

A Multiple Case Study on Virtual Vocal Ensembles and Online Musical Performance

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April 25, 2017 • 14:15-15:45 • Research in Music Education Conference • Session G3
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Virtual Choirs/Singing: A Brief History (Cayari, 2014)

Important Terms (Cayari, 2016b)

Virtual vocal ensemble is an ensemble whose performances are comprised of multitrack recordings

Multitracking is a performance practice in which a video creator layers multiple audio-visual tracks into a project, thus making an ensemble with each performer in a different panel.

Mediation is creation with the help of machines and technology

Virtual Performance is presentation through digital means such as virtual choirs, virtual barbershop quartets, virtual a cappella groups, and other various sized ensembles that may have no equivalent in synchronic musical traditions

Synchronic means existing in a specific space and time

Three Trends of Virtual Music Making

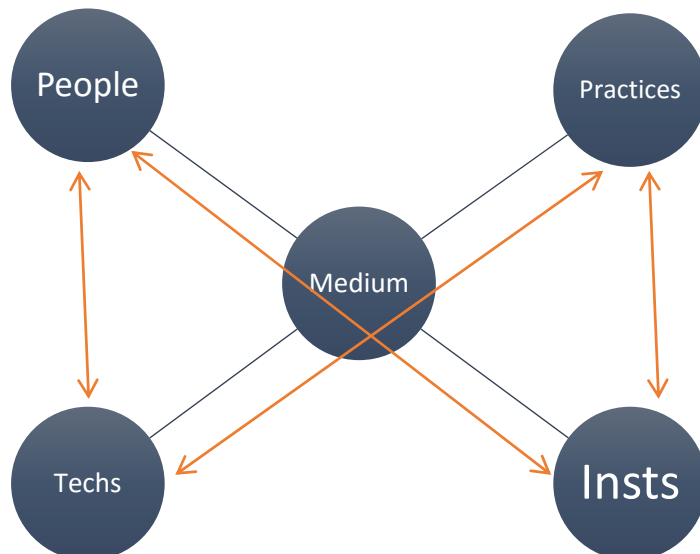
(Cayari, 2016a)

- One-Person Performance
- Collective Performance
- Collaborative Performance

Research Questions

What are the musical and social implications of virtual vocal ensemble creation and participation?

How does a medium (Sterne, 2003) emerge as people create virtual vocal ensembles?

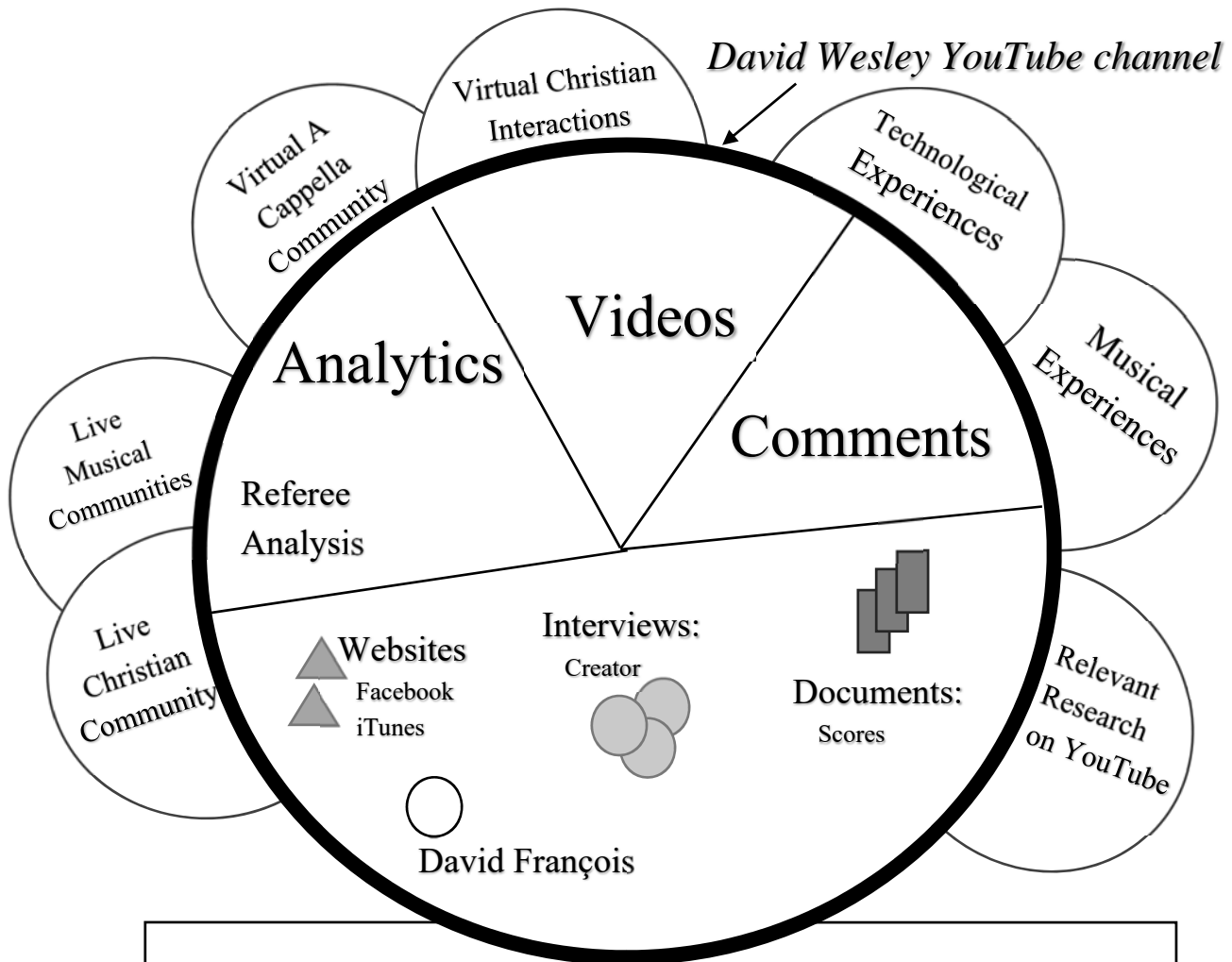


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Selections from the Worksheets adapted from Stake (2006) attached and case 2 (David Wesley) has been accepted with revisions in *Music Education Research*.

FULL Worksheet B.1.2. Graphic Design of *David Wesley* YouTube Channel Case Study



<p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solitude verses working with others Exploring music and video as a hobby Accessible musical arrangements Branding and online identity Discovering a creative process Formal and informal education Evolution of a YouTube channel Spreadability of media Expectations of excellence Spirituality 	<p>Main Information Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What actions did François take to create virtual vocal ensembles? How did François’s education and previous experiences prepare him to create videos? What practices were used to brand François’s YouTube channel? How did François’s branding help him develop a fan base? What role did spirituality play in the construction of François’s fandom?
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Excerpt for Worksheet B.2.2. Themes of Virtual Vocal Ensemble in the *David Wesley* YouTube Channel

Theme 1: Who are the people creating virtual vocal ensembles? 3, 4, 7, 10, 13
Theme 4: How is technology used to mediate ensembles and performance? <i>Technology</i> 14, 15, 16, 19-20, 20, 21, 22, 31, 42, 50
<i>Mediation</i> 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 30, 31, 33, 37
Theme 5: How do the recurring relations create a network through which singers perform?
Theme 6: How do virtual vocal ensemble creators find the performance practice fulfilling and meaningful? 1, 10, 18, 33, 35, 38, 39-40, 50
Theme 9: How does creating virtual vocal ensembles influence the creator's skills and understanding?
<i>Technology Skills</i> 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 43
<i>Musical Skills</i> 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 19, 30, 39, 49
<i>Producer Skills</i> 1, 32, 33, 40, 41, 42, 52

Note: Numbers refer to occurrences where information pertinent to the theme appeared in an early draft of the chapter of the corresponding case. Data were then analyzed to construct Worksheet 3.2. Data from themes 1, 2, 3, and 4 cover information germane to theme 5; therefore theme 5 was intentionally left blank. Subthemes are identified above in italics.

Excerpt Worksheet B.3.2. Case Report Notes for the *David Wesley* YouTube Channel

Synopsis of Case

David François, the creator of the *David Wesley* YouTube channel, used his skills as a musician and recording technician to create virtual ensemble videos on YouTube. His varied experiences as a child, teenager, and young adult gave him the drive and understanding of how to put together audio-visual multitrack recordings. As a self-proclaimed “jack-of-all-trades” and as someone who did not like to stay idle for too long, François used his skills to create predominantly Christian genre virtual a cappella ensembles. . . .

Situational Constraints

Only one collaboration that occurred as more of an accident; only been doing virtual vocal ensembles for a year and a half; unwilling to work on vocal skills, but constantly looking to better videos technologically and through more innovative arrangements.

Uniqueness among Other Cases

François was an adult professional when he created and developed his YouTube channel; he created his own arrangements; he was half black; from Canada; had instrumental videos; lots of experience with technological mediation; a large amount of momentum for growth (same size as Dan Wright, but François's growth predominantly occurred in a year and a half as opposed to a steady growth).

Prominence of Themes

Prominence of Theme 1 (People) in This Case: intellectually curious; struggled with structured learning as a child; created videos as a high school student and collaborated with classmates; wanted a separation between offline and online so he used his middle name instead of last name; searched

for collaborator when skills were not proficient; after working with collaborator, decided to use hand drum, beatbox, or no drums because it took too much time/effort.

Prominence of Theme 2 (Practices) in This Case:

- *Making music*: music would be performed at church and he wanted to get it out of his head and sometimes do it better; used smooth voice leading and chords from the original arrangements.
- *Making videos*: Used YouTube channel as an eclectic video repository; started creating virtual ensembles with no initial plan, but then developed a creative process called the *David Wesley Treatment*; MIDI and click tracks help keep recording in time; created markers in DAW to identify important sections; backdrop, lights, tripod, camera, microphone, and pop filter all used for recording; used laptop for audio and desktop for video editing; recorded audio and video at the same time; listened to recording in multiple scenarios for quality assurance; call to action after videos to encourage involvement.
- *Practices spanning live and mediated music making*: constantly felt he should outdo himself by adding more instruments, more voices, or more challenging arrangements; gave credit to original artists by paying royalties.
- *Social media*: sometimes allowed fans to talk before formulating responses.
- *Creative Process*: selecting, arranging, recording, sound editing, visual editing, and producing the song; hybrid performance was created by taking out the melody and rearranging panels so a live soloist could sing. . . .

Prominence of Theme 7 (Identity) in This Case:

Prominence of Sub-Theme 7a (Technological) in This Case: involved with ministry as a video creator; high school videographer.

Prominence of Sub-Theme 7b (Musical) in This Case: genre effected identity; amateur musician; loved tinkering and exploring; dismissive about critical comments because he is not a “professional”.

Prominence of Sub-Theme 7c (Online) in This Case: wanted a separation between offline and online; preferred making music in his basement and used that to brand his channel; micro-performances for each video were done the same day so that all clones looked the same except for their hoodie; used a coda to direct viewers to other songs and display logo; shared basic information about family through vlogs; hoodie became a trademark; more refined online about controversial topics and criticism; kept everything rated PG; shared personal items to keep fans connected; less critical of other artists online than offline; CD was an extension of online identity; speaking voice and conversational pattern was displayed via vlogs; both good and bad feedback was met with apprehension because they do not know the real creator. . . .

Findings Specific to the *David Wesley* YouTube Channel

1. Creator had an intellectual curiosity that spanned musical, technological and production skills, which were used in tandem to create videos.
2. Creator used YouTube as a repository to archive projects, music videos, and vlogs.
3. Creator developed a method to create music videos, which evolved as he created each subsequent video.
4. Creator challenged himself to outdo his previous accomplishments for each subsequent video.
5. Creator used MIDI tracks to keep himself in time.
6. Creator used professional hardware and software to create audio-visual tracks.
7. Copyright allowed for proper attribution of music as well as legal reproduction of protected performance material. . . .

Worksheet B.4. Ratings of Expected Utility of Each Case to the Development of Themes.

	<i>DanWright32</i>	<i>David Wesley</i>	<i>Melody Myers</i>
Cross-Case Themes and Subthemes			
Theme 1: People	High	Middling	High
Theme 2: Practices	High	High	High
Theme 3: Institutions	High	High	High
Theme 4: Technology	Middling	High	High
Theme 5: Mediation	High	High	High
Theme 6: Meaning	High	High	High
Theme 7a: Technological Identity	Low	Middling	Low
Theme 7b: Musical Identity	High	Low	High
Theme 7c: Online Identity	Middling	High	High
Theme 8a: Learning Community	High	High	High
Theme 8b: Musical Community	Middling	Low	High
Theme 8c: Social Community	High	Middling	Middling
Theme 8d: Fandom	High	High	High
Theme 8e: Solitude	Middling	Low	Low
Theme 9a: Technological Skills	Low	High	High
Theme 9b: Musical Skills	High	High	High
Theme 9c: Production Skills	Low	High	Low

Note: This worksheet was constructed after Worksheets 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 were developed to determine the utility of each case to the themes. Utility was determined by the researcher based on his knowledge of cases, number of occurrences of each theme within the case write-up, and the relevance of data to inform the theme. High utility means that the case is potentially very useful for developing the corresponding theme. Middling utility means that the case is of moderate usefulness for developing the corresponding theme, and Low utility means that the case is of low usefulness for developing the corresponding theme. This data was then used to guide the creation of merged findings and their utility to each theme in Worksheet 6.

Excerpt from Worksheet B.5. Clustered Findings Organized by Merged Findings

Merged Finding	
<i>Case</i>	<i>Case Specific Finding</i>
I. After establishing a fan base, creators may commoditize their services.	
Francois	After developing a following, Creator produced a CD for fans to purchase, which resulted in an increase of track sales.
Francois	Treated YouTube channel as a business.
Wright	Creator used various websites to get money from his music making.
II. Learning communities emerge on YouTube as creators produce content.	
Myers	Positive feedback from viewers was rewarding, although there were also negative ramifications for being a public figure including privacy and harassment.
Myers	Comments were generally positive and the result of an established fandom.
Wright	Negative statements were often accompanied in the same message by positive statements in the comment section.
Wright	Positive feedback was initially meaningful and propelled high levels of output and growth.

Note: Case specific findings taken from Worksheets 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3. Case specific findings were then clustered and merged finding was constructed. Merged findings were then used to construct Worksheet 6.

Excerpt Worksheet B.6. Matrix of Merged Findings with Rated Importance According to Theme.

Merged Findings	Themes								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Creators decide to what degree they commoditized their services.		M	H	M	M	M		M	L
Learning communities emerge on YouTube as creators produce content.	M	H		L	L	L		(H)	H
Creators engage with others to varying degrees to make music on YouTube.	H	M			L			H	L
As fandoms developed around a YouTube channel, social exchanges occurred.	L	L			L	M	L	(H)	
Online and offline activities can simultaneously work in tandem or create tension.	M	M	L		M		H	LC	
Creators shared personal information with their fans via YouTube and beyond.	H	L	L	L	L	L	(H)	H	
Creators made both deliberate and incidental decisions on how to present themselves and their art on YouTube.	H	M		M	H		(H)	LC	LC
Autonomy is a strong rationale for creating virtual vocal ensembles.	L	M			LC	(H)			
Feedback propels creators to continue making virtual vocal ensembles.	M			L	LC	H		H	M
Institutions facilitated learning, provisions, and production throughout the virtual vocal ensemble process.			H	L	M	L		M	M
Acceptable practices were influenced by the community as well as the creators themselves.	M	(H)	L	H	(H)	M	L	M	M
Creators decided which live performance aspects were included in their mediated performances.	M	(H)		(H)	(H)	M	L	L	LC
Creators developed a method that became standard in their own creative process.		(H)	L	H	(H)		H		H
The quality of virtual vocal ensemble was effected by the technology and skill of the creator.		M	M	(H)	H	LC	H		M

Note: Merged Findings from Worksheet 5 were rated based on the researchers perceived importance to each theme. High = high importance; M = middling importance; L = low importance. A high mark means that for this theme, the finding is of high importance. Parentheses around an entry means that it should carry extra weight when assertions are drafted. The notation “C” within a cell means that this situation warrants caution in drafting assertions. The matrix was analyzed to develop a list of cross-case assertions found in Worksheet 7.

FULL Worksheet B.7. Cross-Case Assertions and Their Relation to Themes

Cross-Case Assertion	Theme					Important information to incorporate in cross-cass analysis
	5	6	7	8	9	
Creators develop methods to construct and publish their videos.	X	X	X	X	X	Creative processes, patterns in videos, outliers, learning from others
The technology used to create videos has an effect on virtual vocal ensembles.	X		X	X	X	Growth, learning, technology issues, discrepancies, previous knowledge vs. learning as you go
Creators' personal choices and opinions guide the way they create virtual vocal ensembles.	X	X	X	X	X	Fidelity, live practices, standards, communities of practice, personal choices which can lead to a philosophy of performance, autonomy, laws, sharing
One-person virtual vocal ensembles afford autonomy for their creators.	X	X	X	X	X	solitude, rationale (fun, music they want to make), self-directed learning, one-person virtual vocal ensemble creation as an musical "anti-community"
The creation of virtual vocal ensembles leads to the emergence of a multifaceted community.	X	X	X	X	X	Fandom, learning, solitude, community of practice, relationships with others
Virtual musical collaboration is a time and resource intensive activity.	X	X		X	X	Collaboration preference, mini-cases, distaste for unequal visions, stretching skill levels, learning from each other
Experiences are effected by how creators portray themselves online.	X	X	X	X	X	Sharing personal information, haters, fandom, offline effects, audience, social media, networking, YouTube conventions (annotations, linking, description box)
There is a two-way connection between the audiences and creators of virtual vocal ensembles.	X	X	X	X	X	Feedback as learning, meaning, and encouragement/deterrent statistics, community (venue, learning, fandom)
A creator's voice range influences their ability to make virtual vocal ensembles.	X	X	X		X	Pitch adjustment, voice as identity, expanding range due to practice/performance
Virtual vocal ensembles exist in commoditized spaces, and creators have options on how to participate in monetization.	X	X	X	X	X	Producer skills, recordings, learning tracks, copyright, choices of what to partner

Note: Potential assertions were analyzed and final cross-case assertions were developed. It was noted to which themes the assertions pertained. Themes 1, 2, 3, and 4 were combined into theme 5 as a medium is made up of the recurring relations between people, practices, institutions, and technologies. Important information was also noted to guide the writing of the cross-case report in chapter 7.