https://www.youtube.com/@CCKaraoke/videos>

Breezy basically splits up all the lines. He renders the video and checks it out. He loves the timing.

As a guy who is very pro “subtitle” in the debate, Breezy made this:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGmsZ1IVVqk&list=PL6O5kTvhQJeNdjbaZWeaZ8l>

[OgAPf6ZQtI&index=11](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGmsZ1IVVqk&list=PL6O5kTvhQJeNdjbaZWeaZ8l)

And this tutorial called “Fonts & Sync”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54BUrhkZ2OE&list=PL6O5kTvhQJeNdjbaZWeaZ8l>

[OgAPf6ZQtI&index=12](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54BUrhkZ2OE&list=PL6O5kTvhQJeNdjbaZWeaZ8l)

Also this, to prove that you could make a high-resolution video with the “aesthetic” of

CDG:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sW3PdvzId0>

Also, Breezy does more work than anyone, so no one can really use the excuse that it's too much work. And, if homebrew wants to compete with (or overturn) corporate karaoke, the creators have to at least *match* their level of quality, which means moving away from CDG.

After doing more work on removals, displays, splitting up words and lines, pulling up the grid, and fixing overlapping text, Breezy thinks there *is* a method to the madness. "This is gonna be one dynamic ass video."

When it comes to karaoke, of course the audio is important. But too many people discount the visual aspect. One time, Breezy created a video for someone and decided to do a remaster. He upgraded just the title card and left the audio alone. The guy told him the new version *sounded* better—it’s funny how our brains work.<sup>411</sup>

Breezy made two versions of the video with only one major difference. Trust me, both were a mess. For the title card, he thought it would be fun to put Kelly Clarkson in a forest surrounded by “bucks” since “Get buck” was definitely his favorite part of the song. He searches for an AI image that seems like it’ll have a solid prompt to jumpstart the process. Eventually he wants to spend more time figuring out how to get better results. After about four runs, he gets a pin-up that looks a lot like Kelly Clarkson. For the buck, he tried adding “deer” to the prompt. Instead of putting some deer in the forest, it generated an image of Kelly Clarkson with antlers—not quite what he’s going for. After some more tweaking and editing, the first ever Girl Talk karaoke video is ready to go.

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<sup>411</sup> Check out this homebrew karaoke creator: <https://www.youtube.com/@CloakyOke/videos>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HLjh2c0KUc>

>>>>It's 8:30 at Homer's. The waitress brings over an iced tea and asks if more people are coming. "Yeah, four more will be here, thanks."<sup>412</sup> As he waits for the others, *Breezy* wonders which song should kick off the night. He pulls out his phone and goes to his YouTube channel, aka his catalogue.

>>>>As *Breezy* looks for songs to sing, let's check out the place. There's a stage for the karaoke singers with a red curtain that looks like it was taken from the Red Room set of *Twin Peaks*. Disco balls and balloons of unicorns and rainbows hang from the

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<sup>412</sup> This last part is a "combined" story from two different nights—one night at Homer's and another at a private karaoke house party.

ceiling. One is shaped like a crown and says, "Happy Birthday, Princess!" On the walls, there are neon signs for different beer companies like Coors and Bud Light. The rest of the décor includes random pictures like an AT-AT from *Star Wars* (1980) and Milton from *Office Space* (1999). It's mostly dark, but there are multi-colored lights that shine on the stage and its singers.

>>>>IT MIGHT BE KARAOKE pulls up a chair as MIXTAPE KARAOKE swings into the Homer's parking lot. This is where ***Breezy*** and MIXTAPE met. Eventually MIXTAPE got tired of asking ***Breezy*** to make karaoke videos for him, so he became a creator himself. ***Breezy*** was able to give him a great head start when it came to creating a channel or brand and, maybe more importantly, knowing "what not to do." ***Breezy*** is excited to meet **PEAREOKE** and golden chorale karaoke face-to-face for the first time tonight. Everyone knows each other from diveBar, but it's bonkers that so many karaoke creators live in Austin. ***Breezy*** is looking forward to meeting these other people who are just as ridiculous as him.

>>>>Once **PEAREOKE** and golden chorale get there, the karaoke creator table is full. Everyone puts their names in the rotation. ***Breezy*** still doesn't know what to do first, but he'll probably be able to sing at least three or four songs before he leaves around 11:00. Even with a decent rotation, you gotta make it count.



**Behind the Scenes: Episode 2 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Wake Up" by Brass  
Against - Part 1: <https://youtu.be/QYSbYhfL3-g>**

**Behind the Scenes: Episode 3 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Wake Up" by Brass  
Against - Part 2: <https://youtu.be/rBwmSDjLpLs>**

**Behind the Scenes: Episode 4 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Here's the Thing" by  
Girl Talk - Part 1: <https://youtu.be/ANpYjHCu9h4>**

**Behind the Scenes: Episode 5 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Here's the Thing" by  
Girl Talk - Part 2: <https://youtu.be/gFiHP65hbBY>**

**Behind the Scenes: Episode 6 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Here's the Thing" by  
Girl Talk - Part 3: <https://youtu.be/spKzpW1SChk>**

**Behind the Scenes: Episode 7 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Here's the Thing" by  
Girl Talk - Part 4: <https://youtu.be/pkAdN4YUXQY>**

**Behind the Scenes: Episode 8 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Here's the Thing" by  
Girl Talk - Part 5: <https://youtu.be/r1u3nYawBU8>**

## **Searching for Voice**

## *What are you looking for?*

SEARCH CATALOGUE: voice in qualitative research

### **Results: BOOK**

Voice in qualitative inquiry: challenging conventional, interpretive, and critical conceptions in qualitative research

Jackson, Alecia Youngblood; Mazzei, Lisa A.  
2009

Voice is a complex concept in all qualitative research, and its intricacies are at the forefront within narrative inquiry. In general, researchers tend to put lots of pressure on voice. However, we have to remember “the insufficiency of voice—its abject propensity to be too much and never enough—is unavoidable. Voice will always turn out to be too frail to carry the solemn weight of political and theoretical expectation that has been laid upon it.”<sup>413</sup> MacLure expands upon this idea, noting that there are too many “what ifs.” A participant

might always have said something more, or something else, or something deeper, or something more true—if they had felt more at ease; if they had been more honest; if the researcher had asked better questions; or had refrained from asking so many questions; or had ‘shared’ more of herself; or introjected less of herself . . . if subject and researcher had been of the same sex, or age, or ethnicity, and so on.<sup>414</sup>

To recalibrate our dependency on voice, Mazzei advocates that we should “give up on the promise of voice. By the promise of voice I mean the promise of a voice that can provide truth, fixity, knowledge, and authenticity.”<sup>415</sup> We often find ourselves looking for direct quotes that provide the most straightforward answers to our research questions. Perhaps it would be more

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<sup>413</sup> Maggie MacLure, “Broken Voices, Dirty Words: On the Productive Insufficiency of Voice” in *Voice in Qualitative Inquiry: Challenging Conventional, Interpretive, and Critical Conceptions in Qualitative Research* (2009), 97.

<sup>414</sup> MacLure, 101.

<sup>415</sup> Lisa A. Mazzei, “An Impossibly Full Voice” in *Voice in Qualitative Inquiry: Challenging Conventional, Interpretive, and Critical Conceptions in Qualitative Research* (2009), 47.

productive “to seek the voice that escapes easy classification and that does not make easy sense.”<sup>416</sup>

*Thoughts from backstage:* Mark, Bryan, and James are people (with voices) that cannot be easily classified and do not make “easy sense.” While “subtly musical YouTubers” could be considered a category, it is not an easy one to describe, pin down, or name. I also recognize that I cannot fully represent their voices, their stories are developing beyond the pages of this text, and their words are open to interpretation.

### ***What are you looking for?***

SEARCH CATALOGUE: voice ideology

#### **Results: ARTICLE**

and this is my voice: autopathophonography and the politics of variable voice

Sterne, Jonathan

Canadian Journal of Disability Studies, 2021, Vol.10 (2), p. 294-304

Jonathan Sterne had papillary thyroid cancer develop in their neck and had to receive external beam radiation treatments. Every time they went in for a session of treatment, they recorded the date and the phrase: “and this is my voice.” In addition to an audio track, Sterne writes about the experience and complicates the meaning of voice:

A host of writing on ‘the voice’ . . . have treated *the voice* as the seat of subjectivity and as a metaphor for agency, self, efficacy in the world, and the threshold between the interior of a subject and the exterior world. But what if a voice is not actually a stable thing? I call this equation of voice with agency an *ideology of vocal ability*, which is what it sounds like: the belief that the voice is an index of a subject and a subject’s abilities.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> Lisa A. Mazzei and Alecia Youngblood Jackson, “Introduction: The Limit of Voice” in *Voice in Qualitative Inquiry: Challenging Conventional, Interpretive, and Critical Conceptions in Qualitative Research* (2009), 4.

<sup>417</sup> Jonathan Sterne, “...and this is my Voice: Autopathophonography and the Politics of Variable Voice” in *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* (2021), 287.

Over the course of the audio track, Sterne's voice changes slightly, but did not gradually diminish as much as expected. "Does the ebb and flow of my voice over six weeks convey a state of my body? Sure it does. But does it *express* my inner subjectivity? Absolutely not. There is no correlation at all between the sound on the recordings and my mood or my intention, beyond my intent to record my voice according to the rules I had set out for the piece."<sup>418</sup>

Recognizing the spaces that are left open to readers' interpretations, Sterne offers potential takeaways, but acknowledges "the artist's intention does not determine the meaning of the work."<sup>419</sup>

*Thoughts from backstage:* This reminds me of Bryan/Breezy, whose spoken voice is not a part of his videos, but you can still hear him in other ways. As an example, another karaoke creator told him, "You had such a thing to say with 'Cult of Personality.'" Bryan responded, "Yeah, kinda, nothing too specific . . . I didn't have too much of a point to drive home on that one. On 'Lola,' I *definitely* had a point to drive on that one. I love that song because it's 1970 . . . it's about a guy who falls in love with a trans woman." In this video, Bryan uses color to emphasize the pronouns and to point out that the conversation surrounding transgender rights "ain't nothing new." Some might also consider this video to be Bryan's way of celebrating or supporting transgender identities.

James can also be heard through the music he selects. He puts in a great deal of time, effort, and care in choosing the right tracks for each moment. There is *intention* behind each choice and the music helps him communicate with whoever may be watching.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Sterne, 290.

<sup>419</sup> Sterne, 290.

<sup>420</sup> "Sickos," a creator group on YouTube, would support the idea that music "speaks" for creators. Sickos doesn't collect money from AdSense, which is a rather strange choice, especially for a larger channel. "YouTube doesn't

## *What are you looking for?*

SEARCH CATALOGUE: voice and musicology

**Results:** ARTICLE

Why Voice Now?

Feldman, Martha

Journal of the American Musicological Society, 2015, Vol. 68 (3), p. 653-685

To build upon voice's complexity, Martha Feldman writes, "Whatever congeries of things we may find voice to be, it remains various and refractory to explanation."<sup>421</sup> Voice is related to the body in certain ways, but Feldman argues,

the voice now participates in speech and exceeds it. It emerges from the body, inhabits it, invades it, overshoots it. It settles in the memory, the unconscious, expresses itself in projections, fantasies, delusions, and hallucinations, is heard in aural phantoms and physiological deceptions (the Lombard effect, tinnitus), and deceives with technological tricks (ventriloquizing, channeling, throwing, and mixing voices). Voice is nothing if not boundless, furtive, and migratory, sometimes maddeningly so.<sup>422</sup>

The concept of voice can be frustrating, contradictory, and fraught with tension. Feldman continues to describe voice as "both inscribed within us and legible outside of us. Voice guarantees humanness at the same time as it calls it into question, delineates the human as it challenges it. Voice, it seems, may reveal us, but it is easily, all too easily, also manipulated by us and mistaken by others for things it is not ('real' truths, for instance . . .)"<sup>423</sup>

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allow creators to monetize videos via AdSense that use copyrighted material without permission from the copyright holder" and the group wants to use (and does use) "a mix of unique music from artists like Nas, TV on the Radio, and The Jackson 5."

"There's something to be said about how much music impacts people and how much it impacts a video and a feeling," Jackson Lebsack, a member of the six-person creator group, told us [*The Publish Press*]. That's because music makes their content come to life. "We have conversations on what key a song is in, and whether it brings the energy up or down," group member Maks Moses said. "Looking back at our videos, would we love them as much without these classic songs that have these memories attached to them?"

Hannah Doyle and Nate Graber-Lipperman, "Inside Sickos' Brand Strategy," in *The Publish Press*, February 19, 2024, <https://news.thepublishpress.com/p/channel-opts-adsense>.

<sup>421</sup> Martha Feldman, "Why Voice Now?" in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (2015), 653.

<sup>422</sup> Feldman, 656.

<sup>423</sup> Feldman, 658.

*Thoughts from backstage:* I guess the most important questions to consider here are, “Whose voice, what voice? Where is it situated and with respect to what?”<sup>424</sup> For “whose voice,” efforts have been made to create a document that represents and sounds like Mark, Bryan, and James as much as possible. With them occupying the “onstage” roles, their voices should be the most prominent ones throughout the text. Their voices were not only present during the interviews/conversations, but throughout the entire process. It was intentional to weave their voices from many different moments instead of privileging the interviews/conversations. In addition to direct quotes, sometimes I imitated their voice based on the notes that I took. At other times, I *created* dialogue and I felt comfortable doing so because I spent so much time with them—I now have a reasonable understanding of what Mark, Bryan, and James might say in certain situations. In these places especially, I was extremely deliberate and careful about my choice of words. To provide just one example, Bryan used the word “dynamic” often, which is why it appears repeatedly throughout “Karaoke Trailblazer.” Besides words, it was important for the *composition* of each story to represent each creator. If James had never mentioned Dungeons & Dragons, then his story would have been told completely differently. Mark made it clear that while there were other possibilities, a written review would symbolize him and his work on YouTube the best. If Bryan’s Discord community and his online spaces weren’t as important to him, then they probably wouldn’t have been emphasized so much. These collective decisions might lead to a voice that is more “blended” than singular, but this is the closest representation possible from backstage.

Another answer to “whose voice” would be the researchers and scholars throughout the work. While it might be unusual for them to be in the footnotes more so than the main text, they

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<sup>424</sup> Feldman, 657.

are present, and their role is important. I see the pathways of storytelling, participatory culture, and reflective and reflexive practice as solid because of their work—without it, the pathways would be more like ill-defined trails in the woods where it may be unsafe to walk. The narrative inquiry researchers laid down a strong foundation as well. Without their models, I wouldn't have known where to begin.

Lastly, “whose voice” includes mine, backstage. Initially, I wanted my job to be completely out of the way. I wanted my “voice” to only come through if you thought about how the work was put together. However, the project needed more from me, and so did the field of music education. If I want Mark's, Bryan's, and James's stories to influence how we move forward, then I need to clearly demonstrate how they're musicians, how they're musical, and how they music. I need to show that the ways in which they interact with YouTube, technology, and music is something new. These are stories we haven't heard before and they can help us think through possibilities for the future of music teaching and learning.

When thinking about “what voice,” there are multiple answers again. One is the spoken voice of Mark and James. For each creator, there are links to their work on YouTube throughout this collection of short stories. With Mark and James, following those links will take you directly to their spoken voices. With Bryan, we find another answer: written voice. You will often see written responses to comments underneath James's and Bryan's videos (and Mark's occasionally). In addition to their written thoughts, you might hear their voice symbolically when they “like” or “react” to a comment.

When considering the written voice, it may be worth mentioning that in an earlier draft, I wrote that “Mark, Bryan, and James cannot write this themselves” and a reader asked, “Why not?” I have no doubt that Mark, Bryan, and James could have written their own stories or co-



written them, but I see this as labor they weren't expecting or didn't agree to. I asked them to be onstage and it was amazing to see them perform. Maybe I'm wrong but writing feels like backstage work. If I had said that writing was involved from the start, then the situation would be different. However, if I had proposed a writing component, I wonder if they still would've been willing to participate. For what it's worth, Mark agreed that the writing should happen backstage. Conversations like this one with Mark reminded me of a quote and sentiment I encountered early on: "*I was not interested in his stories as an exotic animal but as a partner in crime.*"<sup>425</sup> Through mutual understandings and agreements, this project became a partnership. As a team, we considered musicking through YouTube and the expansion of music education opportunities and experiences *together*.

Another voice would be their "decision-making" one. In other words, their voices shine through the *choices* that they make. Mark and James make decisions about the clothes they're going to wear on camera and how that impacts their message. James has always been experimental, but intentional with his filming locations.<sup>426</sup> They all make judgments while they're editing and many of them are *musical*. Bryan, even in his most "basic" videos, times the words to the music in some way.<sup>427</sup> Mark and James make musical editing choices that are more subtle. They think about the cadence and flow of their speech. They think about "articulation" and how certain shots or ideas are going to be emphasized. James thinks about the mood he wants to portray and the instrumentation (whether he uses a full mix with all the instruments or

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<sup>425</sup> Nasim Niknafs, "In a Box: A Narrative of a(n) (Under)grounded Iranian Musician" in *Music Education Research* (2016), 360. Emphasis in original.

<sup>426</sup> For a slightly scary example, check out: James Echols, "Goodbye, Home," YouTube, September 13, 2022, 4:10, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoIVi8AHHjQ>.

<sup>427</sup> This is a great example of a "basic" karaoke video that's still what Bryan calls "timing-based." If you watch closely, the words appear on screen based on the melody that's playing and the words disappear to "hits" in the drum part: Bryan Frolick, "Vanessa Carlton - A Thousand Miles (Karaoke)," YouTube, December 1, 2023, 4:10, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZAaslfLL2M>.

just one stem). Sometimes he discovers specific moments in the music that, if placed just right, could drive his point home beyond words.<sup>428</sup> When it's background music, Mark ensures that the volume level doesn't overpower his speaking voice, but that the song is still audible. When he's featuring a song, he finds the "hook," turns up the volume, and makes a cut that's natural, but short enough to avoid copyright strikes.<sup>429</sup> One last consideration for "what voice" could be the medium—YouTube itself. All of these creators have determined that video is the best way to express their visions, but it isn't just the audiovisual aspect that matters—it's the participatory component as well. Bryan loves sharing what he's done with his Discord community and wants his channel to grow. Mark loves the community and the conversation that YouTube fosters. James loves the comments and sometimes sees his commenters as "students" who have just given him "the best fucking answer" to his question.<sup>430</sup>

Finally, we can acknowledge "where is it [voice] situated and with respect to what?" Let's continue with the stage analogy. Mark's, James's, and Bryan's voices are situated onstage or at the center of the work. The researcher's voice is backstage—playing an important role, but not the leading one. Music educators, or people interested in the future of music teaching and learning, are in the audience. All of this is taking place with respect to music education, musicking, and "what counts" as musical. The whole production is about how you don't have to

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<sup>428</sup> To hear James talk about this, check out: Donna Janowski, "Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories," YouTube, January 7, 2024, 5:40:31 to 5:44:10, <https://youtu.be/cF87Z1Wm80U>.

<sup>429</sup> Mazzei also asks, "Voice clearly happens in spoken utterances 'voiced' by our participants, but does it not also happen when they/we fail to audibly voice an opinion with words and instead voice displeasure, discomfort, or disagreement with silence? Does it not also happen through other nonverbal forms such as art, or dance, or music?" Mazzei, 45.

<sup>430</sup> Donna Janowski, "Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories," YouTube, January 7, 2024, 5:21:40 to 5:22:26, <https://youtu.be/cF87Z1Wm80U>.

play an instrument, sing,<sup>431</sup> or write music to be musical. We are *all* musical and can engage with music in a variety of ways, and these YouTubers are here to prove it.

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<sup>431</sup> I realize that Bryan does sing quite a bit, but the creation of the karaoke videos is the musicking I want to highlight. Bryan's engagement with music shows us that we can participate musically in a variety of ways and that those pursuits could inform or support each other. I would also argue that karaoke singing is different from "choir singing" in many ways, which is something music teachers could explore.

## Curiosity Killed the Cat

**Notes from backstage:** Welcome to a Dungeons & Dragons-inspired piece. There are a few reasons why James's part of the story is structured in this way:

1. James LOVES D&D and is currently a part of three different groups. He is the Dungeon Master (DM) in all of them, which means he's the game's lead storyteller and referee. The DM runs the adventure for the players, who navigate its hazards and decide which paths to explore. The DM describes the locations and creatures in an adventure, and the players decide what they want their characters to do. Then the DM, using imagination and the game's rules, determines the results of their actions and narrates what they experience.<sup>432</sup>
2. During my time with James, I noticed that he saw himself in different roles at different times throughout the process. This was particularly evident during the editing stages when he talked about himself as if he were an entirely different person. He explained, "I can't see him as me because then . . . what do I cut? I would never want to discount my thoughts, but this guy needs editing." This led to the development of three different characters: Mr. Echols, James, and kolpeshtheyardstick. The story will describe them as separate people, but in reality, they are all one person: James.

It is also worth noting that I have never played the game myself. I know of the game tangentially through two D&D episodes of "Community" and years of listening to a podcast called *Dungeons & Daddies*. James offered some other recommendations as well:

I would recommend watching real-play games like Critical Role and Dimension20, but personally I'd suggest the first season of The Adventure Zone entitled "Balance" because they learn the game as they play it, so it's a lot easier to wrap your head around since they explain everything as they learn it. I also like these videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00EvO-X6Wu4&list=PLDnRMnDDjAzK5uZLidDUtHtD1iN06Qe0G>.

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<sup>432</sup> Wizards of the Coast LLC, "How to DM The World's Greatest Roleplaying Game," Dungeons & Dragons, 2024, <https://dnd.wizards.com/how-to-dm>.

For readers who are unfamiliar with D&D, the footnotes will offer clarification and links to various resources. However, I wouldn't worry too much about keeping up with the rules—just have fun following the adventure!

Our story starts on the material plane of Earth in the city of Northampton, Massachusetts.<sup>433</sup> It's a quaint, walkable town with an abundance of local art, music, and farmer's markets. Much of the area is wooded and covered in green. The roads twist and turn as though you're lost in a countryside. Patches of civilization will pop up seemingly out of thin air.

Our characters are embarking on a journey to discover the meaning of curiosity and knowledge. Is there a correlation between knowledge and happiness? Or does knowledge equal pain and ignorance is bliss? What about knowledge and its relationship to power, pain, and danger? Undoubtedly, there is much to explore. First, we have Mr. Echols, a warlock and our on-camera personality, who at times is referred to as "The Meme Teacher."<sup>434</sup> Mr. Echols' abilities include riffing, being relaxed for recordings, and committing to the bit.<sup>435</sup> He likes to remind people, "You can't have the same moment twice. Instead of trying to replicate a lost moment, you should try something else."

ROLL ONCE ON THE TRINKETS TABLE<sup>436</sup>

TRINKET EARNED: A PAIR OF OLD SOCKS

Next up is James, a ranger and editor of all things video.<sup>437</sup> James' abilities consist of music selection, finding "the point" in all the available footage, and making cuts so pure you don't even notice them. Lastly, kolpeshtheyardstick (pronounced Kol-pesh the Yard Stick), a bard and YouTube personality, will be joining the adventure as well.<sup>438</sup> kolpeshtheyardstick's abilities involve managing a healthy relationship with an addictive platform such as YouTube, communicating with audience members and patrons,<sup>439</sup> and pressing publish, even when sometimes it feels like he wants to quit.

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<sup>433</sup> Roll20 LLC, "The Planes of Existence," D&D 5<sup>th</sup> Edition Compendium, <https://roll20.net/compendium/dnd5e/The%20Planes%20of%20Existence#content>.

<sup>434</sup> "Warlock," DND 5<sup>th</sup> Edition community wiki, <http://dnd5e.wikidot.com/warlock>.

<sup>435</sup> Wizards of the Coast LLC, "Chapter 7: Using Ability Scores," D&D Beyond, <https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/basic-rules/using-ability-scores>.

<sup>436</sup> "Trinkets," DND 5<sup>th</sup> Edition community wiki, <http://dnd5e.wikidot.com/trinkets>.

<sup>437</sup> "Ranger," DND 5<sup>th</sup> Edition community wiki, <http://dnd5e.wikidot.com/ranger>.

<sup>438</sup> "Bard," DND 5<sup>th</sup> Edition community wiki, <http://dnd5e.wikidot.com/bard>.

<sup>439</sup> Patrons are people that support a creator financially on Patreon.

## Session 1: The White Board

Mr. Echols is standing in the room that most viewers would call his classroom. As he begins brainstorming ideas for the next video, he turns on the camera “for reference, posterity, the future.” He instantly feels better. “The moment that I feel like it’s a show, is the moment I am relaxed.” On his white board, we see a mind map with “Curiosity” at the center. The two main “branches” extending from there are “Stories of curiosity gone awry” and “Stories of ‘great’ curiosity.”

The premise for this video came up long ago. At the time, Mr. Echols was critically depressed and began to draw a correlation between knowledge and unhappiness. He initially believed that knowledge led to pain, while ignorance led to bliss. Curiosity came up because of its use as a storytelling mechanism—curiosity helps the characters *get* to knowledge (and/or pain). Originally, the examples of “curiosity gone awry” included Alice in Wonderland, Pandora’s box, and Adam and Eve. Mr. Echols discussed some studies where participants were told they could find out something, but as a consequence they would experience an electric shock. Many of them *knowingly* went through pain.

As he began looking at these stories of curiosity gone awry, a realization occurred: “Turns out . . . most of these are about women.” This led Mr. Echols to explore sexism within the realms (ha—get it?) of curiosity and knowledge. In all these stories, “Women are punished for their curiosity.” When thinking about masculine curiosity, there are famous stories of male inventors, Christopher Columbus discovering the new world, and Albert Einstein. “*That’s* the juxtaposition we’re talking about.” What began as a small exploration into one man’s relationship with curiosity and knowledge turned into recognition of an institutional, layered, stratified system of knowledge gatekeeping.

After thinking out loud with his mind map, Mr. Echols asks his wife to come into the classroom. She knows what he’s been thinking about and poses one simple, yet incredibly complex question: “What is the point of this video?”



## ROLL FOR INVESTIGATION<sup>440</sup>

RESULT: 10<sup>441</sup>

Mr. Echols grabs a marker and begins to organize his mind map ideas into three parts. Perhaps part one is centered around the word “depressed.” In this section, he would describe the stories of curiosity gone awry and how they’re almost always about female characters. Then part two could be “panic,” which would delve into the gendered perspective of knowledge. They both recently saw a movie titled *Barbie* (2023) and believe that example offers a different perspective on female curiosity. Part three would be “denouement” and he would naturally come back to the white board to “end” the lesson.

The two characters begin discussing filming locations and framing devices. The idea of splitting the video into smaller pieces is floated. If Mr. Echols went down that path, the progression might start with his experience of curiosity, followed by “the female experience,” with a conclusion based on some overall observations and feelings. He decides to create titles for each video to help guide his process:

Video #1: The Dark Side of Curiosity

Video #2: The Punishment of Female Curiosity

Video #3: Curiosity Killed the Ken

DUNGEON MASTER AWARDS MR. ECHOLS INSPIRATION. MR. ECHOLS WOULD NORMALLY DO ONE LONG VIDEO, SO THIS IS A MEMORABLE COURSE OF ACTION.<sup>442</sup>

Thinking about the process they just experienced and the road ahead, Mr. Echols sighs, “It’s painful, but I feel like I have to do this.”

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<sup>440</sup> Arcane Eye, “A Player’s Guide to Skill Checks in DnD 5e,” 2020, <https://arcaneeye.com/players/skill-checks-guide-dnd-5e/>.

<sup>441</sup> Depending on the situation and dungeon master, a roll of 10 could be considered a “success” or “failure.” Reader, it’s your call here.

<sup>442</sup> “Inspiration,” D&D 5e Wiki, <https://dnd-5e.fandom.com/wiki/Inspiration>.

Session 2: *“The Dark Side of Curiosity”*

MR. ECHOL’S TOOLS:

- A Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 4k and CAVER BV30L stand (Both were a gift—he would’ve never bought them for himself)
  - Camera lenses (Got them for a great deal)
  - An Urth mount adapter (To connect his lenses to the camera)
    - An SD card
- A Hollyland microphone set (One piece adheres to Mr. Echols’ shirt and another connects to the camera)
  - Ring light

Mr. Echols is going to use a closet as his first set. He moves his mattress, takes apart the slats of the bed frame, and plays around with different types of lighting. Then he begins to pace around the room. “I guess I’m ready . . . now I have to say something . . . I wish I wrote something . . .”

ROLL FOR PERFORMANCE

RESULT: 14<sup>443</sup>

After recording a test shot and neurotically checking the focus, he begins. “Does anyone else get sad thinking about knowledge?” He riffs for about 30 minutes and hopes that there’s a point somewhere in his ramblings. “I beg the camera to understand me.”

He moves to the basement to film a different segment of the video. There are “cages” of storage units and gray all around. He sets up the ring light and chooses a setting that changes colors. He feels lucky to have the equipment that he does now. Mr. Echols used to have a podcast microphone, but he

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<sup>443</sup> Generally, a roll above 10 is considered a “success” and a roll below 10 is considered a “failure.”

didn't wield it properly and he needed to be able to move his hands more. "People think they can buy equipment or subscribers, but you need an idea."

Mr. Echols hands the footage over to James who imports the work into DaVinci, his video editing program. He tries to watch it all the way through without making any cuts, but the footage is definitely tempting him. He'll start with a raw edit or rough cuts, which he finds easy and relaxing. That stage is all about getting the words out. The finer details take longer, but *that's* where different ideas really begin to take shape. "This part should fade out, let's zoom in here . . ."

### *Session 3: "Curiosity Killed the Ken"*

It was a gray and rainy afternoon. Mr. Echols wanted more sun for video #2, so he decided to skip ahead to #3. For this installment, he saw the movie *Barbie* a second time—strictly for research purposes. At the white board, he used the movie to discuss curiosity and its relationship to other concepts, such as:

Curiosity and death

Curiosity and malfunctioning

Having no curiosity—Accepting life "as is"

Curiosity and change

Curiosity and autonomy

Curiosity and comfort

Additionally, a song called "Closer to Fine" by the Indigo Girls was featured multiple times in the movie.

Interestingly, the chorus articulates a particular outlook on curiosity:

And I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains  
I looked to the children, I drank from the fountains  
There's more than one answer to these questions  
Pointing me in a crooked line  
And the less I seek my source for some definitive  
(The less I seek my source)  
Closer I am to fine, yeah

Closer I am to fine, yeah

At one point during Mr. Echols's improvisation, he mutters, "Don't edit, while you talk . . . don't edit while you talk."

ROLL FOR INSIGHT

RESULT: NATURAL 20

There's a belief that you should only release positive energy into the world. If you think, "I hope I don't get hit by a car today," you're adding fear. Therefore, he tries his best not to "downtalk" himself while on camera. If Mr. Echols has an idea that he believes will be useful to James later, then he'll certainly say it. However, there is a fine line between helping someone and doing their job for them.

#### *Session 4: The Punishment of Female Curiosity*

Mr. Echols decides that the second installment of the trilogy should be filmed outside. He packs up his tools and makes the trek to Smith College. The giant roots of a tree have grown in such a way that they form a perfect seating area. In this spot, he will talk about curiosity, some familiar stories from a gendered lens, and the juxtaposition of curiosity and temptation.



Donna Janowski, photograph, August 14, 2023.

Wandering further onto campus, he finds a fountain with a statue of Mary Tomlinson Lanning, a former Smith College student. As he sets up his camera, two women are sitting on a bench nearby having a conversation. They notice that Mr. Echols is wanting to film and kindly move to a different location. As he begins speaking about institutionalized knowledge and how women were often denied access, two men walk over and sit down near the camera. They stay for a while—much longer than Mr. Echols anticipated. Eventually, they walk away, and Mr. Echols walks up to the camera to make a note of the incident. “Wow. I can’t believe that just happened *while* I was talking about what I was talking about.”

Mr. Echols lets his wife take B-roll footage of plants, butterflies, and squirrels running around Smith College. He also asks her to film him running, since the theme of this video is “panic.” For continuity, he’s wearing the same clothes from the first video and unfortunately, no shoes.

#### DRINK POTION

POTION OF HILL GIANT STRENGTH: MR. ECHOLS’ STRENGTH SCORE IS INCREASED TO 21 FOR 1 HOUR.<sup>444</sup>

Mr. Echols is worried about the battery life on his camera and is certain the SD card is fairly full. James takes the footage and absolutely loves the tree shot. He reframes the statue shot and is happy that Mr. Echols made it so wide because now James has more flexibility—you can always zoom in. He organizes all the footage into specific folders and then begins to focus on the music.

#### ROLL FOR PERFORMANCE

RESULT: 12

He opens Epidemic Sound, which hosts a library of royalty-free soundtracks and sound effects. For each song, a user can listen to the “full mix” or listen to the isolated melody, “instrumental,” drums, or bass track. James will often use the same song but play around with the various stems. The stem separation

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<sup>444</sup> ListFist, List of Dungeons & Dragons 5e Potions, 2022, <https://listfist.com/list-of-dungeons-dragons-5e-potions>.

provides a level of customization that James finds crucial. “I could start with the melody, crescendo to the full mix around here, fade to bass, and then [Mr. Echols] talking.” While a user is in Epidemic Sound, they can see their video footage while clicking through different soundtracks. The platform also has a feature called “Soundmatch,” which provides users with music recommendations for their video. James found a song called “Celestial Haze” that he wants to include in the first video. He appreciates that the songs are very “searchable” because they’re characterized in ways that seem natural.

James starts editing “The Dark Side of Curiosity.” He adds transitions, changes parts of the audio, and makes cuts. “I love being taken for a ride.”

CAST A SPELL: LESSER RESTORATION

EFFECT: HEALING

JAMES CHOOSES TO END SOME OF MR. ECHOLS’ PARALYSIS. BY DOING SO, “THE GREATER

PACE [OF THE VIDEO] WILL BE HEALED.”<sup>445</sup>

As he edits, James likes to comment on Mr. Echols’s work:

“‘When I die, will I feel it?’ Incredible.”

“I can smell a point . . . it’s happening.”

“Ugh, he lost the point. He’s reaching. Shut up.”

“Sometimes, you have to include the parts where he’s not cooking.”

“He’s lost.”

“Sometimes I feel really bad for him.”

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<sup>445</sup> Wizards of the Coast LLC, “Spells,” D&D Beyond, <https://www.dndbeyond.com/spells?filter-class=5&filter-partnered-content=f&filter-search=&page=2>.

*Session 5: “The Punishment of Female Curiosity”—Rough Cuts and Music*

James’s initial thoughts about the background music is that it should be more classical than lo-fi for the second video. As he clicks through Epidemic Sound, he realizes that the outdoor filming location is distracting him from the emotional quality that needs to be present—this video is *panic*.

ROLL FOR PERSUASION

SECOND ROLL FOR ADVANTAGE<sup>446</sup>

RESULT: 11 & 5

He goes hunting for keywords and finds natural, natura, and a “small emotions” genre. On his search, James stumbles upon an artist, Hanna Lindgren. He considers her music to be “sensitive, but not weak.” One of Lindgren’s albums is titled *Listen to the Forest Weep* (2023) and James wants to begin with the titular track. He isolates the stems but likes the sound of the full mix. After inserting the track, he watches the footage with the music and edits along the way. When the song ends, James feels like he lost his momentum. He finds the next song on the album and inserts it for now—he’ll clean up the transition later. “I like a lot in this one. The silences especially.” James can already tell that each video will present different editing expectations:

Video #1—It will be showy to edit, but I’ll enjoy it.

Video #2—If I’m in the mood to problem-solve or if I’m looking for a challenge, I’ll pull up this one.

Video #3—An easy edit, but a marathon.

*Session 6: Editing “The Dark Side of Curiosity”*

James wants to get out of the office, so he takes his laptop to one of Smith College’s libraries. There’s a conference room with two large screens that happens to be available. James plugs in and begins

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<sup>446</sup> “Advantage and Disadvantage,” 5thSRD, [https://5thsrdr.org/rules/advantage\\_and\\_disadvantage/](https://5thsrdr.org/rules/advantage_and_disadvantage/).

thinking about the intro. Perhaps he could include footage from all three videos in the beginning. He's going to use six seconds of copyrighted music alongside the tracks from Epidemic Sound—kolpeshtheyardstick will let him know if he gets any copyright strikes. He's not in love with the musical transition from "Everywhere at the End of Time" by the Caretaker into "Celestial Haze." He tries adjusting the volume and pulls in a stem from a song he found in YouTube Studio called "Blue Dream." To create a better "fit," James raises "Blue Dream" by 12 semitones in one spot and then lowers it in another. For smoother transitions, he shapes the arcs of the fades. He replays the transition and makes adjustments multiple times. He decides to make a cut before one of the chords resolves. James lowers the music in one spot so that Mr. Echols can be heard. He wants the video to look floaty and dreamy, which is going to make cuts fairly difficult. All of the sudden, he remembers a song called "Depths Emerging," by Hanna Lindgren. The track was too stormy for the second video, but it's just right for this first one. As he finishes up this work session, he thinks about the fact that every minute of video takes about an hour to edit. "I got 2 minutes of video done—this is fantastic!"

### *Session 7: Exploring YouTube*

kolpeshtheyardstick is lucky to have patrons that pay him for his work. "They pay because they want to." He also appreciates that they don't care about perks and just wait patiently for his videos to be uploaded. In addition to building relationships with his patrons, he wants to continue creating substantive connections with other creators. "It's been a joy." As his channel grows, his YouTube social circle expands, and he's able to have more conversations about the platform. One "fresh" thought he had (still in the oven), is that YouTubers want to be more powerful, but they don't realize the power they already possess.

ROLL FOR ARCANA



RESULT: 18<sup>447</sup>

Youtubers have people's attention, and with that they can steer and influence discourse.<sup>448,449</sup>

To curtail his addiction to analytics, kolpeshtheyardstick has a routine when it comes to uploading videos.

ROLL FOR SURVIVAL

RESULT: 19

First, he'll publish it as unlisted and put it on Patreon for his biggest supporters. Then he schedules the release for when he's not home. "I have no interest in pacing around and hitting refresh, refresh, refresh." He doesn't check YouTube for a minimum of 24 hours, but he'll ask his wife to make sure the comments are positive and that there isn't anything wrong with the video. After a day has passed, he'll peek at the video, but not his analytics. He might read some comments and add a heart here and there. Once a video has been published, he'll take about a week off before starting a new project. He's been through some workplace drama, but overall, his comment sections are positive, and he loves his audience. A lot of times they feel like students who are working with Mr. Echols.

Sometimes kolpeshtheyardstick thinks about quitting. YouTube is hard, but he hates not doing it. "I'm sad all the time because I'm not making videos that are good enough or I'm not making videos fast enough . . . but then I think about how much I've done. When you're not making, it eats away at you. It's a creative burden and release." There are entire worlds on YouTube and kolpeshtheyardstick enjoys being a part of them. He's not exactly sure if he considers himself a YouTuber, but he wants to entertain and create artistic video experiences. Content creator might be better, but it doesn't evoke time or effort—it just means

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<sup>447</sup> Arcane Eye, "Arcana," 2020, <https://arcaneeye.com/players/skill-checks-guide-dnd-5e/#Arcana>.

<sup>448</sup> If you're interested in this idea, I would recommend this episode of Chris Hayes's podcast where he talks with Natalie Wynn, aka "ContraPoints," about her video essays and their influence on people: MSNBC, "Chris Hayes Podcast with Natalie Wynn | Why Is This Happening? – Ep 167 | MSNBC," YouTube, June 23, 2021, 49:11, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_UnWuONL5I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_UnWuONL5I).

<sup>449</sup> Natalie Wynn, ContraPoints, YouTube, February 3, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/@ContraPoints>.

something now exists. Whatever his title may be now or in the future, the thing he wants most of all is to *linger* in people's minds.

kolpeshtheyardstick doesn't stick to one topic or claim that his channel is just one thing. The only thing he knows for certain is: "I don't know, sometimes I make videos about eggnog."

Behind the Scenes: Episode 9 | kolpeshtheyardstick: <https://youtu.be/vaAsoMFpZqQ>



Donna Janowski, photograph, August 14, 2023.

## **Final Curtain**

At the beginning of my undergraduate career in music education, I wanted to be the best orchestra director possible. I held onto this dream until my final year. The class that changed the trajectory of my life was titled, “Teaching Contemporary Musicianship.” The goal of the course was not to convince us to eliminate band, choir, and orchestra, but to show us there was *more*. To “advertise” the class, the professor started playing a video game and asked us different questions about the music. Suddenly, music education was reinvigorated. Thinking about the possibilities was overwhelming in the most thrilling way.

Once I became a teacher, I wanted students’ interests and wonderments to guide our work. To settle on a meaningful

venue for project-based exploration, I asked my fourth, fifth, and sixth graders to choose their “favorite” from the following list: art, video games, sports, commercials, YouTube, movies/TV shows, and blogs/vlogs. The overwhelmingly popular—but not at all surprising—response was YouTube. In a few classes, I facilitated a YouTube project that at its core asked, “Why is YouTube important?” Students did not seem to struggle to provide answers. These experiences led me to wonder what kind of music education research has been conducted in relation to YouTube, which eventually led to a desire to contribute to the conversation moving forward.

While I know there are significant concerns and tensions that exist on YouTube,<sup>450,451,452,453,454</sup> I will admit that I

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<sup>450</sup> Sophie Bishop, “Anxiety, Panic and Self-Optimization: Inequalities and the YouTube Algorithm” in *Convergence (London, England)* (2018).

<sup>451</sup> Max Fisher and Amanda Taub, “How YouTube Radicalized Brazil” in *The New York Times* (2019).

<sup>452</sup> Yeshimabeit Milner and Amy Traub, “Data Capitalism + Algorithmic Racism,” *Data for Black*

*Lives and Demos*, 2021, <https://datacapitalism.d4bl.org/#epilogue>.

<sup>453</sup> Lauri Väkevää, “Educating Musical Prosumers for the Economic Conditions of the 21st Century” in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Media and Music Learning* (2020).

<sup>454</sup> Edward Katrak Spencer, “From Contagion to Imitation: On Bass Drop Memes, Trolling Repertoires and the Legacy of Gabriel Tarde” in

tend to look at the positive aspects of the site and its potentialities, especially in relation to music education. I have *loved* YouTube since its inception in 2005. My brothers and I use YouTube to stay in touch; instead of having a movie night with friends, I often had “YouTube” nights where we got lost in time, sharing videos with one another. I believe that YouTube and YouTubers can help us expand music education practices, but I had to remain open to the fact that “some stories confirm; others challenge.”<sup>455</sup>

Each creator’s story partially confirmed *and* challenged my assumptions. Everyone had formalized music education experiences that largely did *not* prepare them for what they are doing now on YouTube. However, they all challenged my belief that their music education was entirely unhelpful.

After hanging out, talking, and creating the collaborative videos, I pitched

some writing ideas to everyone. Bryan recommended that I assume the role of an “invisible narrator.” He also suggested that a karaoke bar setting might appeal to readers more than a private karaoke house party. This led to the creation of the last part of Bryan’s section, which is a “combined” story that mixes details from two different nights—one night at Homer’s karaoke bar and another at a private house party with some karaoke creators. Here was Bryan’s response:

So i gave it a quick read, and thus far very readable although... this Breezy character is a bit far fetched... saying outlandish stuff. i dunno, just slightly weird reading my own words back to me and thinking.... that person is a character, they are not real. I just mean that.... you know how “the dude” in “The Big Lebowski” is based on a real guy? i feel like how i imagine he felt when he watched it. like saying “im not like that am i?” & being told “no... you’re exactly like that”

i dont think you have to change anything, it’s a me problem.

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*Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (2023), 51-71.

<sup>455</sup> Margaret S. Barrett and Sandra L. Stauffer, *Narrative Soundings: An Anthology of Narrative*

*Inquiry in Music Education* (Springer Netherlands, 2012), 97.



I hope that you enjoyed your time with Bryan, James, and Mark. I hope that whatever background, positionality, and intentions you bring as a reader, that this

work helps you reflect and find something that you need. As James likes to say, I hope these ideas “linger.”



## **Dream Doors**

Do you remember your dreams? I know a lot of people don't. Some people have to write down what happened as soon as they wake up to have any hope of remembering. There's a dream I still remember vividly from childhood. It actually happened twice with an "alternate ending" the second time. If my dreams (and nightmares) were to have a common thread, it would be school. Sometimes I'm the student and I forgot to prepare a huge presentation or write an important paper. Sometimes I'm the teacher and I've just had the *worst class of my life*.

In a show called "Behind Her Eyes," some of the main characters have night terrors and they can see different doors. One of the characters learns how to control her dreams, which then leads to astral projection. Apparently, you can only project to places you've been to before. In the dreams, you have to imagine the place where you want to go and walk through the door to get there. I don't know about you, but if I'm dreaming, I want to be able to go *anywhere*.

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I'm in a wide, open space. I don't see anything at first, but then lines begin to appear, almost as if I'm on a blank page until Harold comes along with his purple crayon.<sup>458</sup> The lines start in different places and then begin to intersect and wrap around each other in different ways. As I watch, they grow in length and width. Like the trail behind my childhood home that we affectionately called "the bike path," I realize I can walk on them. With each step, the lines continue to change shape and move in all kinds of patterns. Doors begin to appear in places where the lines cross and interconnect.

**Door #1:** "Welcome to YouTube and Music." Students are exploring a range of aspects at the intersection of music and YouTube.<sup>459</sup> Some want to create music and music videos. Some

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<sup>458</sup> Hearts and Heroes Read Alouds, "Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson Read Aloud," YouTube, April 26, 2018, 4:38, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y194zww8cKU>.

<sup>459</sup> Replace "television" with "YouTube" in this passage from Negus: "As television pervades ever more private and public spaces, so it continues to integrate music and image not as an aberrant modern mass medium finding ever

are creating choreography that matches the music they made or found. Some are working on lyric videos of songs they love, while others are removing the vocals to create karaoke tracks. They experiment by making “basic” videos that are more static and then transition into creating “dynamic” videos with moving parts (Bryan’s words).<sup>460</sup> Certain songs lead to discussions about the meaning of the lyrics, people’s different interpretations, and how these words represent the artist singing them.<sup>461</sup> Students are interested in reviewing, critiquing, and reacting to music as a YouTuber. Mark mentions to them that viewers often go to reaction videos for the *reactor*—they like that particular person’s on-camera personality. While developing their on-camera persona, this class also explores ideas like this one from Mark:

I also think there’s an element of conducting yourself well. I think that is something, especially as a YouTuber, that can often go overlooked. I don’t engage with drama, I don’t go at people. Sometimes I wish I could, sometimes I *really* know I could, but other times I’m like . . . I’m taking a higher road. This is not what I’m here to do. I’m not here just to churn out content, I’m here to make analysis. I’m not here to stir up drama, I’m here to get to a better point.

Another group is listening to music that they want to include in the background of their videos. They use YouTube’s “Audio library,” Kevin MacLeod tracks, and platforms like Epidemic Sound, Bensound, Joystick, Soundstripe, and others. Conversations about the connections between music and YouTube’s comment section, advertisements, algorithm,

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more ways of corrupting the purity of music, but as participant in the latest episode of a much longer story about the continual interplay of the audible and visual in human cultures.”

Keith Negus, “Musicians on Television: Visible, Audible and Ignored” in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* (2006), 310.

<sup>460</sup> Bryan’s influence is already spreading within the karaoke creator community. He texted backstage the other day saying, “Remember when I said that there was a ‘before Breezy’ and ‘after Breezy’? . . . Tell me this doesn’t look like something I’d do” and sent some examples.

<sup>461</sup> “Hit songs have many lives in the brave new world of fan engagement, participatory culture, reappropriation and remediation, a world that has fundamentally changed the possibilities for music circulation.” Circulation could also be replaced (or supplemented with) “education.”

Henrik Smith Sivertsen, “Internet Archiving: The Many Lives of Songs in the YouTube Age” in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (2023), 93-94.

analytics, and other features happen often.<sup>462</sup> Debates and dialogue about artists, their music, their videos, copyright, and more are commonplace.<sup>463</sup> As one example, James discusses:

Here's the problem, right? I think it's a societal problem because . . . YouTube, copyright law, stuff like that, it doesn't allow you to just *pick* music that you think would be appropriate or that you love or something that . . . you know, maybe I make a video and there's a Beatles album that I was thinking about the entire time making this. I'm just gonna play this Beatles album start to finish. And maybe that isn't the cleanest thing, but that's the thing that was playing in my mind. And maybe it's not the prettiest video, it doesn't line up perfectly, but the *spirit* is there. The *love* of music is there. You can't just pick songs you love. You have to pick from *libraries* of songs you never *heard*. So you would have to *study* in these libraries to *find* the perfect music. And if you're not willing or feel like you're incapable or whatever . . . it's quite easy to find a genre . . . 'I won't pick the first one, I'll pick the third one, maybe that one's less common.' Download. Slam. Good enough! 'Cause the alternative is making no money, getting copyright stricken, maybe getting your channel taken down or a *lot* of time. That's it.

Students think through what this means for creativity, intention, and musical decisions.

**Door #2:** “Welcome to Musicking.” Some students want to be performers and they’re learning how to sing or play certain instruments. Some students want to be performance adjacent—they don’t want to be onstage, but they’re interested in sound and what it takes to set up the microphones, speakers, and gear for different types of shows. Other students want to know how to produce a killer light show. Some students want to work in marketing and figure out how to promote the performers. Some want to write music and they go about this in a variety of ways. Some students want to talk about music like Mark—they spend time listening,

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<sup>462</sup> Replace “television” with “YouTube” and “musical performance” with “musicking” (from Negus again): “Regardless of genre . . . musicians and television personnel have tended to treat television as if it were a neutral lens, rather than a transformative medium that can redefine, or develop innovative types of, musical performance.” Keith Negus, “Musicians on Television: Visible, Audible and Ignored” in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* (2006), 314.

<sup>463</sup> Here, a good example is the creator, Nacho (<https://www.youtube.com/@NachoVideo>), who “had established a popular YouTube channel exhibiting numerous remastered and re-edited [David] Bowie videos, along with several videos featuring the work of other musicians.”

Lisa Perrott, “‘Spinning Straw Into Gold’: Nacho Video and the Exquisite Corpse of Fan-editing” in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (2023), 245.

“Scholars express differing perspectives about the functions of these videos and the authorial status of their creators. They provoke a range of perspectives about auteurism, collaborative authorship, participatory culture, assemblage and intertextuality.”

Perrott, 249.

analyzing, writing, and speaking.<sup>464</sup> Mark comments that this genre is now *undersaturated* on YouTube. To help people find other music reviewers, in the description of some of his videos he'll write: "Spectrum Pulse is a music review / commentary channel, like colleagues Anthony Fantano of TheNeedleDrop, ARTV, Dead End Hip Hop, Rocked, Deep Cuts, Crash Thompson, and plenty others, known for discussions of music, movies, art and culture."<sup>465</sup>

Some don't know what they want to do yet, but they're able to play with sound and work with others until they find their calling. For others, playing with sound *is* what they want to do.<sup>466</sup>

**Door #3:** "Welcome to Music and Project-Based Learning." Students create questions and then find ways to delve into potential answers.<sup>467</sup> *How can we change the world through music? Why is music important? What is important to know about music? What does it mean to be creative? How is music related to . . . ?* Sometimes music is created and performed, other

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<sup>464</sup> The Coalition for Music Education in Canada (CMEC) held a symposium and policy summit to discuss the future of music education in Canada. "Participants stressed the importance of rethinking inclusion and performance-centric music education practices."

Kyle Zavitz, *A Cross-Sectoral Look at Music and Music Education in Canada*, (2023), 49, [https://coalitioncanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/PolicySummit\\_FullReport\\_Oct142023\\_en.pdf](https://coalitioncanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/PolicySummit_FullReport_Oct142023_en.pdf).

<sup>465</sup> Mark Grondin, "On The Pulse 2023 #12: Travis Scott, Carly Rae Jepsen, Disclosure, Lori McKenna - Album Reviews," YouTube, 21:47, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOcAre6JSWc>.

<sup>466</sup> Playing with sound could mean so much. Holly Rogers discusses "soundscapes" and "networked sonic elongation." Soundscapes are when "Composers and artists . . . process real-world sounds, using them as compositional material for music composition and the remediation of our sonic environment."

Holly Rogers, "Listening Through Social Media: Soundscape Composition, Collaboration and Networked Sonic Elongation" in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (2023), 113.

For networked sonic elongation, "When uploaded, actuality sounds and images captured by amateur artists from all over the world can instantly become compositional material for other web users . . . I call this multi-voiced elongation of noise from image 'networked sonic elongation' and define it as a technique that arises through multiple interpretations of an audiovisual event . . . it is a creative progression achievable only through online collaborative processes."

Rogers, 116.

<sup>467</sup> Olu Jenzen et al. ask important questions about the role of music videos in protests: "How do music videos operate to mobilize and unite the movement musically and as a multimodal form of online communication? How do the videos amplify the movement's critiques to reach a wider audience? And what does the online music video format offer to activists today?"

Olu Jenzen, Itir Erhart, Hande Eslen-Ziya, Derya Güçdemir, Umut Korkut, and Aidan McGarry, "Music Videos as Protest Communication: The Gezi Park Protest on YouTube" in *Remediating Sound: Repeatable Culture, YouTube and Music* (2023), 270.

times students engage in other forms of musicking.<sup>468</sup> Sometimes the students collaborate with another music class, another subject area, or people in the community.<sup>469</sup> Collaborations happen with YouTubers who want to make a difference as well. James thinks out loud: “Here’s a fresh thought (still in the oven) . . . YouTubers want to be more powerful, but don’t realize the power they already have. There are some stories where YouTubers have affected positive social change, but it’s not consistent. Saying ‘Call your congressperson’ in a video probably won’t get much traction. But, YouTubers have attention, and with attention you can steer conversations.”

**Door #4:** “Welcome to Music in Higher Education.” People from all types of musical backgrounds are able to pursue degrees in music teaching and learning. They bring their unique forms of musicking to the program, which informs and expands possibilities for the next generation. They learn conducting alongside facilitating. They can explore music in a variety of ways, from listening to performance. They can tailor their experience to fit their goals.

. . .

I drift off to sleep. In my dream, I’m staring at the YouTube search bar. Normally, I know exactly what to type, but right now, I’m lost. I can’t type “music videos” or “videos with music” because that won’t show me who I’m looking for.

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<sup>468</sup> “The single-minded cultivation of personal capital that once typified conservatoire and conservatoire-like instruction—simply becoming better at playing an instrument, for example, and learning the history and theory that is a prerequisite to informed interpretation—can fall short of contemporary societal expectations and needs.” Lee Willingham and Glen Carruthers, “Community Music in Higher Education” in *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music* (2018), 595.

<sup>469</sup> “Augmented sixth chords or the birth of opera can no longer supersede issues of social justice and the role of music and musicians in a civil society in the core curriculum.” Willingham and Carruthers, 600.

Let's try: video essays . . . workout . . . dance workouts . . . music reviews . . . music commentary . . . music analysis . . .

I'm struggling to find any contact information for a creator I want to reach. As a last resort, I leave a short comment under their latest video, hoping they might see it.

I look away from the screen and see a friend. He asks me, "Have you thought about vloggers as potential participants?" Do they post on YouTube and use music in some way? Then, yes. I explain that YouTubers don't have to be people who make money on the platform or those who have a certain number of subscribers.

I look back at my computer and notice a few rejections from potential participants. There could be lots of reasons for why someone might not want to take part, but I can't help but wonder: Was it the letter of consent? Was it too long? Seemingly daunting? Intimidating sounding? I also noticed my comment disappeared from that video. Damn. Did they delete it? Were they just not interested? How should we reach out to content creators? Are there words we should avoid, like research? How might we open up more pathways between social media personalities and researchers?

I take my eyes off the computer and start having a conversation with my brother. He asks me, "So you're looking for people who are unknowingly musical by instinct?" I explain that everyone is musical, it's just that some people believe they are, and some believe they are not. My friend joins us and asks, "So would my salsa dancing classify as 'music-ing'?" Yes, it would. Do you have a YouTube channel?

I return to my screen and see Bryan on Zoom. I ask him for advice—for me, for music teachers, for music teaching and learning. He says,

I think putting a good mindset about music is a good thing to instill. To appreciate and not gatekeep stuff. If it's a bop, it's a bop, ya know? There's some vids out there from . . .

Chilly Gonzales<sup>470</sup> I think, pop masterclass, and he did short vids doing mini breakdowns of some pop songs. If that guy can appreciate the music, ain't no reason other people can't. It's why I try to say 'it's not for me' or things like that. Some people may love it but I'm not going to say it sucks, just not my vibe or something like that.

The idea that people have different music preferences might seem like such a simple thing, but it's a big deal. Some music teachers don't really talk about this idea enough. Some even ask students to share their favorite song and allow a whole class to laugh at a girl for bringing in country music—a personal nightmare of mine that came to life.

I turn around and wonder what we should do moving forward. Mark hears my thoughts and replies,

I think there's a responsibility not just to establish the fundamentals of music theory, composition, instrumentation, and production, but also place music in the appropriate context for analysis and be willing to meet it where it is. One of the great pitfalls of analyzing music and our emotional experiences with art is the desire to make it more of what we already know we want, instead of accepting the fact that art exists as conversation between artist and audience. More people want to talk over the conversation rather than meet it consistently in good faith, which leads to . . . The advice I'll give isn't just that earnest good faith is such an asset when it comes to discussing music and art, but also in communicating ideas in and around art. That sort of discourse creates meaning, and while you're always going to encounter folks for which learning is just routine work to be done, what can truly galvanize a student is giving them space in that conversation not just for interpretation, but also emotional engagement as well.

This makes me think about motivation. We find lots of opportunities to extrinsically motivate students with stickers, prizes, and grades, but it can be so *powerful* when we foster the intrinsic motivation that comes from their interests and ambitions.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Just one example of Chilly Gonzales: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzpPLBta\\_L8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzpPLBta_L8).

<sup>471</sup> As Alfie Kohn illustrates:

If you have enough power, sure, you can make people, including students, do things. That's what rewards (e.g., grades) and punishments (e.g., grades) are for. But you can't make them do those things well . . . and you can't make them *want* to do those things. The more you rely on coercion and extrinsic inducements, as a matter of fact, the less interest students are likely to have in whatever they were induced to do. What a teacher *can* do—all a teacher can do—is work with students to create a classroom culture, a climate, a curriculum that will nourish and sustain the fundamental inclinations that everyone starts out with: to make sense of oneself and the world, to become increasingly competent at tasks that are regarded as



In my peripheral vision, I can see that James is nearby. I walk over to him and bluntly ask, “Where do we go from here?” He pauses for a moment and then responds,

I think everyone should know that they can engage with music, and that doesn’t mean they need to have perfect pitch or even read sheet music. Music is water. We all have it inside of ourselves, we use it every day, we need it to live. Those without a connection to music lack a basic component to humanity, and I think it’s partially because music is seen as a pursuit rather than a part of regular life. You will hear a lot more songs in your life than plays you will watch or films or video games or paintings or nearly any other artform. Music is everywhere, and we should engage with it as the universal constant that it is rather than talking exclusively about Bach or whichever European is the teacher’s favorite.

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**Door #5:** “Welcome.” In this world, we don’t ask each other, “Are you a musician?”

Instead, we ask, “How do you music?”

Maybe someday.

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consequential, to connect with (and express oneself to) other people. Motivation—at least intrinsic motivation—is something to be supported, or if necessary revived. It’s not something we can instill in students by acting on them in a certain way. You can tap their motivation, in other words, but you can’t “motivate them.”

Alfie Kohn, “How to Create Nonreaders: Reflections on Motivation, Learning, and Sharing Power” in *English Journal* (2010), 16.

## **The Last Campfire**

The fire may have started out small, but it's now a roaring group of flames. The crackling sound effect accompanies the conversation between Mark, Bryan, and James.

**James:** So, how did we all get here?

**Mark:** A lot of my work is predominantly built around discussion and critical analysis of music, art, culture, not so much creating or playing music.<sup>472</sup> After watching her video, I thought that seemed to be in line with what she's looking for . . . but it is an idiosyncratic process, and it can be tough to contextualize. I've been active in this space for about a decade, and I have a very established routine in how I create videos, both short and long-form, but I think my process is a bit dry. I asked her if that was a problem and she seemed up for it, so I thought, ok then!

**Bryan:** Yeah, the video got me. After I watched it, I thought . . . I may be what you are looking for. I was impressed with how much detail there was about the YouTube creator as an example of what he does. The guy has to come up with possibly the music, but definitely the routine, the flow of it...that was the reason I decided to throw my lot in. Generally speaking, basic karaoke videos, in my opinion, are boring. Text on a screen that swipes with the song. Don't get me wrong, that basic stuff is a good amount of work, but it's still kind of boring and static. Some of my stuff will range from standard top 40 to literally my own personally made remix of a song.<sup>473</sup> The amount of thought and detail I put into each video I make varies, but each one was made with intention. In reality, I don't think anyone out there goes to the extent that I do in each video, from the individual title cards to how the lyrics go. And I honestly don't think anyone should, it's very . . . time consuming. I said a similar thing like, while I have no problem showing you ALL the things, sometimes the video "creation" part is long, repetitive, and tedious. I think the quickest one I've made took me about 3 hours? I don't remember, but some of the more "creative" ones took days. "Hi Ren" took about 4 days, "Trippin'" took several days, it just kind of depends.

**Mark:** Karaoke . . . You know my family would have a tradition that every Sunday after dinner, we would sing karaoke together.

**Bryan:** Really? That's awesome.

**James:** I'll have to check out some of your karaoke videos—they sound interesting! When I got the email, I was immediately intrigued, especially since I'm also pursuing higher education in the arts. Then after examining things further, I found myself full-blown interested! I appreciated the thought...cultivating and selecting music is an essential part of my creative process that I take a lot of care and consideration in doing.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Mark Grondin, "We Don't Want To Talk About Separating The Art From The Artist - Video Essay," YouTube, May 22, 2021, Video essay, 41:13, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3226SMZqz8E>.

<sup>473</sup> Bryan Frolick, "Slipknot / Justin Bieber - Psychosocial Baby (Karaoke)," YouTube, August 4, 2023, Karaoke video, 3:50, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5\\_6rQce\\_zUI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_6rQce_zUI).

For the video that inspired the karaoke version, follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kspPE9E1yGM>

<sup>474</sup> James Echols, "What Makes A Game Cozy?" YouTube, August 13, 2022. 22:25, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bi7e-mTWC9U>.

**Bryan:** Nice. It sounds like this YouTube thing takes up a lot of our time.

**Mark:** Yeah, things are insane between my full-time job and YouTube.

**James:** It takes me a while, but I also don't force it, you know? I try to upload once a month, but if it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen.<sup>475</sup>

**Mark:** There are some things that I have to get out at a certain time . . . like my Billboard Breakdown episodes happen once a week, and then the mid-year and year-end reviews have a deadline. But yeah, people don't realize you can train your audience with your upload schedule, then you won't feel as much pressure if they know what to expect.

**James:** I love my patrons because they just wait, so patiently. They know it takes me a while and they're fine with it. It's great. I just recently got a sponsor, which was a crazy story!

**Mark:** Oh really? Who is it?

**James:** It's with Brelly.

**Bryan:** Never heard of them.

**James:** It's a browser extension that gives people discounts when they shop for stuff online. For every download, I get some money.

**Bryan:** Gotcha.

**James:** Yeah, they sent me an email, and I looked 'em up, hit reply, said, "I can't find a lot of information about you, can you just pitch me a little bit because I wanna know more before I say anything incriminating. And I need to know if you're a bot, so if you could tell me your favorite color as well" [laughs]. And I get a reply from the CEO of the company, he says, "I used to work at Honey" and I looked him up on his LinkedIn. He used to work at Honey in an executive position. This is a serious businessman who has worked in relevant fields.

This is actually a funny story, so he was like, 'cause we had a Zoom call meeting to talk about sponsorship and he said, "I just want to be honest about how I found you 'cause normally people go for bigger players in the game. I went on a date and this woman showed me this meme and it was the one of Saturn Devouring His Son, but it was replaced with a cup of coffee." And he said, "I didn't really get it." And I went, "No fucking way." He said, "So, I looked it up and I found your video." I was like, "Are you serious? I never imagined that someone would *actually* do what I made the video for . . . someone who doesn't understand the meme." He was like, "I felt like the video was made for me. And I assumed that it was a short video, and I was listening and was like, this is a fun video. And then 15 minutes had passed, and it was still going. I looked down, over an hour?! So then I was like, "There's gotta be somethin' else going on here." So he

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<sup>475</sup> Note from backstage: Bryan, Mark, and James all spend a staggering amount of time working on their videos. As a teacher, this is amazing to me because this is work that they *give to themselves*. However, I think they put in this much effort because it doesn't *feel* like work. This is the type of intrinsic motivation that was mentioned earlier. If we could create learning experiences that are this engaging for students, we could change the whole "I hate school" narrative.

watched the whole video and he's like, "I just couldn't stop watching, I just loved it." I was like, "That's insane! That's the best story I've ever heard! You went on a date, and she showed you a meme, and you didn't get it, so you looked it up and found a video tailor made for your problem? That's awesome!"

**Mark:** I can't imagine that happens very often—good for you!

**James:** I just think it's the craziest story. But anyway, what were we talking about before?

**Mark:** I think it was . . . uploading? Do you have a schedule for when you upload videos?

**Bryan:** A lot of times I just want to get the thing out there . . . I try to wait until Wednesday or Thursday, closer to the weekend, but yeah, it's tough to hold 'em back. We have a karaoke Discord group and I always want to see what that group has to say.

**Mark:** I love the Discord group . . . we can really have a conversation and chat about music. It feels like we're so many steps beyond the "stan" bait, the nonsense . . . we're getting into deeper conversations.

**James:** I have personal Discord groups I'm a part of, but with the conversation . . . I love seeing the conversation unfold in the comments section. There have been so many good comments and that's why I want my classroom to be bigger—I want to keep talking with more people.

**Bryan:** What do you mean by "your classroom"?

**James:** Oh [laughs]. I have this teacher character where I'm at my white board a lot . . . some people call me the meme teacher. I think I might be the first person to use my acting and playwriting degrees for YouTube!

**Bryan:** Oh cool, what are some shows you've done?

**James:** I mentioned it already, but one I'm really proud of was *Flowers for Algernon*. I also did *Boeing-Boeing* and *Pippin*.

**Mark:** Yeah, I started doing some on-stage performances in high school as well. I was in *Annie* and *The Music Man*.

**Bryan:** The Music Man! I. Love. That. Show. I saw it in New York on a school trip and that's what catapulted me into music theatre.

**James:** Oh, so same question for you! What shows did you do?

**Bryan:** I didn't stick with the degree, so I was only in a couple, but I remember *Anything Goes* and *Pirates of Penzance*.

**James:** Ok, ok . . . I think there are some musicals that are spectacular like *Les Mis* and *Phantom*.

**Bryan:** *The Music Man* is my favorite, but *Hamilton* was also great. And people don't realize, it's not a musical, it's an *operetta*.

**Mark:** Hmm, good point.

**Bryan:** I don't know 'bout you, but my high school was a very weird hybrid . . . my experience in high school was that everyone kind of knew everyone. It was a class of 600, but there wasn't any type of, there wasn't really . . . you ever see *10 Things I Hate About You*?

**James:** Yeah.

**Mark:** Yes.

**Bryan:** So, there wasn't cliques like that, really. Everyone kind of knew each other, there wasn't the football people who didn't hang out with the theatre people, who didn't hang out with whoever. And that was partly because, I think, because the theatre was such a big deal at my high school, everyone kind of did it. And that theatre really tried to be as inclusive as possible. So if you wanted to work on the musical, you could. You just had to show up, really. And they situated it to where it was outside of football season and it was outside of baseball season, so we had people who were on the football team be in the dance crew and all of that jazz. They wanted to make sure that, all you had to do was show up. You had to audition for lead parts, but if you wanted to be on stage or if you wanted to help on the things, they would find you . . . they would get you involved. They were very inclusive.

**James:** That sounds great.

**Bryan:** And then after I left, they started doing really good shows like *Hello Dolly*, and that's the thing. . . I won't say they were Broadway productions or anything, but there was a lot of effort with it. They did a lot of cool things. When they did *Guys and Dolls*, they built rolling buildings so they could change the set. The theatre was an actual full ass theatre that could accommodate for stuff like that. And then they'll do ridiculous shit like they'll combine different parts of shows. Well, we didn't really like this thing, let's add this part with this part, and did that. There was a whole section, it was called *Little Me*. That was my senior year, the one I actually got cast in that time, and the whole ending of the first act, they didn't particularly care for, so they kind of took stuff from . . . alright, we're taking this part from *George M* and putting it in here 'cause it works and it fits and it's so much better than the actual production of the original show.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Note from backstage: I found it fascinating that all of them had onstage performing experience, but maybe this is why they were comfortable being "onstage" in this production. While everyone here had some type of "formal" background in music education, I'm sure there are musical YouTubers who taught themselves, learned from a peer, learned from YouTube, etc. I'll also say that it seems like Mark's, James's, and Bryan's formal music training helps them with their YouTube channels more indirectly than directly. For example, Bryan mentions that he has "rhythm" and that his time in school band *may* have fostered that ability, but I would argue that if any of them had experiences like the ones I illustrated in "Dream Doors," the connections between that type of learning and their own musical goals, interests, and YouTube would've been undeniable.

You can find Bryan's "rhythm" quote at: Donna Janowski, "Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories," YouTube, January 7, 2024, 5:36:25 to 5:36:57, <https://youtu.be/cF87Z1Wm80U>.

**James:** That's actually really cool, I don't think we ever did anything like that. So how did you get from musicals to karaoke?

**Bryan:** Well, after that year I did two years off and on at a community college and then I sort of drifted and started doing karaoke with friends. I used to be a bigger Reddit user, don't as much anymore, but there was a subreddit on karaoke . . . r/karaoke, ya know? And it's not that great mainly because most people are just going, "How's my set? What's a good set-up? What's a good mic?" It's whatever. And then for some reason there was a thread on there, I think it ended up being karaoke nerds that actual user, who mentioned the Discord and I went, "There's a Discord?" He was like, "Yeah, here it is."

So I checked it out and it was just kind of . . . oh, wow there's a whole bunch of stuff here, and oh, there's new releases, oh shit, there are people putting actual stuff up, that is crazy and I don't know any of these songs at all and they're all . . . when you first look at 'em, you go oh, that's really neat. And after, I don't know a week or so maybe of just kind of looking through it and going like, well all these people are posting their stuff and I didn't even know . . . I didn't even dive any deeper than oh, there are specific creators with specific brands and tie-ins and all that jazz, it didn't even click in my brain. It was just this person is posting this and this person is posting this, and I was like, well, people are making these things and it's really good, I should post the best . . . I thought I have a whole bunch and maybe it's just a sharing type of thing. If you want this song, here's this song. I didn't exactly know. And I was like, well, I have a whole bunch that I've made, but comparatively they suck, ya know? And I thought well, I should . . . if I'm gonna post one, I'm gonna post the best one I have and that's the "Cult of Personality" video at the time. And so, I was like alright well, here's this one. Check it out if you want. And that's when it essentially blew up with . . . they had never seen anything like it. And now I just lurk on the Discord all the time now, really. There's a lot of cool people that you just kind of . . . it's so reminiscent of really old chat rooms.

**Mark:** Yes, definitely.

[James starts humming "I'm Just Ken" from *Barbie*.]

**Mark:** [Laughs] I did a review of the Barbie movie, actually.

**James:** Oh yeah?! I wanted to . . . I filmed something about it, but it wasn't as analytical as most of my other stuff. I might just post it on Patreon.

**Mark:** What I learned is that film discourse is *so* much worse than music discourse, oh my god. A lot of the philosophy in which I approached the Barbie movie and I managed to pull out of that, I'm like these are conversations I've been having in music for *years* now. And to see that film spaces are so *slow* to it and not willing to engage . . . I thought was very telling.

**James:** Hmm. Yeah, I think with YouTube, we're in a unique position to steer discourse and conversations.

**Bryan:** I didn't see the Barbie movie, but maybe now I have to? Is it as good as *The Interview*?

**James:** Oh my god [laughs].

**Mark:** I agree with your comment, James. And for my channel, I know not everyone in my audience will have a “technical” music knowledge background, so I can’t use jargon. I focus more on the emotional elements of music.<sup>477</sup>

**James:** Ha, that reminds me of this book I had to read for a class. It was Bourdieu . . . I remember reading the first sentence and thinking, “You already lost me.” I went to this giant dictionary I have and looked up the one word I was confused about and then that definition forced me to look up another word . . . I remember someone saying he was a great public speaker and I thought for who? ‘Cause I can’t understand him . . .

**Mark:** I think Win Butler, the guy from Arcade Fire . . . he went on a rant about a decade ago saying that a lot of music criticism sucked ‘cause they weren’t technical about music. He’s like this is how songs are supposed to resolve, but they don’t resolve in this way, and they are wrong.

**Bryan:** Wow.

**Mark:** Right? I remember thinking first off, you’re operating as you have this framing of how things are *supposed to be* done and it seems like a lot of music has been deviating from those practices. And assuming that one classical canon is right when it doesn’t really work when applied to certain *entire* other genres . . . you have to be willing to look outside of that. And I always have the one guy who will come in and say, “But you didn’t bring up this, and this, and you missed all this miraculous instrumentation and production.” And I think, “I’m not doing this for you.” If you can’t explain what you’re talking about, in language people understand, you failed as a writer.

**James:** Maybe that’s why I don’t write scripts for my videos [laughs]. Sometimes I wish I had something written down, but I’m comfortable riffing so that’s what I normally do.

**Bryan:** I guess I riff, in a way. I like to throw stuff at the wall to see what works. So much of my stuff is aesthetics.

**James:** Yes. I might not have a thesis for my videos, but I have a vibe. They all have a “James” energy.

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<sup>477</sup> Note from backstage: Depending on the situation, a music student might need to know the “jargon” Mark is referring to, but at other times it might not be helpful, or it may even get in the way of a student’s overall understanding. Jackie Wiggins addresses this idea of “Teaching Concepts, Not Labels:”

It is very important for music teachers to understand the difference between a musical concept or idea and the way musicians have decided to name the idea or write it on paper. Western musical culture has developed quite a complex system of “labels” that represent the various things we understand about music. However, these labels are meaningless to people who do not understand the concepts behind them. It is important for learners to first experience and come to understand a concept before being expected to identify it with an appropriate label. . . . Instead of teaching “quarter notes and eighth notes,” teach that, in music, some sounds last longer than others. . . . *Without conceptual understanding of music, a learner cannot develop into an independent musician.*

Jackie Wiggins, *Teaching for Musical Understanding*, (CARMU, Center for Applied Research in Musical Understanding, Oakland University, 2009), 42-43. Emphasis in original.



**Mark:** I definitely have an aesthetic to my stuff too.<sup>478</sup> It's funny, I add this image of blue pulses—my channel is called “Spectrum Pulse,” by the way—so I add this image for texture, but I'm pretty sure I'm the only person who will notice or care.

**Bryan:** I say that all the time. It's pretty cool when people catch the smaller details, but sometimes I feel like everyone missed the joke or whatever.

**James:** Sometimes I leave in a “mistake,” just to see if people catch it.

**Bryan:** Sometimes I can justify a mistake as an artistic choice, but if it bothers me too much, then I have to remaster it.

**James:** What do you mean by “remaster”?

**Bryan:** Well, I have a bunch of older videos that need to be updated. So, I call it remastering when I fix it and re-upload it.

**James:** Oh god, that reminds me of my first meme video . . . the audio was off, so I had to re-upload it, but I'm so mad at myself because that was my viral moment and I killed it.

**Bryan:** Yeah, I had to re-upload one that had a lot of views for my channel. But views to me aren't the biggest deal. We're not monetized in karaoke and if I make a video that I can't stand lookin' at, then I won't want to sing the song.

**James:** That's fair.

**Mark:** You never can predict when something will go viral. There was a period online where the “angry review” got the most traction. And I filmed one like that when I was sick, in a horrible mood . . . and of course that one gets 100,000 hits.

**Bryan:** Damn. What song or album or whatever was it?

**Mark:** It was an album review of AJR's *The Click*. I still feel like I gave the album a fair shake, but I'm not particularly proud of how it turned out.

**Bryan:** I don't know what album, but I think Funbox and CC have AJR videos . . . yeah, I couldn't do what I do if I don't like the song. I have to listen to it so many god damn times that it needs to be somethin' I like.

**Mark:** Yeah, I don't really have that luxury [laughs]. I have to review it all. I mean, I don't *have* to, but I've chosen the route of not specializing. I will say that not specializing has hurt me. The people who can micro-focus tend to do really well. I'm one of the few critics who try to cover everything . . . I guess I didn't want to feel pigeonholed.

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<sup>478</sup> Note from backstage: They've all developed their own “aesthetic,” which is also a part of their voice. Through project-based learning, music educators could design spaces where students can start to develop their own aesthetic, voice, or signature.

**Bryan:** It kinda sounds like you might do stuff similar to Todd in the Shadows . . .<sup>479</sup>

**Mark:** Oh yeah, he was one of the earlier creators that I admired. I saw what he was doing and thought, “YouTube is a platform I can utilize—let’s give it a shot.”

**Bryan:** Have you seen his stuff, James? If not, you gotta check him out.

**James:** I don’t think so, but I will. It’s funny because it feels like I’m part of a different world on YouTube . . . there’s so many different ones. I’m kinda “in” with the video essay crowd: F.D Signifier,<sup>480</sup> Mia Cole,<sup>481</sup> CJ the X<sup>482</sup>—ugh, CJ’s videos are so good.

**Bryan:** I mean, the nice thing is . . . there’s enough views to go around.<sup>483</sup> Like in my karaoke circle, we’re supportive of each other and it doesn’t feel like we’re trying to steal views or anything like that. And we can have two or three different videos for the same song, as long as you’re doing something with it, it’s cool.

**James:** Yeah, what’s that saying about tides rising or something?

**Bryan:** I think it’s, “A rising tide lifts all boats.”

**James:** Yeah!

**Bryan:** So James, what do you do exactly?

**James:** What do I do . . . good question [laughs]. Well, at first, I knew I wanted to make things and I started to make videos exclusively for myself. Basically, I was like, “Yeah, I want to get better at this, so I need to make things.” So, I was just making things as much as I could. And I made this video about this pretty small YouTuber named F.D Signifier, J.D Signifier I think I say

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<sup>479</sup> Todd Nathanson, “Todd in the Shadows,” YouTube, October 14, 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/@ToddintheShadows/videos>.

<sup>480</sup> F.D Signifier, “F.D Signifier,” YouTube, May 2, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/@FDSignifire/videos>.

<sup>481</sup> Mia Cole, “mia cole,” YouTube, April 19, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/@miacole/videos>.

<sup>482</sup> CJ The X, “CJ The X,” YouTube, August 28, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/@cjthex/videos>.

<sup>483</sup> Note from backstage: Here’s a lesson we can learn from YouTube: There’s room for *everyone*. One of Jesse Rathgeber’s participants, Sienna, described a “musical table” or “musical potluck,” to illustrate this exact idea:

If you have a potluck, everyone brings their own special recipe. So, you know, like, maybe their cornbread is the best in the county and they have, like, three blue ribbons and you would never had known that unless you had a potluck, because you might have told them to bring chicken if you were having a set menu. But, with a potluck, you get the chance of surprise as people get to bring their favorite and cherished recipes. People get to share themselves instead of catering to the wants of an organizer. With a potluck, people can bring their identities, their strengths, their interests, and all of themselves to share. They get to sample from what everyone has brought and they get to leave a little—well, let’s be honest—a lot more, with chances to listen, really listen with mind, body, and soul, to learn and understand more about life. Instead of being confined in boxes or to a set menu, we all get fed more when there are more people at the potluck of life.

Jesse Rathgeber, *Troubling Disability: Experiences of Disability In, Through, and Around Music* (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2019), 237-240.

at one point in the video . . . he made 10,000 subscribers, nothing crazy, but he had this video about Bo Burnham that blew up and everyone's watching this video and I felt like he was addressing me very directly 'cause he's talking about white, progressive people and their sort of artistic pursuits and I thought, "Hm. I kind of have something to say about this."<sup>484</sup> Nothing negative, I just . . . things sort of resonated with me and I feel like there were some things he didn't address. He was talking about white experiences versus Black experiences . . . and I read about how Black people are more likely to die at a hospital because doctors don't take them seriously. Like "Oh, you're over exaggerating, you're upset, take this medicine and go home." And then they die! Where with white people it's like, "Oh my goodness, something must be very wrong if you've arrived at the hospital." So that's a whole thing. And I was like, I have some things to add, so I talk about that.

I just sat on my bedroom floor, 25 minutes, barely any editing, I didn't frame it right, I was wearing a t-shirt from a podcast that is now dissolved [laughs]. I wasn't even holding the microphone right, but you know, I made it, and he commented, he watched it, and we started communicating and I was like, "I'm really glad that you liked it" and he was like, "I've never had anyone make a video about one of my videos, so you're like the first person who's done that for me, it's very cool." And he's exponentially growing and all this stuff and we're friends, this is awesome. And then he makes his "Break Bread" video and I'm in it. There I am on his big, green, motherfucking wall, my giant face plastered behind him. What was happening is I was working on a video about fucking eggnog and I was checking my YouTube Studio and the number went from 400 to 430 and I was like, "Hmm. That's weird." 431. 432. What? 433. 434. What's going on? We had a roommate at the time, and I said, "Can you come here?" She came in and I was like, "What's going on right here?" 445. "It's moving." And she said, "Yeah. Maybe the algorithm got you." "On what?! What's hitting?" "I don't know, but it's a good thing." "Yeah, I guess so."

Then I was like, oh I figured it out . . . whenever he posted the video I get a bump because people get pushed to his most popular video, which was the Bo Burnham video at the time, so it's cyclical and I was like, "Man, you gotta stop posting videos 'cause it scares me when the number goes up. And he was like, "Oh yeah, sorry I didn't ask you before I included you in the video." I was like, "What the fuck are you talking about?" So . . . and then I pull up the video, look at the description, there's my fucking name, I'm like alright. Well, I gotta watch the video now . . . and he leaves this glowing review of me, speaks very, very positively...he invites me onto his live a couple weeks later. You know, I'm bumped up to 3,500 subscribers. Like, ok, I got patrons, things are happening and so I thought, "Well, this is what I'm gonna do now."

But of course, all my projects take forever. So, I would get discouraged 'cause I'd be losing steam, and it takes a lot of time, so I would spiral about it, and nothing would happen. I'm a lot more open about it now and I'm very up front with the people who do give me money. Look, all the money you give me *does* go right back into this. This patron money bought the white board, that's inarguable. It wouldn't exist without there being extra income coming in. Numbers stopped going pretty much. Right now I checked my subscriber count, I still get subscribers, but it's not the same type of jump and it's not the dopamine, it's not the food. It's just like, "Oh,

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<sup>484</sup> James Echols, "My Experience Being White - A Response to F.D Signifier," YouTube, August 16, 2021, 14:36, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmxkpEcnz28&t=1s>.

people are existing in the world, and they run into it, and they like it well enough, so they subscribe.” It’s not because I’ve done something new, it’s residuals, basically.

**Mark:** Well, it takes time. Trust me, I’ve been doing this for ten years [laughs].

**James:** Yeah, that’s awesome, I hope I get that far.

**Mark:** So with your content, where does music come into play?

**James:** Well for music . . . Have you heard of Epidemic Sound?

**Bryan:** No.

**Mark:** I don’t think so.

**James:** It’s this platform that has a bunch of royalty-free music and I like it because I can “test out” whatever video footage I have with the music on the site. So every time I pick a new song, it resets the video so I can see what it would be like with each song.

**Mark:** Nice.

**James:** Yeah, I got tired of the YouTube Studio music. It got to the point where I could recognize when people were just using songs from there.

**Bryan:** So you put music in the background?

**James:** Yeah, but I spend a *lot* of time going through different songs to find what will work.

**Bryan:** A lot of listening—same here.

**Mark:** Same.<sup>485</sup> The audio and audio quality is paramount. If they don’t like what they’re hearing, they will click away.

**James:** It’s funny, I used to have a podcast mic, but I didn’t know how to use it properly and I found out I moved my hands way too much. But I would agree that a better mic is even more important than a camera. I remember this video with the director of *Shazam!*<sup>486</sup> saying, “You can’t explain a shitty mic if they can’t understand you.” [Laughs]

**Bryan:** Hmm. Yeah, for me most people care more about the audio, but I find the visual to be so important. Like don’t get me wrong, there can be *bad* audio in karaoke videos, and you don’t want that. But to me it’s so boring when the visuals are static. I don’t like static.

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<sup>485</sup> Note from backstage: Listening is a huge part of everyone’s work on YouTube. Currently, within music education, listening seems to mostly happen when it’s serving the end goal of performance (e.g., listening to a recording of a piece that you want the ensemble to play at a concert). Active, analytical, and careful listening could be prioritized way more, or it could be the central focus of a music class instead of being along the periphery. There is also merit and purpose when it comes to passive listening (e.g., meditation, movie music, etc.). Both types could potentially be explored in a music teaching and learning space.

<sup>486</sup> Note from backstage: The director is David F. Sandberg and he’s also a YouTuber!: <https://www.youtube.com/@ponysmasher>

**Mark:** I definitely upgraded my camera early on, so the visual is important and they'll click away if that's bad too. But I've been told that some people listen to my stuff like a podcast, which makes sense because I have visuals, but the music and what I'm saying takes precedence.

**Bryan:** Yeah, so are you reviewing current stuff?

**Mark:** For Billboard Breakdown, yes. For some of my other stuff, it depends.

**Bryan:** Hmm. So how is copyright for you?

**Mark:** Oh, copyright [laughs]. I have some tricks that I use, like I put an annotation on the screen with the information about the song . . . kind of like citing my source. I also manipulate the video clips of the songs and sometimes changing the aspect ratio helps. But I have a script for copyright claims, which sucks, but it happens.

**Bryan:** Sounds familiar [laughs]. My group has a script for that too and we put together a list of "bands to avoid."

**James:** Seriously?

**Bryan:** Yeah, it doesn't make any sense to us. We're not getting any of the money. And if anything, we're promoting their songs even more so *they* would get more money.

**James:** Wow. I guess that's why I stick with Epidemic Sound for the most part. I'm using 6 seconds of copyrighted music in one of my videos that I'm working on now. It's funny because I fade in and fade out of it, so with the fades, it plays more than 6 seconds, but without the fades it's 6 seconds exactly. So I'm just gonna roll the dice and see if I get checks when I upload it and figure it out if I need to [laughs].

**Mark:** What song are you using?

**James:** It's "Everywhere at the End of Time" by the Caretaker.

**Mark:** Hmm. Yeah, with bigger artists I usually use a shorter clip of music.<sup>487</sup> What is the video about where you're using that song, if you don't mind me asking?

**James:** It's . . . so I'm doing something different. I normally do longer videos about a topic, but I'm going to try making three smaller videos and see how that goes. So the videos are about

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<sup>487</sup> Note from backstage: Copyright is another topic of discussion that could use more attention in music education. Now that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a part of the mix, it may be helpful for music teachers and students to know more about that as well. In one update, *The Publish Press* shared:

A song featuring AI-generated versions of Drake and The Weeknd's voices went viral on TikTok and YouTube earlier this year, leading many in creative industries to ask: How can creators, artists, and actors control the use of their personal likenesses as artificial intelligence tools become more and more popular? The generative AI firm Metaphysic believes that the solution isn't to ignore new technology. Rather, the company is helping talent secure personal data, file to copyright their likenesses, and license their portfolio to third parties in order to keep up with AI innovation.

Hannah Doyle and Nate Graber-Lipperman, "Creatives Move to Protect Their AI Likeness Rights," in *The Publish Press*, November 27, 2023, <https://news.thepublishpress.com/p/creators-can-digital-likeness>.

curiosity...and I actually made a trailer about this a long time ago, so I'm kind of basing my work off my work.

**Mark:** I do something similar with my scripts. I save all my scripts, so I can go back and see what I said about...for instance, I was working on a review of the new Carly Rae Jepsen album, and the interesting thing there is I have Carly Rae Jepsen reviews going back to 2015. I got five reviews I can pull on. It's not recycling myself, because the albums are different, but if you're trying to build a continuity or how you've thought about someone over a period of time, it helps.

**James:** Yeah, definitely. I had to abandon the idea when I first started it, but I'm glad I still had something to go back to when I knew I was ready.

**Bryan:** Same with my remasters . . . it helps to start with something, even though with some of them it's *almost* like starting over. But I have no choice, really, 'cause if I can't stand looking at 'em, I won't want to sing 'em. I just want to get everything up to the same standard.

**James:** Right. I'm always prepared for whatever video I'm working on to blow up. They all need to represent.

**Bryan:** For sure. I keep telling my karaoke people that if we want to compete with corporate karaoke, we need to step up our game.

**Mark:** Corporate karaoke?

**Bryan:** Yeah, that's what I call those channels like . . . what are their names? KaraFun is one . . .

**Mark:** Ok, gotcha. And what's the deal with those types of channels?

**Bryan:** I mean, they're fine. But I just find the homebrew stuff to be so much better. Way more interesting, way more dynamic, and we all use high-quality recordings instead of covers.

**Mark:** Makes sense. I call some channels corporate channels and they're somewhat of a mixed bag. You have the ones that YouTube backs and the ones that YouTube doesn't. The ones that YouTube backs are the big late-night comedians or the news channels, stuff like that. They get backing and promotion, fine. I'm not competing in that space anyway. When I went to one of those YouTube Spaces, there was a representative from Indie88, which is a Toronto indie rock-based music station, and they do a bunch of internal YouTube videos and stuff like that. And I thought, "This is cool, let's talk about music stuff."

**Bryan:** Sorry, what's "YouTube Spaces"?

**Mark:** This was something YouTube tried, and you know what? I'll give 'em credit. This was a physical space . . . they wanted to get YouTube creators to come in and use the space, so they had sets built, cameras set up, they had everything like that, ready to go.

**Bryan:** Ok, never heard of it.

**Mark:** Yeah, it mostly didn't work. But yeah, with Indie88 . . . it was very obvious from then that the old guard of radio and that structure does not *get* YouTube, does not *care* to get YouTube, and will look down on any creator that comes out of YouTube. 'Cause from them, it is very much we have our structure, we have our silo, we have our space in terms of how music is supposed to be made, promoted, circulated . . . *you* are not a part of that.

**James:** YES. That reminds me of how "Hot Ones" is on Hulu and TV now. It feels wrong, like "Are we not good enough for you?" Is YouTube not good enough for you?

**Mark:** It's good enough for me [laughs].

**James:** I actually told her that I had a suggestion for her moving forward. So with me, she took a lot of notes, but I said you should keep doing this and film *everything*. You would get permission and maybe the creator wouldn't want you to use absolutely everything, but film everything so you have it. And then you can give people these inside looks behind the scenes and with that, you could become the person who interviews YouTubers and takes YouTubers seriously. Even though I don't consider myself a YouTuber, I get that I'm *on* YouTube.

**Mark:** Right. Yeah, I identify as a music critic more than anything.

**Bryan:** Mhm. I would say I'm a karaoke guy or karaoke creator, I guess. I don't know, I just make shit fly on the screen [laughs].

**James:** I don't know either [laughs]. I like to say I make videos instead of I make *YouTube* videos. I don't know . . . there's still a connotation that's associated with YouTuber that I don't consider myself a part of.

**Mark:** Like Shane Dawson?<sup>488</sup>

**James:** Yeah, or Tyler Oakley, or MrBeast. The "Hey guys!" type of energy where I feel like I can't breathe while watching the video. But then I think, "How different am I?" I want clicks, I get torn up about views. I guess I just want to make things . . . videos or art and that could function on any platform.<sup>489</sup>

**Bryan:** Right. It's just that YouTube is the only game in town.

**James:** Well, there are platforms like Nebula and Dropout that are gaining traction, but YouTube is . . .

**Bryan:** I have no real loyalty to YouTube it's just . . . it's easy because it's Kleenex, it's that type of thing.

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<sup>488</sup> Shane Dawson, "shane," YouTube, September 21, 2005, <https://www.youtube.com/@shane>.

<sup>489</sup> Note from backstage: This part of the conversation loops back to the words we use and the title of "YouTuber." Music educators may want to explore words, titles, and how we "name" things with students. For example, what's the difference between a song, a piece of music, and repertoire? Which title do you prefer: YouTuber, artist, videographer, etc.? Why? If we "name" this a "YouTube video," does that make it seem inferior to a movie or a documentary?

**James:** Kleenex [laughs]. That's a good way to describe it. There are definitely problems with the platform and . . . it's an impossible problem because they have 8 billion customers. *Everyone* uses YouTube. How do you service 8 billion customers? McDonald's doesn't even serve 8 billion customers . . . and everyone hates McDonald's! [Laughs]

**Bryan:** Right?!

**James:** But yeah, even with the problems, I hate not doing what I'm currently doing. And I'm proud of what I've been able to do so far. Especially . . . well not especially, because my *Love Island* video is my favorite [laughs]. But I was thinking the comment section under my first meme video is so good because they got the *spirit* of the video. And that's why I want the videos to be bigger. That's why I want them to reach a larger audience, because . . . when it hits the target demographic that I'm trying to reach, they just...they go to the *moon*. And they are just so creative. 'Cause it's not like, "Aw man, I wish I had that thought." It's I LOVE hearing you have that thought. I LOVE . . . like you are my student in my classroom, just giving me the best fucking answer to my question.<sup>490</sup>

**Mark:** Do you want to be a teacher?

**James:** Yes, that's the goal.

**Mark:** I don't engage with my comment section as much anymore . . . unless I have to, but that sounds great.

**Bryan:** For sure. Yeah, once I get these remasters done, hopefully I'll be proud of everything out there.

**Mark:** It's funny . . . a lot of people have questioned the role of the music critic in the modern era. A lot of people think, "Well, what's the point? We can come up with our own opinions online, anyone can have a YouTube channel, anyone can shout off on social media." And ok, that's true. But I'm going to go the extra mile. I'm going to curate the stuff that I like, or I have a lot to say about. That takes work. And the fact that I've been doing this 10 years . . . that's the catalogue, you can't really come at that.

**James:** How did you get started?

**Mark:** I only started really watching YouTube larger, I'd say around 2011, 2012. After I left university, I got really bored over summer vacation in 2012 where I was between university and my job and . . . at that point my folks moved out to Edmonton, I moved out to Edmonton with them, stayed there for the summer. I didn't have a job, wasn't doing much of anything. Really, *really* was bored 'cause none of my friends were nearby, my sister was on a co-op term, so I had nothing to do. So a lot of that time I spent going for long runs, going for long walks in the woods, and listening to a lot of music. And that's when I first started blogging about music in

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<sup>490</sup> Note from backstage: This is another place where music teachers might take inspiration from participatory culture. The person who created the video, the music, or whatever is not the only important piece of the puzzle. The people who comment on, analyze, and share it are also contributing and participating in significant ways. How people interact with a creation is what gives it the ability to "live on" in various ways.



some form. And when I say that, I mean, it's a bit of a lie, a bit of a misnomer because I started writing about music on Facebook actually, I wanna say 2009, 2010. Just small little blog posts that I was putting together . . . they didn't get a ton of traffic, more among my friends, but you're not building a platform on Facebook. Then I got, I used a blogger platform, and I started writing about music pretty extensively between I wanna say the summer of 2012 onwards for pretty much until the fall of 2012. I did a lot of writing around that point, then there was a gap for about three or four months, I had work stuff that took priority. Moving on from there, I only started returning to blogging I want to say, March 2013, I started writing there, started building more content, and then I was looking at my traffic figures. I'm like, it's doing ok, but it's not making money off of AdSense that way, so these people on YouTube seem to be doing ok and then I pivoted my content over there.

**James:** Gotcha. YouTube was always a big thing for me. I was obsessed.

**Mark:** See, for me, YouTube was *there*, but I was watching people on other platforms.

**Bryan:** That's how I felt or still feel . . . YouTube is fine, and I wanted to share my karaoke stuff, so it felt like the only place that made sense.<sup>491</sup>

**James:** Everyone knows about YouTube. Mark, since you've been doing this for a lot longer, do you have any good stories?

**Mark:** Oh, so many stories [laughs]. There was one artist, his name is Redveil. He sent me an Instagram DM, he sent me his album to get reviewed. He said, "I've been watching your stuff since 2014. Since I was a preteen, teenager. I've got an album, do you want to review it?" He's now on tour with Danny Brown and JPEGMAFIA. I'm gonna go see him *live* in 2 days. And sometimes you'll get odd situations, like sometimes you'll go to a live show and since I'm 6'5" and I get recognized pretty quickly, like I'll have an artist who'll come up to me afterwards and say, "So, didn't like the mix on that last album, eh?" And I'm like, "Yeah, there was a little too much reverb on it!" Although sometimes you'll also encounter the cases where it's a little nastier, where you say a black metal act is not particularly good and then they try to punch you in the face at a show, which has happened. And then there was the case where I'm not sure it's safe to go to Houston, at least for me, because Scarface cussed me out on Twitter at one point. And I'm like, "Listen. I liked your album, I just didn't think it was transcendent, I think you've done better." And our interaction was fine and dandy and then some of my *fans* hopped into the replies, everyone got blocked, and I'm like, "Fuck, I can't go to Houston now."

**Bryan:** My old stomping ground . . .

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<sup>491</sup> Note from backstage: It surprised me at first that Mark and Bryan weren't huge YouTube "fans" before they got started. I guess I always imagined that YouTubers would look up to other YouTubers for inspiration. In any case, this indifference towards YouTube makes me think this isn't a "YouTube study." Yes, I found everyone on there, but YouTube isn't the end-all and be-all solution that I'm advocating or promoting. While I do believe music educators can utilize YouTube in meaningful ways, this is a study about *musicking*, being musical in ways beyond performance and composition, and *valuing* all forms of engagement. It's about the fact that we're missing out on students who are interested in music like Mark, Bryan, and James. It's about so much more than YouTube and whether we like the platform or not.

**Mark:** Oh nice. Another cool thing is that sometimes you break artists. Sometimes you give them enough publicity that they get signed or they get picked up by more audiences, more people find out about them, and they see credible changes in their lives. That's happened for a couple of artists that I've covered, especially in the country space where they don't get a lot of coverage. One thing that got commented on . . . I don't use Spotify, but some people have gone into the Spotify recommendations, and they see certain acts that I've recommended and then they see a bunch of other acts that are just based off of what I've recommended. So, I've shaped some people's Spotify listening algorithms for certain artists . . . which is weird, but at the same time you're shaping a community, you're trying to make it a positive community. You're trying to do things that will ultimately help bring people into a better place and appreciative of the art.

**James:** YES. For my stuff . . . I think about editing and how in order to edit well, you need to have a sense of musicality. You need to have a rhythm . . . this sounds stupid, but you have to have a rhythm in your heart, you have to have a thump in your chest. You have to convey the emotion—that's what music *does*—it conveys an emotion. So how do you capture that on a platform where *the entire world* is at their disposal? They can watch bombs get dropped, they can watch *anything*. How do you get them to feel something, watching you? You need to give them music, you need to give them art. You need to give them a story.

**Bryan:** I time my stuff to music all the time. And I try to . . . so I always like songs where the lyrics don't match what the song is. For instance, "Semi-Charmed Life." It's such a bummer song and it's wrapped up in such a happy thing. Yeah, crystal meth will lift you up until you break! I love that one. That one's a great one 'cause I think maybe at the time, I don't know, people missed the point. I did!

**Mark:** Oh yeah.

**Bryan:** And you know what I missed the point of until very recently? It was kind of explained was, "Say It Ain't So." "Say It Ain't So" is a *horribly* sad song. It is *incredibly* sad. And I never caught it. It's a jam, but damn it's so sad. But I didn't know that and I knew the lyrics . . . it was one of my original karaoke songs that I could sing very well, so I knew the lyrics. I just didn't know what they *meant*.<sup>492</sup> So that actually made me think about making that one at some point and trying to . . . convey that.

**Mark:** Yeah, so many songs tell a story and I like talking about those stories. And especially for the video essays I do, my writing comes in handy. I had been writing persistently in some form since I was a kid. I did fan fic for years...then from there I also play D&D a lot . . .

**James:** I LOVE D&D! But continue . . .

**Mark:** Nice! I was going to say and D&D also translates to . . . you learn how to build dramatic storytelling very strongly through that medium.

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<sup>492</sup> Note from backstage: Another opportunity for music teachers: lyric analysis! A lot of people don't realize what their favorite songs are really about or what kinds of messages their favorite artists are sending out into the world. There are also multiple ways to interpret a song and it may be valuable for students to hear from and make sense of different perspectives through the study of lyrics.

**James:** Absolutely. 100% agree.

**Bryan:** So there's one I recently did . . . Stone Temple Pilots "Wet My Bed/Crackerman." I wanted it to be ethereal, 'cause the song is very much . . . I'm wasted talking kind of thing. This is one it fades in, it fades out, as opposed to it disappears. And it's a smoky background type of lettering because I wanted it to look more like the thoughts are just kind of coming in and drifting off . . . I hate thinking it but . . . when you listen to professional wrestlers talk about pro wrestling, they're like, "We tell stories." And that's not wrong. Really good wrestling matches, they have a throughline of what they're doing. They set up things, there is a storytelling aspect to it, but it seems very highfalutin to go like, "We tell stories." Like oh god . . . that's how I feel when I go about mine. Like well, the story of this video is . . .<sup>493</sup>

Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories:  
<https://youtu.be/cF87Z1Wm80U>

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<sup>493</sup> Note from backstage: This ending may make it seem like I'm emphasizing storytelling and YouTube/participatory culture more than music teaching and learning. The way I see it, the music is driving the story that Bryan is telling through his video, and music education is what drove this entire collection of short stories. Mark, James, and Bryan all tried the formal music education route, and it didn't work for them. Not really. They had to forge their own pathways and YouTube happened to be a place that welcomed the different ways they wanted to engage with music. The cliffhanger ending is here to give readers space for reflective and reflexive practice and to wonder: Where do we go from here? Moving forward, let's . . .

## **YouTube Links**

### **Backstage**

I Need Your Help, YouTube! Recruiting Musical YouTubers:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JM9wWUjGI\\_8&t=6s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JM9wWUjGI_8&t=6s)

### **I Need Your Help, YouTube!**

Zumba Sulu: <https://www.youtube.com/@ZumbaSulu>

### **The Focus Group**

Hey Clip: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-\\_CSo1gOd48](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_CSo1gOd48)

Adam Neely: <https://www.youtube.com/@AdamNeely>

12tone: <https://www.youtube.com/@12tone>

David Wesley: <https://www.youtube.com/@DavidWesley>

Wade Johnston – “Tip Jar”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PE3ZyL2hZWU>

### **Once Upon a Time**

The Dichotomy of YouTube & Art: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzFz4QZQgZM>

### **YouTube: A Global Campfire**

How Andrew Schulz took over the internet:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BB2HTaXTy0k&t=1744s>

Adventures With Purpose: <https://www.youtube.com/@AdventuresWithPurpose>

Are You Winning Sisyphus? (Behold! A Meme! - Ep. 1):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Jxt8kzNNPc&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Jxt8kzNNPc&t=1s)

Don't Talk To Me Until I've Had My Son (Behold! A Meme! - Ep. 2):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80-1cK48VSE&t=1s>

A Love Island Video Essay: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c9H5DA8WyI>

How Much Control Do You Have Over Who You Are?:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qjh2-vXLEeI&t=98s>

Channel Awesome: <https://www.youtube.com/@ChannelAwesome>

LoadingReadyRun: <https://www.youtube.com/@loadingreadyrun>

CJ The X: <https://www.youtube.com/@cjthex/videos>

Internet Today: <https://www.youtube.com/@InternetTodayTV/videos>

Linkara-AtopTheFourthWall: <https://www.youtube.com/@AT4W>

Todd in the Shadows: <https://www.youtube.com/@ToddintheShadows>

The Full Story of Michelle Khare (Challenge Accepted):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qoe2qhcZ-Y>

Lil Nas X: <https://www.youtube.com/@lilnasx>

Jacob Geller: <https://www.youtube.com/@JacobGeller>

## **Journal Entries**

Goodbye Internet: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8R1\\_TqU68yo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8R1_TqU68yo)

## **Lights, Camera, Action**

Ryan Gosling – I’m Just Ken Exclusive (From Barbie The Album) [Official]:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru1LC9IW20Q>

## **Mark Grondin aka Spectrum Pulse: Not the Music Critic We Deserve, But the One We Need**

Semisonic - Little Bit Of Sun - Album Review:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpI3CAeMgZg&t=2s>

Billboard BREAKDOWN - Hot 100 - July 1, 2023 (fukumean, back to the moon, Attention, Classy 101): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pu03YCWm0xI&t=327s>

Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories:  
<https://youtu.be/cF87Z1Wm80U>

Behind the Scenes: Episode 1 | Spectrum Pulse: [https://youtu.be/cSjppqFy\\_1Hc](https://youtu.be/cSjppqFy_1Hc)

Billboard BREAKDOWN - Hot 100 - July 29, 2023 (Seven, Try That In A Small Town, What Was I Made For): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9nLHCMx73Y>

## **Words Are Hard**

DJDoesResearch: <https://www.youtube.com/@DJDoesResearch>

Tyler Oakley: <https://www.youtube.com/@TylerOakley>

MrBeast: <https://www.youtube.com/@MrBeast>

The Dichotomy of YouTube & Art: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzfz4QZQgZM>

Disney Channel's Theme: A History Mystery:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b\\_rjBWmc1iQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_rjBWmc1iQ)

## **The Narrative Turn**

This Is How We Roll - The Wild 'Legacy' of Bro-Country, Then and Now - A Video Essay:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvRVUB1BBEA>

## **Karaoke Trailblazer**

Breezy's Studio Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@StudioBreezy>

Wake Up | Rage Against the Machine cover | ft. Sophia Urista:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JrIKcoD1Qw>

Stone Temple Pilots – Trippin' On A Hole In A Paper Heart (Karaoke):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-Rrx11fBko>

Velvet Goatcheese Sings: <https://www.youtube.com/@VelvetGoatcheeseSings/videos>

Sing King: <https://www.youtube.com/@singkingkaraoke/featured>

KaraFun Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@karafun>

Sound Choice Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@soundchoicekaraoke5436>

BrilliantTrash: <https://www.youtube.com/@BrilliantTrashMusic/videos>

Rose's Garden Variety Karaoke Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@Roses-karaoke/videos>

Mix Tape Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@mixtapekaraoke/videos>

It Might Be Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@ItMightBeKaraoke/videos>

Nomad Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@nomadkaraoke/videos>

What Happened to Lemmy Caution - Help us out, link in the description:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1quie0k7aTk>

Carpy Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@carpykaraoke/videos>

Peareoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@Peareoke/videos>

Obama... And Time Travel... And Coolness... And the Last Racist:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Me1HcsrLaw>

Monster Tracks Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@MonsterTracksKaraoke/videos>

Brass Against - Wake Up (Karaoke): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygzyTT-0GB8>

Here's the Thing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HprWyS25um4>

diveBar Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@diveBarKaraoke/streams>

Karaoke Singing on a Wednesday Night with diveBar Karaoke:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjMy6NZApr&t=1934s>

Punk Media Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@PunkMediaKaraoke/videos>

Let Me See You: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMUL7q0w7H8>

Funbox Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@FunboxKaraoke/playlists>

Living Colour - Cult of Personality (Karaoke):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bCcy\\_suvA0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bCcy_suvA0)

Psychostick - Blue Screen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2DKCTH2m-A>

Cloud Eleven Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@CloudElevenKaraoke/videos>

Jonathan Coulton - Re: Your Brains (Karaoke):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyhB7ui57gU>

Acorlei: <https://www.youtube.com/@Acorlei/videos>

lopenash: <https://www.youtube.com/@lopenash/videos>

Ren - Hi Ren (Karaoke): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8QQeJFK4ZI>

CC Karaoke: <https://www.youtube.com/@CCKaraoke/videos>

Breezy's Tutorial - Draw time CDG vs Subtitle:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGmsZ1IVVqk&list=PL6O5kTvhQJeNdjbaZWeaZ8lOgAPf6ZQtI&index=11>

Breezy's Tutorial - Fonts & Sync:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54BURhkZ2OE&list=PL6O5kTvhQJeNdjbaZWeaZ8lOgAPf6ZQtI&index=12>

Jonathan Coulton - Always The Moon (Karaoke):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sW3PdvztId0>

CloakyOke: <https://www.youtube.com/@CloakyOke/videos>

Girl Talk – Here's The Thing (Karaoke): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HLjh2c0KUc>

Behind the Scenes: Episode 2 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Wake Up" by Brass Against - Part 1:

<https://youtu.be/QYSbYhfl3-g>

Behind the Scenes: Episode 3 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Wake Up" by Brass Against - Part 2:

<https://youtu.be/rBwmSDjLpLs>

Behind the Scenes: Episode 4 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Here's the Thing" by Girl Talk - Part

1: <https://youtu.be/ANpYjHCu9h4>

Behind the Scenes: Episode 5 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Here's the Thing" by Girl Talk - Part

2: <https://youtu.be/gFiHP65hbBY>

Behind the Scenes: Episode 6 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Here's the Thing" by Girl Talk - Part

3: <https://youtu.be/spKzpW1SChk>

Behind the Scenes: Episode 7 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Here's the Thing" by Girl Talk - Part

4: <https://youtu.be/pkAdN4YUXQY>

Behind the Scenes: Episode 8 | Breezy's Studio Karaoke | "Here's the Thing" by Girl Talk - Part

5: <https://youtu.be/r1u3nYawBU8>

## **Searching for Voice**

Goodbye, Home: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoIVi8AHHjQ>

Vanessa Carlton - A Thousand Miles (Karaoke):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZAasfLL2M>

## **Curiosity Killed the Cat**



A Crap Guide to D&D [5th Edition]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00EvO-X6Wu4&list=PLDnRMnDDjAzK5uZLidDUtHtD1iN06Qe0G>

Chris Hayes Podcast with Natalie Wynn | Why Is This Happening? – Ep 167 | MSNBC: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_UnWuONL5I&t=94s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_UnWuONL5I&t=94s)

ContraPoints: <https://www.youtube.com/@ContraPoints>

Behind the Scenes: Episode 9 | kolpeshtheyardstick: <https://youtu.be/vaAsoMFpZqQ>

## **Dream Doors**

Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson Read Aloud: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y194zww8cKU>

Nacho Video: <https://www.youtube.com/@NachoVideo>

On The Pulse 2023 #12: Travis Scott, Carly Rae Jepsen, Disclosure, Lori McKenna - Album Reviews: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOcAre6JSWc>

Tones and I: „Dance Monkey“- Chilly Gonzales Pop Music Masterclass | 1LIVE: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzpPLBta\\_L8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzpPLBta_L8)

## **The Last Campfire**

We Don't Want To Talk About Separating The Art From The Artist - Video Essay: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3226SMZqz8E>

Slipknot / Justin Bieber - Psychosocial Baby (Karaoke): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5\\_6rQce\\_zUI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_6rQce_zUI)

Justin Bieber vs. Slipknot - Psychosocial Baby: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kspPE9E1yGM>

What Makes A Game Cozy?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bi7e-mTWC9U>

Todd in the Shadows: <https://www.youtube.com/@ToddintheShadows/videos>

F.D Signifier: <https://www.youtube.com/@FDSignifire/videos>

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My Experience Being White - A Response to F.D Signifier: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmxkpEcnz28&t=1s>

David F. Sandberg: <https://www.youtube.com/@ponysmasher>

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Email Script for Recruitment

Hello [Name of YouTuber],

My name is Donna (or a lot of people call me DJ) and I'm a PhD candidate in music education! I'm interested in YouTube research and I'm specifically wanting to learn more about the YouTubers who create the videos I love so much. I found your email address on YouTube (under the "About" tab of your channel), and I wanted to reach out because I noticed that your YouTube channel is musical in a particular way, and I'm hoping to find out more about your background and how you create your videos. With your help, I'm hoping to inform and expand music education opportunities. The name of my study is "Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories."

Over the summer of 2022, I spent about two weeks with a YouTuber named Eric, who has a channel called "EMCproductions." I spent time watching him create a video for his channel, facilitating a few interviews, and creating a video with him! If you're interested in working together, we'll do the same things, but I'll respect your preferences as to scheduling and the timeline. Depending on the work that had to be done, Eric and I spent between 1-6 hours per day together, but again, I will honor your preferences and schedule. I am interested in traveling to you and your workspace, but if COVID-19 restrictions interfere with in person events, we can do everything virtually!

If you're looking for more details, I have attached a letter of information, or I can answer any of your questions through email. The Principal Investigator (my supervisor) for this study is Ruth Wright, and if you have any questions for her, she can be contacted by email: [REDACTED]

Thank you for your time and please reach out if you have any questions or concerns!

Thank you,  
Donna Janowski (DJ)

## Appendix B: Letter of Information and Consent



March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Letter of Information and Consent

**Title of the project:** Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Ruth Wright, Professor, Don Wright Faculty of Music  
[REDACTED]

**Co-Investigator:** Donna Janowski, PhD Candidate in Music Education  
[REDACTED]

Dear Potential Participant,

You are being invited to participate in a research study because of your musical YouTube channel. The purpose of this study is to document your musical background and the processes you undertake creating YouTube videos. This information could inform and expand music education practices.

You will be one of 3-5 participants in this study. It is expected that you will be in the study for approximately two weeks. If you agree to participate you will be asked to:

**Partake in interviews/conversations:** You will be asked to participate in three interviews with each lasting no longer than an hour. The interviews will be about your music background, YouTube, and your video creation processes. These interviews will be arranged according to your schedule. If you would prefer to have conversations rather than sit-down interviews, I will record our organic dialogue. If you do not want our interviews and/or conversations to be recorded, you may still participate in the study.

**Permit observations:** The observations will be about “setting the scene” (finding a location, setting up, etc.), writing (creating a script, notes, etc.), sound (microphones, equipment, etc.), recording (cameras, etc.), lighting (placement, etc.), filming, editing, uploading (scheduling, etc.), what happens after uploading (monitoring comments, tracking views, etc.), and whatever may fall into an “other” category. If you do not want your video creation processes to be recorded, you may still participate in the study.

**Collaborate on a video:** We will collaborate on the creation of a YouTube video. The production of the collaborative video will follow your lead, as the YouTuber. This portion of the project will reflect your needs and wants because it is your channel! For your time, effort, knowledge, and stories, I hope that in return, I can offer ideas for future videos, use my personal abilities, assist in the video creation process in whatever ways you see fit, and/or help contribute to your channel.

The study will take place wherever you live and work, in any spaces that you determine. Note, that the research can be done virtually if COVID-19 restrictions prevent the study from being conducted in person. If needed, we will use Zoom to conduct the interviews. Here is a link to Zoom's privacy statement: <https://explore.zoom.us/en/privacy/> If the study needs to be done virtually, we can send materials (like video clips for the collaborative video) through OneDrive. The password required to access materials on OneDrive will be emailed to you in a separate message.

Here is a link to Microsoft's OneDrive privacy policy: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/how-onedrive-safeguards-your-data-in-the-cloud-23c6ea94-3608-48d7-8bf0-80e142edd1e1>

Here is a link to Microsoft's privacy policy: <https://privacy.microsoft.com/en-gb/privacy>

The data will be stored in Canada. Please note that nothing over the internet is 100% safe and there will always be some chance of privacy and security risks. It is possible that information could be intercepted/hacked by unauthorized people or otherwise shared by accident. This risk can't be completely eliminated, and we want you to be aware of this possibility.

The identifiable information that will be collected is your name, email, audio and/or video recordings, direct quotes, and the name of your YouTube channel. Your full name is required for the consent forms and your email address may have been needed for recruitment purposes and as a form of communication. Audio recordings would make the transcription process much easier, but all recordings are optional. The video recording is part of the collaborative video portion of the project. Another identifier will be the name of your YouTube channel. Your channel name will help me refer to you throughout the study and will hopefully help you gain viewers and followers, as people come into contact with this research. In the dissemination of this research, I may use direct quotes, your name or nickname, the name of your YouTube channel, and links to videos. At the end of this letter, you may choose whether or not you consent to audio recordings, video recordings, your name, quotes, or YouTube channel being used in the dissemination of this research.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate, you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. You also have the right to request a withdrawal of any data collected unless certain information has already been published. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time, it will have no effect on you. It is important to note that a record of your participation must remain with the study, and as such, the researchers may not be able to destroy your signed letter of information and consent, or your name on the master list. However, any data may be withdrawn upon your request. You do not waive any legal right by consenting to this study. We will give you any new information that may affect your decision to stay in the study.



There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. The possible benefits to you may be increased viewership on your channel and ideas for future content based on our collaboration. There is no compensation offered for participating in this study. The possible benefits to society may be that teachers, leaders, policymakers, or others connected to music education, may develop positive changes based on this study. Possible changes could be related to the involvement of more learners, the incorporation of YouTube or other platforms into music courses, and/or the development of new classes that engage learners in meaningful and relevant music-making practices.

Delegated institutional representatives of Western University and its Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research in accordance with regulatory requirements. The researcher will keep all personal information about you in a secure, confidential, and Western University approved location for 7 years. Once this time has passed, the information will be destroyed through digital removal in accordance with Western's Disposal Guidelines and Best Practices.

There will be publication or dissemination outside of the collaborative video. This research will be presented at conferences and published in written form. You will be identified because that will help readers or audience members find you and your channel. The audio-recordings and transcripts will be stored on a secure USB Safeguard.

If you have questions about this research study, please contact Ruth Wright: [REDACTED] or Donna Janowski: [REDACTED]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics: (519) 661-3036, 1-844-720-9816, email: ethics@uwo.ca. This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Donna Janowski, PhD Candidate, Music Education

Principal Investigator: Ruth Wright, PhD, Professor of Music Education



**Title of the project:** Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Ruth Wright, Professor, Don Wright Faculty of Music

**Co-Investigator:** Donna Janowski, PhD Candidate in Music Education

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research.

YES  NO

I agree to be video-recorded in this research.

YES  NO

I agree to have my name used in the dissemination of this research.

YES  NO

I consent to the use of personal, identifiable quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research.

YES  NO

I agree to have my YouTube channel used in the dissemination of this research.

YES  NO

I consent to the use of my data for future research purposes.

YES  NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (DD-MM-YYYY)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Guardian  
(If applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (DD-MM-YYYY)

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Person  
Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (DD-MM-YYYY)

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

### Music Background

1. Tell me about where you grew up and any significant musical memories from your childhood.
2. Tell me about your family's involvement in music.
3. Describe your K-12 music education and/or musical experiences.
4. Describe your collegiate/university music education and/or musical experiences.

### YouTube

1. Describe your memories or experience with YouTube *before* becoming a YouTuber yourself.
2. Was there a moment, experience, or inspiration that motivated you to become a YouTuber?
3. Tell me about your early YouTuber days. What were your struggles/difficulties? What were your highlights/positive moments?
4. What have you learned from being a YouTuber? Have you had any "ah ha" moments in your YouTube career?
5. Did your K-12 music education prepare you for your YouTube career? If yes, specifically how so? If no, please explain.
6. Did your collegiate education prepare you for your YouTube career? If yes, specifically how so? If no, please explain.
7. Do you have any interesting stories to share about critical moments (turning points, major events, etc.) both positive and negative in your YouTube career?
8. What do you find most rewarding about being a YouTuber?
9. What kind of impact do you think or hope you have on your audience?
10. Do you have any regrets about your career choice or decisions along the way, and if so, would you be willing to share those with me?
11. Is there anything in your career that we have not touched upon that you would like to share?

### Processes

1. How do you come up with video ideas?
2. What do you think attracts your viewers or what do you think your viewers like most about your content?

3. How do you feel about the “pace” of your uploads? Do you have any thoughts related to the uploading schedule of other YouTubers?
4. How do you plan for “what’s next”? Do you work video to video, or do you have more of a long-term plan?
5. If someone was new to your channel, which videos would you recommend and why?
6. Take me through the creation of a “typical” video on your channel. What needs to happen first, second, etc.?
7. Are there videos that had unique processes? What was necessary in the production of these particular videos?

## Appendix D: Observation Guide

Date:

Time:

YouTube Process	Observations centered around the Process	Observations centered around the YouTuber	Overall Thoughts/Feelings
"Setting the Scene" (Finding a location, setting up, etc.)			
Writing (Creating a script, notes, etc.)			
Sound (Microphones, equipment, etc.)			
Recording (Cameras, equipment, etc.)			
Lighting (Placement, equipment, etc.)			
Filming			
Editing			
Uploading			

"After" (Commenting, Tracking Views, etc.)			
Other			

## Curriculum Vitae | Donna Janowski

### Education

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Doctor of Philosophy: Music Education  
University of Western Ontario

Graduation: August 2024

Master of Music: Music Education  
Arizona State University

Graduation: May 2017

Bachelor of Music: Music Education  
Minor: Spanish  
Arizona State University

Graduation: May 2014

### Research

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- Janowski, D. (2023). Interconnected Pathways on YouTube and Music Education: YouTubers and Their Stories—Project ID: 122376
- Janowski, D. (2022). Compose a Comment with EMCproductions: Using YouTube as Narrative Inquiry—Project ID: 120258

### Adjunct Teaching

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Progressive Pedagogies in Popular Music Education

Winter 2024

### Western Graduate Teaching Assistant

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Progressive Pedagogies in Popular Music Education

Fall 2022 to Fall 2023

Psychology, Learning, and Music

Winter 2022

Teaching and Learning Music

Fall 2021

Philosophy of Music Education

Winter 2021

### Graduate Student Assistantships

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Editorial Assistant, Dr. adam patrick bell

September 2023 to present

Marking Assistant, Dr. Danielle Sirek

October 2022 to March 2023



## Publication

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Janowski, D. (2021). Review of *The Horizon Leans Forward...: Stories of Courage, Strength and Triumph of Underrepresented Communities in the Wind Band Field: With an Annotated Bibliography of Works by Underrepresented Composers*. *Canadian Winds: The Journal of the Canadian Band Association*, 20(1), 46-49.

## Presentations

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- Janowski, D. (October 2023). “Compose a Comment”: Narrative Inquiry, YouTube, and the (Partial) Story of EMCproductions. Sound, Meaning, Education 2023: CONVERSATIONS & improvisations.
- Janowski, D. (February 2023). Choose Your Own Adventure: YouTube Edition. Guest Speaker for “Creativity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”
- Janowski, D. & Touchette, J. (July 2022). The YouTube Project: Students and Their Voices as Content Creators. 35<sup>th</sup> World Conference of the International Society for Music Education 2022.
- Janowski, D. (June 2022). “Compose a Comment” with EMCproductions: Using YouTube as Narrative Inquiry. NIME8 Conference 2022: Narrative Inquiry in Music Education.
- Janowski, D. & Van Klompenberg, A. (May 2019). Project-Based Learning, STEAM, and Beyond: Evolving Structures in Music Education. Mountain Lake Colloquium.
- Janowski, D. (November 2018). Music and Project-Based Learning: Engaging, Challenging, and Authentic. Virginia Music Educators Association Conference.
- Janowski, D. & Nowak, T. (May 2017). Embodiments of the Creative Self. Mountain Lake Colloquium.
- Janowski, D. & Nowak, T. (February 2017). An Examination of Students’ Beliefs of Creativity. Arizona Music Educators Association Conference.
- Janowski, D. (January 2016). Blurred Lines: Bringing General Music into Orchestra. Arizona Music Educators Association Conference.

## Special Projects

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Coordinator for the Western University Graduate Symposium on Music

August 2023

- Organized the 24<sup>th</sup> annual graduate student conference for Western University.
- Created the Call for Papers, arranged the conference schedule, moderated the sessions, and secured a keynote speaker.

Design Team Member

January 2017 to May 2017

- Collaborated with numerous music educators for the Sound Explorations: Creating, Expressing, and Improving Communities grant project from the 6th Digital Media and Learning Competition, with support from the MacArthur Foundation (Primary Investigator Dr. Evan Tobias with the Consortium for Innovation and Transformation in Music Education and Arizona State University Foundation).
- Offered advisement in the development of music learning playlists for youth. The playlist topics included building instruments and interfaces, coding and programming music, connecting music and culture, jamming, making beats, and producing music.

## Teaching Experience

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Fairfax County Public Schools - Virginia      Itinerant Strings Teacher, August 2017 to June 2020

- Instructed orchestra students from fourth to sixth grade. Generated a curriculum centered around students' musical interests.
- Participated in orchestra events around the district including Solo and Ensemble Festival, West Potomac Area Orchestra concerts, and school performances.
- Facilitated several projects that allowed students to explore music in different contexts. Examples included an art and music project, a video game project, and a movie trailer project.
- Collaborated with general music colleagues to organize a commercial project. Students created jingles, background music, and songs to sell original products.
- Designed a concert program that featured a "project gallery." Musicians presented their projects to audience members in an open, fair-like atmosphere.

Legacy Traditional School - Arizona      Music Teacher, August 2015 to May 2017

- Organized kindergarten to second grade general music classes.
- Taught students from third to sixth grade in the Mozart program. The Mozart program is a unique schedule where students may elect to have music classes four days a week.
- Directed orchestra, general music, recorder, and piano classes.
- Instructed junior high orchestra with students in seventh and eighth grade. Implemented a curriculum that was a mixture of traditional orchestra practices and project-based learning.
- Facilitated a junior high elective titled, "Musicking." Students in seventh and eighth grade explored musical elements by creating, performing, improvising, and analyzing music.

Capitol Elementary School - Arizona      Music Teacher, August 2014 to May 2015

- Organized kindergarten to sixth grade general music classes.
- Instructed choir students in seventh and eighth grade.
- Choir participated in the Greater Phoenix Choir Festival, Phoenix Elementary District Festival, and school concerts.
- Taught secondary general music to students in seventh and eighth grade. Students demonstrated their musicianship by performing, creating, analyzing, and discussing music.

## Practice Teaching

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Desert Sounds - Tempe, Arizona      Violin/Viola Instructor, August 2014 to September 2016

- Taught students from first grade to high school. Students participated in an annual recital that included solo repertoire and chamber music.
- Coached and supported other Desert Sounds teachers with the mariachi ensembles.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School – Tempe, Arizona      Music Instructor, January 2011 to May 2013

- Taught violin and cello students from fourth to seventh grade.
- Directed a chamber group project.
- Explored a variety of genres including fiddle, folk, and classical.

String Project – Tempe, Arizona      Private and Group Instructor, August 2010 to May 2014

- Instructed private students from grades two to twelve. Instruments included violin, viola, cello, bass, and piano.
- Organized beginning, advanced and fiddle classes.
- “Allegro,” the beginning class, would usually consist of students from fourth to sixth grade.
- “Presto,” the advanced class, would usually consist of students from sixth to eighth grade who were ready for more challenging string techniques.
- The fiddle class consisted of members from fourth to eighth grade. Students were required to memorize their music, sing, and participate in basic choreography.
- Prepared all String Project students for recitals each semester.

## Performance Experience

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TooNice      July 2021 to present

- TooNice is a reggae, punk, ska band that plays a variety of events and venues.

Washington Metropolitan Gamer Symphony Orchestra      September 2018 to March 2020

- WMGSO is a community orchestra that arranges and performs music from different video games.

Soul Mi Sol      May 2014 to August 2017

- Soul Mi Sol is a Latin American band based in Phoenix, Arizona.
- The group utilizes a number of instruments including violin, guitar, bass, harmonica, charango, voice, and a variety of percussive instruments.

Solo Performance - Arizona State University String Studio Recital      August 2010 to May 2014

Arizona State University Symphony      August 2010 to December 2014

## **Scholarships/Recognition**

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Graduate Teaching Assistantship	January 2021 to present
Western Graduate Research Scholarship	September 2020 to present
Society of Graduate Students in Music (SOGSIM) Chair	October 2022 to September 2023
SOGSIM Lunchtime Research Forum Coordinator	October 2021 to September 2022
Grant to attend TI:ME Leadership Academy	February 2014
Eirene Peggy Lamb – Music Scholarship	August 2013 to May 2014
Emil Barberich Scholarship	August 2012 to May 2013, August 2013 to May 2014
New American University Scholar – Provost’s Award	August 2010 to May 2014

## **Professional Organizations**

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The College Music Society	May 2021 to present
The Association for Popular Music Education (APME)	April 2021 to present
Ontario Music Educators’ Association (OMEA)	April 2021 to present
Virginia Music Educators Association (VMEA)	September 2017 to September 2020
National Association for Music Educators (NAfME)	August 2010 to November 2020
Arizona Society for General Music Teachers (AzSGM)	July 2014 to August 2017
Arizona Music Educators Association (AMEA)	August 2010 to August 2017
Arizona Band and Orchestra Directors Association (ABODA)	August 2010 to August 2017
Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA)	December 2013 to December 2014