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*Vignette*  
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**Setting the scene:** This clip is from a live performance, recorded in New York city, where the *Switched on Pop* podcast hosts, songwriter Charlie Harding and musicologist Nate Sloan, were promoting a book by the same name. In this live show, Harding and Sloan make the case, central to both their podcast and their book, that pop music, while often disparaged, is much more than lowbrow junk food for your ears. By applying tools of musicology (analyzing structure, timbre, chord progressions, etc.) to pop music, Harding and Sloan claim that we can access richer listening experiences and a deeper appreciation for music of all forms. This *analytic ear* is something all people have—most of us just need a bit of practice to develop it.

At this live event, Harding and Sloan are sitting in armchairs on an elevated stage, slightly facing each other but mostly facing the audience members (~100 people), who are arranged in a semi-circle around the stage. Between them are two small tables: Harding's table has a laptop and Sloan's has a keyboard, which they respectively use to play music clips that punctuate their spoken narratives. They each have paper scripts in their laps. Behind Harding and Sloan is a large screen with the *Switched on Pop* logo. Screens are also mounted throughout the audience, streaming the recording, so that people sitting in the back or with a view obscured by the space's columns can still see Harding and Sloan. The event has been recorded with several video cameras that alternate between the following shots: Extreme close-ups on Harding or Sloan; medium shots of Harding and Sloan together (no audience members visible); wide shots of Harding and Sloan with a few audience members visible; extreme wide shots of the audience, with Harding and Sloan still visible on stage; medium shots of the audience exclusively (used for audience participation segments, i.e. the "quiz" portion). The recording that I have access to was published on YouTube and combines these recordings.

The excerpt I describe in this vignette occurred from 8:57 to 10:27 in the recording. Prior to this segment, the hosts had introduced themselves and the premise of their show, and had begun analyzing Britney Spears' 2000 song, "Oops!...I Did It Again," a song they chose because it was slammed by music critics. Harding and Sloan argue, however, that the song is a masterful reflection on the multiplicity of identity, as embodied in the two-part chorus. In this segment, Harding and Sloan lead the audience through a two-part singalong of the chorus, and then Sloan explains how to hear the song's duplicity with analytic ears.

**Assertion/synopsis:** Within the span of this short clip, *Switched on Pop* podcast hosts Charlie Harding and Nate Sloan attempt to teach a live audience to learn to listen to pop music analytically by stepping them through a structured, mediated sequence of learning activities. This sequence moves from active listening, to embodied collaborative creation, to mediated interpretation. While we have little access to the audience's external reactions or internal receptions of this teaching moment, we are able to see how Harding and Sloan respond and adapt, in real time, to the audience. Thus, we can use this scenario to identify patterns of learning to listen that we might emulate in other interactions where the goal is developing analytic listening skills.

**Vignette:** This excerpt begins with a sound clip, which Harding is playing from his laptop, of the two-part “Oops!...I Did It Again” chorus. Harding and Sloan have explicitly played this clip in order to prepare the audience for the impending singalong, so that they can hear what they are about to sing. But it serves another purpose: During the sound clip, which lasts for 6 seconds in this segment, Harding and Sloan are *modeling* the act of listening for the audience. As “Oops!...I Did it Again” plays, both Harding and Sloan have their eyes slightly downcast, as if they are narrowing their field of vision so that they can focus on listening. Harding also appears to be looking at his laptop, monitoring how much time is left in the clip. Still, we can see his head nod ever so slightly to the rhythm of the final lines of the chorus. Sloan demonstrates an even more explicit style of embodied listening, enacting the rhythm of the song with his foot, which moves in a circular motion, and his hands, which he raises from the arms of the chair, forms into fists near his lap, thumb on top almost like he is playing the drums. Finally, he pumps his fists up and down, grooving from his shoulders, to punctuate the beats of, “I’m not that innocent.” In doing so, he is demonstrating that it is perfectly ok, even preferable, to feel the song with his body, signaling to the audience that they can and should do the same. (Although we cannot see the entire audience, we can see a few people in the front row, to Sloan’s left, subtly bobbing and swaying.)

As the “Oops!...I Did It Again” soundbite ends, Sloan launches almost immediately into the audience singalong. Sloan takes on the role of conductor: Using verbal speech, gestural body language, and demonstrative karaoke, he directs Charlie to get ready to lead the left side of the audience in the “original” chorus while he will lead the right side in the “alternate” chorus. He does this by first extending his left arm across his body, hand open, over to Charlie’s half of the audience:

*Ok here we go, ready Charlie you are going to lead this side in the original chorus,  
[singing] oops I did it... [move his open hand along to the beat]*

He then, without any pause, moves his left hand, palm still open wide, back to his side of the audience, rotating in his seat so that his entire torso is facing them:

*And I’m gonna lead this side in the alternate chorus, Pause [clap] [singing] oops I...  
[turns hands into two pointing fingers, which he wags along to the beat]*

Here, Harding and Sloan are embarking on a tentative experiment—they cannot be sure if the audience will indeed come along on this participatory journey with them. Sloan provides a variety of scaffolds to set the audience up for successful participation: He labels the two parts of the chorus (“original” and “alternate”), giving the audience a shorthand with which to remember and distinguish them; he karaokes short excerpts of the chorus, so that they can hear it and to diffuse self-consciousness about the act of singing; and he uses his entire body, especially his arms and hands, to visually demonstrate the distinct rhythms of each chorus.

Harding and Sloan then look at each other as Harding suggests, “Count us in?” and Sloan sighs and gives several “yeahs” to coordinate their motion before saying, “three, four...,” which he

again punctuates with fist-shaped, up and down hand motions, and which Harding mirrors with subtle/inaudible finger snaps. Harding and Sloan then turn to their respective audience segments and begin singing. Both of them sing, embodying the rhythm with hand movements, and the audience joins in and begins to sing as well:

*Charlie Harding's side: Oops I did it again, got lost in your heart, got lost in the game, oh baby baby*

*Nate Sloan's side: [Pause] Oops I did it again to your heart, got lost in this game oh baby baby*

During the singalong, Harding starts to laugh halfway through the chorus (right around “got lost in your heart”) signaling that he was having trouble getting the exact words and melody right, but that it was still ok, and the collaborative singalong was still ultimately proceeding as planned. In the front row, on Hardings' side, we can see two audience members also using their arms to count out the rhythm, moving their fist-shaped hands up and down to punctuate the “Oh baby baby” line. It is hard to tell from the camera angle, but it seems like Harding is looking directly at the two of them, rather than at the entire audience, coordinating his motion with them. As the chorus finishes, Harding continues to laugh, which shifts seamlessly into a “yeah” as he looks over to Sloan, indicating that the singalong is over. Harding then says, “They got me,” as the audience claps, and he continues, “They were so beautiful,” as Sloan claps, “I wanted to sing with them,” and Harding laughs again. Sloan responds, “That went much better than we anticipated,” which evokes laughs from the audience and an affirmative yeah/sign from Harding. This banter serves to signpost the end of the participatory singalong segment and give both hosts time to prepare for the next portion of the show, which will be Sloan explaining the meaning of the two-part “Oops!...I Did It Again” chorus that they, and the audience, have just performed.

During this banter segment, Sloan resettles in his seat by lifting his body up in the chair, extending both of his arms on the chair's arms. Then, he grabs his paper script from his lap, shuffles/organizes the papers, and glances at the script, readying himself for the upcoming extended period of exposition during which he will keep his eyes up, on the audience, and use his hands to emphasize his explanation:

*So at the end of this song, it raises a question: Who is Britney Spears? We still don't have an answer. She is multiple things at once. She is performing different identities. And this was, again, very, uh, vexing to a lot of critics when this song came out. But now maybe with the benefit of hindsight we can step back and see how masterfully this is done. She never truly reveals herself, she keeps us guessing, and in 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. And I think that's what this song really captures.*

This 40-second long segment of Sloan's exposition is distinct from the previous interactions in several important ways: Sloan is looking almost exclusively at the audience, rather than over at Harding or down at his script; and Harding doesn't interrupt Sloan until the very end, when he

gives an affirmative “hmmm,” before launching into his own portion of the script. Sloan hearkens back to points that they had made earlier—how this song vexed critics—while also connecting the musicological themes to more universal themes about identity and self. During this narrative, Sloan uses gestures liberally, which is somewhat unexpected given that he is a podcaster who is skilled at communicating with his voice alone, and in this segment he is neither listening to nor performing music. For example, synchronously with the word “masterful” he moves his hands in a motion as if he were playing the piano; and during the line, “in performing multiple aspects of her identity, she does something that we all do,” Sloan transitions from having his hands wide apart, moving up and down in a kind of popcorn motion, to bringing his hands close to his chest. Throughout this explanation, Sloan is using tools that he had demonstrated while performing music (singing karaoke) and while listening (to the soundbite)—his gestural emphasis and his pacing—to communicate concepts that extend beyond the song itself, and indeed even beyond music.