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Play-By-Play

As the clip begins, a music sample from the chorus of Britney Spears' "Oops I did it again" is playing. Nate, one of the hosts, is gently tapping his foot and rocking out with his hands; Charlie, the other host, is subtly nodding his head as he looks down at his script. When the clip finishes, Nate gestures to the left side of the audience and says *here we go, Charlie you are going to lead this side in the original chorus*, then performs a karaoke snippet to remind them what it sounds like: "oops I did it." Then, he turns to the right side of the audience, gesturing with the same outstretched hand and open palm, and says, *I'm going to lead this side in the alternate chorus* and karaoke-sings a snippet of that: "pause [claps] oops I." During this bit, he turns both hands into pointed fingers and shakes them up and down to the rhythm of the song. Nate and Charlie look at each other, backchanneling, and Charlie says, "Count us in?" While looking at Charlie, Nate counts, "three...four..." as Charlie looks at his half of the audience and starts singing and motioning with a hand that he opens and closes to the beat. The audience starts singing with him. A beat later, Nate turns to his half of the audience and starts singing, moving his hands (with pointed index fingers) along with the beat. His side of the audience joins the song. For the next ten seconds, Nate, Charlie, and the two halves of the audience sing the two-part chorus together through one entire round. During the song, a woman in the front row holds up her cell phone to record the action. The camera angle shifts, and we can now see two audience members on the far left grooving and dancing to the beat of the sing-along.

They stop singing, all at once, as many audience members and Charlie laugh. Charlie says, "They got me," as the audience begins to clap. He continues, turning to Nate, "they were so beautiful...I wanted to sing with them." Nate remarks that portion went much better than they anticipated, which generates a more laughter from the audience. He shuffles his script in his lap, looks down at the script, and then launches into an explanatory monologue about the significance of this two-part chorus (which will continue mostly uninterrupted for the next 40 seconds). During the monologue, he keeps his eyes up, softly focused on the audience, and uses both of his hands to provide gestural emphasis. He says, *the end of the song raises a question: Who is Britney Spears? We still don't have an answer.* (At this point, someone from the audience interjects loudly, but the exact words are inaudible.) He describes how she—Britney Spears—is multiple things at once, performing different identities. This was vexing, he says, to critics when the song came out, but provides the audience with an alternate perspective: This is a "masterful" move to keep listeners guessing who she is, and "By performing multiple aspects of her identity, she does something that we all do; none of us are just one thing. We are all composed of multitudes." That's what this song really captures, he says, using an index-finger-and-thumb "ok" gesture on both hands to indicate the artistry in the song. As he does this, Charlie says, "hmm" and then is about to take back the floor.

Relating this clip back to my conceptual framework

This clip demonstrates several aspects of how the *Switched on Pop* hosts, Nate Sloan and Charlie Harding, attempt to teach audiences to listen to pop music with an analytic ear. Throughout this clip, because the camera focuses on Nate and Charlie, we are mostly seeing the *teaching* side of this relationship, but we get glimpses into the *learning* side of this relationship through some moments of audience participation. As the video clip starts, a sound bite of the song is playing, and both Nate and Charlie are demonstrating how to listen with their whole bodies, feeling the song in their small gestures of foot-tapping and head-nodding. It can be awkward to performatively listen to something (as they are doing on stage, under the audience's gaze), so they could simply be deflecting that awkwardness, but I think they are also providing a model for the audience of *how* to listen by embodying the sound.

This act of embodiment continues through the sing-along, where Nate and Charlie direct the audience to sing the two parts of the chorus, feeling the sonic difference in the music by performing it with their voices. Again, Nate and Charlie demonstrate this themselves first—but this time, they also explicitly invite the audience to participate and contribute their own voices. As they approach this participatory activity, it is not a given that the audience will actually sing along—as Nate and Charlie demonstrate by their nervousness leading into the activity and their astonishment when the activity is completed. Thus, this collaborative, embodied act of singing along, as a means for learning to listen, is also an act of profound trust between hosts and the audience. We can also consider this collaborative sing-along as a boundary object. Boundary objects, as defined by Star and Griesemer [1], are artifacts for communication and cooperation that “inhabit several intersecting social worlds” and are “plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity.” In this moment, the sing-along builds a common identity between Nate and Charlie (hosts with a strong musical background) and the audience, who are composed of disparate individuals with a range of musical backgrounds and personal experiences with the song “Oops I Did it Again.” This emergent, experiential boundary object also bridges the *theoretical idea* of the song, the interpretation of the song that Nate and Charlie hold in their heads, the memory of the song (which the audience and the hosts just heard via a sound bite), and the emerging understanding of the song in the minds of the audience members.

After the collective sing-along, the clip turns toward an extended period of explanatory exposition (40 seconds of uninterrupted narrative is long for this kind of live show), which Nate performs. In this explanation, Nate interprets the song on behalf of the audience, transferring his own understanding of the song to them. He does this through narrative as well as gesture, which punctuates and emphasizes his meaning, and by establishing common ground between the meaning of the song and the lived experiences of the audience (“doing something we all do”).

Looking at the sing-along and the explanation together, we can observe a sequence of learning to listen, which the audience experiences through (1) guided analytic listening (hearing the sound bite), (2) a collective embodied experience (performing the song through karaoke), and (3) facilitated interpretation (through listening to Nate's explanation). Here, learning to listen is treated as a simultaneous act of *creating/performing* and *interpreting/hearing*.