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**VIRTUOSIC 'UKULELE:
RE/CREATING ETHNO-MUSICAL IDENTITIES IN HAWAI'I**

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ABSTRACT

This case study takes a biographical approach to the life stories and music of three ‘ukulele virtuosi through research that examines their artistry and their re/contextualization of ukulele performances while documenting their innovative techniques and eclectic stylings. The research reveals the development of a *local* ‘ukulele repertoire that informs the music of three outstanding musicians—Byron Yasui, Benny Chong, and Jake Shimabukuro. The music expresses their musical values, backgrounds, and artistry; moreover, their music represents cultural products and processes that move through local, *local*, and glocal spaces in the complex ethnoscape of Hawai‘i.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	vi
Preface.....	vii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
A Brief ‘Ukulele Overview	2
Local Identity	5
Review of the Literature.....	10
Chapter 2. Byron Yasui.....	23
Musical Development	23
Introduction to Hawaiian and Pacific Musics.....	26
Introduction to Jazz	30
Introduction to Classical Music.....	32
‘Ukulele Influences	34
Instrument and Tuning Preferences.....	37
Virtuosity.....	38
The ‘Ukulele as a Solo Instrument.....	41
Artistry	43
Analysis.....	44
Chapter 3. Benny Chong.....	57
Musical Development	57
Introduction to Jazz	60
Introduction to Show Music	61
‘Ukulele Influences	64
Instrument and Tuning Preferences.....	65
Virtuosity.....	67
The ‘Ukulele as a Solo Instrument.....	68
Artistry	69
Analysis.....	72
Chapter 4. Jake Shimabukuro	84
Musical Development	84
Tracey Terada	86
Pure Heart and Colon	87

Solo Career	88
Collaborative Influences.....	90
‘Ukulele Influences	90
Instrument and Tuning Preference	92
Virtuosity.....	94
The ‘Ukulele as a Solo Instrument.....	95
Artistry	96
Analysis.....	100
Chapter 5. Synthesis and Conclusions	108
Defining Contemporary Virtuositic ‘Ukulele.....	108
The ‘Ukulele as a Solo Instrument	109
Legitimized the ‘Ukulele.....	111
Musical Arrangement and Composition.....	112
Improvisation in Performance	114
Local Music.....	116
Local Habitus.....	117
Localizing and Globalizing Music.....	119
Oral Transmission and Informal Mentorships.....	122
Local ‘Ukulele Repertoire	123
Possible Future Studies	127
Appendix A. Pictures	131
Appendix B. Songs	148
Appendix C. Discography.....	156
References.....	158

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Picture of a Contemporary Hawaiian Ensemble.....	13
Figure 2. Picture of an ‘Ukulele Soloist.....	14
Figure 3. Picture of Byron Yasui.....	24
Figure 4. "Hanohano Hanalei," measures 1 – 4.....	45
Figure 5. Example of straight eighth notes.....	46
Figure 6. Example of swinging eighth notes.....	46
Figure 7. "Hanohano Hanalei," measures 10 – 18	47
Figure 8. "Hanohano Hanalei," measures 27 – 30.....	48
Figure 9. "Hanohano Hanalei," measures 31 – 37.....	48
Figure 10. "This Nearly Was Mine," measures 1 – 4.....	50
Figure 11. "This Nearly Was Mine," measures 5 – 15.....	51
Figure 12. "This Nearly Was Mine," measures 15 – 18.....	52
Figure 13. "This Nearly Was Mine," measures 47 – 51.....	53
Figure 14. List of Songs on Byron Yasui's CD <i>Anahola</i>	54
Figure 15. Picture of Benny Chong.....	58
Figure 16. Example of an extended C13 chord.....	73
Figure 17. Example of a C13 voiced for ‘ukulele.....	73
Figure 18. Alternative functions of the notes in a C13 chord	74
Figure 19. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 1- 4.....	75
Figure 20. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 10 - 13	75
Figure 21. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 18 - 21	76
Figure 22. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 26 - 29.....	76
Figure 23. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 34 - 37	77
Figure 24. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 42 - 45	77
Figure 25. "Ka Wailele O Nu‘uanu," measures 1- 4.....	78
Figure 26. "Ka Wailele O Nu‘uanu," measures 8 – 11.....	79
Figure 27. Example of a drop 2 voicing.....	80
Figure 28. Photo of Benny Chong's fingering for the drop 2 chord.....	81
Figure 29. "Ka Wailele O Nu‘uanu," measures 51 – 56.....	82
Figure 30. List of Songs on Benny's CD <i>'Ukulele Jazz</i>	83
Figure 31. Picture of Jake Shimabukuro..	85
Figure 32. "Sakura," measures 1 – 4.....	100
Figure 33. "Sakura," measures 12 – 17	101
Figure 34. "Sakura," measures 24 – 31	101
Figure 35. "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," measure 1.....	102
Figure 36. "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," measures 9 – 16	103
Figure 37. "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," measures 19 – 26	104
Figure 38. "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," measures 49 – 87.....	104
Figure 39. List of Songs on Jake Shimabukuro's CD <i>Gently We</i>	107

PREFACE

As a Native Hawaiian musician I often find myself faced with the complexities of researching music, techniques, and repertoire from an oral culture. Questions of aesthetics, trends, and shifts in music frequently go unanswered because of the methodology of oral transmission and/or a lack of documentation concerning influential people in music, such as the composers, performers, and trend-setters. Unfortunately, many of these people have passed on, making our attempts to understand their lives and music difficult, as we are forced to glean answers about from current practices. Moreover, tradition is an ever-changing thing with each passing generation, technological break-through, or cultural shift meaning that paying attention to current practice is the best option available.

I approach the study of 'ukulele virtuosi as an 'ukulele player and performer of Hawaiian music. My research, however, explores a different genre of 'ukulele performance and examines the backgrounds, ideas, and performances of three players who have developed an amazing style of 'ukulele performance that is very different from my own. Since my own Hawaiian perspectives and approaches to playing the 'ukulele interweave these pages, it is important to explain my background, relationship, and position with respect to Hawaiian music and the 'ukulele.

I grew up in a family of Hawaiian musicians and was raised through *hānai* (informal adoption) by my grandfather. He was a guitarist by choice, but loved to play the 'ukulele. Before taking time to raise me, he often played the hotel and club circuit in Waikīkī, at clubs on the military bases, and for *kumu hula* (hula tradition bearers). I was five years old when my grandfather began teaching me songs on the 'ukulele and

encouraged me to sing. He recognized my interest and love for music and quickly began toting me around with him to provide Hawaiian music at restaurants, church services, and community events.

Soon after, he retired, and we relocated to Portland, Oregon. In school, I explored new musical outlets such as choir, vocal jazz, and musical theater. After school, I practiced playing the 'ukulele, sang Hawaiian songs, and danced hula. In the evenings and weekends, I performed in my family's Polynesian revue. I recall often having to finish my homework in smoky lounges and dressing rooms. In this environment, however, I began to learn about the intimate relationship between the 'ukulele, the voice, and hula. Though my family always challenged me to expand my playing and musicianship by trying new chords, learning how to modulate, or jumping in to *pā'ani* (solo) on the 'ukulele, the repertoire, performance style, and musical values transmitted to me were based firmly on Hawaiian music.

A portion of my 'ukulele tutelage was not geared towards hula and Hawaiian music, however. There were also mentoring sessions in which my grandfather would teach me pieces for solo 'ukulele as opposed to a strictly chordal accompaniment to singing. These instrumental pieces included: "Tea for Two," "Bye Bye Blues," "Nola, Stars and Stripes," and "Bridge over the River Kwai." These songs did not originate in Hawai'i or embrace Hawaiian ideas, nor did they support hula. Though some of these pieces have a melodic line for voice, I was taught to perform them as pieces that would portray the 'ukulele's soloistic capabilities rather than accompany the voice.

This leads me to my study of three men who started from this basic notion of featuring the 'ukulele and took it in new directions, starting in 2000. In this biographical

study of Byron Yasui, Benny Chong, and Jake Shimabukuro, I examine a style of ‘ukulele performance that is both contemporary and virtuosic. Part of what interests me as a musician and scholar, beyond their incredible musicality and creativity, is the way in which these players use the ‘ukulele to function in another musical and ethnic space. I chose these players because of their outstanding performances in the Art of Solo ‘Ukulele concert and recording project. All three are recording artists who actively promote the ukulele in international, national, and local levels. Their musical careers and backgrounds have made them recognized figures in Hawai‘i’s music industry

My thesis focuses on the lives and performances of three ‘ukulele virtuosi—Byron Yasui Benny Chong, and Jake Shimabukuro. In my interviews with them I collected information about their musical backgrounds, outlining when they first came into contact with the ‘ukulele and what shaped or moulded their musical interests and careers. Another set of questions were aimed at asking Byron, Benny, and Jake to provide their definitions of virtuosity as well as to describe their own styles, approaches, and artistry. I also inquired into what kind of left and right-hand techniques they employ and their approach to personalizing their instruments and their music.

In my interviews I also asked the artists if they would identify signature songs in their repertoires, songs that either expressed their own unique styles or had a large impact on their ‘ukulele careers. Then I cross-referenced their answers with what they thought each other’s signature song was. Byron’s song was “This Nearly Was Mine,” a song from the musical *South Pacific* and one that showcased his latest style of using classical guitar technique. For Benny, it was the Hawaiian song “Ka Wailele O Nu‘uanau,” written by Jay Kauka which Benny recorded twice on his album, in a solo setting and

with ensemble accompaniment. Jake's signature song was "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," the popular Beatle's song written by George Harrison.

Jake does not have scores for his music, but both Byron and Benny graciously provided written scores. All committee members were provided copies so that they could verify my analyses, but at the request of the players, this thesis does not include full scores or transcriptions of their pieces. I agreed with this request in order to protect their unique stylings and their right to publish their works in the future. This thesis, thus, is based on an analysis of longer works although only notated excerpts are included here to illustrate my points in the narrative. I am very grateful to the players for sharing their scores with me, allowing me to view their music through their own eyes.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Musical research in general, and particularly the documentation of specific artists, is underrepresented in Oceanic scholarship. In my graduate studies I found it difficult to locate information about individual musicians in the Pacific. This, in part, relates to larger issues of academic interest, financial support, and legitimacy based on colonial institutional prejudices. Also contributing to this lack of documentation is the fact that the cultural mores that define Oceanic cultures and practices minimize the value of individualism and individual-centered acknowledgement and recognition. Both of these factors contribute to a lack of biographical data in Oceania that leaves scholarship on Pacific music noticeably void of a basic personal quality, the emphasis remaining on the collective rather than the individual.

In contrast, a large component of Western music history is composer-centric. The lives and works of composers are the sacred ground on which musicology is founded, with the most significant composers acknowledged for their accomplishments, new forms of expression, and their place in a continuum of musical development and artistic trends. Music scholars analyze the composer's style and musical significance, delineating the techniques exhibited in their compositions and placing these within the larger musical and social environment of the time.

However, there is hardly any biographical work on musicians in Hawai'i or the Pacific at large. Consequently, there is very little information about those who launched new trends, scant documentation of the creation and emergence of new musical forms,

and little analyses of acculturated music,¹ despite the vital importance of all to Oceanic cultures. Without this documentation future scholars may have difficulty developing theories to explain musical, ethnic, and linguistic shifts in the Pacific.

I have chosen a biographical approach in the development of this thesis in order to document the use of the 'ukulele by significant artists and to bring to notice musical styles that are underrepresented and often overlooked. I focus on the 'ukulele, both because it is an indigenized Hawaiian instrument and because it is a tool for three outstanding musicians—Byron Yasui, Benny Chong, and Jake Shimabukuro—to express their musical values and aesthetics through a contemporary setting of virtuosic playing that contrasts sharply with Hawaiian values.

Researching this instrument was, in many regards, a reflection on the roots of my own musical journey. This research has led me to better understand the role the 'ukulele has played in other people lives and to realize that not everyone's context for viewing and playing the instrument was or is the same. The 'ukulele itself has crossed over many seas, been indigenized by the Hawaiian community, and subsequently spread by many different hands to different ethnic and music communities in multiple locales. In the process the 'ukulele and its performance has been re/contextualized. My research examines a new genre of 'ukulele performance and the emerging values that are associated with it.

A BRIEF 'UKULELE OVERVIEW

The 'ukulele was introduced to Hawai'i in 1879 by Portuguese immigrants. The instrument, known in its homeland as the *braguinha*, was quickly dubbed 'ukulele by

¹ Acculturated music is a musical system that adapts to and/or incorporates another musical system's forms and aesthetics.

Native Hawaiians. The Hawaiian words *'uku* meaning 'flea' and *lele* meaning 'jumping' were used to describe the way the fingers jumped around to different strings and frets on the fret board.² Since its introduction, Native Hawaiians have incorporated the 'ukulele into modern genres of Hawaiian music, alongside guitar, piano, and the double bass.

The 'ukulele became a favored instrument in the court of King Kalākaua, a trained musician who is credited with reviving the hula and older genres of Hawaiian music in an age of missionary influence and Western acculturation. In King Kalākaua's effort to celebrate the hula and to coax it out of hiding, he inspired new musical compositions, styles, and expressions of hula. The 'ukulele became popular in King Kalākaua's court as he "...featured it at a major occasion, his Jubilee celebration in 1886, as an accompaniment to the hula dances that were performed" (Kanahele 1979, 397).

The 'ukulele's popularity continued to grow. In 1915, The Royal Hawaiian Quartet performed at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. The quintet featured chordophones, namely the guitar, steel guitar, mandolin, and 'ukulele.

The Royal Hawaiian Quartet, a band that featured guitar, steel guitar, mandolin and the ukulele, played to an estimated 17 million people in a seven-month period. The Hawaiian exhibit was touted as one of the most popular at the exposition and the music was a tremendous success, launching the interest in Hawaiian music in the United States that lasted through World War II. (Gold Coast 1999, 6)

Hawaiian music became very popular as more groups of Hawaiian musicians began travelling and performing on the West and East Coasts, popularizing the instrument in the process. "One effect of the mainland 'ukulele fad was the increase in the demand for 'ukuleles, which led to a boom in manufacturing" (Kanahele 1979, 400). Over the next

² Though there are other explanations of the 'ukulele's name, this is the most common and widely accepted one in Hawai'i.

two decades, 'ukulele sales increased exponentially, and famous guitar makers began to produce 'ukuleles.

In 1934, Arthur Godfrey became a freelance entertainer and radio announcer. Famous for his 'ukulele-accompanied singing, witty repartee, and musical acts, he eventually moved to simultaneous broadcasts on both radio and television in the late 1940s.

It is likely that no other single person has been directly responsible for the sale of as many ukuleles as Arthur Godfrey. As an enormously popular television star at the beginning of the 1950s, Godfrey single-handedly initiated the second great wave of ukulele popularity in the United States. He played his ukulele regularly on his radio and television shows, and even had a show where he gave ukulele lessons to his television audience. Sales of all types of ukuleles soared, and Godfrey's endorsement helped sell millions of the newly introduced plastic ukulele models. (The 'Ukulele Hall of Fame, 2000)

Arthur Godfrey's incorporation of the 'ukulele in his musical acts launched a craze that resulted in enormous sales of 'ukuleles and kept the instrument in the mainstream of American popular culture.

Back in the islands, around the same time (1935), a new program named *Hawai'i Calls*, began to broadcast from the Moana Hotel in Waikiki. This radio program had a thirty-year run, showcasing top Hawaiian musical artists.

In its heyday, the show was heard on over 600 radio stations in North America and scores of other stations in Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, South America, Africa, and on Armed Forces Radio throughout the world. (Barnes 2008)

This thirty minute program featured solo and choral singing accompanied by 'ukulele, steel guitar, upright bass, and guitar. The songs, in both Hawaiian and English, created a

pleasant listening laden with images of the Other³ for *malihini* (non-native) listeners and familiar soundscapes for *local* listeners.

The 'ukulele's popularity waned in the continental United States as other popular musics subsequently rose and dominated the commercial music industries. Hawai'i, however, continued to produce 'ukuleles and 'ukulele players because of the instrument's long-held function of dance accompaniment and its close relationship to modern hula. As the popularity and dissemination of hula expanded in the 1970's post-Renaissance years, so too did the number of Hawaiian music performers and 'ukulele players. Likewise the emergence of a *local* identity began to arise in political awareness. The growth of diasporic Hawaiian communities on the US mainland, the international spread of hula to places like Japan, Mexico, Europe, and Tahiti, and the recognition of the 'ukulele as an educational tool in Canada, all contributed to further the continuing widespread use and popularity of the instrument. Despite its diasporic transculturations, the 'ukulele still flourished in Hawaii's local communities.

LOCAL IDENTITY

The word "local" holds many meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Webster's online dictionary defines it as, "...characterized by or relating to position in space: having a definite spatial form or location" (Merriam-Webster 2008). In Hawaiian Creole English, the term *local* generally refers to people who were born and raised in the Hawaiian Islands as well as those who have culturally assimilated to what might be described as a *local* culture. This is a somewhat porous category that is important to Hawai'i residents, who see differences between people who embrace local

³ The Other is a term used in social sciences to define groups of people that have been subordinated or alienated from particular societies and groups.

values and practices and those who do not. I use it here in that sense and italicize the word to mark its use as a specifically creole term. I refer to *local* as a panethnic cultural identity (Okamura 1994; Rosa 2000; Labrador 2004) of its own and view the products of that culture as artifacts and processes that originate in Hawai'i's rich transnational and transcultural social environment.

Hawaiian Creole English began as a pidgin language during the Western colonization of the Hawaiian Islands. As large waves of immigrant workers from China, Portugal, Japan, and the Philippines came to the Hawaiian isles to work, they adopted and expanded the pidgin language through their own transnational and transcultural contributions. Despite its development into a creole language, people in Hawai'i refer to it as pidgin-English. "It is a language that has brought people together in spite of their differences in ancestral culture and language and has created a 'local' culture which blends ideas and flavors." (Da Pidgin Coup, 1999) Pidgin-English is inextricably linked to *local* identity formation.

Academic discourse historicizes *local* identity and attributes its formation to socio-political tensions and a reactionary need to Other non-residents.

In the early 1970s, university of Hawai'i sociologist Andrew Lind suggested that [*local*] first came into widespread use during the Depression years when the rape and murder trials of the Massie Case gave powerful expressions to tensions between a largely non-white resident population and the influx of the white military personnel and their families in the decade before World War II. (Rosa 2000, 94)

Rosa further explains *locality* is based on positioning oneself in relationship to power and place. He also describes how *local* represents a historical relationship based on a commonality among working-class people of color and their differences from whites, demarcating issues of class and race.

Roderick Labrador wrote a journal article in 2004, describing the Hawai'i's *local* ethnic humor and the *local* identity it expresses. His paper primarily centers on Frank Delima, a well known comedian in Hawai'i. Labrador focuses on a part of Delima's comedic routine that pokes fun at Filipinos in Hawai'i. Labrador makes note of the social expressions and stereotypes generated by Delima and asserts that, "...[*local*] has become a racialized social identity category; a panethnic formation composed primarily of the various non-White groups that usually trace their entrance into the islands to the plantation era—Chinese, Japanese, Okinawan, Filipino, and Korean" (Labrador 2004, 295). However, Labrador's critique also examines Delima and his audiences' uncritical celebration of ethnic humor and its potential to generate ethnic and racial divisions among Filipinos and other various *local* communities.

Similarly, the music of the three players—whose lives and music I examine in this study—is *local*. Although *locality* is not island-specific, Byron Yasui, Benny Chong, and Jake Shimabukuro are all *locals* from the island of O'ahu. As such, they represent a specific group with its own distinctive practices and values, musical and otherwise.

In *Reimagining the American Pacific*, Rob Wilson describes American commerce and culture production in the Pacific. He further describes the phenomenon of *local* culture and how Hawai'i residents negotiate American ideals and ethnic-cultural distinctiveness within the space of *local*. Wilson never really defines exactly what is *local*, but recognizes Hawai'i's residents as possessing a unique affinity towards localization and globalization. Localization is the process by which global products or services are adapted to regional or local spaces; this is evident in the McDonald's restaurants in Hawai'i that offer breakfast meals with spam, or haupia pies (in lieu of

apple pies). Globalization is the process by which local products are adapted and made available for global audiences. An example of this is the popularization and consumption of 'ukuleles throughout America during in the 1950s, due to Arthur Godfrey's radio and television programming and their current popularity in Japan and other parts of the Pacific.

Localization and globalization are useful terms beyond their socio-economic application. I use these terms to describe and identify the transitive movement of cultural products and processes. The popular phrase, "...think globally, but act locally," (Eblen 1994), describes the term glocal. Wilson goes further defines glocal as the fluidity in these polarities of local and global spaces. I assert that the music and the cultural processes of the three 'ukulele virtuosi music can be described as both *local* and glocal. The notion of music as a global activity is pertinent to my study, not only because all three players originate from a *local* Hawai'i, but because their cultural production of music is a prime example of negotiations between local, *local*, and glocal spaces.

The music they create, their cultural production, does not exist in a vacuum; rather they and their works are perceived and consumed on multiple artistic, ethnic, cultural levels. My conceptualizations of the cultural factors surrounding the music of these three 'ukulele virtuosi align with Wilson's work in defining transitions between *local* and glocal. While there are scholars who have delved into definitions and issues of *local* culture in Hawai'i, few studies analyze specific artistic products such as dance, poetry, theater, and music in relation to *local*. This thesis explores *local* identity by looking at how local people define, record, and historicize *locality* through performance.

From a Hawaiian music perspective, the ‘ukulele music of Byron Yasui, Benny Chong, and Jake Shimabukuro is unique because they currently use the ‘ukulele in a solo setting without singing. To portray the full capabilities of the instrument, they use their virtuosic, advanced technical and artistic skills to highlight the ‘ukulele as a solo instrument that provides its own melody and harmonic textures. This function is very different from most ‘ukulele playing used to accompany singing.

The logogenic⁴ nature of Hawaiian music values the *mele* (lyrics, poetry) as the most important feature and aesthetic of musical performance. During the last century, and largely due to its association with modern hula, Hawaiians have relegated the ‘ukulele to the role of lead accompanying instrument for hula and Hawaiian singing. The music of the *local* ‘ukulele artists examined here, however, presents the ‘ukulele without *mele*, hula, or any other accompanying instruments. In that very action, these artists move the ‘ukulele to a non-Hawaiian space and, in my view, to what becomes a *local* space.

The obvious visual and audio differences are stark, yet this soloistic representation of the ‘ukulele harkens back to its initial appearance in the Hawaiian Island chain. Portuguese immigrants, who disembarked the *Ravenscrag* after a long and arduous journey across the seas, were quick to share their music and culture with local inhabitants. “In late August, 1879, the Hawaiian Gazette reported that ‘Madeira Islanders recently arrived here, have been delighting the people with nightly street concerts’” (King 2000). The Portuguese dazzled Hawaiians with their instrumental mastery, no doubt sharing songs from their homeland in the process.

⁴ Logogenic, meaning the words, lyrics, and poetry are the most important aspect or feature.

Though the solo-virtuosic setting that Byron, Benny, and Jake choose for their ‘ukulele performances may be similar in presentation intent to that of the early Portuguese immigrants, I assert that they are not continuing a solo tradition but rather re/inventing one. Their ethnic and temporal positionality sets them apart from the Portuguese immigrants of 1879. They are contemporary *locals*, not first-generation immigrants. With over a century of ethnic acculturation, political upheaval, and social re/significations that have transpired in Hawai‘i, the lives and music of these three artists are informed by their *local* habitus.⁵ The music these contemporary ‘ukulele virtuosi perform possesses a “pidgin musicality” and, therefore, becomes a musical expression of their *local* identity.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature that contributed to this study embraces distinct categories of knowledge—‘ukulele, the Pacific Islands ethnomusicology, and Cultural Studies—each of which addresses different issues and perspectives. Of these, the ‘ukulele literature is sparse and lacks multiple academic resources to review and analyze.

Although the ‘ukulele has gone through many different phases of popularity, with each phase resulting in a variety of published works, the vast majority of these works are instructional and prescriptive in nature. The early dawn of Waikīkī and tourism produced books and scores of old Polynesian songs from Hawai‘i’s golden age. The popularity of ‘ukulele recording artists also affected and propagated communities of ‘ukulele learners. With the explosion of Ka‘au Crater Boys recording of “Surf”, in the early 1990s,

⁵ I incorporate and adapt Bourdieu’s concept of habitus here to describe an unconscious internalization from cultural influences and social structures derived by living in and assimilating to *local* Hawai‘i.

bookstores stocked up on the published works of Daniel Ho, Roy Sakuma, and many others who attempted to help the 'ukulele enthusiast by means of instructional manuals.

Other writers, like Jim Beloff, collected 'ukulele memorabilia to outline and piece together the evolution of this modest instrument for a lay audience. Scholarly works written on the 'ukulele are virtually non-existent, with Karen Drodz's M.A. thesis on 'ukulele players, makers, and teachers standing out as the only document to discuss people and institutions that propagated the learning and playing of the 'ukulele.

Ethnomusicological sources on Pacific music include a variety of articles and books, and many of these look at music and dance as interconnected art forms. Despite the spread of the 'ukulele and guitar throughout the Pacific, chordophone research—especially for purely instrumental genres—is scarce, with scholars expressing a need for more scholarly work in the Pacific.

The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music discusses a variety of musical cultures, functions, and instruments and is organized by regions of the world. In the volume for the Pacific under Musical Instruments, Amy Stillman discusses two important aspects of the 'ukulele in terms of its use in Hawaii. The first section describes the 'ukulele's history and grounding in Hawai'i. Stillman explains the indigenization of the instrument, cites notable 'ukulele makers, and segues ways into a description of the four sizes of 'ukulele: soprano, concert, tenor, and baritone (smallest to largest).

In the second section, Stillman describes the tunings and strumming patterns often used in Hawai'i. She describes the standard tunings for the 'ukulele and its various musical uses in providing melodic leads and chordal accompaniments. Referring to its

introduction in Hawai'i, Stillman states that the 'ukulele functioned to display musical virtuosity.

Accounts from the 1880s reveal its virtuosic appeal. Players dazzled audiences with rapid picking, hence the instrument's Hawaiian name: '*uku* means 'flea', *lele* means to 'fly'; thus the term '*ukulele* is often rendered as 'flying fleas' or 'jumping fleas', referring to the action of the fingers. (Stillman 1998, 391)

This statement implies that the instrument was not only named for the method in which the instrument is usually played but for the virtuosity that was displayed on it.

Stillman follows this comment with a description of two strumming patterns that became popular in the 1950's, explaining that these strumming patterns were developed from the beats of the gourd idiophones, *ipu*, that accompany hula. These idiophones hold a unique and highly important role in the performance of many ancient hula. With the transition of hula to include Western styles of accompaniment, the rhythmic role of the *ipu* was transferred to the 'ukulele.

In the accompaniment of modern hula, an 'ukulele is played in an ensemble that includes at least a guitar and a string bass; the ensemble may be augmented by a piano and an electric steel stringed guitar. (ibid.)

The 'ukulele's close ties to hula and its important function of accompaniment are both features that are rarely associated with instrumental virtuosity or solo settings.

Love and Fletcher describe the cultural aesthetics surrounding chordophones in Oceania and address the Pacific tendency to prefer group participation in performance traditions.

Most cultures of Oceania highly value the noisiness of public display, correspondingly devaluing soloistic instrumental performance... Introduced chordophones—banjos, guitars, mandolins, ukuleles—are louder; when played in ensembles, and especially when amplified electrically, they accompany singing and dancing in public venues... (Love and Fletcher 1998, 385)

Figure 1 shows a typical instrumentation for contemporary Hawaiian music of guitar, bass, and 'ukulele. In the ensemble the 'ukulele provides the rhythmic foundation, while the attention is directed to a focus on the song or dance performance of the group or community as a whole.



Figure 1. Picture of Contemporary Hawaiian Ensemble. Mānoa Voices displays a typical instrumentation for contemporary Hawaiian music—guitar, bass, and 'ukulele with an added vocalist. (Photo by Jay Junker, 17 May 2008, Honolulu).

In contrast, the 'ukulele soloist in figure 2 sends a very different message—that of the soloist who neither sings nor is accompanied by dance and who exhibits the performance values of pop music. The difference in conception regarding the musical role of the instrument alters the function and the sound of the music, marking a shift in musical

aesthetic and social value that renders the performance more compliant with the world of popular Western music.

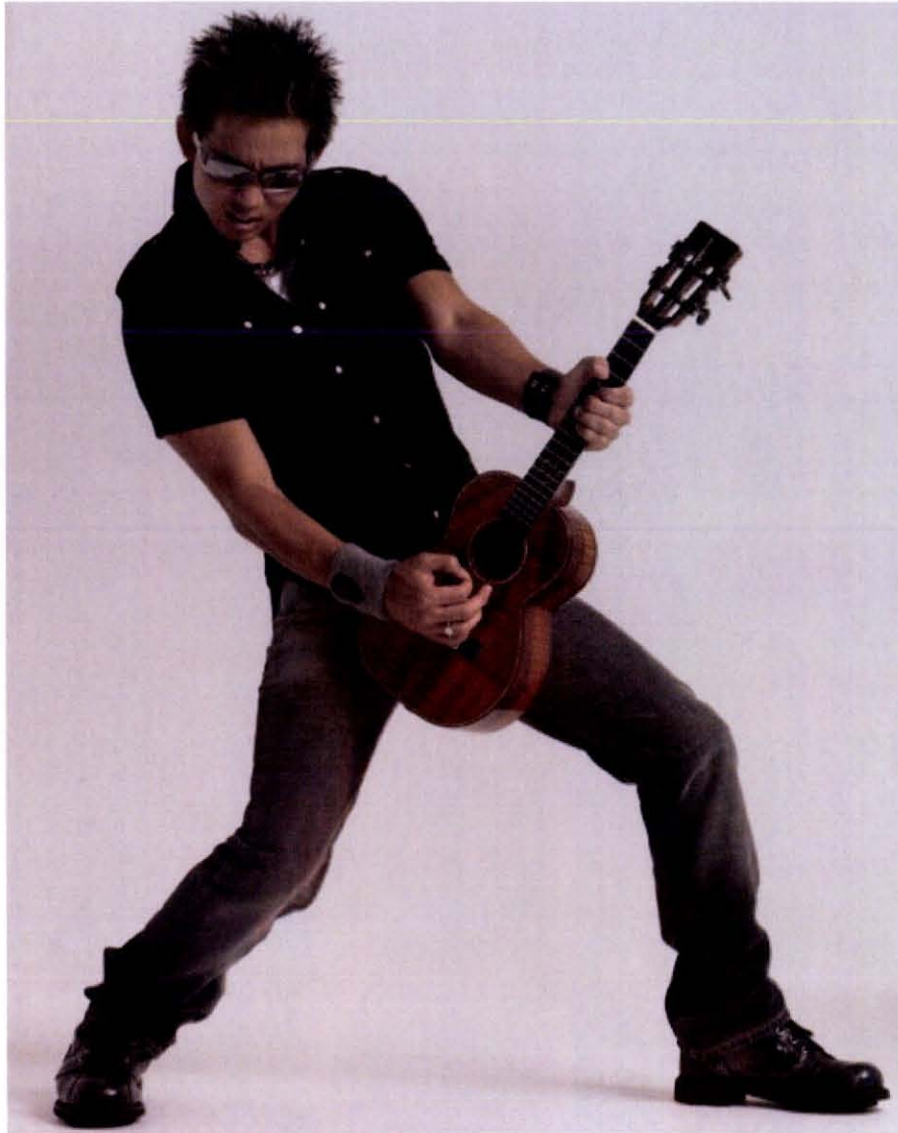


Figure 2. Picture of 'Ukulele Soloist, Jake Shimabukuro. (Photo by Nobuyuki Itoh, Courtesy of Toastman Inc.)

An article by Allan Thomas and Ineleo Tuia highlights the work of Ihaia Puka, a Tokelauan composer. First, the article discusses the role of composers in an Oceanic

setting, particularly in Tokelau. A composer holds a high level of respect and reverence in Oceanic communities as composers are able to tie aspects of their person to a song. “Songs are composed by unique individuals, who have their own complex relationship with the communities and cultural traditions to which they belong” (Thomas and Tuia 1990, 267). This is appropriate as musical composition and arranging both play a strong role in the music that these composers create, record, and perform. It is very clear that these performers are mindful of the music they are re/presenting.

Second, the composer, *pulotu*, creates music that is to be danced to and sung by many communities. The music is accessible to the public at large. “When a *fatele* [song] is performed at a gathering it becomes common property, and anyone who hears it may perform it elsewhere.” (ibid.) Thoma and Tuia point out the need for biographical work on Oceanic composers. There is hardly any documentation that describes the significant and prolific work of composers and musicians in the Pacific.

Ethnomusicologists have been slow to acknowledge the composers/originators of the musical material they are studying. There is very little literature on Pacific composers, though plenty of evidence of their work. (Thomas and Tuia 1990, 267)

The performances of a composer’s work are not enough to provide thorough and holistic analysis of their music and their lives. Scholars looking to understand the form and function of Oceanic music and the people that have influences on it will be best served by having biographical documentation of composers and musicians. The orality of Pacific Islands cultures heightens this need even further. While understanding and respecting the validity of and issues surrounding oral transmission, I advocate for the agency and voice of musicians in and through documentation of their stories. In this study I endeavor both

to document a significant musical phenomenon and to share the personal stories of three musical artists and their work in the Pacific.

All of the three virtuosi in my study have recorded pop music. The pieces, and, more importantly, the styles adopted by these solo 'ukulele players in my study come from a variety of popular musics. The influence of popular music also ties to issues of the artist's presentation, target audience, and homage to the traditional.

The three artists pull from a variety of musical traditions and styles. Through musical arrangements for the 'ukulele, the artists create acculturated musics that combine aesthetics from various genres, such as Western art musics, folk musics, and ethnic musics. Byron Yasui's performances of "This Nearly Was Mine", from the musical South Pacific, and "Hanohano Hanalei" are both examples of music from different musical traditions, however he recontextualizes these orchestral pieces for the 'ukulele. As Kaepler says,

Though outside influences have continued and can be seen in Hawaiian jazz or the mellow sounds of entertainers such as Kui Lee, the exciting new wave can be characterized as contemporary traditional – traditional music and dance rendered in contemporary forms. Concerns over ethnic identity, festivals, and tourism spur a reemphasis on tradition. (Kaepler 1998, 126)

Jazz has also had a significant influence on music in Hawai'i for nearly a century and, not surprisingly, colors the work of the virtuosic artists I study. Jay Junker comments on this imported musical tradition that *local* artists bring into their work:

Since the 1920's, incorporating into Hawaiian music the stylistic elements of jazz has led Hawai'i closer to the international musical mainstream. These elements include hot solos, riffs, improvisation, augmented chords, swing, syncopation, call and response patterns, and plasticity. (Junker 1998, 163)

Several of these values and aesthetics are seen in contemporary solo 'ukulele music on two levels. The first link is the incorporation of not only Jazz but other Western musics affecting the genre, the style, and function of a music performance. The second link is through the artists themselves, as all of them value improvisation, augmented chords, swing, and plasticity. Their jazz backgrounds and their musicianship shape the performances through their artistic choices. These indirect and direct influences on the artist and the instrument, make the 'ukulele an ideal medium for this "contemporary traditional" genre of 'ukulele music.

Jane Moulin describes music, as both a cultural product and one that influences the development of culture. Her claim is that the arts are capable of re/defining cultures and reshaping them.

Music not only *reflects* the culture that produced it; ample evidence exists that the arts contribute to *forming* cultures – they are capable of leading the way to change, rather than passively telling what has already transpired.
(Moulin 1996, 129)

The music these solo artists create informs us of the influences that have shaped and molded the artists as performers and culture producers; moreover, the music they are creating is forging new musical culture. This study explores how a new approach to 'ukulele playing may be providing a re/signification of what the 'ukulele represents, its function, and musical capabilities.

Thomas expounds on this idea in his article that discusses acculturated music in Oceania and the practice of cultures in the Pacific to adopt, incorporate, and re-use pop or Western music in their own performative traditions (Thomas 1981, 189) He asserts that music scholars have a long-standing bias for studying music that is traditional, avoiding and dismissing acculturated music as being "tawdry" or "not pure." This prejudice

exposes an apparent need of scholars, most of whom are not Pacific Islanders, to “Other” Pacific cultures and their music by dismissing their own unique negotiations with Western culture.

Looking at the distinctive musical features in acculturated Oceanic musics that ethnomusicologists should endeavor to study, document, and analyze, Thomas says,

...these procedures are not those of the parent music – the European music from which the tunes appear to be borrowed, nor are they purely the procedures of traditional music either. They are in some sense a ‘pidgin’ musical language – simplifying, recombining and developing elements of both parent systems. (Thomas 1981, 183)

Such is the case with the solo ‘ukulele music of this study. The artists are transculturating musical songs and forms from jazz, musical theater, pop rock, and world music through the ‘ukulele. Thomas defines this as a type of musical ‘pidgin.’ Taking this one step further, and viewing this musical “pidgin” as analogous to ‘pidgin’ English, I hold that this acculturated music of solo ‘ukulele virtuosi and the musical pidgin in which it was crafted form expressions that embody and reconfirm a unique *local* identity in Hawai‘i. This melding of musics between Hawai‘i’s panethnic musics and Western pop music results in expressions that communicate ideas, values, and histories of *locality*.

Two works from the wide range of discourse that encompasses the field of Cultural Studies were of particular relevance to this study of *locality* through expressions of music. In an article on Asian ethnic identification, Jonathan Okamura argues that there are no Asian-Americans in Hawai‘i. More specifically, he discusses why Asians in Hawai‘i, in a cultural identification counter to the common trend in the continental U.S., identify themselves as *local* rather than Asian-American. It is precisely this *local* identity that plays an important role in defining the musical choices of artists who are

contemporary 'ukulele virtuosi. They are all *local* in origin. Byron Yasui is *local* Japanese, Benny Chong is *local* Chinese-Hawaiian, and Jake Shimabukuro is *local* Okinawan. All of them are of Asian heritage, yet all of them were born and raised in Hawai'i. They embrace a *local* ethnicity as their primary identification.

Describing the marginality of both the concept and use of the term Asian-American, Okamura offers economic, social, and political reasons why *local* identity developed. He challenges Dennis Ogawa's definition that *local* ethnicity has created a culture in which its members feel capable of cultural and community contributions and, moreover, express a sense of shared experiences or "points of commonality" (Ogawa 1981, 7). Okamura counters,

These points of commonality would include eating certain foods (e.g., plate lunches), the practice of particular customs and habits (e.g., ethnic jokes) and shared folklore (e.g., supernatural beliefs.) With the exception of social interactions, all of the above common areas are trivial and can hardly serve as the collective basis for a shared culture that is supposed to underlie social relations in Hawai'i. (Okamura 1994, 164)

More than trivial interactions that provide a supposedly shared *local* identity, I find that these cultural processes and products provide the meaning and the means of a shared identity where class and racial dimensions potentially disappear. Okamura's critique of this present configuration, however, asserts that a focus on 'shared culture' leaves the divisions in Hawai'i unexamined and these in turn are mapped on to ethnic stratifications. I do not discount these ethnic stratifications nor ethno-cultural divisions in the *local* populace, but I do question his dismissal of the commonalities of cultural production, and suggest that these points of commonality may help to dissolve or de-emphasize these class and racial divisions.

In his latest work Okamura looks at how some groups use ethnic identity constructions to advance their political or economic concerns in the larger context of their cultural representation, which is reflected in *local* communities (Okamura 2008). He then explains the multiplicity of local identity and how his students themselves identify and define their *locality*, use of pidgin, and relations with other ethnic groups, quite differently from previous generations, revealing the flexibility in the definition over time and the need to succeeding generations to make it reflect their own in a largely urban, post-plantation world.

These literatures of *locality* delineate the concept and identification of being *local* as an evolving process, with different meanings at different points in time. Historically, there was a shift from a class-based panethnic identity (starting in the 1930s) to one that is based primarily on cultural symbols and practices (the present formations). These critical theories on *locality* identify the *local* of the past as politically potent and capable of effectively mobilizing and unifying Hawai'i's panethnic populations across ethnic and racial lines. This was exemplified by many of those who took up the "*local*" banner as they shared similar struggles in Hawai'i. With temporal changes in economic assimilation and cross-generational meanings, *local* identity continues to evolve.

This became apparent in my research and discussions with these musicians. I take the position that the music these virtuosic 'ukulele artists create is a musical expression of their *local* identity. Their eclectic choices of pieces display musical tastes and interests that span several geo-cultural ethnic groups and the various musical genres to which they were exposed to in their *local* upbringing. This is then rearticulated through their own renditions and interpretations of these songs via their 'ukulele performances. I assert that

these cultural processes are not bound by economic or political factors but come from an artistic and creative space.

These issues of creative spaces are described in Mari Yoshihara's book entitled, *Musicians from a Different Shore* (2007), which examines the role of Western classical music in the lives of Asians and Asian-Americans. Yoshihara interviewed various artists to obtain insights into their musical careers, connections to ethnicity and culture and, most importantly, if their musicianship or the type of music they perform transcends socio-cultural boundaries. Describing her own journey as a classical pianist and as a young Japanese and now Asian-American woman, Yoshihara examines classical music as a status category and holds that classical music since its introduction to the Asian world has been used by Asians as a negotiating force in their careers, artistic pursuits, and social goals. In subsequent chapters she delves into aspects surrounding these musicians, their careers, and their own personal conceptualization of these issues.

Yoshihara's book also addresses gender. In my research, the selection of my musicians was based on their participation with the Art of Solo 'Ukulele Concert in 2000. All three of these musicians are men. Though I recognize the potential for a gender-based research in the field of 'ukulele performance, the basis of my study focuses on their musical production and its grounding in *locality* rather than gender or class.

Yoshihara exposes the difficulty of analyzing music, ethnicity, and agency in the Asian musicians. While her work is important to my study as I analyze *local* Asian musicians, their backgrounds, and the importance of the music they play, their backgrounds and identity formation are different from Asian nationals and Asian Americans on the mainland. Moreover, another difficulty arises as the musical "x"

factor, a belief that the pursuit of music and music itself is not tethered to essentialist notions of race or class. In recollecting her own experiences as a musician, Yoshihara states

A creative process is shaped by one's own imagination and expressive vocabulary, and to the extent that a large part of my imagination and expressive vocabulary *was* Japanese, it seemed reasonable to say that my playing was influenced by my Japanese upbringing. But in all honesty, where and how I grew up felt rather irrelevant as I was trying to distinguish the tone color in different voices in Rachmaninoff's D-Major Prelude. (Yoshihara 2007, Preface)

Ethnic identity conceptualizations behind music making and the transcendental nature of music as a process can be difficult to articulate. To address these difficulties, my study attempts to document the lives and current works of these three virtuosic 'ukulele players in Hawai'i and—through their life stories—highlight their views of what they do. I will analyze the elements that make up their artistry and give voice to their musical conceptualizations. Furthermore, I will show how their music making is a musical expression of their *local* identity.

CHAPTER 2. BYRON YASUI

Byron Yasui was born in Honolulu, Hawai'i on December 13, 1940. He is a *sansei* (third generation Japanese-American) who grew up in the Nu'uana area of the island of O'ahu and graduated from St. Louis High School in 1958. There are three categories of activity that underpin Byron's musical career. The first is university teaching. He is Professor of Composition and Theory at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where he has been teaching for over 35 years. The second field of activity is composing. Byron holds a DMA in composition, has received a number of ASCAP awards for his compositions, and has had his pieces performed at the Society of Composers national and regional conferences and elsewhere around the world. The last area of musical activity is performance. This study highlights his 'ukulele playing, something he has been doing since the age of thirteen, and the skills that earned him a place on the Board of Directors for the 'Ukulele Hall of Fame Museum, in Duxbury, Massachusetts in 2005. He is a versatile musician, and one who plays three instruments—'ukulele, bass, and classical guitar.

MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Byron Yasui's musical training represents a unique blend of different backgrounds and highlights the role of three distinct musical traditions in forming his musical tastes. The first was his early exposure to the 'ukulele and, shortly thereafter, to Hawaiian music with its oral transmission of culture and its rich repertoire of songs accompanied by chordophones. The second was his training in and exploration of jazz, which is similar to Hawaiian music in its methodology of transmission, but possesses



Figure 1. Picture of Byron Yasui (Photo courtesy of Byron Yasui. Honolulu.)

different aesthetics and values. The third was his formal training in Western music through undergraduate and graduate studies at universities. These backgrounds represent an intertwining of very different methodologies of learning, techniques of playing, and musical values—all of which have combined to shape Byron’s musical knowledge, technical approaches, and compositions.

Byron was first exposed to the ‘ukulele through his older brother upon his brother’s return from his service in the Marine Corps. The instrument was a Martin ‘ukulele that was well-worn and abused from his brother’s travels. The body and the neck had many cracks, and the instrument was held together by cellophane tape. His brother would play while Byron watched him intently. When given the opportunity, Byron picked up the ‘ukulele and mimicked his brother’s fingering and strumming patterns. “I learned by ear what he was playing and by watching him” (Yasui, interview, 19 September 2007). Much of what Byron learned was through observation, his growing self-taught skills combining with a strong motivation to help him to learn how to recreate the sounds on the ‘ukulele. Eventually, his brother lost interest in the instrument, and Byron remembers inheriting it through unspoken terms and mainly due to his constant playing and obvious interest. Learning by ear and through observation and mimicry highlights an important aspect of ‘ukulele playing that is inherent in the Hawaiian music tradition.

The ‘ukulele and I became literally inseparable. This is important to know. I often literally used to go to sleep with the ‘uke on my chest, brought it with me practically every day to the playground and anywhere else my playmates and I ventured, and played it incessantly, from time I woke up to the time I went to sleep, virtually seven days a week. I think this is one of the things that separates some ‘uke players from other. Benny Chong told me that he went through the same thing and, I ‘m sure, so did Jake Shimabukuro. There’s that common thread. (Yasui, pers. comm., 12 August 2008)

INTRODUCTION TO HAWAIIAN AND PACIFIC MUSICS

Soon after inheriting his older brother's 'ukulele, Byron was introduced to Hawaiian music making. He recalls making music with a Hawaiian boy named Charlie Brickwood Kane who lived further up the street from Byron's Nu'uaniu residence. Byron remembers Charlie as having a beautiful voice and being able to accompany himself on the 'ukulele. Charlie would often pass by Byron's house and wait at the bus stop on Nu'uaniu Avenue. Byron, sitting with 'ukulele on the front porch, would invite Charlie to play 'ukulele with him to pass the time, initiating a level of what Richard Schechner refers to as "play." Play, as defined by Schechner, consists of players [musicians] in consensual agreement of execution who send metacommunicative messages and often follow an orderly sequence of actions for known durations of time (Schechner 2002, 109). Schechner's act of play is analogous to performing music; moreover, it is an ideal method of transmitting technique, timing, delivery, and repertoire. Byron and Charles played their 'ukuleles, sang songs, and learned to harmonize.

That's where I learned a lot of Hawaiian songs. My mom used to say, 'Oh, your music is so beautiful. The way you harmonize is so beautiful.' One bus after another passed by and after two to three hours, it was dark. This would happen a lot. That's the kind of front porch music I started with. (Yasui, interview, 19 September 2007)

They would sit for hours with friends at gatherings, providing 'ukulele accompaniment for group singing. Byron began to learn a lot of Hawaiian songs and started to seriously listen to Hawaiian music recordings. Some of his favorites included the Rodrigues sisters,¹ Mahi Beamer, Benny Kalama, and Johnny Castello of the Invitations (Yasui, pers. comm., 25 June 2008). This methodology of learning through playing—both as a symbol of metacommunicative potential and as an enjoyable activity of sharing—is a

¹ The sisters were Lani, Lahela, and Nina (Keali'iwahamana).

common experience when first learning how to play Hawaiian music. Initially, the aspiring learner watches and mimics musical material and styles executed by other local players. This style of sharing is analogous to the *local* activity of “talk-story,” an oral tradition of sharing and transmitting stories, information, and folklore in an informal setting while building interpersonal rapport and community between all involved.

In addition to learning chords and fingerings, Byron learned how to use the ‘ukulele to accompany the voice when performing Hawaiian songs. The nature of Hawaiian music is logogenic, meaning the words are the most important feature. Byron learned to play, but he also learned the importance of singing in Hawaiian culture and came to understand how the ‘ukulele supports the voice.

The multi-ethnic culture that makes up local communities in Hawai‘i also led to exposure to other Polynesian musics. In high school Byron’s best friend was a Sāmoan-Portuguese boy named Lawrence Letane Su‘a. Su‘a’s father, Pulusia had been a Sāmoan knife dancer in his youth and was familiar with a lot of Sāmoan songs and repertoire. “We’d go to his house at Makini Street in Kapahulu during my junior and senior years in high school...and we’d just eat, drink, and play music. I learned a lot of Sāmoan songs there” (ibid.). During this time Byron learned how to arrange four-part vocal harmonies, distributing parts from the ‘ukulele chords to the different voices. This proved to be an important part of his musical development. Through these informal activities, Byron was exposed to other Pacific cultures and oral traditions and learned how the ‘ukulele could be used in other cultures.

The development of a self-taught musician is dependent on the person’s influences, exposures, and experiences. Oceanic music, as a whole, is community based,

with its foundation in oral transmission, experiential learning, and mimicry/duplication. Through performing with more experienced performers, younger performers are introduced to new skill sets and repertoire. Locating venues to play music with other musicians creates opportunities to learn additional pieces, build new techniques, and practice newly acquired skills while building rapport with other musicians and dancers. Byron refers to this informal music learning in describing the group with whom he shared playing time:

Joe Kaimana was our newspaper delivery boy, a schoolmate, and a childhood playmate in sports. Because of my 'ukulele playing and love of Hawaiian songs, I would get invited to join the pau hana family gatherings of his family friends, who were stevedores. We'd eat, drink, and play music out on Sand Island. Incidentally, Joe's father was noted Hawaiian musician Joe Diamond, bassist with Andy Cummings for many years. Kaimana is Hawaiian for 'diamond.' (ibid.)

Developing friendships is an integral part of fostering musical development in Hawaiian and Oceanic musics. The process of cultural transmission is imbedded in the interpersonal commentary that transpires and the social gatherings that surround music making.

Another similar event occurs at households during *kanikapila* (lit. 'sound the instrument', which implies casual music making). These sessions are times when families and friends make music informally through singing and playing instruments, usually after and sometimes during a meal. One of the early musical friends Byron performed with was Nicky Wong,

Nicky's mom was a hula teacher, and one of his little sisters grew up to become noted kumu hula Aloha Dalire. They used to live by the UH sugar Research facility near the park on Ke'eumoku St., makai of Wilder Ave. I'd often go over on Sunday afternoons and stay into the evening. There was always a huge pot of beef stew on the stove. We'd eat, then play chalangalang music. George Naope was a frequent house. (ibid.)

Chalangalang, which refers to the rhythm of an ‘ukulele strum used in older Hawaiian music, is a *local* term used to reference a particular style of playing Hawaiian music (where up strums on upbeats are added to down strums on downbeats). This style of playing is often preferred by older members of the community and usually is used today to accompany the hula.

This informal musical exposure and exploration can lead to opportunities for performing in professional settings. The oral transmission of Hawaiian music reinforces a cultural value that musicians should be able to memorize the music and harmonize it spontaneously. These skills make Hawaiian performers stage-ready for venues that allow little time for rehearsal or place for extraneous musical accoutrements, such as music stands, sheet music, and electronic amplification. Byron found an opportunity to play at a famous hotel on the Waikīkī strip.

I used to play with a guy named Jimmy Kaina. He was a singer of Hawaiian songs with classical training in voice (UH music major). He and I played every Wednesday night at the Halekulani Hotel’s “House Without a Key.” This was way back in 1961, I think. We were strolling musicians. He played autoharp, and I played ‘ukulele. We strolled around singing Hawaiian songs, and I’d harmonize with him. We’d never rehearse; we just knew the songs. So that’s the kind of background I come from, doing Hawaiian music (ibid.).

Byron’s skill in playing Hawaiian music and his background knowledge of the repertoire led to many cultural and professional experiences.

In the summer of 1959, during the Air National Guard Summer Camp, Ernest “Nole” Pacarro had heard Byron play the ‘ukulele and later asked Byron if he would be interested in playing bass with a quartet he and his friends were forming. Byron explained that he did not know how to play the bass nor did he own one. “Nole” assured

Byron that the group had a bass and, with his 'ukulele, Byron would quickly learn the instrument. Byron joined the quartet on an evening at Ronnie Silva's house in Pu'unui.

Amos Keawekane², the pianist, showed me how to hold, pluck, and play my first notes on the bass. Ronnie Silva was the vibes player, and we later added Benny Dumlao on guitar. We modeled ourselves after the Invitations, rehearsed at Ronnie's house, and played our first (and only) gig. It was on Kaua'i in Nawiliwili at the Copacabana night club. Larry Vincente was our "manager" - he got us the gig. It was [in] September 1960 - two nites - a Fri. and Sat. We got \$15 per night, playing for two female Japanese exotic dancers, a German stripper named Isa Bergen, and a crippled beachboy, Kimo Delacruz, who sang and served as emcee. We also played dance music and did our portion of the show, and I think we did two sets each night. We were called The Internationals, and we argued a lot, musically— Amos and I versus the other three. We agreed to disband after that Kaua'i gig. I came home on a Sunday and started my first day of classes at UH as a freshman on Monday. (Yasui, pers. comm., 4 August 2008)

These musical experiences led to other opportunities for Byron to perform professionally and to explore other styles of popular music.

INTRODUCTION TO JAZZ

The strong aural skills that Byron developed as a performer of Hawaiian music also prepared him to explore jazz—its music, performance practices, repertoire, and sonorities. Moreover, playing the bass in Hawaiian music circles helped Byron to make connections and opened doors to important people in Hawai'i's jazz community.

Amos Keawekane (Kimo Garner), the keyboardist of the Internationals, was acquainted with Eddie Suzuki, the manager for Ernie Washington, a top jazz pianist who had moved to Hawai'i from New York. Ernie Washington was in a predicament because

² Amos Keawekane later took his stepfather's name Garner. Soon afterwards, he found work at Island Holidays as a tour escort. It was company policy for employees to wear an aloha shirt with their names on it. Amos's shirt wasn't ready so they said, "Here, You wear this shirt." It had the name: "Kimo" on it, and he became Kimo Garner. He is Loyal Garner's brother. Byron spent a lot of time at the Garner house, right above Lanakila Park, and knew singer Loyal Garner when she was attending high school at Sacred Hearts Academy in Kaimuki. Byron gave Loyal her nickname, first "Lolly", then "Lollipop".

his bass player, Dave Yap, was leaving to play at another venue in Waikīkī with another jazz mainland-pianist named Joe Castro. Amos suggested Byron to Ernie.

[Eddie] said, 'Well, try Byron Yasui.' Ernie said, 'Who's that?' 'Oh he's this kid up at the university but he shows a lot of promise.' He volunteered me, and I didn't want to go. But I went down to audition and got the job with Ernie Washington. We were playing at Duke Kahanamoku's right before Don Ho started there. It was in 1960 or 61. I joined the musician's union that day and started playing with Ernie that night; I am now a life member of the union. (Yasui, interview, 19 September 2007)

Byron credits Ernie Washington with having a tremendous influence on his development as a bassist and jazz musician. When he began playing with Ernie, Byron had no experience in jazz as a bass player. At the time he was only familiar with Hawaiian tunes and popular music. Ernie Washington took Byron under his wing, and Byron learned jazz stylings, forms, and practices just by playing with Ernie. They would perform late nights, from 1:00 am to 3:00 am six nights a week. Byron performed at night and also attended the university by day in his freshman or sophomore year.

Through Ernie Washington, Byron learned one of the most important aspects of jazz improvisation, spontaneous musical creativity. Ernie, at first had to goad Byron into developing this creativity:

He played, then, when it was my turn to solo, he looked at me and said, "Go, baby." I said, "No, I don't know how to play. I don't want to play." He said, "Just play." And I said, "No." And he said, "PLAY!" And I shook my head no. I didn't know what to do. And he stopped playing and it was me and the drummer Darrell Aguilera playing. I had to do something...so, that's how I started playing jazz bass. (ibid.)

Instructed in jazz repertoire and stylings by a top jazz pianist, Byron was exposed to a new musical world and gained a new set of performance skills. By developing his skills on bass, he was also able to perform with other musicians in Waikīkī and, in turn, come into contact with other ways of playing.

Soon after Ernie Washington's contract ended at Duke Kahanamoku's, Don Ho stepped into the venue with musicians Sonny Chillingworth, (guitar) and Joe Marshall, (bass), Tony Bec ('ukulele), and Mike Garcia (drums). Eventually Don Ho combined with a group called the Ali'is, which was comprised of five musicians, including Benny Chong. At the time Byron and Benny shared a mutual admiration for each other as they shared similar musical circles and venues. "I often got called to sub for the Ali'is bassist Manny Lagodlagod" (ibid.). Though Byron and Benny were friends, they did not spend time socializing together. The relationship was a musical one, one based on performing music.

INTRODUCTION TO CLASSICAL MUSIC

Byron began his classical music training in the sixth grade with trumpet lessons. He also participated in the St Louis High School band from seventh through the eleventh grade. In 1962, when Byron enrolled at the University of Hawai'i as a music education major, the baritone horn became his major instrument, the band director suggesting it because: 1) he had not touched a trumpet since 1957, and 2) the baritone horn was the easiest brass instrument to play.

As part of his degree requirements, Byron spent a semester practice teaching at the UH Lab School and also gave a recital on the baritone horn. While pursuing his degree as a music major he also studied double bass for three semesters and performed in a joint recital with cellist Juli Kimura. At the urging of Armand Russell, his bass teacher, he auditioned for George Barati, conductor of the Honolulu Symphony, in 1963.

Although he resisted going to the audition, Byron got the job as a part time bassist mainly

because there were no other double bassists who had a bow or knew how to read bass clef. Byron played on and off with the Symphony from 1963 through 2001.

In the classical music world, children often start intensive training at a very young age, even as young as three or four years old. Byron, however, describes himself as a late-comer to classical music.

I came into classical music through the back door. I didn't have any classical musical exposure as a kid. In fact, the first Honolulu Symphony Concert I went to was during maybe my junior year in college. I'd never been to a classical music concert before that. I didn't even know how to pronounce the names of Mozart and Beethoven. (ibid.)

Although his undergraduate degree focus was in Music Education, Byron took a class that piqued his interest in another musical area—composition.

During my junior year, for an orchestration class project, I composed something and orchestrated it, and I was hooked on composition ever since. I finished up my undergraduate degree in music education, then immediately made plans to study composition in grad school somewhere. (ibid.)

Byron shifted his focus from education to the compositional arts in music and received the Masters of Arts and Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition from Northwestern University. Over the years, he has received several awards from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) for his musical compositions, and his works have been performed in a number of nationally-known venues, conferences, and festivals. Moreover, two of his orchestral works have premiered at Carnegie Hall. Byron and his music were also featured on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition", showcasing his contributions to the field of music.

Aside from his specialization in music theory and composition, Byron also taught himself how to play classical guitar, after buying a guitar and a guitar book from Metronome Music Store April 17, 1971 (Yasui, pers. comm., 4 August 2008). Since

1987, he has performed as a classical guitar duo partner with Carlos Barbosa-Lima, a virtuosic Brazilian guitarist. In 1996, his involvement in classical guitar led him to be a moderator and featured performer in a “Spectrum” program on guitarists Carlos Barbosa-Lima and Charlie Byrd that was broadcast on Hawai‘i Public Television.

In addition to his extensive training in classical music, Byron continued to play jazz bass through freelance side jobs and the ‘ukulele mainly as a personal interest. Each of these musical explorations continually expanded his musical frameworks and contributed to his arrangements and compositions.

‘UKULELE INFLUENCES

Byron attributes his continuing interest in the ‘ukulele to the recordings and songs he listened to. He identified listening to the recordings of Lyle Ritz as one such pivotal point (Yasui, pers. comm., 29 June 2008). In 1957, Lyle Ritz came out with an album called *How About Uke?* that changed how several *local* players conceptualized the ‘ukulele, its function, and its capabilities. In this album Lyle Ritz, a Hollywood studio bassist, featured the ‘ukulele as a solo jazz instrument, accompanied by flute, bass, and drums. In doing so, he kept the ‘ukulele in the forefront of the arrangements rather than using it as background accompaniment. His use of jazz chords and special voicings that utilized a melody on top of chordal harmony sparked the imaginations of ‘ukulele players in Hawai‘i. Byron says he listened to Lyle’s album “about a thousand times or more” and attributes his repeated listenings to it with helping him to learn more about the ‘ukulele and more ideas in creating jazz lines. “I didn’t know jazz could be played on the ‘ukulele, just as it can be played on piano or guitar, especially jazz standards with difficult chord progressions. It opened my mind and blew me away” (Yasui, interview,

14 August 2007). That jazz 'ukulele album did not become popular on the mainland, but it probably sold more copies in Hawai'i than in the continental United States.

Even though *Hawai'i Calls*—an international radio show broadcasting Hawaiian music—was at its height of popularity during the 1950s, the mainland populace only perceived the 'ukulele as a primary cultural signifier of Hawaiian music and not as an instrument that could cross genres and become part of a jazz combo, which at the time possessed its own ethnic associations. Moreover, well-known TV personality Arthur Godfrey, had trivialized the 'ukulele as a gimmick instrument; the same happened with Tiny Tim in the 1960s. Though the 'ukulele's small size made it convenient, its association with pop music ultimately hindered its acceptance as a serious and viable ensemble or solo instrument for formal musical traditions.

Despite the lackluster response on the mainland to the 'ukulele, in Hawai'i the populace had already accepted the 'ukulele as an important instrument for Hawaiian music. Byron noted Lyle Ritz's new 'ukulele sound and saw how it inspired several musicians who played the 'ukulele in Hawaiian musical settings. They were intrigued by this novel and unique way of using the instrument.

...That album affected Benny Chong, Sam Ahia, Sonny Kamaka, Danny Otholt...all the guys who are now known as jazz guitarists. They were Hawaiian musicians before. We all played the 'ukulele like me. And then there was this influence that Lyle Ritz had on us. We eventually memorized Lyle's solos, but most of them gradually switched to guitar. As they got more into music nobody needed 'ukulele. So, they played jazz and switched to guitar. Everybody needed a guitarist. They became jazz guitarists, but they started out as jazz 'ukulele players through Lyle, because of Lyle Ritz's album. I went on to become a bassist instead. (ibid.)

After being exposed to this recording, Byron started to memorize solos from the album. As a result of this foundational influence on his style, Byron still incorporates many of the licks from Lyle's recordings and can identify them in other performers.

Byron quit the 'ukulele professionally in 1958 upon his graduation from high school, mainly because he believed there was no demand for the instrument. In 1998 however, he resumed his playing of the 'ukulele when he was invited to participate in The 'Ukulele Hall of Fame Museum 'Ukulele Masters Concert Tour. This eventually led to Byron's participation in 'ukulele festivals as a guest artist and/or clinician and, eventually, to the production of his own CD (Yasui, pers. comm., 25 June 2008).

Another major source of musical influence on Byron's 'ukulele playing was "Mungo" (Harry Kalahiki), who recorded an album in the 1970s called *Mungo Plays Ukulele*, which included the piece "Comedian's Gallop" by Dimitri Kabalevsky. This particular tune had a deep effect on Byron, inspiring him to create his own version, a piece that Byron still performs today as part of his repertoire. The complexity of this song requires the advanced technical skill that Byron so admired in Mungo's recording.

Perry Botkins, another recording artist on the 'ukulele, also had an effect on both Byron's playing and his approach to the 'ukulele. Perry recorded a song called "On the Beach at Waikiki." It was a virtuosic rendition played in a chord melody style wherein the top note of each chord is the melody note, much in the manner of certain banjo soloists. This particular style of playing consequently helped to shape Byron's own style and his views of 'ukulele performance.

Byron Yasui, Benny Chong, and Jake Shimabukuro have two things in common—They are all performing artists who have recorded an album, and they all push

the boundaries of the 'ukulele's musical role by exploring a variety of genres. In self-taught explorations of instrumental performance, the recordings of these artists served as aural documentation that other 'ukulele players used to learn techniques, expand repertoire, and re/conceptualize what is possible on the 'ukulele.

INSTRUMENT AND TUNING PREFERENCES

Byron Yasui prefers playing the tenor 'ukulele. He uses an off-the-rack Kamaka 'ukulele that he had equipped with an electric pick-up to amplify his sound for performances. The fret board of the alto, or concert 'ukulele, is too small to accommodate the size of Byron's hands. The baritone is also a problem because of the long neck and more widely spread frets that make fingering difficult in the lower register, requiring a wider spread and consequently more pressure.

Tuning is also a consideration in selecting an instrument. Soprano 'ukuleles outside of Hawai'i often tune³ to IV – a¹, III – d¹, II – f^{#1}, I – b¹ (a¹, d¹, f^{#1}, b¹ for strings 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively). This tuning is referred to as “British tuning”. Alto 'ukuleles (and sopranos in Hawai'i) are tuned a whole step lower to IV – g¹, III – c¹, II – e¹, I – a¹, to accommodate the bigger body and longer string lengths. Surprisingly, the tenor 'ukulele is also tuned IV – g¹, III – c¹, II – e¹, I – a¹, despite its significantly larger size. With this tuning, Byron describes the tenor 'ukulele as having a bright and less resonant sound quality, because the tension is too high, especially on the I string. The tuning does not reflect the tenor range.

³ The roman numerals represent each particular string “I” being the farthest string on the right when facing the instrument and holding with the neck pointing upwards. The pitches are given 8^{va} designations based on middle c as c¹.

Byron eventually broke away from Hawai‘i’s standardized tuning system and tuned his tenor strings down to an appropriately relaxed tension via experimentation. He explains that the difficulty is to avoid loosening the string to the point where the tension and resultant sound becomes too “flabby.” By retuning his instrument, Byron found that he broke fewer strings because of the lower tension. While Byron joins the majority of players who use the “My-Dog-Has-Fleas” or “British” tuning (g¹, c¹, e¹, a¹), he tunes a whole-step lower to, IV – f¹, III – d¹, II – B^b, I – g¹. He defines this as the optimal tuning for the tenor ‘ukulele. Byron has altered the tuning of his tenor to compensate for tension. He imagines an ‘ukulele with a size between the tenor and the baritone⁴ as the best size for his hands.

Byron explains that string material makes, “...all the difference in the world because the ‘ukulele’s sound is affected greatly” (ibid.). Byron’s preferred brand of ‘ukulele strings is Worth, a brand he learned of in West Virginia and later bought in Japan. The Worth ‘ukulele strings generate a tone that he likes with good sustain and projection. He purchased a set for Benny Chong, who enjoyed them so much that he bought various sets at different gauges. Both musicians now use Worth strings, and these have recently become available in Hawai‘i. Optimum tuning (tension), therefore, affects string tension, which in turn affects playability. String quality affects tone.

VIRTUOSITY

Byron’s fundamental definition of virtuosity is based on the technical ability a person has on an instrument and, more specifically, uncommon speed and flexibility.

⁴ Ideally, Byron envisions an ‘ukulele with a fret board and string length between that of a tenor and a baritone. He thinks it should be called a 2nd tenor or a mezzo-tenor ‘ukulele and has talked to Casey Kamaka about building one.

However, he expresses that this only accounts for the base or foundation of virtuosity. Technical ability on musical instruments comes through gaining physical control of the instrument—achieving a level of mastery over the instrument, whether voice, ‘ukulele, or any other instrument. Virtuosity is achieved by those individuals who go above and beyond ordinary technical skills.

Byron further stipulates that although virtuosity is commonly associated with uncommon speed in playing ability and with exceptional mastery of an instrument, speed without accuracy results in sloppy playing, which negates any virtue of rapid playing ability. Byron also identifies that one of the problems with virtuosity is that it provides instant gratification and therefore

...easily tires [listeners], as does anything that overwhelms people at first exposure. What is more substantive and longer lasting than virtuosity is technique and sensitive musicality, personified in clean, accurate playing and beautiful in shaping of beginnings, middles, and endings of phrases. (Yasui, pers. comm., 12 August 2008)

According to Byron, musical interpretation plays a big role in the overall rendering of a composition. For example, the player needs to be aware of the hierarchy of musical components and must both bring out the important foreground elements (melody) and subdue the less important background elements (harmony). Byron identifies two ways of playing an ‘ukulele:

There are two basic ways of playing the ‘ukulele: strumming and plucking. Strumming may be defined as an up and down raking across one or more strings, with or without a plectrum of some sort (plastic, turtle shell, or felt pick). Plucking involves picking single strings with the thumb and fingers. Some players use the fleshy part of the thumb and fingers, while others use the nails, to emulate the attack sounds of hard picks. Chords may be strummed or plucked. (ibid.)

Most 'ukulele players utilize what Byron calls *single line-picking*, where only a melody is heard without chords. Players often improvise up and down the scale, alternating scalar passages with intervallic leaps to invent interesting melodies. The use of this technique can be impressive but often is not musically challenging beyond fundamental technical ability. This type of playing would normally sound empty without one or more accompanying musicians providing harmonic support and would sound most complete with a bass player.

The next step beyond *single-picking* requires advanced technical ability and is another defining feature of 'ukulele virtuosity. It is something that Byron refers to as *chord-melody* texture. The 'ukulele player chooses a song and an appropriate key that allows him or her to play the melody on the highest pitched string. The player simultaneously strums chords or arpeggiates them and accentuates the melody in the top note. This requires the player to be familiar with the entire fingerboard and to also have knowledge of how to manipulate harmony.

...when you do chords and melody, a combination of the two, you're setting yourself up to be a more complete musician. Because you have a sense of harmony control as well, melodic control, and rhythmic, and time structure and all that...you have to know your chords, [and] you have to know your 'ukulele fingerboard, to be able to do that. So that sets the pros [apart] from the amateurs. (ibid.)

The *chord-melody* technique results in a full musical sound and allows the player to demonstrate a high level of musicianship. All that is missing is the bass line. Mastering the technique requires a thorough knowledge not only of the melody, but also the principles of harmonic progression and chord inversion.

THE 'UKULELE AS A SOLO INSTRUMENT

In Byron's performances, he often uses the 'ukulele as a solo instrument, providing the melodic line as well as the accompaniment. He feels this setting presents the 'ukulele in a way that best suits the instrumental range and the possibilities of the instrument. To perform effectively in the solo setting, a skillful 'ukulele player depends greatly on the *chord-melody* technique. The technique allows the 'ukulele to deliver melodic and harmonic sonorities often called for by the aesthetics of Western music.

In typical solo playing a melody is featured. If the melody is played as a single line, with no chords, it may sound empty and the single line texture may become tiresome after awhile unless there are one or more accompanying instruments providing harmonic support and, ideally, a bass line⁵. So the challenge in solo playing is to sound full without having to rely on accompanying instruments, that is, to present melody with chords.

In the *chord-melody* approach to solo 'ukulele playing, the melody and the chords are presented in a number of different ways. Chords may be voiced as the melody note is heard in the top voice of each chord. This requires judicious selection of the key in which to play, a key that will allow the entire melody to be sounded on the treble (first) string. Passages or an entire solo may consist of chords strummed tremolo style, for dramatic effect,⁶ strummed with rhythmic syncopations, as in the tradition of banjoists such as Gene Sheldon and Perry Botkins ("Hanohano Hanalei"), or plucked as arpeggios,

⁵ Because the 'ukulele has no bass strings, there will normally be no bass line sounding in solo 'ukulele playing. However, in the song "This Nearly was Mine", Byron was able to preserve the original bass line in the first 16 measures. Jazz musicians such as Lyle Ritz, Bill Tapia, and Benny Chong typically play single line solos during their improvisations and, therefore, welcome the addition of a bass player to provide that bass line for a fuller sound. In the accompaniment, however, chord instrument support may not be necessary because in the hands of an expert jazz soloist, improvised lines imply the harmonies so clearly that the astute listener can pinpoint the exact location of the chords within the structure of the piece being played.

⁶ Byron attributes his initial exposure here to Denny Rogers.

as in classical guitar styles (“This Nearly Was Mine”). In each of these styles, the melody note is heard as the top voice of each chord. There is also another style of playing that combines picking and strumming. The melody is sounded, then during rhythmic “dead” spots in the melody, chords are sounded, usually strummed (“Stars and Stripes, Forever”).

If a variety of instruments is performing in an ensemble setting, each instrument is assigned a role based on its function. For example, a guitar or keyboard, though having the ability to carry the melodic line, often assumes a role of providing harmonic texture.

Anybody can play the 'ukulele if they're backed up by a bass player, keyboard, or guitarist, drums and all that, because all they need to do is play single lines. The other guys will play the chords, the bass will play the bass...and not to knock that down, I mean that takes a certain skill, ensemble... but the more instruments you add; the less the instrument is featured. (ibid.)

Without accompanying instruments, the demands on the solo 'ukulele player are more rigorous. The *chord-melody* technique allows the player to simultaneously function melodically, harmonically, and rhythmically, negating the need for other instruments. All attention is focused on the single player, who alone is responsible for creating and controlling the energy, mood, and personality of the music through performance.

When you play solo 'ukulele, you are all alone out there. You are naked. You got nobody to hide behind. You have to sustain interest the whole time, and that's a challenge. If you've ever done that... you'll know what I mean. And if you've never done that, you'll never know what I mean. [Laughter] (ibid.)

Ensemble playing also includes its own set of performance requirements. According to Byron:

Playing in an ensemble of two or more players is a test of musicianship because all of the players involved have to keep track of each other by listening to each other constantly, adjust their whereabouts in a phrase if anyone gets lost, and end together. When playing unaccompanied solos,

none of these challenges exist. Instead, other challenges arise, such as demands on the art of playing the instrument. (Yasui, pers.comm., 12 August 2008)

As the principal and solo performer, the single 'ukulele player takes total responsibility for the performance. In Byron's opinion, playing solo is the ultimate challenge as a musician and a performer.

ARTISTRY

In his 'ukulele playing, Byron utilizes some classical guitar techniques in creating his particular performance style. One of the techniques that makes his approach to the 'ukulele unique is his incorporation of the *à la harp* or *campanella* technique, a technique that he has employed since 2002 and one that involves letting notes of a scalar passage blur into each other, as heard on the harp. For example, if you are playing a scale in upwards stepwise motion, you arrange the notes on different strings, rather than on the same string, allowing the sound of the previous note to spill into the sounding of a new note. The technique allows for the "...old notes to ring while the new note sounds. It's like a blur [of sound] pyramiding up or cascading down. Like a harp...à la harp [sic]" (ibid.). This contrasts with Hawaiian music, with its block-chord strumming and early-ragtime accentuated rhythm. The *campanella* technique allows the player to deliver the harmonic material through broken-chords, arpeggios, or scalar passages.

Byron also explains that counterpoint plays an important role in his arrangement of 'ukulele solo pieces. "Melodies have rhythmic "dead" spots, where the melody note is sustained and nothing is happening harmonically" (ibid.). When such "dead" spots occur, professional arrangers automatically attempt to fill these places, often by creating stepwise motion in the inner voices. Byron also stipulates that sometimes even melodic

figures are created in counterpoint to the melodic line, which along with chromatic harmonies propel the music forward to the next chord and keeps the momentum alive. He is mindful of the limitations of four strings and is judicious about the treatment of the harmonic textures and voicing.

Benny and I think orchestrally...with moving inner voices and lines. When you hit a chord and that chord lasts for a long time, what do you do? Do you just strum it and wait? No, you do something to keep it going...you prolong the harmony. You do something to keep the interest alive. Rather than strum a chord with [a monotonous] rhythm, you create moving lines in the inner voice to propel the notion forward. (ibid.)

The challenge is in arranging the inner voices, which usually provide the background harmonic textures. Byron utilizes chromatic lines, extended chords, and colorful nonharmonic tones to enhance the harmonic progressions of his pieces, making his arranged music masterful, calculating, and a unique listening experience.

ANALYSIS

In my musical analysis for each player, I have given the lead sheet chord symbols used by jazz artists. I chose this method for my analysis because it more clearly distinguishes the details of solo 'ukulele music and the complications and complexities involved with it. The chord quality and bass note are indicated by the chord symbols. In the example of G/B, the letter to the left of the slash refers to the chord G major, in this case; the letter to the right of the slash indicates the bass note, (thus first inversion G major triad). The lack of a slash assumes the chord is in root position. In the music of these virtuosi, fundamental notes are occasionally missing from the chord. This is because of voice leadings, limitations of 'ukulele fingerings, or ease in playing, especially at fast tempi. Much like the bass line, these missing tones are implied and are

often addressed through judicious arranging and voicing. Moreover, when the tonic or sub-dominant chord is used in a chord progression, arrangers and jazz musicians automatically adorn the chord with the major 7th and/or the major 6th of the chord.

The older pieces in Byron's repertoire call for either strumming or a combination of strumming and picking. Byron has performed these songs and arrangements since his teen years and the beginning of his 'ukulele playing. A common aesthetic in these pieces is the reliance on strumming techniques. Songs such as "The Stars and Stripes Forever" (*local* 'ukulele repertoire) and "Hanohano Hanalei" (Hawaiian repertoire) utilize heavy strumming patterns⁷ that fulfill rhythmic functions in these musical traditions.

The Byron's arrangement of the song "Hanohano Hanalei" (fig. 4) is performed solely with strumming techniques. The song, written by Alfred Alohihea, has the melody as the highest note in the anacrusis and first two measures; each note is supported by block chords providing the underlying harmony through strummed rhythm.

Lively

1

F⁶ C⁷ F⁶

bass motif: C D C D C C D C D C

Figure 2. "Hanohano Hanalei," measures 1 – 4.

In the third and fourth measures there is a repeated melodic pattern in the highest voice (c²-d²-c²-d²-c²). When playing Hawaiian music, Byron recalls noticing Sybil Andrews, from the Halekūlani Girls (a group that also included Alice Fredlund and Linda Delacruz)

⁷ The standard strum for most people, other than Benny Chong, involves the index finger strumming downward (with the nail) then upward (with the flesh). The double strum simply employs the index finger followed by the pinky on the up stroke.

use this motif in the bass line to respond to the end of the melodic phrase. “From time to time, I’ve heard other bassists play that lick—most recently at the Halekūlani Hotel’s “House Without a Key”...the bassist was Nathaniel Stillman” (Yasui, pers. comm., 4 August 2008). Both Sybil and Nathaniel would use this motif in the bass line at the end of phrases to fill in the dead spot at the end of a melodic phrase.

By incorporating this in his playing, Byron demonstrates his ability to creatively re/contextualize his Hawaiian music background by bringing it into his ‘ukulele voicing. In figure 4, he thickens the original bass line with chords and places the bass motif in the uppermost voice of the chords to provide a figure that does not function as a part of the bass line per se.

To bring a jazzy feel to the piece, Byron rhythmically “swings” all the eighth notes throughout the piece. Figure 5 is an example of written eighth notes:

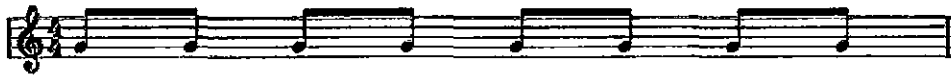


Figure 3. Example of straight eighth notes.

However, in performance the eighth notes are played as eighth note triplets, as notated in figure 6. The swing feel is created by “ghosting” the down beats by playing them significantly softer than the upbeats as noted with parentheses.

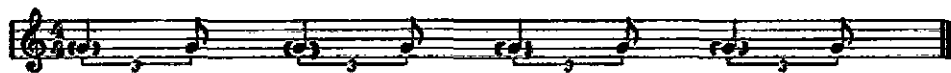


Figure 4. Example of swinging eighth notes.

The chord progression in figure 6 is common in Hawaiian music laden with jazz stylings. Another jazz rhythm technique involves anticipating the down beat. This

creates a rhythmic tension by playing the downbeat chord early on the upbeat of the previous measure. This is seen in figure 7 on the last beat of measures 11 through 15. Syncopations abound in this excerpt, and a nonsyncopated version is given in the lower staff for comparing the swing anticipations and straight rhythm.

Figure 5. "Hanohano Hanalei," measures 10 – 18.

Harmonically, the passage uses a $I - V^7/ii - V^7/V - V^7$ progression often found in traditional Hawaiian music; it occurs here in measures 11-16. However, Byron uses a variety of techniques that display jazz aesthetics such as diatonic and chromatic passing chords as seen in measure 15. He also uses rising chromatic passing chords in measures 15 and 16. In measure 16, Byron uses an appoggiatura chord. These chords are delineated with a P (passing), N (neighbor), or A (appoggiatura) in figure 7. To deliver

some of these chords Byron often uses a *sliding chord* technique, where he plays the next chord fingering a half-step lower, then while keeping the fingering the same he slides it to the diatonic position as seen in the chromatic passing chord of measure 15 on beat three. Another example of this is also displayed in the appoggiatura chord of measure 16 on the upbeat of beat 3 and four.

In figure 8, Byron uses a muted strum to create a percussive effect on the 'ukulele on the second beat of measure 28. Byron mutes the string by placing his fingers in the proper position for the chord, but does not apply enough pressure to the fret to allow the string to create a clear sonority. Instead he creates a muffled staccato sound because the finger does not allow the string to resonate. This is a technique used by 'ukulele players to mimic percussion.



Figure 6. "Hanohano Hanalei," measures 27 – 30.

Figure 9 demonstrates how Byron uses a jazz tag, a coda to end a section of the piece or the entire song.

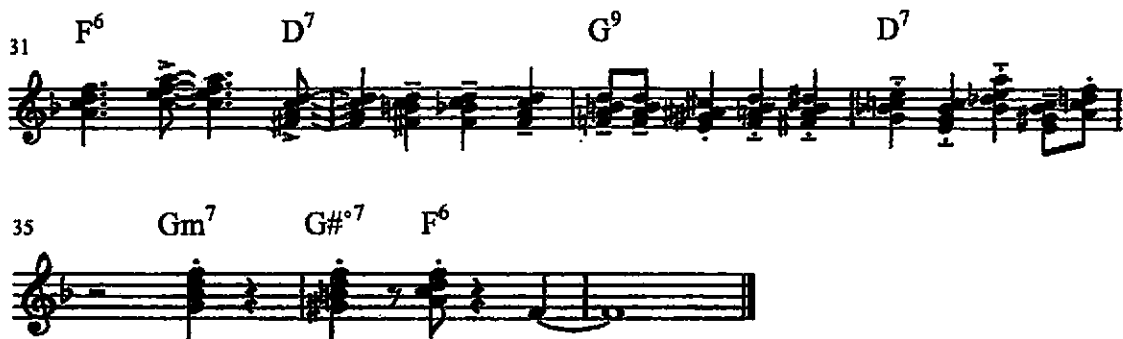


Figure 7. "Hanohano Hanalei," measures 31 – 37.

This device also appears in Hawaiian music that is heavily influenced by swing and ragtime. The progression is $I - V^7/ii - V^7/V - V - I$. In Byron's tag of "Hanohano Hanalei" (fig. 9), the secondary dominants in this excerpt are inverted and are followed by chromatic passing tones leading to the next chord. In measures 35 and 36, Byron ends the piece with a cliché ending used by many jazz musicians. This onomatopoeic technique is called "splanks" and is based on the light piano texture Count Basie used to end many of his songs.

As a classical guitar player, Byron is familiar with various techniques from the guitar tradition and incorporates these as the newest development in his 'ukulele playing. . "My latest repertoire represents the very latest techniques I've been toying with—right hand classical guitar applications" (ibid.). These technical applications focus on the *campanella* technique. The arrangement of the song requires passages of notes to be played on separate strings to allow the longest sustain possible for each note. This results in a veiled blurry texture where the previously plucked sonorities overlap the following sonorities until a chord is played.

Byron's current signature song is "This Nearly Was Mine," a piece from the musical *South Pacific*. The style in which he arranged the piece represents his latest artistic exploration of using right-hand classical guitar technique on the 'ukulele. The opening measures present the melody without any introductory material (fig. 10). In these four measures, the lowest note and root of the chord is on the first beat, and the subsequent notes outline the harmony in an *Alberti bass* pattern. It was a popular device of mid-eighteenth-century keyboard music, and one that animates the simple harmonies. In Byron's music, it appears in the low and mid voices. The first challenge in this piece

is to maintain a smooth ascending line, C – D – D# – E, over the course of the four measures. This creates a gentle rising feeling that supports the melody.

Moderato

1 C G⁷/D D#^{o7} C/E

Figure 8. "This Nearly Was Mine," measures 1 – 4.

I loved the original bass line of the song and found a way to preserve it in my arrangement by choosing the best key in which to play this piece to compensate for the 'ukulele not having bass strings. (ibid.)

As a professor of musical composition, Byron is familiar with compositional techniques from various periods of Western classical music and readily incorporates these where appropriate. As seen in figure 10 above, the rhythm is smoothly articulated on strong and weak beats that outline a chordal accompaniment.

In contrast to the previous example, where the lowest note slowly ascends, the following passage (fig. 11) demonstrates a descending chromatic bass line of B – B \flat - A - A \flat - G – F# - F \natural , as Byron re-harmonizes the progression.

G/B Gm/B \flat F/A Fm/A \flat

9 C/G F \sharp \circ ⁷ F⁶ Fm⁶

13 C/E G⁷/D C

Figure 9. "This Nearly Was Mine," measures 5 – 15.

Here Byron masterfully voices the broken chords and scalar passages so that the structural bass note is heard on the first beat of every measure in slowly descending steps.

The following four measures (fig. 12) detail the first and second endings of verses 1 and 2. In the 1st ending, the lowest note, which appears on the upper staff as c¹, rises diatonically before moving downward in a chromatic passage. In this passage, Byron places a g¹ on off beats as harmonic filler that creates a repeated off-beat drone that generates added rhythmic momentum when combined with rising parallel thirds sounding on the beats. In the first ending, the harmonic and rhythmic tension builds to a half

cadence on a $V \overset{4}{3}$ chord with the soprano note of the first ending as the last melodic note of the phrase. The c^1 ascends and then descends to lead back to the c^1 of measure 1 in figure 10. The fingering demands in 'ukulele playing mean that sustained notes are not always possible. In measure 18, the c^2 in the soprano of measure 17 is understood as a sustained tone even though this is not actually sounding.

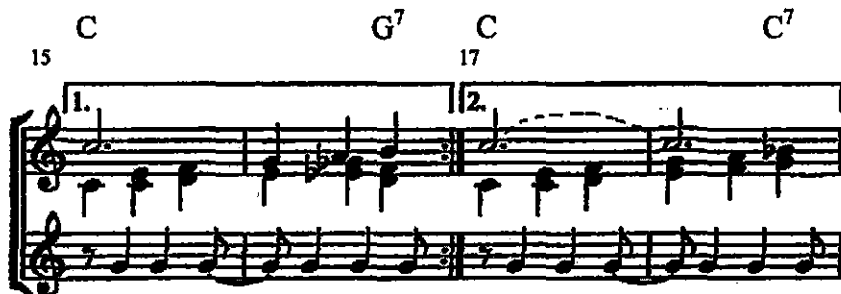


Figure 10. "This Nearly Was Mine," measures 15 – 18.

The second ending mimics the first, except that the rising thirds continue to ascend and end on a secondary dominant, $V \overset{4}{3} / IV$, which leads into the IV chord that opens the bridge. The c^1 ascends diatonically all the way through the penultimate beat of the next measure where it will resolve to c^2 (the first note of the melody) after the repeat.

The ending of "This Nearly was Mine" (fig. 13) presents an extended passage of harmonics (overtone sonorities), a technique used in various guitar traditions such as classical guitar and *kī hō 'alu* (slack-key) guitar. The harmonics, notated with ° above the note, are played on the 12th fret (an octave above) the indicated open strings. In Byron's arrangement, they support the ending of the melody up until the penultimate measure, at which point Byron uses borrowed chords from the parallel natural minor key to descend diatonically towards a cadence that resolves in an open-voiced tonic chord.

C G⁷ C Fm⁷ C

molto rall.

47

Figure 11. "This Nearly Was Mine," measures 47 – 51.

It is evident that Byron's signature piece pulls from his background as a classical guitarist and as a composer. He employs melodic, harmonic, and contrapuntal techniques that are typical of Western art music. Through the *campanella* technique, Byron arranges the accompaniment and corresponding notes to resonate and dissipate naturally on individual strings as opposed to stopping the sonority through the articulation of multiple notes on a single string.

Both of these songs are featured in Byron's album, *Anahola*, his first CD recorded in 2006. The album showcases a variety of musical pieces that capture Byron's eclectic musical tastes and features his diverse instrumental techniques and arrangements. Figure 14 lists the pieces on this solo album, including his signature song, "This Nearly was Mine," and one of the older songs in his repertoire, "Hanohano Hanalei." The original genre of the song is listed on the right to highlight the eclectic musical choices Byron made in creating his solo album.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>GENRE</u>
1. <i>Anahola</i>	Original composition
2. <i>In a Little Hula Heaven</i>	Film: Waikiki Wedding
3. <i>You Are Beautiful</i>	Musical: Flower Drum Song
4. <i>Sophisticated Hula</i>	Traditional: Hawaiian
5. <i>This Nearly Was Mine</i>	Musical: South Pacific
6. <i>The Stars and Stripes Forever</i>	American March
7. <i>Pua Mae 'ole</i>	Traditional: Hawaiian
8. <i>Granada</i>	Traditional: Mexican
9. <i>Hanohano Hanalei</i>	Tradition: Hawaiian
10. <i>First of May</i>	Pop
11. <i>The Comedian's Gallop</i>	Classical
12. <i>Sleigh Ride</i>	Pop
13. <i>Medley of Japanese Songs</i>	Traditional: Japanese
14. <i>Amazing Grace</i>	Christian Hymn
15. <i>Blue Hawai'i</i>	Film: Blue Hawai'i
16. <i>Waikiki</i>	Traditional: Hawaiian
17. <i>Undecided</i>	Jazz standard
18. <i>Scherzo</i>	Classical

Figure 12. List of Songs on Byron Yasui's CD *Anahola*.

One of the largest single genres represented on Byron's CD is Hawaiian music. Byron chose selections of Hawaiian songs that range from *hapa haole* music to hula standards. In choosing to record these songs, Byron draws from his background in and fondness for Hawaiian music and reflects the influence it has had on him.

Two of the pieces on the CD, "Stars and Stripes Forever" and "Granada," come from the United States and Spain, respectively, and have been part of his repertoire since his early days of 'ukulele playing. These pieces, among many, were popular with *local* kids learning to play the 'ukulele during Byron's youth. These songs represent the early part of his repertoire and identify him as a *local* 'ukulele player. Furthermore, they also establish his foundation of technical mastery on the 'ukulele and create contrast with other pieces that are neither Hawaiian nor *local*.

In the "First of May," a Bee Gee's hit, Byron shows his versatility in playing contemporary pop music. His eclectic pieces include the jazz standard "Undecided," in

which he adds his own bass accompaniment and three other 'ukulele parts via overdubbing. His arrangement reflects his experience as a jazz musician.

An example of his classical training comes through his rendition of "Scherzo," an excerpt from the third movement in Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, a piece for eight string parts that Byron plays on eight separate tracks with an incredible precision indicative of his classical background. His classical training focused on a highly valued aspect of Western music, composition, and Byron has written choral and symphonic pieces,--both tonal and atonal works. Byron incorporates this compositional skill and creativity into his 'ukulele playing, as in the noteworthy piece "Anahola," the only original piece on the CD. The title song on his CD, *Anahola* was written for his niece who lives in the town of the same name on Kaua'i. While walking with a friend on the shoreline, Byron was inspired by her stories about Anahola Bay and the stream that feeds into the bay.

Manulele Clark and I jogged and walked along the beach. While walking, she told me about the beach and Anahola bay. There's this Anahola stream that feeds into it. At one point the stream peters out and it rolls into the sand to reach the bay, Anahola bay. Depending on the wind that blows the sand around and the force of the river, the stream enters the bay at various points from day to day. Nobody can predict which path the stream will take when it reaches the bay. It's the little things like that, I thought well, maybe I'll write a song about Anahola, which I did. I wrote the words and everything. I wanted a more subtle contemporary sounding you know...pop style of piece. You'll hear it. It's the first song on my album. (Yasui, interview, 19 September 2007)

This song describes geographic features of Anahola Bay and expresses a yearning to return to the bay. Sadly, Kunane, the eldest son of his niece, died in an auto accident on Anahola Road after the song was written. The words of the song now have new meanings to the Yasui family.

Byron's 'ukulele music is an amalgamation of his many musical backgrounds, all of which inform and shape his 'ukulele playing. This is demonstrated in the various genres he chose to record on his solo 'ukulele album. Though his taste in music is eclectic, his recent 'ukulele arrangements and stylistic approaches underscore his classical guitar training, making him unique in relation to the other solo players in this study.

CHAPTER 3. BENNY CHONG

Benny Chong was born in Honolulu, Hawai'i on April 25, 1943. He lived in various parts of Oahu including Kalihi, Kalia,¹ and Kaimuki until the 3rd grade, when the family moved to Kailua. He is of Hawaiian, Chinese, and Portuguese ancestry. Benny's professional music career is filled with great experiences. As a founding member and arranger of the Ali'is, he was a part of a group that toured nationally. Benny traveled and performed in 48 states. The group recorded many albums of their own as well as several more with Don Ho. As a combined act, Benny participated in numerous national TV performances, such as: The Tonight Show starring Johnny Carson, The Mike Douglas Show, The Joey Bishop Show, Hollywood Palace, and many others. After the group disbanded, Benny continued to create vocal arrangements for young artists, developing his reputation as an arranger. He still performs in Waikiki, but now as a solo 'ukulele player.

MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Born into a family of musicians (many of his uncles were musicians), much of his 'ukulele learning took place through the processes of trial and error and playing by ear. He first began playing the 'ukulele around the age of 11 years old. Like most local children, he played music with friends and tried to emulate and copy the chords, voicing, and strum patterns they were playing.

We'd learn from each other. You would ask a guy 'oh, please teach me that song,' and that's how you'd learn. There were no lessons really--not like today--you have (sigh) so many people giving lessons. I just kind of latched on to ['ukulele playing] by chance. Basically that's how I got started. (Chong, interview, 2 November 2007.)

¹ The area from Hilton Hawaiian Village and Ala Wai Harbor to Kalakaua used to be known as Kalia.



Figure 1. Picture of Benny Chong. (Photo courtesy Benny Chong. Honolulu.)

Peer learning was an integral part of Benny's early musical experience. There were no formal institutions that taught 'ukulele at that time. Rather, the main method of transmission was through informal interactions with various friends and family members

who could play certain songs or styles. This type of transmission is centered on loose mentorship that is motivated by an 'ukulele student's initiative to expand chords and repertoire by looking to surrounding players for new ideas, approaches, pieces, and solutions to performance questions. Knowledge was passed on informally and as part of an oral approach to music making. This process emphasizes the collective experiences, sharing, and orality that it is valued in *local* and Hawaiian cultures.

Solo 'ukulele songs were shared throughout the islands through oral transmission. This shared learning of songs and styles developed into a standardized *local* repertoire and methodology. Benny remembers other ukulele players practicing and performing the same songs, which included such songs as "Stars and Stripes", "Crazy G's", "Come back to Sorento", "Lady of Spain", and "Elomark". Some 'ukulele players knew more songs or possessed more skill; this both affected what was shared or transmitted in certain locales and caused differences in how these songs were performed. Despite these minor regional differences in performing the *local* repertoire, these songs formed a collection of material that was immensely popular and spread throughout the State of Hawai'i.

As I learned to play, the beginner and intermediate level of players seemed to be playing the same songs. We would pass the 'ukulele around and eventually a different player would repeat the songs previously played. In wanting to be different that's how I got started trying to play songs that weren't part of the standard 'ukulele repertoire at that time. (ibid.)

After realizing that the shared 'ukulele repertoire was somewhat standardized and limited, Benny turned his attention to another genre of music and a style that offered musical complexities, opportunities to be distinct, and ways to diversify his 'ukulele playing. That music was jazz.

INTRODUCTION TO JAZZ MUSIC

Since he was a toddler, Benny Chong was exposed to different styles of contemporary jazz music, vocal and instrumental. He would listen to the smooth and sultry voice of Julie London, the improvisatory genius of Ella Fitzgerald, and the tightly-knit harmonies of the Four Freshmen. Jazz, however, possesses rich instrumental traditions as well as, with Benny also acknowledging that "...the big bands of Tommy Dorsey, Count Basie, Duke Ellington...Al Balleto Sextet, each of these groups were introduced to me by my family...my uncles" (ibid.). His uncles had a very strong impact on his musical development and tastes. While everyone else was beginning to listen to Bill Haley and Comets, Elvis Presley, and other rock 'n roll music in the mid 1950's, Benny listened to classical, contemporary, and jazz music.

Benny attributes his early musical development to his older family members and, in particular, his two uncles, Alex Among and Dennis "Kuki" Among, who were known first as the Among brothers and, later, as the Tropicals. Alex played the vibes, piano, guitar, and steel guitar, and 'ukulele. Kuki played the steel guitar and 'ukulele. Alex Among was invited to join The Invitations and was featured on their second album. "I was fortunate enough to have my uncles who are musicians around, to help me, teach me, and answer my questions about music." (ibid.). Both uncles had a strong influence on Benny as he watched them play music as a young boy. Similar to Hawaiian culture, the jazz tradition practices a method of transmission steeped in learning by rote, explorative listening, and mentored instruction. Mentorships are often informal, and knowledge is orally transmitted. The first two contemporary Jazz songs Benny learned at 12 to 13 years of age were "Prelude to a Kiss," which Kiki taught Benny, and "Dancing on the Ceiling," which Benny learned from Alex.

Benny describes his musical training as “mostly on the job” and from the school of “hard knocks.” Most of what he knows came from playing and learning music with peers and occasionally picking up books on musical theory and arranging methods. He developed a lot of his playing through trial and error and by playing predominantly by ear. If he played something that sounded good, he kept it. It is a jazz aesthetic to value individualistic sounds and styles, and jazz musicians often seek out or create sounds that are new and unique, incorporating them into their repertoire and techniques. Contrary to classical music, where performance techniques are taught and practiced in order to create the optimal sound, jazz practice leaves it to the musician to create a technique the player values to deliver his sound. Hence Benny’s musical development relied on personal and experimental approaches.

INTRODUCTION TO SHOW MUSIC

Benny began his professional career at the age of 14, when he played for a high school dance that featured him on the ‘ukulele backed by a drummer and a guitarist. By the age of 16, Benny played bass with the Four BARR’s (Benny, Al, Rudy, and Rodney) who performed at such events as school dances, weddings, and graduation parties. At 17 Benny began playing bass with a Latin quartet that was featured at the old Menehune Lounge (later known as the Wave in Waikiki).

After graduating from high school in 1961, Benny and his friend Rudy Aquino auditioned for the US Air Force as a bass (Benny) and a vibe (Rudy) player. They were hoping to fulfill the required post-high school military draft demands² by playing music

² Fulfilling the draft requirements of the time meant a total of six years of service—four years of active duty and two years of reserve duty.

in the armed forces. Military symphonic and marching bands do not have positions for vibes or bass players, however, and their auditions were refused.

Another opportunity fortuitously appeared. At the time, the Pentagon was trying to form and enlist a musical group that would represent Hawai'i. Their initial attempts were to commission a musical group called The Surfers, who turned down the offer. Two Air Force sergeants suggested to Benny and Rudy that they organize a group and submit a musical demo for Pentagon review. In 1961, the two friends found three other players and formed a band called The Hawaiian Ali'is. Rudy Aquino played vibes, Al Akana played drums, Manny Lagodlagod played bass, and Joe Mundo played piano, and Benny who switched from bass to playing the guitar. Their musical demo was accepted, and the band was enlisted into the US Air Force Special Services Band at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington D.C.

The military scheduled The Hawaiian Ali'is to play in many national and international venues including the State Department in Washington D.C. These performance experiences helped Benny to hone his technical skills and musicianship by performing regularly and at a wide variety of events. Through the Air Force, Benny also had a unique opportunity to play as part of The Hawaiian Ali'is on the Arthur Godfrey show. Benny remembers asking Arthur Godfrey what kind of 'ukulele he used and was given the opportunity to try Arthur Godfrey's 'ukulele. Arthur Godfrey, who was on the set, was struck by the sound and commented "Wow...he can play!" (ibid.).

After a year, nine months, and twenty-one days, the military's budget for music was drastically cut. Benny recounts that there were approximately 500 employees who performed in various musical ensembles at the time, including: Symphonic Band,

Operatic Singers, Airmen of Note Jazz Band, Choir, and about five combos. However, the military needed to make cutbacks and endeavored to lower the employee count to 300. In an effort to downsize, the Air Force dismantled several of their musical ensembles, including the Hawaiian Ali'is, and began a process of moving the displaced musician-soldiers to other military functions and careers. Their enlistment contracts, however, had specified musical functions. Not wanting to serve in non-musical jobs, Benny Chong and Rudy Aquino sought help from a Hawai'i senator (Hiram Fong, Sr.) to help them with their enlistment contract issues. Shortly after the Senator's intervention, the Hawaiian Ali'is were sent back home with honorable discharges that allowed them to fulfill the rest of their enlistment service on reserve duty.

After returning home in 1964, they were soon approached by Don Ho, who was looking for a group for his show at the International Market Place in Waikīkī. Performing with Don Ho was a major step towards adopting music as a career. "I just kinda happened into [music] and stayed with it. Music is not an easy vocation. I have been lucky all my life. [knocks on wood]" (ibid.). In the military, Benny was making \$45 a month. When the Ali'i's began to play music for Don Ho in Waikīkī, each player made \$150 each per week, as starting pay. As the popularity of Don Ho's show grew and his name became established as an icon of Hawaiian music, the Ali'is individual pay eventually increased to \$600 a week. Travelling and touring became the most lucrative part of the job, with pay as much as \$1500 a week. Benny added that during this time, a plate lunch of curry stew cost 25¢ and car insurance was less than \$50.00 per year. In addition to firmly establishing Benny as a legitimate professional musician with a local, national, and international reputation, playing music for Don Ho provided Benny many

other great opportunities, such as accompanying famous celebrities and traveling to far-off places around the world. It was a truly exciting career.

‘UKULELE INFLUENCES

Benny recognizes his uncles as the first ‘ukulele influences in his life. At the beginning of his exploration of the ‘ukulele, he would draw the ‘ukulele fret board with up to 20 frets and write in the notes on each fret and string; then he asked his uncles what notes make a C6 chord. He was told that the C-E-G-A notes formed a C6 chord. He then asked if any combination of notes played would still be a C6. Following the affirmation of his idea, he then circled every C-E-G-A on each string and every combination of C-E-G-A he could find on four strings. This continued with other chords as he learned about them. This was the beginning of Benny learning how to construct chords in different positions and inversions by using the entire fret board.

Learning to play with friends was another step in exploring the ‘ukulele. It was during this process that he was exposed to local ‘ukulele repertoire. Benny began to notice that many of the local ‘ukulele players tended to play the same songs with slight regional differences. Benny disliked the homogeneity of ‘ukulele music and endeavored to play different songs with different styles.

He sought help from his uncles, who in turned, helped expose Benny to a world of jazz. His uncle Kuki taught him how to play “Prelude to a Kiss.” This was the first jazz song Benny learned, and it was different from what his friends were playing on the ‘ukulele. It included different musical aesthetics, such as chromatic movement and complex harmonic progressions. The song also used chordal embellishments such as #9ths, b 9ths, and b 5ths. Benny still uses this song in his performances and prides

himself on being able to play this song close to the way he learned it 50 years ago with very little alteration.

The next largest influence on Benny's 'ukulele playing was Lyle Ritz. Lyle was the first to use the 'ukulele as a featured instrument in a jazz combo. His use of chord-melody technique inspired Benny. After listening to Lyle Ritz, Benny "decided that [he] wanted to not only play single-style picking lines but to be able to create, arrange, and play harmonically in the way he felt a song should be played" (Chong, Interview, 7 August 2008). This endeavor has shaped his style and approach to the 'ukulele and has consequently shaped Benny development as a jazz 'ukulele player.

INSTRUMENT AND TUNING PREFERENCES

The 'ukulele that Benny presently uses is made by the Ko'olau Guitar & 'Ukulele Company in collaboration with his friend John Kitakis. In order to create the instrument that would best accommodate his hand and playing style, Benny involved himself in the construction of his instrument. He wanted a thin neck for ease of play and asked to adjust this so that it was neither too thin nor too wide, but still of a size that could accommodate his large hands. Because he was very particular about the distance between strings, the Ko'olau 'ukulele makers called Benny into the process at every major step of the way. "They'd call me up, '...ok I got the neck done,' and I'd go down there and, 'try make it little bit more thinly over here.' I'd go back and forth" (ibid.). Benny was pleased with the outcome, because he ended up with an 'ukulele designed with the exact specifications he had envisioned.

Benny expressed an indifference to the appearance of the 'ukulele but placed great emphasis on attention to detail surrounding the instrument's intonation, tone, and

resonance. “I don’t care if it has holes or cracks in it. I don’t care if it was termite ridden. But if it sounds good and it plays well, that’s an ‘ukulele that I’ll use for the rest of my life” (ibid.). Both Benny and Byron share the observation that each ‘ukulele is individual in sound and that a good sounding ‘ukulele can be found in almost any brand. However, each player prefers a certain sound, making a match between player and instrument an important consideration as well.

The baritone ‘ukulele is the preferred size for Benny. Since purchasing his first Kamaka baritone and his current Ko‘olau baritone ‘ukulele, Benny has noticed that the newer baritone ‘ukuleles have a bigger body and a longer distance from the nut to the 14th fret, which is now right against the body. Benny does not like the extended length because it makes the finger extensions in some of his special voicings more difficult. The use of alternative fingerings for chord voicing has opened up a new dimension in the art of solo ‘ukulele. The longer fret distances on the baritone ‘ukulele has made it almost impossible for people with smaller hands or shorter fingers to play some of these alternate chord voicings. In short, the ability to create new voicings for chords, viewed as part of the art of the solo ‘ukulele player, has been removed. When playing on these newer ‘ukuleles, Benny finds that the stretch is larger than the comfortable distance on the instruments to which he is accustomed.

When Benny first began playing, he started out with a standard soprano ‘ukulele that he tuned with to G-C-E-A, congruent with the mnemonic tuning device “My-Dog-Has-Fleas.” Benny experimented with non-reentrant tuning by tuning the IV string an octave lower. This creates a linear tuning where the IV, II, II, and I strings are tuned in ascending order like on a guitar. Benny found that he could incorporate several different

fingering and chord voicings with this style of tuning style. However, he found that the linear tuning creates

...the sound of a tenor guitar or a four-string guitar. If I'm going to play a 4 string guitar, I rather play the guitar. You can do more harmonically with 6 strings. (Chong, interview, 2 November 2007.)

Besides the resultant sound of changing the tuning, Benny noticed technical differences created by changing to a non-reentrant tuning, such as a difficulty in playing the close voicing that re-entrant tuning allows. He found, in general, that using tighter intervals in chord construction while maintaining the ability to widen or spread out the voicing or intervals was much easier overall with the re-entrant tuning.

VIRTUOSITY

Benny describes virtuosity as obtaining a high level of fluency in the techniques a performer executes. Musical performances often depend on the use and combination of various techniques. Benny views a person's virtuosity as defined by his or her range of technique and the fluidity the performer has in moving between these techniques; moreover, each person has a different level of skill in regards to each technique. The challenge is in negotiating these skills and technical demands so that the best performance can be delivered.

When you talk about virtuosity, I think more on the plane of techniques, everyone is going to be different and someone is always going to be better. Like some people can run faster than others. Some people can jump higher than others... (ibid.)

Virtuosity in and of itself is not the highest measure of outstanding performance. For Benny, it is creativity. When performers have reached a certain point in their playing where they are capable, he no longer looks for virtuosity; he looks for creativity. To Benny that is the next level of artistic development. After the years of practicing double

and single strums, picking and improvisation, he looks for the next level of musical demands.

...creating arrangements, creating harmonies, the usage of chords, the usage of different inversions can make a song sound fuller. You don't always have a bass and drum set. (ibid.)

Benny feels that creativity is what brings the music all together. When other musicians tell him why they like his, Jake's, or Byron's style of playing, they inevitably mention how creatively their pieces are arranged, not how fast they play or the technical skill they display or use. Among these virtuosic musicians, there is a distinct value placed on composing or arranging 'ukulele pieces creatively.

Every player exhibits different levels of ability, both in areas of excellence, and in those skills that need improvement. Strumming and picking are only limited tools in crafting a piece for performance. How a piece is arranged, developed, and delivered is how Benny determines the quality of solo 'ukulele playing—through creativity, not technical virtuosity.

THE 'UKULELE AS A SOLO INSTRUMENT

Benny sees the solo setting for the 'ukulele as another opportunity for musical creativity. The demands on a single 'ukulele player in performance can be very challenging, since the player is forced to create and fulfill musical roles that the 'ukulele is normally not responsible for executing in ensemble playing.

If I have a symphony orchestra behind me [while I play 'ukulele], I only have to play simple notes to play the melody and it would sound beautiful. But when you take away the symphony... you're in the real world. When you're playing at home, or you're playing down at the beach, or you're playing someplace where you don't have the luxury of having a bass player, drummer, and piano...what do you do? (ibid.)

He feels the biggest challenge is in creating a full sound. A single melody can be strong and clear but the texture can sound thin and diminutive on the 'ukulele. As an example, Benny played the melody for "Mary had a Little Lamb" on a single string. He then played it with two-part harmony, then three-part harmony, and finally performed it with four-parts. The tune became more complex with the addition of each new line, providing a fuller harmony. The difficulty in using all four strings to provide a simultaneous melody line and harmonic rhythm became apparent. Benny values a robust and full texture.

It's like an orchestra...only you are trying to create one on four strings, which is very difficult and depending on the tuning you use, reentrant or non-reentrant tuning, makes it that much more difficult ...depending on the tuning and the type of style you play. (ibid.)

Four-part harmonization on the 'ukulele allows the virtuosic player to add chordal complexities and contrapuntal voicing, both of which are great resources for controlling the mood of the piece and even alternating between different moods in one piece, such as moving from happy to sad. In a solo setting, Benny prefers balancing crowd-pleasing techniques with full voicing and harmonization, the latter calling for a more sophisticated conceptualization of sound and "orchestral" composition.

ARTISTRY

Part of Benny's 'ukulele artistry comes from his distinctive approach to dealing with the limitations of four strings and the unique challenge of re-entrant tuning. Tuning is also an important part of performing 'ukulele music and is something that affects the style of playing that a performer chooses. The 'ukulele's standard tuning, is *re-entrant*, wherein the IV string is not linear in the tuning and sounds than the III string (g1, c1, e1, a1). The interval from the IV string to the III string is a ↓ P5. The melody on the 'ukulele

is usually played on the I string. With the IV string so closely tuned to it, a distance of only a M2, the melody or harmonization of the melody can alternate between the two strings quite easily. With this *re-entrant* tuning, however, the range of the open strings spans only the interval of a M6. The result is close voicing and tight chord patterns.

It was very difficult for Benny to articulate his stylistic approaches to the 'ukulele, and he was quick to refer me to Byron to answer questions about Benny's stylistic approaches. Byron described how players can circumvent this limitation by using an open voice technique.

With our tuning, everything you play is usually a normal comfortable chord... left chord fingers. It's all in close harmony, so you have to [sings e², c², a¹, g¹] right? The second note from the top is a C, in this case. You drop it down an octave [sings e², a¹, g¹, c¹]. That opens up. That is classic open voicing. And so in order to do that you pretty much spread your hand or use your thumb, which Benny does all the time, and which I do once in a while. (Yasui, interview, 19 September 2007.)

In keeping with Western harmonic voicing of his classical music training, Byron prefers placing the melody on the highest-sounding string. Melody created on the highest-sounding string allows for easy recognition of the melody as the harmonies are arranged on the lower sounding strings. Voicing the four strings on the instrument is similar to four-part SATB choral arrangement, except that the unique tuning of the instrument creates tight voicing and closed positions. On occasion however, the melody sometimes descends beyond the range of the treble string and must be accommodated.

We like to keep the melody on the treble string, [the I string], the bottom string. Sometimes the melody goes below that. Then we have to accommodate and make adjustments to that so that the melody can be played on the fourth or the third string...and sometimes even the second string so that's an inner string that's thinner in sound...you have to play those mostly as single notes. (ibid.)

When the melody descends significantly, e.g. to the two lowest sounding strings, two options are possible: thinning the texture by playing fewer notes, or voicing delicate or simple harmonies in the upper voices. In either case the ideal is to keep the melody clear and prominent.

Options also include an open position chord voicing, which requires the use of the left thumb and all four fingers of the left hand spread out on the fingerboard, and Benny is known for his use of such voicings. According to Byron, Benny has also created ways to enhance the sound of the four-string 'ukulele to appear as if the instrument had five, six, and/or seven-tone chords "through strategic pitch omissions and ingenious voicings" (Yasui, pers. comm., 7 June 2008). A formidable picker, Benny has found ways to pick across the four strings of the 'ukulele while adjusting the scales in the melody to fit the changing keys implied by the moving chords. He has developed a style that is uniquely his as he strives consciously to create specific sounds on his 'ukulele.

I guess I have created a lot of things that are new on the 'ukulele which nobody has done before. I just thought that there was somebody else, but Byron says there isn't anybody. I'm just thinking, there had to be somebody out there. There's millions of players out there. There's somebody that does this kind of stuff. We've never heard of them, but I hate to say that I'm the guy that started certain things. But Byron seems to think I've innovated [certain 'ukulele possibilities] and for me to talk about it is very difficult. (Chong, interview, 7 August 2008.)

Despite his obviously high level of virtuosity and technical command over the 'ukulele, Benny's performance and his articulation of that performance comes from a place of creation and not one of critical analysis.

Because I just play. I'm not there to impress people as far as stretching my hands out or how fast I can go or do fancy things on 'ukulele that other people can do or can't do. I'm just there to play music, that's my forte. I just like to play music. (ibid.)

He states that, when arranging a song on the 'ukulele, his choices come from an artistic place. This artistic place is a mental space that allows him to infuse his music with his own passion. No matter where the song originates or what it might be, Benny identifies the melody and re-harmonizes it with a particular voicing fit for the 'ukulele. This enables him to express his own abstract thoughts and feelings, which when rendered through his skill and inflections, become no longer abstract but re/contextualized. This then imports passion to the song.

This value of impassioning his music also translates to non-arranged songs and improvised works. Benny provided an example of how he would play certain songs that would endear particular audiences at his many performances.

One Wednesday we learned we had a tour group from Korea coming in for dinner on Thursday. We had a request for a Korean folk song which Byron knew. Byron played it for me at lunch Thursday and I played it for the Korean people Thursday night. They clapped and sang the song as we played it. We also did "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," which they also recognized. You have to do some music that people are familiar with. In doing so, I try to be creative with it and do it in the contemporary style that I'm accustomed to. (Chong, interview, 2 November 2007)

These songs may not be to his liking, but Benny tries to turn a mundane task into a musical challenge. By playing to the tastes of an audience and pulling on the important aspect of familiarity, he delivers a new interpretation of the old via his artistic creativity.

ANALYSIS

In analyzing Benny's music, the standard Roman numeral analysis employed in Western art music poses certain complications. Roman numeral analysis is incumbent upon identifying the root and demarcating the lowest sounding note in a chord. For jazz musicians, however, a frequent practice is to omit notes when constructing chordal harmony, particularly the 5th and the root of the chord. Benny often omits the root of the

chord for two reasons. First, jazz harmony employs extended chords and often omits the least functional notes. Extended chords are tertian harmonies that extend beyond the root, the 3rd, the 5th, and the 7th. These extended notes include the 9th, 11th, and 13th.

C	E	G	B \flat	D	F	A
Root	3 rd	5 th	7 th	9 th	11 th	13 th

Figure 2. Example of an extended C13 chord.

A full 13th chord includes seven notes; however, the ukulele has four strings. The challenge for Benny, therefore, is to choose which notes to play. One possibility is to include the 3rd, 7th, 9th, and 13th, as depicted in figure 17.

-	E	-	B \flat	D	-	A	
C ¹³	Root	3 rd	5 th	7 th	9 th	11 th	13 th Resolves to F

Figure 3. Example of a C13 voiced for ‘ukulele.

Roman numeral analysis has difficulty in identifying the chord since the root is not present and the tertian alignment of the chord is neither obvious nor evident. The root would usually be reflected in the bass note but with its absence, the above chord could be another chord that has the same collection of notes. For examples, Benny states that the above collection of notes can function as a variety of chord voicings on the ‘ukulele.

	-	B \flat	D	E	A	-	-	
Gm ^{6, add9}	Root	3 rd	5 th	6 th	7 th	9 th	11 th	Resolves to C ⁷
	E	A	B \flat	D	-	-	-	
Em ^{7, b5, sus}	Root	4 th	b5 th	7 th	9 th	11 th	13 th	Resolves to A ⁷
	B \flat	D	E	A	-	-	-	
B \flat ^{Δ} , b5	Root	3 rd	b5 th	7 th	9 th	11 th	13 th	Resolves to A
	-	B \flat	D	E	A	-	-	
F \sharp ^{7, #5, #9}	Root	3 rd	#5 th	7 th	#9 th	11 th	13 th	Resolves to B

Figure 18. Alternative functions of the notes in a C13 chord.

The second reason Benny often omits the root is that his arrangements account for an implied bass line. The way his chords resolve delineates their function and provide a bass line that is not sounded, but implied. Moreover, the I string is usually dedicated to the melody, and the other three remaining strings are committed to supplying harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment. There is often no structured bass line in the ‘ukulele part, because the ‘ukulele has no bass register strings.

Benny uses an arrangement of the song “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” to illustrate the fundamentals of his unique voicing techniques. The top staff represents the notated sonorities, and the staff below is the tablature he uses to provide players the appropriate fingerings to deliver the tones specified in the notation. The number on the tablature staff indicates the proper fret. The four lines on the tablature correspond to the four strings of his baritone ‘ukulele with a D – G – B – E tuning. However, because the intervallic relationships for standard ‘ukuleles are the same, the music can be played all sizes of

'ukulele as long as the instrument utilizes re-entrant tuning. Figure 19, demonstrates how Benny plays the melody on the I string.



Figure 4. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 1- 4.

To harmonize the melodic line, Benny creates a second line in parallel 3^{rds} below it. This parallel harmony is played on the II string (fig. 20).



Figure 20. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 10 - 13.

Benny then creates a third harmonic line a 6th below and this also moves in parallel motion. This harmonic line is set on the III string (fig. 21).

18

Figure 21. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 18 - 21.

The three harmonic parts are then combined as in figure 22.

26 G: G D⁹(r) G

Figure 22. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 26 - 29.

Figure 23 shows how Benny then embellishes this three-part harmony and fits it to the 'ukulele. He does this by utilizing a F# with the I chords to create a G^A (or Gmaj⁷) creating the distinct dissonance against the tonic that is favored in jazz. He also uses chromatic passing tones in measures 35 and 36 for additional embellishment.

34 G: G Δ G^{add6} - G D D^{7(r)} G Δ D^{sus}

Figure 23. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 34 - 37.

The next step Benny takes is to add a fourth and final voice, as in figure 24. In measure 42, he adds tonal embellishment by alternating between the major 6th and major 7th, E – F# – E – F#. In measure 43, he keeps the melody unaltered and reharmonizes the last chord on the third beat to create a G#^{o7}, a chromatic filler chord that creates “drive” towards the following Am⁷.

42 G: G⁶ G#^{o7} Am⁷ D^{9(r)} G⁶

Figure 24. "Mary Had a Little Lamb," measures 42 - 45.

Benny utilizes another jazz technique of delaying a V⁷ chord by inserting ii⁷ for the first half of the original V⁷ lifespan for a ii⁷ – V⁷ progression. The third measure of both figures 21 and 22 is harmonized as a V⁷ or D⁷ chord. In figure 24, however, Benny substitutes a ii⁷ – V⁷, or Am⁷ – D⁹, for the D⁷. In this particular case, the Am⁷ chord in

measure 44, is composed of common tones shared with the $D^{9, \text{sus}4}$ (C – E – G – A and C – E – F# – A). The $A\text{m}^7$ chord functions similarly to a $D^7\text{sus}$. “This is very basic to jazz harmonic thinking, and this separates jazz harmonic concepts from folk music harmonic concepts” (Yasui, pers. Comm., 13 August 2008). These chordal substitutions, which are standard practice in the jazz tradition, are prevalent in Benny’s approach to ‘ukulele playing.

The following excerpts are from one of Benny’s signature songs, *Ka Wailele O Nu‘uanu*, a song written by Jay Kauka about the waterfalls in Nu‘uanau Valley on the island of O‘ahu.³ Benny portrays these waterfalls through his arranging choices and harmonic progressions. Benny’s style of jazz-influenced ‘ukulele playing is reflected here.

Rubato

1 G: G^{Δ} G^6 $D\text{m}^7$ $G^{7(r)}$ C^{Δ} $B\text{m}^7$

Figure 5. “Ka Wailele O Nu‘uanu,” measures 1- 4.

Benny starts the song with chromatic non-harmonic embellishments that move in the parallel thirds (fig. 25) typical of jazz stylings. The first chord is a major 7th chord that moves to a tonic chord embellished with a major 6th. In the next measure the sonorities reveal a $D\text{m}^7 - G^7$ progression ($ii^7 - V^7$) that embellishes a G^7 (V^7/IV) secondary dominant that leads to the C^{Δ} (IV).

³ Jay Kauka composed this song to describe the waterfalls he used to see when driving over the Pali with his father.

In figure 26, the uppermost staff displays the passage that Benny plays on the ‘ukulele. The next two staves are a reduction of the harmonies to show the logic and contrapuntal approach that Benny employed in this particular passage. In the lowest staff, I have included the implied bass line from which Benny builds his chords; this bass line is not sounded but is included here to portray the direction and function of the chords.

8 G: A¹³ \flat^{13} D^{9sus4(r)} D⁷ \flat^9 (r) G ^{Δ 9(r)} G+

Figure 6. “Ka Wailele O Nu‘uanu,” measures 8 – 11.

The melody sits on a¹ as an inner voice (F#, 13th of A⁷) slowly descends by stepwise motion, F# – F \flat – E – E \flat , until the 4th beat of measure 9. Also the G of measure 8, is the 7th of A⁷, which then becomes a suspended 11th in D⁷ in measure 9 that resolves to F# (the 3rd of D⁷) right when the E moves to E \flat , creating beautiful contrapuntal lines. Moreover, the D⁷, in the first beat of measure 9 is re-voiced into a D⁷, \flat^9 chord with a B in the melody, creating the feeling of an “add6”. Both the root and the 5th of the chord are

omitted. In the downbeat of measure 10, Benny plays an open-voiced “drop 2” chord that is indicative of his style.

A drop 2 is a procedure in chord voicing where the second highest note of a three or four note chord in close position is displaced an octave lower in a particular style of open voicing (see figure 27). In the closed voicing, the second highest note is b^1 . However, after lowering it or “dropping” it an octave, it is now b .



Figure 7. Example of a drop 2 voicing.

The finger spread is so wide that Benny uses his thumb on the IV string and ring finger on the I string to allow for the longest stretch in playing it. With his thumb pressing down on the fret board, Benny must apply additional pressure from his right arm to hold the ‘ukulele in place. It is an awkward position, but one that Benny has mastered. The cover of his album features a photo of the drop 2 chord hand position (fig. 28).

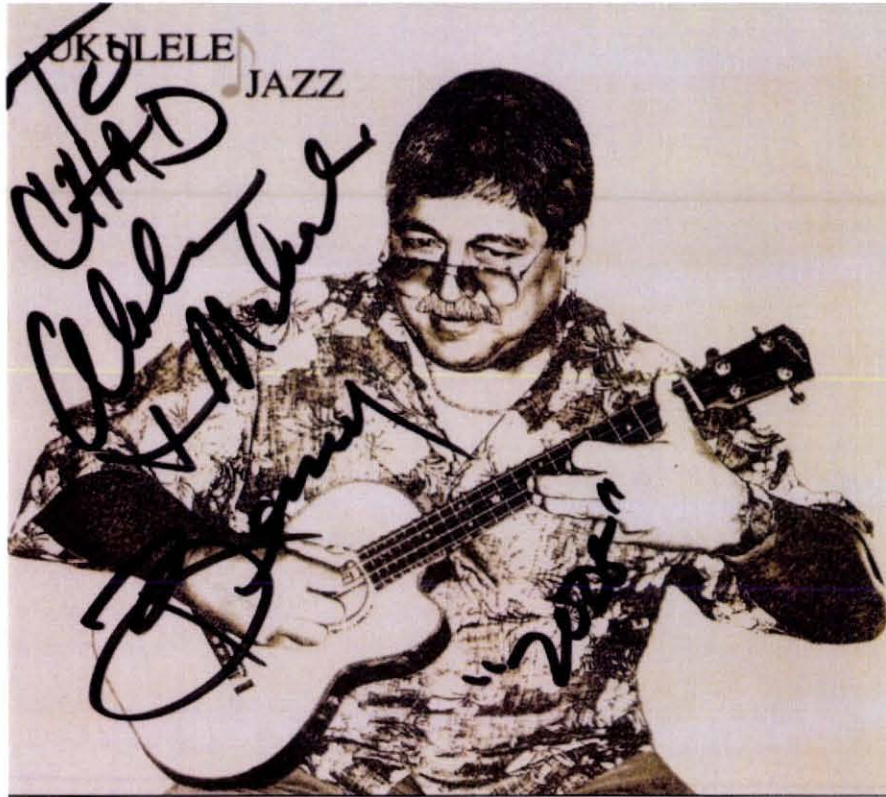


Figure 8. Photo of Benny Chong's fingering for the drop 2 chord.

In figure 29, Benny uses a sequence of drop 2 chords as he slowly moves downward in a chromatic descent from the 3rd beat of measure 52 to the Am⁷ chord on 3rd beat of measure 53, where the line reverses direction to rise in diatonic stepwise motion to the C^Δ on the downbeat of measure 54.

G: A#^{o7} Bm⁷ Bb⁷ G#^{o7} Am⁷ Bm⁷ C^Δ D^{7,11}

51

(G) - Am⁷ D^{7(r)} G

54

Figure 9. “Ka Wailele O Nu‘uanu,” measures 51 – 56.

After descending to a C^Δ, Benny slides down to a tone cluster in a tight C^{9,6} chord. For contrast he follows this with harmonics outlying the G chord, a technique often employed in Hawaiian slack key style. The free rhythm of the harmonics creates the feeling of a cadenza that carries into the last phrase. In the last two measures, Benny plays one of the familiar V⁷ patterns used in Hawaiian music to evoke a Hawaiian sense of place. The entire song is arranged with jazzy extension chords and chromatic passing tones and chords. What is perhaps significant in these last two measures is that after all the incredibly rich harmonies, the return to a straight forward V⁷ – I progression recontextualizes the song by returning to the simplicity of the chords in the well-known original song, including the final G triad with no added tones.

In 2005 Benny recorded an album entitled *Ukulele Jazz*. In this solo CD album, he utilizes his innovative fingering techniques, masterful arrangements, and improvisations. Similar to Byron’s solo CD, the collection features a wide ranging mix of musical genres (fig. 30).

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>GENRE</u>
1. <i>Happy Talk</i>	Musical: South Pacific
2. <i>Like Someone In Love</i>	Jazz standard
3. <i>Ka Wailele O Nu'uaniu</i> (ensemble)	Traditional Hawaiian
4. <i>Cry Me A River</i>	Jazz standard
5. <i>I Didn't Know What Time It Was</i>	Jazz standard
6. <i>Summertime</i>	Musical: Porgy and Bess
7. <i>I Remember Clifford</i>	Jazz standard
8. <i>Spicks and Specks</i>	Pop
9. <i>I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart</i>	Jazz standard
10. <i>Meditation</i>	Latin Bossanova
11. <i>Georgia</i>	Blues
12. <i>Night in Tunisia</i>	Jazz standard
13. <i>Ka Wailele O Nu'uaniu</i> (solo)	Tradition Hawaiian

Figure 10. List of Songs on Benny Chong's CD album *'Ukulele Jazz*.

Jazz is the predominant genre on Benny's solo album *'Ukulele Jazz*, and throughout the songs on the album, Benny's virtuosic jazz stylings and textures are apparent. Just over half of the numbers are solo virtuosic 'ukulele performances; the remainder are ensemble pieces arranged by Nathan Aweau, a close friend of Benny and an award-winning singer, composer, guitarist, bass guitarist, and recording artist. Although several pieces are from musicals, it is noteworthy that a trend for jazz arrangers is to take musical theater pieces and rearrange them in a jazz setting.

This jazz aesthetic is quintessential to Benny's 'ukulele style. His arrangements display his strong background and experience in arranging, and the extended chords lend the color and rich emotional overtones that make Benny's style unique. His commitment to developing new fingering techniques to deliver the sound he wants to hear makes him a committed and innovative musician.

CHAPTER 4. JAKE SHIMABUKURO

Jake Shimabukuro was born in Honolulu, Hawai‘i on November 3, 1976. He is a *gosei* (5th generation Okinawan/Japanese-American). He graduated from Kaimuki High School and took courses at both Kapi‘olani Community College and at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Currently he tours professionally nationally and internationally and conducts occasional ‘ukulele workshops. He has recorded six albums and two DVDs and was recently commissioned to compose and arrange the sound track to a Japanese motion picture. The combination of Jake’s virtuosity and energetic youth has led him to become a popular icon of ‘ukulele-playing in *local*, national, and international communities.

MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT

At the age of four, Jake became interested in the ‘ukulele because of his mother, a singer and ‘ukulele player who taught him how to play and sing traditional Hawaiian songs. He remembers the excitement and enthusiasm he felt after making his first chord. Although Jake has explored other musical instruments over the years, none could never replace his love for the ‘ukulele, and he viewed them only as a means of gaining a better understanding of the ‘ukulele itself.

“When I was in high school I played drums in the marching band. I dabbled with a little bit of guitar and piano—things like that, but it was only because I just wanted to get a better understanding of those instruments so that I could apply that knowledge to my uke.”
(Shimabukuro, interview, 7 January 2008)



Figure 31. Picture of Jake Shimabukuro. (Photo courtesy of Toastman, Inc., Honolulu.)

Since the onset of his 'ukulele playing, Jake's sole interest has been in developing his technical and performance abilities. He began his formal tutelage at the Roy Sakuma Ukulele Studio, where he studied from 1982 to 1988. Later, while working at The House of Music at the Ala Moana Shopping Center, he met independent 'ukulele instructor Tracey Terada in 1994, and decided to study with Tracey.

TRACEY TERADA

Tracey Terada, a former 'ukulele instructor, now works as a sound engineer. He was greatly influenced by Peter Moon,¹ a well known Hawaiian musician who was an integral part of the group Sunday Mānoa. Peter Moon, in turn, was influenced by Lyle Ritz's recording of jazz 'ukulele and his chord-melody technique. When Jake began studying with Tracey, the first song that he worked on was "Yesterday," a pop song written by Paul McCartney. Tracey noticed that Jake had a tendency to play the melody solely on the I string. In an effort to help Jake to become more familiar with the 'ukulele, Tracey challenged him by saying, "I want you to learn [*Yesterday*]--but when you learn this song, I want you to play everything on just the [other] three strings [II, III, IV strings]" (Terada, interview, 14 June 2008). Tracey explained his reasons for this assignment:

He needed to do that on those strings, although to be honest with you, I didn't think that I would be able to do it. But for me, it was the lesson for me to show him that if you think about the instrument and you think about the notes that are on the instrument, you can actually find so many other ways to play different chords and play different melodies. Each string has a different tone. If you play the note [I string] and then on the [II string] it sounds very different. Beyond that, using closed fingering offers you more flexibility and offers vibrato on it. You can put a vibrato on that

¹ Peter Moon learned guitar under the tutelage of renowned Gabby "Pops" Pahinui and was a founding member of the group Sunday Mānoa. A constant figure in the band's many incarnations, he finally created the Peter Moon Band in 1979. He is the featured 'ukulele player on the famous Sunday Mānoa version of "Kawika." Peter's 'ukulele playing was largely influenced by Lyle Ritz and.

note and all of a sudden it becomes more expressive, where if you play it on the open string it can only be as expressive as an open string can be. (ibid.)

Jake called Tracey the next day, explaining that he figured out how to play the melody without using the I string and then played it for Tracey over the phone. Marveling at the short amount of time it took Jake to meet the challenge, Tracey realized that Jake was a gifted and avid learner.

PURE HEART AND COLON

Several promising and talented students in Tracey's 'ukulele studio were offered an opportunity to record their 'ukulele playing on a student-centered compilation album. Jake agreed but asked Tracey if he could include his fledging band, Pure Heart, which consisted of himself and two other players, Lopaka Colon (percussion) and Jon Yamasato (guitar). Tracey agreed and after their initial recording, he approached Pure Heart to record an album featuring only the group's work. They eventually agreed to do the project in 1998 and recorded their first album *Pure Heart*. The album was very well received in the recording industry and among the *local* population. Their debut album won them four Nā Hōkū Hanohano² Awards (the Hawaiian counterpart of the Grammy Awards) in 1998, including: "Island Contemporary Album of the Year, Most Promising Artist(s), Album of the Year and Favorite Entertainment of the Year, (determined by unrestricted public vote" (<http://www.nahokuhanohano.org/cms/index.php?page=Past-winners>). The group recorded another album in the following year, *Pure Heart 2*, which won them another Nā Hōkū Hanohano award for Island Contemporary album of 1999. In

^{2 2} Nā Hōkū Hanohano awards are offered by the Hawai'i Association of Recording Artists, a non-profit organization created in 1982 to stimulate the *local* recording industry, musical artists, and achievements in the music of Hawai'i (<http://www.nahokuhanohano.org>).

the same year they released *Pure Heart 2.5*, a Christmas album. However, the group disbanded by the end of the year, added a new guitarist, and reformed to create the band Colon.

Jake and Lopaka recruited Guy Cruz as their new guitarist and named their group after Augie Colon, Lopaka's father and a well known percussionist in Hawai'i. Jake said,

The three of us have played together before and the chemistry we [found] is great between the three of us. He's Lopaka's cousin, and they've always wanted to do projects together and never had the opportunity. I know Lopaka's father is really happy that they are. (Berger, 2008.)

In 2000, they recorded the *Grove Machine* and won a Nā Hōkū Hanohano award in 2001 for Favorite Entertainer of the Year. Each musician gradually began to explore his own individual projects, however, and in 2001 Jake decided to pursue a solo performing career. This was a challenging departure from his ensemble-performance experiences.

SOLO CAREER

In 2001, Jake recorded a song titled "Ehime Maru" and dedicated it to the families of the ill-fated *Ehime Maru* training ship. The music marked the grief felt by many at the tragic collision of the ship with the United States Navy submarine *Greeneville*. Socially-conscious and aware of Hawai'i's strong social reaction to the incident, Jake contributed all the Hawai'i proceeds to the Ehime Maru fund that was used to build the Kaka'ako Memorial for the victims of the collision. The song became a testament to the grief borne by the families of the victims and a reassurance that this grief was acknowledged and shared by Hawai'i residents. The poignancy of the piece was underscored by Jake's simple performance, which used only a tenor 'ukulele to provide melody, harmony, and rhythm.

From 2002 to 2007 Jake recorded six solo albums, each marking a distinct evolution in his playing and arranging style. During this period he also appeared on various national television broadcasts in Japan and the United States, developing both a wide following and a truly international reputation.

In December 2005, he appeared on “Late Night with Conan O’Brien.” The following year, a video clip of Jake was posted on YouTube of him playing “While My Guitar Gently Weeps,” a song written by George Harrison. This was a song that Jake had recorded while he was at Central Park in New York and in front of Strawberry Fields. The video clip has received more than 4 million hits, with Jake’s ‘ukulele arrangement of the pop song generating many opportunities for the young musician. He feels, moreover, that the song affects the way the audiences react to him.

Now when I travel and tour, as soon as I start playing the song—the audience gets all into it. As soon as I start playing the first few notes everyone starts cheering. I mean it’s really amazing! Especially since I’m a huge George Harrison fan. So for me, it’s just amazing. (Shimabukuro, interview, 7 January 2008)

Jake explains one of the greatest moments he has had with this song. Olivia Harrison, George Harrison’s widow, came to one his performances after she saw the video clip on YouTube. She approached him backstage and expressed how she wished her husband and Jake could have met, since George Harrison was a fan of the ‘ukulele as well. Jake was awed to hear that his idol held these musical sentiments.

In 2007, Jake was commissioned to write music for a Japanese film called “Hula Girls.” This cinematic feature outlines the lives of several young women whose parents are affected negatively by the shutting down of the local coal mine. Forced to find an economic solution to save the town, the coalminers’ daughters learn to dance hula in

order to create a South Seas center that will bring tourists to the town. All but one of the songs on the soundtrack is composed by Jake. This opportunity provided a new musical experience for Jake to develop and utilize his musicianship in another forum.

COLLABORATIVE INFLUENCES

Developing a better understanding of and relationship to music is very important for a musician. Musicians learn from those they play with, often expanding and developing their own views of music and exploring new ways of playing based on their exposure to other musicians.

A lot of my influences mainly come from people that I play with. Locally, there are two musicians that I play with often: Noel Okimoto and Dean Taba. Noel is a great jazz drummer and just a great all-around drummer. Dean Taba is a bass player, upright and electric; both of them are really incredible. I've been playing with them for years now. (ibid.)

Both Noel and Dean are noted jazz musicians in Honolulu. They perform frequently with a variety of musicians and are sought-out performers for many recording projects.

Jake also draws inspiration from other artists with whom he has toured outside of Hawai'i. These artists include Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, Bobby McFerrin, and Jimmy Buffet. He describes working with these artists as exposing him to different sounds and different ways of approaching music.

'UKULELE INFLUENCES

While being around great musicians has changed Jake's view of the music he makes, there are also specific 'ukulele players who have helped to mold Jake's ideas of the capabilities of the instrument. Eddie Kamae, one of the founding members of the Sons of Hawai'i, has been a key figure in the Hawaiian cultural renaissance. Through his unique plucking techniques and virtuosic style of

playing in Hawaiian music, Eddie Kamae also transformed the 'ukulele into a lead instrument, as opposed to an anonymous member of the rhythm section or the Hawaiian Combo. Eddie was a favorite because Jake saw him as a natural player on the 'ukulele.

When he plays it, it's like he's talking. He doesn't even have to think about it, it's just so natural to him. So I've always loved that aspect of what he does. Anything that he plays is beautiful [and] gorgeous, and it's just perfect every time. (ibid.)

Aside from Eddie, Jake was also influenced by the stylings and technique of Herb Ohta, otherwise known as "Ohta-san." The most prolific 'ukulele recording artist in history, he has performed, recorded, and taught 'ukulele music for fifty years. He was an Ukulele Hall of Fame Inductee in 2006, and his works are known internationally. Seeing Ohta-san's amazing technical skills inspired Jake to develop his own dexterity on the 'ukulele and to gain a better technical understanding of the instrument.

Byron Yasui also had a large influence on Jake's 'ukulele approach. Jake took several individual lessons in music theory and arranging from Byron, and he and Yasui worked on several performance projects together.

I love his playing, because he's so schooled as a musician, and he understands every aspect of music in his 'ukulele playing. You hear a lot of string influences, horn influences, woodwind influences—a lot of guitar, piano, even bass. Because of his knowledge in all of those instruments and his knowledge of all different kinds of music, you hear stylistically everything in his playing, which is amazing. (ibid.)

Jake is able to hear the orchestral conceptualization in Byron's playing. The intricate movements of the internal voices on the 'ukulele are like two separate parts in an orchestrated piece. Jake lists other well-known players as influences, including Benny Chong, Lyle Ritz, Peter Moon, and Troy Fernandez. Each of these performers possesses

a distinct individual style and sound in his playing. While Jake acknowledges the individuality in each player, his many albums portray an evolution of his unique style that has helped him to develop his own sense of virtuosity.

Jake does not limit his 'ukulele influences to musicians. He finds inspiration in other forms of performance and artistry. When he was younger, he especially liked the martial artist Bruce Lee. He tried to adopt and emulate Lee's philosophy and the way that he views martial arts. Consequently, Jake takes a serious, committed, and focused approach to his own music and instrument. Other athletes whom Jake emulates include Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan, and Joe Montana "guys like that who have that focus ya know, really very inspirational" (ibid.). The disciplined focus of these athletic performers or martial artists appeals to Jake. In turn, he assumes a single-minded focus in his performance once he starts the music.

INSTRUMENT AND TUNING PREFERENCE

Jake uses tenor 'ukuleles made by Kamaka. One of his 'ukuleles has a body made of curly koa with a neck and fret board made of ebony, one of the ideal woods for an 'ukulele fret board because it is dense and hard with an appealing appearance.

When it comes to instruments I play, they are all made by Kamaka. And I just love them! They've been making ukuleles for almost 100 years and no matter what they never compromise the traditional sound of the instrument. There are a lot of other makers out there and their 'ukuleles look fantastic, the craftsmanship is great and the sound is all great, but if you close your eyes they sound like classical guitars. Some of them have a really fat sound or they try to get a really big sound but the 'ukulele is not supposed to sound big, not supposed to sound fat. It's supposed to be a little tinny it's supposed to sound...playful, kind of kid-like in character. It's supposed to be charming. (Shimabukuro, interview, 8 July 2008)

Jake feels that the Kamaka 'ukulele sounds quintessentially Hawaiian. To contrast he describes some other 'ukulele brands as possessing incredible beauty but not the classic

sound that he prefers. Some even sound like small guitars and therefore are devoid of that aural charm he values.

If you listen to the old Aunty Genoa Keawe recordings or the Sons of Hawaii, those were all Kamaka ['ukuleles]! So they set the standard for the sound and what we recognize today as the traditional ukulele sound. That's why I respect them so much and love their instruments. They are well made. I mean the craftsmanship is incredible, and they always stay true to the roots and the origin of the instruments. (ibid.)

Jake feels the Kamaka 'ukuleles possesses the ideal sound for the instrument, a judgment he feels is supported by the company's popularity among many well known Hawaiian musicians. He does not make any requests to the Kamaka 'ukulele builders, but values his special relationship with the family.

I don't know anything about making ukuleles so I leave that all to them and whatever they come up with and I just play it. My relationship with them, the Kamakas...they're like family to me, they are like my brothers--and Chris and Casey, they have been great role models in my life because they're such good people. They're always just so honest, real, down-to-earth, and hard working. (ibid.)

Jake's relationship with the Kamaka family is based on a mutual respect for the 'ukulele and explorative innovation. For example, the Kamakas might experiment with an idea for a different kind of bracing inside the 'ukulele and will then ask Jake to come to the factory and try out their latest creation. This is an exciting endeavor for both the maker and the player, since Jake is always trying to bring changes to the way he plays the 'ukulele and Casey and the rest of the builders at Kamaka are always trying to be innovative in the creation of their instruments. The Kamaka factory strives constantly to improve their instruments without sacrificing or compromising the sound and the tonal characteristics.

Jake prefers to play tenor-sized 'ukuleles because of the larger range of sound and increase in volume that are not present in soprano or concert sizes. What he really enjoys, however, is that the tenor size allows him to open up his body and body movement a more. He feels that playing smaller instrument tends to bring his shoulders forward, causing him to hunch over the instrument. Opening up the posture of his body during a performance gives him more room to communicate body language in his music. An open body posture also allows for more resonance as opposed to a hunched or closed posture that tends to trap the sound.

In his early career, Jake used wound strings by Savarez, the same brand often used for flamenco guitar. Savarez strings are nylon wound, and Jake prefers wound strings for all of his strings. While wound strings have a rich sound, they also tend towards a noisy resonance that is not ideal in recording settings. Nevertheless, because of Jake's preference for these strings, "He started a little bit of a craze. I mean everybody started using Savarez strings...This guy has so much influence in the 'ukulele community. This is before he got really, really big" (Terada, interview, 14 June 2008). Eventually, he began to use D'Addario strings in 2000 and has been using them since.

VIRTUOSITY

Jake defines a virtuoso as an artist who possesses a complete understanding of the musical situation and who performs appropriately in any given context, whether it is a solo piece, a group setting, or playing in a new musical style that is not familiar. Jake emphasizes that to do this effectively, artists need to understand fully their instruments and themselves. This enables the artist to adapt and conform to whatever is appropriate at the time. Furthermore, Jake defines music as being a communicative process.

In music it's all about communication, about having a conversation. There's this musician, Joe Craven, who's a good friend of mine and we often talk about music. One of the coolest things he said was that music is the only language in which everyone can be speaking at the same time and be heard and understood, and it's so true. At the same time, as everyone is talking or expressing themselves, you have to also be listening and being sensitive to everything going on. And a person who's a virtuoso musically—I think has that sensitivity and is able to absorb everything that's happening around them at that moment to become a part of it, whether they are expressing something or not. (Shimabukuro, interview, 7 January 2008)

By understanding the context, an artist can determine how to play a solo or even choose not to play in certain places. How a musician articulates sound should be balanced between both internal creativity and external sensitivity to the context.

Jake's definition of virtuosity is linked to a musician's ability to be sensitive to the performing context, in terms of the style and format of the music, the appropriate function of each musician involved, and the expectation and sensibilities of the audience. "I think that virtuosos are people who really understand all of that and are sensitive to everything going on, realizing that it's not about them but about the whole big picture" (ibid.). A virtuosic musician must be able to negotiate each of these contexts, often simultaneously.

THE 'UKULELE AS A SOLO INSTRUMENT

Jake enjoys playing in a variety of settings, including both solo performance and performing with an ensemble. He enjoys the challenges and intricacies of each individual context. In his own conceptualization, Jake does not view solo 'ukulele performance as a solo situation. "I never feel like I'm playing solo except when I'm in my room practicing by myself. To me that is the only time you are truly playing solo, when no one is listening to you but yourself" (ibid.). Jake is conscious of the audience and sensitive to the context that it creates. He feels that once he is on stage and there is an audience

observing that space, the audience has a significant impact on the music played. In effect, the audience plays an interactive role with the artist and, therefore, performance is not truly a solo space. “Basically you are not creating everything on your own, and that’s how it should be. I think that music is very interactive, and it should always be interactive. That’s when the greatest stuff happens” (ibid.). Jake explains that, when he is in his room practicing alone, he might come across an interesting voicing or some new technique; however, though he may practice thoroughly and frequently, there is never a “connection” or an interaction with anything. This changes if another person enters the environment and becomes a listener, creating an interplay that allows the performer and observer to play off each other.

Jake conceptualizes a performing musician, who is being observed, as being in a conversation.

As a musician, it’s like having a conversation. Sometimes for some people they like being in a crowded room and talking to everybody at the same time. And sometimes [they] like these one-on-one conversations...but it’s like any other language. There’s never really any true solo dialogue. Monologues happen because there always has to be someone listening or observing it for it to become art. (ibid.)

Because of his awareness of the audience and the effect they have on performance, Jake defines solo ‘ukulele performance as practicing in solitude. His performance highlights his strong valuing of audience-performer interaction and a synergetic approach to ‘ukulele performance.

ARTISTRY

Arranging a piece allows Jake to alter and craft a song so that he can best deliver it on the ‘ukulele. Because of the important role of voicings in ‘ukulele playing, it is very important to find the appropriate key for the piece. Jake only keeps the original key of a

song when he is performing a classical piece and is attempting to stay true to the music, but ultimately he feels that it is important to thoughtfully pick the right key to best deliver the song on the 'ukulele. Jake feels that the choosing an appropriate key also entails making choices about open notes or fretted notes, another aspect of voicing. "If you are arranging for a solo 'ukulele arrangement, you'll want to utilize some of the open strings, because the open string has a completely different timber and tonality than a fretted note" (Shimabukuro, interview, 8 July 2008). Being able to utilize specific open strings relates directly to the key that is chosen.

When Jake arranges a piece he identifies the climax of a piece and works around it, building up the tension and the dynamics surrounding that portion of the piece. He arranges the piece to lead musically to the climax and then away from it, creating in the process the form of the piece.

When arranging pieces, I think dynamically. When I am working with the 'ukulele, I map out the tune and see where [in the song] am I building up this song...cause naturally certain chord voicings are going to sound bigger and fuller then other voicings. So you want to kind of work around that and again, it just depends on the song. Some are going to stay even and some are going to start up here and then come down. There are so many ways you can work with the dynamics of a song. It's about finding the options. I usually start with the climax of a tune when I'm arranging, I usually start with the climax because that's where everything is going to lead. You want to start there because it is always easy to work your way down [to the subtler parts] with the 'ukulele. You can only get to a certain dynamic level and it's hard to work beyond that, so for me I find the climax then I work my way down. (ibid.)

This is one of the ways Jake circumvents the volume limits of the 'ukulele, confirming in the process his belief that one strength of a string instrument is that it can be played with a wider dynamic range. Other instruments need to start off at specific volume level just to be played, but string instruments like the 'ukulele can range from loud frenetic strumming to delicate almost inaudible picking.

Jake has tried to expand on his approach to the 'ukulele by learning how to play other instruments. One of the earliest explorations was through playing drums in high school. Jake learned how to use wrist rotation from drumming and apply it to his strumming. He explains that strumming from the elbow will allow for some considerable speed, but it requires the use of larger muscles and can fatigue a player quite easily.

Jake also played guitar and adopted techniques that he could use on the 'ukulele. Jake learned to efficiently use multiple fingers in his playing and also learned a left-hand pull off technique, wherein the left hand pulls the string way from neck to create the sound of an open string. He also employs an electric guitar technique called right-hand tapping, where the player uses the right-index finger to tap out the notes on the string, creating a gentle delicate sound.

Piano was another instrument Jake explored, gleaning insights from watching the use of the right hand in piano-playing.

I gained a lot of ideas from, just watching the right-hand of piano players. The way they phrased their notes and the way they pull the sound out of the instrument—when they play they lift their hands in such a graceful way—away from the keys. They are actually drawing out the sound from the instrument. So a lot of times with the 'ukulele, I'd do that technique with my right-hand, like a piano player. So when I'm playing the note, I actually visualize and feel my hand drawing the sound out of the instrument. (ibid.)

One of the aspects that Jake values in music is the ability to express one's own personality. Technical ability and musicality is important in performing, however Jake values an individualistic style and perspective that encompass the specific choices a musician makes. These choices are seen in repertoire, performance style, and contexts.

Jake values

...anyone who does something different with the instrument, but does it in a way that's true to who they are...their spirit. When you hear Benny play, that's his personality. When you talk with him--when he doesn't have his instrument--he talks and expresses himself in the same way that he plays the 'ukulele. He's got that real excited, but very spontaneous [feel]. He gets very excited and he has that energy that goes straight into his playing. (ibid.)

Jake recognizes when an artist has the ability to express personality in his playing, without being hindered by the limitations of technical restraints. This idea is about “putting oneself into the music.” The process by which a musician performs—not only notes and phrases but also expresses ideas, emotions, moods—is often rooted in the performer’s personality or experience.

It’s the same things in all these great ukulele players; their personality comes out when they are playing. If you take a look at all the great musicians, guys like Miles Davis, people like Bob Dylan, and groups like the Beatles, their music represents who they are...their music is just, just a reflection of their soul, and I’ve always loved that about them. (ibid.)

This process outlines a communicative process of internal projection to an external audience. However the other value the Jake demonstrates in his performances is an ability to interact with the audience.

Reading the audience is a valued skill for Jake Shimabukuro. When the performer reads and observes the audience’s reactions and internalizes the needs and interests of the observers, he adjusts his performance accordingly. Understanding what the audience wants and expects guides the performer towards appropriate choices or risks. Jake possesses a refined ability to sense what the audience wants, and this skill has ensured performances that are endearing and well-received. Such performances are key to his continually increasing popularity.

His ability to play off an audience, to look at the audience, to read the audience, to know what the audience wants, to know how to communicate with the audience...nobody can touch him...If you can’t read the crowd, you can’t reach the level of success Jake has attained. He can read the crowd, he knows what they want. If they want something flashy, he’s going to give them something flashy, and the next day is going to be completely different. (Terada, interview, 14 June 2008)

The value and emphasis Jake puts into developing a rapport or connection with the audience affects his approach to playing, how he plays, and what he plays. Jake understands the synergetic energy that occurs between an audience and a performer.

What [musicians] choose to play or how they approach a song—they may get really notey or they don't use a lot of notes—all of these different things channeled through their instrument can evoke so much energy. And that energy can make the music really magical, and that's the power of live performance. It's not only the musicians on stage that create the music but also the audience, because the audience can throw a lot of energy into the music as well and that inspires or influences the music that is being created by the instruments. (ibid.)

Jake goes to great lengths to communicate with his audience and views each performance as a collaborative effort between the audience and himself. His conceptualization of the performance is specifically *not* a solo 'ukulele performance.

ANALYSIS

On his 2006 album, *Gently Weeps*, Jake recorded his arrangement of "Sakura", a traditional Japanese folk song. Jake's version of this song on the 'ukulele relies of opening chords in free rhythm with heavy rubato. The sonorities and chordal textures in the first four measures outline a pentatonic scale of B – C# – E – F# – G; his way of strumming the first chord and then leaving it to dissipate naturally before striking the next chord recalls Japanese approaches to silence as an important part of music (*ma*). Figure 31 shows Jake's use of rubato chords and sparsely interspersed melody.



Figure 32. "Sakura," measures 1 – 4.

In figure 32 demonstrates another unique trait, wherein Jake takes a short melodic pattern and repeats it with varying speed to create rhythmic tension.

Figure 33 shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff, labeled '12', begins with the tempo marking 'Rubato' and the dynamic 'acc.'. It contains a melodic line in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a sequence of eighth notes: F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5. The second staff, labeled '16', begins with the tempo marking 'decel.'. It contains the same melodic line in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a sequence of eighth notes: F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Figure 33. “Sakura,” measures 12 – 17.

When the melody is introduced, in figure 33, it becomes more metric yet the line is still delivered with a heavy rubato. Jake’s accompaniment of the melody retains the pentatonic sound, as he avoids tertian harmonies and creates a drone like texture underneath the melody, alternating between F# on strong beats and G on weak beats until the end of the phrase.

Figure 34 shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff, labeled '24', begins with the tempo marking 'Rubato' and the dynamic 'acc.'. It contains a melodic line in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a sequence of eighth notes: F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5. The second staff, labeled '28', begins with the tempo marking 'decel.'. It contains the same melodic line in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a sequence of eighth notes: F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Figure 34. “Sakura,” measures 24 – 31.

The rolled chords, the sparseness of the melody, and the clear plucking sound of the drone invoke aural images of the Japanese zither *koto*. Indeed, Jake’s desire to experiment with these atypical ‘ukulele sounds underscores his commitment to exploring the endless possibilities of the instrument.

Jake’s signature song, “While My Guitar Gently Weeps,” continues to generate increasing popularity since his performance on YouTube is available and accessible to a variety of listeners through the World Wide Web. People who are interested in the ‘ukulele, the Beatles, or Jake can easily stumble upon his video. George Harrison’s song is so widely known, yet Jake manages to breathe fresh life into it. He opens with a quick melismatic blues riff.



19 C/E C^{A7}/E C/E Em⁹

23 Dm/F Dm/F Em/G F/A G/B

Figure 37. “While My Guitar Gently Weeps,” measures 19 – 26.

Following this transition, Jake brings out his strumming techniques. Utilizing the harmonic progressions of the verse, he expands into rhythmic variations with strong accents to bring increased depth to the rhythm and added syncopation.

49 Cm Cm⁷

53 Cm⁶ Ab⁷/C

57 Cm Cm⁷

Musical staff 57: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords Cm and Cm⁷. Rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

60 Cm⁶

Musical staff 60: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chord Cm⁶. Rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

63 Ab⁷/C Cm

Musical staff 63: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords Ab⁷/C and Cm. Rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

66 Cm/Bb Cm/A#

Musical staff 66: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords Cm/Bb and Cm/A#. Rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

70 Ab⁷ Cm

Musical staff 70: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords Ab⁷ and Cm. Rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

74 Cm/Bb Cm/A#

Musical staff 74: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords Cm/Bb and Cm/A#. Rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

78 Ab⁷ Cm

Musical staff 78: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords Ab⁷ and Cm. Rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents and triplets.

82 Cm/Bb Cm/A#

Musical staff 82: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Chords Cm/Bb and Cm/A#. Rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents and triplets.

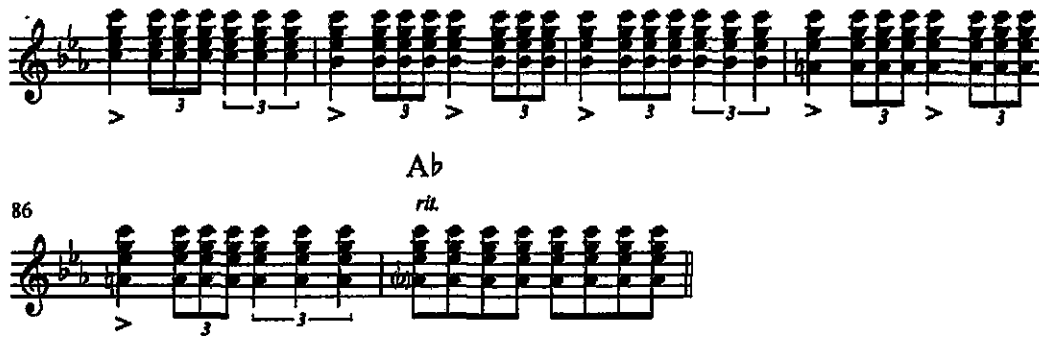


Figure 38 “While My Guitar Gently Weeps,” measures 49 – 87.

With the slide in measure 64-65, Jake changes the inversion by placing the descending chromatic note in the lowest voice while continuing to vary the rhythm further. In his final set of rhythmic variations in measure 81, Jake introduces triplet rhythms.

This signature song portrays his ability to bring multiple stylings to his arrangements for the ‘ukulele by employing new and different instrument techniques. The elements of improvisation and his delivery of unique and innovative styles for the instrument are hallmarks of Jake’s performances. Moreover, his use of improvisation sets up expectations and captivates the audience’s attention in the introductory sections of the piece, thus highlighting the value he places on engaging and communicating with the audience.

The album on which this piece appears bears the same name, *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*, and pays homage to Jake’s musical idol. Much like Byron and Benny albums, this CD reveals eclectic musical tastes. The pieces on his album (fig. 38) range from the classical “Ave Maria” to the jazz standard “Misty.” “The Star Spangled Banner” and “Sakura” reveal his dual ties to both the United States and Japan, while the title song demonstrates his understanding of pop styles and his ability to infuse an older

pop classic with sounds that are new, fresh, and unexpected. Notably, more than half of the recordings on this album consist of original pieces written by Jake.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>GENRE</u>
1. <i>While My Guitar Gently Weeps</i>	Pop
2. <i>Ave Maria</i>	Classical
3. <i>Wish On My Star</i>	Original
4. <i>Sakura</i>	Japanese Traditional
5. <i>The Star-Spangled Banner</i>	American Traditional
6. <i>Let's Dance</i>	Original
7. <i>Misty</i>	Jazz standard
8. <i>Spain</i>	Jazz fusion
9. <i>Heartbeat Dragon</i>	Original
10. <i>Blue Rose Falling</i>	Original
11. <i>Grandma's Groove</i>	Original
12. <i>Breathe</i>	Original
13. <i>Angel</i>	Original
14. <i>Lazy Jane</i>	Original
15. <i>Hula Girl</i>	Original
16. <i>Beyond The Break</i>	Original
17. <i>Wish On My Star</i>	Original

Figure 39. List of Songs on Jake Shimabukuro's CD *Gently Weeps*.

Jake's penchant for composing original 'ukulele music, combined with his star-status popularity in Japan, has led to other musical projects that are spreading his fame (such the Japanese movie, *Hula Girl*, mentioned earlier). Through his innovative exploration of applying various instrument techniques to the 'ukulele and his prolific repertoire of original 'ukulele music, Jake has captivated both domestic and international audiences. From being featured on national television, to assuming the role of cinematic musical director to gaining international fame through video clips on YouTube, Jake has become an iconic and highly popular 'ukulele virtuoso.

CHAPTER 5. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

I use the term contemporary 'ukulele virtuosity to describe a re/invented genre of music in Hawai'i that presents the 'ukulele as a solo and featured instrument. By utilizing a biographical and ethnographic approach to three players, I hoped to gain an understanding of their musical history, the genres they perform, and their musical values. I researched Byron Yasui, Benny Chong, and Jake Shimabukuro as performers of this music. Through various interviews, observations of performances, and an analysis of their music, I discovered several aspects that helped me to define contemporary 'ukulele virtuosity. Since all are local musicians, I also gained insights into issues surrounding *local* identity and cultural production. Finally, I began to realize the potential of other research possibilities in the future.

DEFINING CONTEMPORARY VIRTUOSIC 'UKULELE

There are threads of commonality between the three players that help to understand and define contemporary 'ukulele virtuosity. First, all three players use the 'ukulele as a solo and featured instrument. Secondly, each player feels strongly about legitimatizing the 'ukulele as a serious musical instrument rather than only a performance gimmick. Third, all three believe the active process of arranging and composing is an integral part of the virtuosi's performative role. Finally, these artists view improvisation as an important and honed skill that they expect of musicians who fall into the virtuoso category. Together, these four expected qualities define this new genre of virtuosic music for the instrument and, consequently, shape the performance of this new 'ukulele music.

THE 'UKULELE AS A SOLO INSTRUMENT

Byron Yasui, Benny Chong, and Jake Shimabukuro use the 'ukulele as a solo instrument. Though their individual styles and approaches are clearly different and distinct, they all view the 'ukulele as an instrument that is fully capable of delivering a performance without accompaniment, thus as a solo instrument. The term solo, while appropriate here, has a dual meaning in musical parlance. Solo can mean singular instrument, as opposed to group of instruments that constitute an ensemble or a combo. When the 'ukulele performs in this setting, however, and without other instruments, it most frequently functions in an accompanying role to the voice. Though only one person is playing a single instrument, with the addition of vocal melodic line means that two instruments are generating sonorities. In contrast, these three performers in this study do not sing and they allow the 'ukulele alone to generate all sonorities in their performances.

Solo, however, can also refer to an instrument that functions as a featured melodic instrument. For example, when a saxophone player begins to play the melody of a tune and a jazz ensemble or combo provides harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment, the saxophone player is the featured melodic instrument and is considered a soloist even in an ensemble setting, by virtue of playing the melody alone. The three players in this study relegate the melodic function solely to the 'ukulele, making it the featured "solo" instrument as well.

Contemporary virtuosic 'ukulele players, however, fulfill these definitions and take it a step further. When performing in a single-instrument context, the three virtuosos do not use any kind of accompaniment and are faced with the challenge of fulfilling the melodic function even as they simultaneously provide the harmonic and rhythmic

accompaniment for the piece. While performing in this setting, Byron, Benny, and Jake perform with only one 'ukulele and are able to draw on their technical ability to use the 'ukulele as both a featured melodic instrument *and* as an accompaniment. Essentially they double the function of the instrument, which in turn demands a higher degree of competency.

Solo 'ukulele performances however, are not new. A solo style of 'ukulele performance has been developing over the last century with many performers contributing to its evolution. Jessie Kalima's performances of the march *Stars and Stripes Forever* utilized the 'ukulele as a solo instrument in a way that demonstrated its melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic capabilities. Lyle Ritz's album *How About Uke?* featured the 'ukulele as a primary instrument accompanied by a jazz rhythm section, displaying the capabilities of the 'ukulele in an ensemble setting. Byron, Benny, and Jake, however, have further developed the performance aspects of solo 'ukulele performance by generating more repertoire, developing sophisticated arrangements for the 'ukulele, and promoting the 'ukulele as a solo instrument.

In order to demarcate and discuss the musical and cultural differences in group versus solo settings, I examined the role of the ukulele in a Hawaiian context and what most players and audiences generally acknowledge as the original or source tradition of 'ukulele performance. In Hawaiian music, the 'ukulele often functions as an accompanying instrument; the voice carries the *mele*, or poetry, and the 'ukulele provides harmonic and rhythmic for the singer. When the 'ukulele accompanies hula, it also serves to direct hula dancers with various musical cues. In this role, the 'ukulele's function is largely rhythmic, while supporting the harmonic functions of the guitar and

bass. A rhythm section¹ in Hawaiian music provides accompaniment and support for sung poetry and metaphoric movements from hula dancers. In Hawaiian music, the cultural values are group involvement, cooperative effort in serving the text, a privileging of the text and the use of song, and movement to underscore and amplify the text's importance.

The three virtuosi players, however, use the 'ukulele in a different way that favors solo performance over group involvement. The 'ukulele in this context does not function as accompaniment to text or singing. Byron, Benny, and Jake do not sing the melody; rather, they deliver the melody of a song through the 'ukulele. Dispossessed of logogenic qualities, hula then becomes ineffective and inappropriate for this contemporary virtuosic 'ukulele genre. Rather than serving the goals of a combined group effort that highlights poetry, the purposes of performing the ukulele in this setting are threefold—to display the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic capabilities of the instrument, to present various genres of music through the unique timbre of ukulele, and to portray the technical and artistic abilities of the performer. By featuring the 'ukulele as a solo instrument instead of relegating it to an accompanying role, the players establish and apply a new set of musical and social values to this genre.

LEGITIMATIZING THE 'UKULELE

Each of the players expresses a strong desire to raise the validation and the legitimacy of the 'ukulele. The 'ukulele in Hawaiian music holds a highly valued status, as it has an intricate and important relationship to the performance of hula. In a *local*

¹ Rhythm section is a common jazz term to describe a small collection of instruments that supports the featured instrument with harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment so as to free the featured instrument to solo.

context, the 'ukulele is a fixture of a *local* lifestyle. Children often carry the instrument to and from school, playing at backyard jams and family get-togethers. These socio-musical spaces contrast greatly with social practices and musical values in the continental United States, where the 'ukulele has a variety of associations that range from gimmick to folk or ethnic. In the documentary called "Rock That Uke," amateur musicians exploit the "quirky" image of the 'ukulele in post-modern performance, by expressing their disdain for and sometimes irreverent fascination with the 'ukulele. Byron, Benny, and Jake have all expressed their desire to get people to move beyond these stereotypes and, through their music, recognize the 'ukulele's range of musical possibilities.

To further this goal, the three players participate in 'ukulele festivals held in Hawai'i, the continental United States, and Japan. At these festivals, the virtuosi deliver lecture-demos, workshops, and performances, with the three artists continually pushing the boundaries of 'ukulele presentation and performance through new ensemble settings and new venues.

MUSICAL ARRANGEMENT AND COMPOSITION

Musical arrangement and composition are an integral part of how contemporary virtuosic players craft and perform 'ukulele music. Byron utilized a combination of arranging and compositional skills on his CD album, *Anahola*. He arranged songs from a variety of genres for his own solo 'ukulele performances. These songs include "Waikākā," "This Nearly Was Mine," and "Sleigh Ride." In "Scherzo," Byron takes an excerpt of the third movement from Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4 and re-writes the musical lines for 'ukulele orchestra. He simulates an 'ukulele orchestra by recording several separate tracks and then laying a separate track for his double bass. This

reappointment of parts and instruments is also a form of arrangement as innovative as it is ambitious. “*Anahola*” is the sole original piece of the album; however, Byron conceptualizes the processes of arrangement and composition as two sides of the same coin.

If you think about it, when you compose—when you finish a composition, you orchestrate it...you, in effect, arrange your composition. You composed it, but when you fine-tune it, so much of the process is similar to arranging somebody else’s song. [Likewise] a large part of arranging is composing. For example, say...I compose my own melody, which is original. Now I have to harmonize it. That’s like I’m arranging it. I could arrange and harmonize it twelve, twenty different ways. It’s the same with an arrangement of somebody else’s song. Say, you wrote a melody and then I want to make an arrangement of it. Well, I’ll take it your melody, but I didn’t compose it, you composed it. But now I am going to harmonize it my own way and not use your chords. Then I’m putting myself into it. (Yasui, interview, 19 September 2007)

The arranging process is fundamental to this genre of music. Arranging empowers the players with an artistic agency in the representation of their repertoire. It also allows the artist to rejuvenate these songs in different musical contexts and through different stylings.

Benny has composed songs but leans heavily on the arranging side of this creative process. He enjoys taking old and contemporary standards and embellishing them on the ‘ukulele. This embellishment of the sound and style of a song gives a known composition a new meaning and opens the ears of the audience to a new experience.

It depends on my mood, sometimes I like to take a certain song—I hear as a ballad and can then hear it as a fast song, a medium song, or a bossa nova. It’s just how you feel it. It’s not a set standard thing. Sometimes I hear a lot of harmony and sometimes I don’t. Sometimes I hear it with a lot of harmony and sometimes I hear it with nice simple chords, nothing too fancy. It’s hard to describe creativity because it’s individual. It depends on how you feel [the music] at that particular time. (Chong, interview, 2 November 2007)

Benny's process of arranging is dependent on his mood. His creativity comes from an intuitive and emotional space that he uses to interpret songs for the 'ukulele.

Jake appears to be the most prolific of the three artists in terms of composing original music for solo 'ukulele. He has six solo albums that include both his originals and his arrangements of pop songs. The first CD had a large collection of pop songs; as his recording and performing career develops, he is composing and including more original work.

IMPROVISATION IN PERFORMANCE

Improvisation plays an important role in displaying the technical ability of the player and demonstrating the familiarity the player has with the 'ukulele and different musical contexts. Each of the three players conceptualizes and uses improvisation differently. For Benny, improvisation is an opportunity to express how he feels through the music. He occasionally improvises certain passages or alters minor parts of the music to express his feelings and ideas. Byron views improvisation as a marker of musical mastery of one's instrument. Jake's approach to improvisation is an integral part of communicating with the audience. He can change the set list, alter tempo, and add or subtract melodic or harmonic ideas to suit the audience. There appears to be no consensual use of improvisation among these three players. It is, however, present in all of their performances to varying degrees and allows them to use their fluidity and skill with the 'ukulele to express their musical ideas.

A favored setting for improvised 'ukulele performances is in ensemble playing removed from a purely solo setting. In jazz or Hawaiian music, other instruments create a musical backdrop by filling in the harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment. In terms of

improvisation, there is an expectation for the performers to display improvisational ability in an ensemble setting. Moreover, for these three players, improvisation marks the skill mastery and creativity level of a player. The more creative and affective the improvised material, the more capable they consider the player. Improvisation is a value common to all three virtuosos and one that serves as a marker of a performer's technical skills and their ability to play with other musicians.

Their performances bring new values and aesthetics to 'ukulele playing, in essence creating a new context for future players. Each of them values new sounds and new ideas, but does so in a personal and distinct way. Byron states that he is developing a classical music approach to 'ukulele. Benny continues to fuse jazz into his song choices and progressions, develop fingerings, and create new sonorities. Jake seeks ways to communicate his ideas and feelings through his performance of innovative sounds, styles, and genres.

One trend over recent years is an expansion in performance opportunities for this virtuosic playing and improvisation. Byron and Benny have been playing at the Neptune Room in the Pacific Beach Hotel in Waikīkī for three years. They perform two one-hour sets on Thursday and Friday nights each week. They begin each set with solo 'ukulele virtuoso material, each taking a turn on several solo pieces before they complete the set with Byron playing double bass together with Benny on 'ukulele. In this context, Benny operates as a jazz 'ukulele player and Byron as a jazz bassist. The duo performs a wide variety of songs using standard jazz formats and includes interludes that feature extended improvisatory solos by both musicians, essentially bringing their improvisatory abilities

to the forefront. The two men effectively showcase their skills as solo performers as well as their artistic sensitivity and musical ability as ensemble musicians and as soloists. Jake performs on extended national and international professional tours; his latest tour was with Jimmy Buffet. Jake exposes pop music audiences to the charm of the ‘ukulele while displaying his intricate and sophisticated playing style.

When Jake performs with us at The Maui Arts and Cultural Center, he requests the McCoy Studio Theater that seats 250 people, [and] his popularity demands multiple shows. We’ve suggested the Castle Theater that seats 1200, but Jake insists on having an intimate rapport with the audience.” (Padilla-Holt, interview, 29 June 2008)

Jake engages the audience by standing front and center on the stage, using arm and body movements to control and conduct his sound. This affects not only sound delivery but also reinforces his physical expression of the music. Improvisation is expressed in his stage blocking, bodily movements, and most importantly his musical sound. Improvisation is an integral tool for Jake to communicate with his audience and deliver his performance.

LOCAL MUSIC

Byron, Benny, and Jake are all *local* musicians and ‘ukulele players. In examining the music they create, I concluded that their music should be defined as *local* music. I have found several features of their *locality* as expressed through their music. I define *local* music as a musical product created and articulated by musicians who are informed by a *local* habitus and cultural context. Each of these artists was exposed to the ‘ukulele at a young age, and each of them had that exposure because of familial relations. Through the instrument’s prevalence in *local* communities, they were able to develop their ‘ukulele skills by playing with other *local* children, learning from *local* mentors, and

exploring a variety of musics and musical contexts associated with the *local* artistic environment. Although Native Hawaiians and *malihini* (foreigners) alike view the ‘ukulele as a Hawaiian instrument, each holds different cultural associations with and expectations of the instrument. While I personally conceive of the ‘ukulele as a Hawaiian instrument, I recognize its use and presence in *local* culture—and the differences between *local* and Hawaiian culture.

All three of these musicians were exposed to Hawaiian music and performed at various levels. I attribute this similarity to the ‘ukulele’s presence in both Hawaiian music and *local* music, music that shares the same geographic space. These three musicians all have experience in performing Hawaiian music; Byron sang and played *mele* at the Halekulani, Benny was a part of Don Ho’s show for many decades, and Jake performed many Hawaiian songs while in Pure Heart. They are fluent in multiple-musicalities because of the diverse musics existing in Hawai’i and their history of personal interest in different musics.

LOCAL HABITUS

In Hawai’i, many types of musics are broadcast through media that feature music ranging from classical to America Top 40, with vintage Hawaiian music to island Reggae music falling in between. For decades, television stations have catered to the ethnic diversity of Hawai’i by televising popular Japanese programs with Japanese music. Currently, Korean soap operas have become favored television programs that portray storylines indicative of modern and ancient lifestyles. These programs include contemporary and traditional Korean music. More than media, however, are the cultural events in *local* communities that contribute to the diverse musical background of

Hawai‘i. It is these events that aide in the remembering and celebrating of *local* identity. Examples of repeated events include: the Merrie Monarch Hula Festivals, Japanese O-Bon dances, the Kamehameha Schools Song Contests, Bob Marley Fests, the annual Filipino and Okinawan festivals, Samoan Flag Day, Chinese dragon dances, and the many other celebrations that occur throughout the islands. The combination of media and live events all contribute towards developing a musical habitus that Hawaii residents consider diverse, unique, and emblematic of island *local* culture. This background forms the musical and ethnic background for the three musicians in their musicality and music making as is evident in the eclectic nature of their recorded works.

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is apparent in their compositional and arranging process. Habitus, as described in Bourdieu’s work (Bourdieu 2002), is an unconscious internalization of objective social structures that appear spontaneous and natural. Bourdieu states that these internalizations are socially conditioned and in his works places a focus on class formations; however I am applying Bourdieu’s construct of habitus to the creative space that is influenced by the objective social structures and exposures these artists are influenced by or privy to. In terms of the arranging and compositional component of contemporary virtuosic ‘ukulele music, this is evident in the musical choices these performers make in their song selection. The three players identify themselves as *locals*; their recordings of songs like “Hanohano Hanalei,” “Stars and Stripes Forever,” “Ka Wailele O Nu‘uanau,” “Crazy G,” and “Sakura,” display music that they were exposed to and music that is unique to the local environment. Hence their *local* habitus informs their musical choices and expressions. However, as explorative artists, the three ‘ukulele players are far from limited to their subconscious inclinations of

their *local* habitus. The performance approaches and music also reveal both a predisposition to the larger musical influences and the development of broader musical styles over time. Byron, in his current stylings, uses classical forms, techniques, and values in his arranging. This can be observed in the repertoire that he recorded on his *Anahola* CD album. Musical show tunes and symphonic pieces like “The Comedian’s Gallop” and “Scherzo” reveal an orchestral approach to arranging. Benny, in contrast, is heavily influenced by the jazz tradition and therefore uses jazz practices in his approach to arranging. His arrangements of “Georgia” and “Spicks and Specks” are filled with harmonic progressions that are popular in jazz music. Jake, with songs like “While My Guitar Gently Weeps” and “Mrs. Robinson,” reveals a pop background approach to showmanship and communication with the audience, aspects highly valued in pop music and features that further underscore the connections to popular culture in Jake’s music.

The three players all have a *local* upbringing, but through their own creative and musical development have come to express their ‘ukulele music in distinctively different ways. I assert that their *local* influences and habitus merely inform them and help to construct fundamental tastes and values; however, their own unique musical development plays a significant role in the way they express and articulate their music.

LOCALIZING AND GLOCALIZING MUSIC

The processes and products of Byron, Benny, and Jake’s musical habitus are infinitely more complex and nuanced than a simple reproduction of sounds heard. These three *local* musicians re/contextualize various musical genres and styles by glocalizing and *localizing* music. The former refers to taking songs from a *local* or Hawaiian cultural space and arranging them in a global musical style, like jazz, to re-signify the

music from a local and regional product to a global context, hence glocalizing it. An example of this is Byron's "Sophisticated Hula", a *hapa haole* song written by famous Hawaiian performer Sol Bright. In Byron's arrangement, the tune is done in a jazz style. The reverse is also evident when local musicians take songs from global or popular mainstream music and perform them on *local* instruments or *localize* them through stylings and genres that are popular in the *local* environment. Benny's "Night in Tunisia" is an example of this, a jazz standard that he plays on the 'ukulele in a modern reggae style that alternates with a swing tempo. This mesh of *localized* and glocalized musics highlights the complex processes that occur when multiple soundscapes are known and enjoyed by people in a specific geographic locale and where musicians produce musics that can be consumed by *local*, local, and global communities.

The processes of *localization* and glocalization show the complexity that derives from the superimposition of multiple ethnic spaces. Scholars such as Jonathan Okamura, John Rosa, Roderick Labrador, and Rob Wilson have contributed to the modern discourse on *local* identity. My research on these three *local* musicians, focused on the cultural product—their music—and the processes involved with it. I found that the artists arranged and performed their music to express musical and artistic ideas, taking into account the difficulties that are the creative and performative processes are somewhat fluid and, on occasion, imagined. As an example, artists often sing songs of heartache or loss without having experiencing these.

The musical arrangements for solo 'ukulele that Byron, Benny, and Jake have created, are contributions and cultural products of *local* music. Their music is created through a complex combination of musical influences emanating from global and *local*

soundscapes and experiences. The unique aural backgrounds of these musicians grant them the ability to easily *localize* the works of other artists and glocalize their own musical works. The processes of *localizing* and glocalizing operate as bridges between the spaces of *local* and global. Benny's recording of "Nights in Tunisia" is an example of music from a larger global setting rendered as *localization*, and Benny recalls many *local* fans appreciating the song, its style, and its arrangement. As an example of glocalization, Byron takes the traditional Hawaiian song "Hanohano Hanalei" and arranges it with a distinctive jazz style that draws on heavy substitution chords and chromatic embellishments. In glocalizing their songs, these artists realize more than just artistic and cultural goals. Their music is enjoyed by fans in Hawai'i, the continental United States, and Japan. There are economic implications to these musical processes. Byron, Benny, and Jake's music has been able to express their artistic sentiments while simultaneously negotiating the cultural and ethnic spaces of their audiences.

In examining the music—the cultural product—of these virtuosi, and distinguishing its relations to the culture producer, I realize that the culture producer is influenced by internalized musical preferences defined by personal experiences, exposures, and backgrounds. I propose that the musical habitus is a smaller, more specific part of an individual's larger social habitus with the artist's musical habitus playing a part in the creative process of expression.

This creative process allows for fluidity and can allow artists to *localize* and glocalize their own music as well as the music of others/Others. In analyzing these complex processes, I find that the term "*local* identity" is too singular, because these processes highlight the interconnectedness of shared signifiers and associations between

multiple individuals. I conclude that *local* identity is composed of multiple identities; an acknowledgement of the rich ethnic and cultural backgrounds make for diverse identities and yet an identity that recognizes the commonalities in *localness*.

ORAL TRANSMISSION AND INFORMAL MENTORSHIPS

Oral transmission and informal mentorships have long been an accepted part of 'ukulele transmission. The 'ukulele studios and schools that have cropped up are recent additions to the possibilities for 'ukulele instruction. Byron claims no tutelage whatsoever; his learning of the 'ukulele has been completely by aural mimicry, informal sharing, and musical experimentation. Benny had two uncles as tutors who fostered loose mentorships with him, but much of his 'ukulele playing was developed through his own "trial and error" explorations. Jake was initially taught by his mother, studied with Roy Sakuma Studios, and then took lessons from Tracey Terada. Though his growth shows a clear path of tutorship, many of his lessons with Tracey were student driven and based on his own personal experimentation. With all of these players, there were no tutorships or mentorships that involved direct lessons with virtuosi. They achieved their level of technical ability and developed their own performance style through their own musical endeavors, in self-taught learning.

My study revealed a strong component of oral culture that is integral to the learning and musical development of these virtuosic players. Repertoire and specific performance and compositional techniques were passed on through socio-musical sharing and informal mentorships. Byron and Benny learned by playing with friends, exchanging songs and expanding technical options and technical facility. To this day the arrangements of the songs are learned by ear, a process dependent on aural rendering and

careful musical choices. All three musicians are comfortable with musical notation but prefer to compose and arrange through their experimentation with sonorities and techniques. This oral/aural process is still very much a part of music-making in Hawai‘i and throughout the Pacific. Pacific artists most frequently hold arrangements, histories, and ideas concerning repertoire and aesthetics in their memories.

The mixture of self-taught ‘ukulele learning and Hawaiian oral culture highlights three aspects of their musical development: awareness of musical influences (as defined by what they listened to), the development of a *local* ‘ukulele repertoire, and the value of artistic distinctiveness. These aspects affected the three virtuosi in this study and possibly many other *local* ‘ukulele players as well.

Self-taught musicians find inspiration and new musical challenges through aural exposure. Self-taught ‘ukulele players are exposed to influences that both affect how they approach their music and build a foundation of aesthetics for them to develop their own musical tastes. In the case of Byron Yasui, his ukulele playing was heavily influenced by Jessie Kalima, the performer who popularized “Stars and Stripes Forever” on the ‘ukulele in Hawai‘i. Byron also listened to Lyle Ritz’s album which offered innovative ideas about how the ‘ukulele could be played with chord-melody techniques. Byron reinforces the importance of knowing a player’s personal history by stating, “It is important [to] get an idea as to the kinds of recordings, songs, and artists that I listened to *a lot*—these shaped my musical tastes, repertoire, and direction in music” (Yasui, pers. Comm., 25 June 2008). The importance of knowing the musical foundation is not limited to Byron, but becomes clearly evident in analyzing the music of both Benny and Jake.

LOCAL ‘UKULELE REPERTOIRE

When speaking with the artists about their early musical development, I noticed a recurring similarity among all of them, and myself, as ‘ukulele players. I recognized that in our early ‘ukulele learning, we were exposed to and learned various parts of a shared body of ‘ukulele songs. These songs included “Stars and Stripes Forever,” “Tea for Two,” “Bye Bye Blues,” “Lady of Sorrento,” “Crazy G,” and many others. These songs were part of a repertoire that is shared among ‘ukulele players and transmitted through oral tradition. These songs serve to develop technical skills on the ‘ukulele and to highlight these skills in performance. I also learned to play several of these songs while learning the ‘ukulele, but this repertoire was separate from Hawaiian music and contexts. This repertoire was not to be performed with hula or voice; rather, the melodic line was performed by the ‘ukulele. This unique expression of ‘ukulele playing thus existed and functioned outside of a Hawaiian space but was still centered in a *local* space that easily crossed between the two spaces. This repertoire is neither popular nor propagated in the continental United States, but it is prevalent in Hawai‘i and its *locality*.

The affinity for oral transmission, with its informal and inter-generational continuity based on personal relationships, has turned this collection of songs into an oral tradition that I refer to as ‘*local* ‘ukulele repertoire.’ As such, these songs also demonstrate other features and issues of an oral tradition, such as semantic drift and regionalism. The *local* ‘ukulele repertoire is passed on aurally. Traditionally, students learn this body of repertoire not from music notation but from each other, with ‘ukulele players mimicking fingerings and specific techniques based on their powers of observation. With each transmission of the material, however, individual stylistic devices and approaches may bleed into the transmission of the repertoire, generating a musical

equivalent of a linguistic semantic drift. This semantic drift results in individual differences in the way these songs are performed. Differences might be slight, such as the direction of a strum in a musical passage or perhaps one 'ukulele player has a downward strum for a set of accents and another player uses an upward strum. The differences can also be large, thereby greatly altering the form of the piece. Some 'ukulele players learn and perform songs from the core repertoire but play them with missing sections, transitions, or bridges. The alterations are varied and departures very diverse.

Analysis of their music reveals significant issues in terms of *locality* and a musical “discourse” of *local* identity. Through talking with the three, I was able to identify the presence and transmission of a *local* 'ukulele repertoire, one that could be and was expanded when influential 'ukulele artists recorded albums that became important to *local* performers. Popular pieces from these albums were learned aurally and then disseminated through family, friends, and communities to result in recognizable regional differences over time.

'Ukulele players of the generation after me like to play songs like “Surf” or “Maui Hawaiian Suppa Man”—songs that I do not know how to play and that were not part of my aural training. However, I had spent my teenage years learning my grandfather's *local* 'ukulele repertoire in Oregon, perhaps missing out on repertoire knowledge of my generation in Hawai'i. My research suggests that this repertoire is simultaneously generational and regional.

Local 'ukulele repertoire is transferred generationally and is thus affected by cross-generational drift. There is a thirty year difference between Byron and Benny to

Jake, with each generation possessing different meanings of *local*. This is reflected in their different upbringings and social milieu. In part, these differences of being *local* effect the aural transmission of ‘ukulele skills and songs; Benny’s and Byron’s family and community-based, informal learning contrasts significantly with the one-on-one, predominantly cash-based teaching that Jake had, aside from his initial instruction from his mother. Moreover, generational differences impact the repertoires of *local* songs like “The River Kwai March” from Byron and Benny’s time to “Surf” from Jake’s time. The generational differences in being and understanding what it is to be *local* shape the different kinds of *local* musics that they produce.

Byron and Benny, having played with many ‘ukulele players, recognize regional differences in *local* ‘ukulele repertoire. As an example, ‘ukulele players in Nu‘uanu may have a specific way to perform “Tea for Two” that has been incorporated into a transmitted arrangement that differs from that played by ‘ukulele players in Kailua, who also have idiosyncratic alterations in their arrangement. This expression of regionalism is common for oral cultures in general; it is particularly prevalent in Hawaiian culture, which values and generates pride associated with place and region as a physical location. This strongly-felt Hawaiian cultural value appears to transfer into *local* culture, the regional distinctiveness being a facet of *local* identity that is shared across ethnicities.

In summary, this study has highlighted the need for Pacific music biographies as a way to: better understand the individuals behind the performance; document the lives and artistic influences of key musicians; and provide insights into their musical styles, practices, values, and corpus of works. All three of the artists view virtuosity differently. Byron looks for the “swing-factor,” the passion an artist puts into the creative work to

bring it to life. Benny looks for artistic creativity and the musical vision to express oneself through a song. Jake values an artist's ability to communicate with audiences through music. Discovering these values reveals much about how the artists form and create their music as well as their views of the multiple functions of the music and the instrument they play.

In looking at the music of these virtuosi, examining the cultural product (the music) and distinguishing its relations to the culture producer (the musician), I realize that the culture producer is influenced by internalized musical preferences defined by personal experiences, exposures, and backgrounds—a musical habitus that is, a smaller specific part of an individual's larger social habitus. I define *local* identity as an individual's expression of association with *local* as an identification rooted and conditioned in habitus, but I disagree with the singularity of that identity. In my study I focused on the cultural product of music and the processes surrounding its creation, performance, and reception. What I found was that the artist's habitus plays a part in the creative process of expression. What is interesting about the *local* is how it redefines social interactions.

POSSIBLE FUTURE STUDIES

Future works that analyze *locality* should address other cultural products as well, because a wider range of analysis will yield clearer and more specific ideas about the processes involved. My hope is that future studies will develop additional theories to help us recognize distinctiveness within hybrid and acculturated settings and will accord the creators of such products the voice and acknowledgement they deserve.

In observing these three virtuosic ‘ukulele players, I have found similar counterparts in North America who, while not part of this study, also deserve studying and recognition for their role as virtuosic ‘ukulele players. John King lives in Florida and is a virtuosic ‘ukulele player who is a trained classical guitarist. His background in classical guitar affects his artistic approach to and style of playing the ‘ukulele. He is also a knowledgeable ‘ukulele scholar and has written documents on the ‘ukulele’s origin and history.

Lyle Ritz is a trailblazer who featured the ‘ukulele in a jazz setting in his recording *How About Uke?* album. He lives in Oregon, where he is a jazz bassist and a studio musician. His album affected many well-known players in Hawai‘i. He is currently experimenting with new music and recording technologies.

James Hill is a Canadian who developed his ‘ukulele skills through the Langley ‘Ukulele Ensemble. He also performs an eclectic variety of material that dazzles his audience. His YouTube recording of the “One Note Samba” shows him utilizing guitar techniques such as making percussive flicks on the body of the instrument. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FO7spLjad3k>) In the YouTube video he utilizes these percussive strikes while still picking the melody and subsequently adding harmonic material.

I hope that future studies will examine the works of these three North American virtuosos. With the rise of interest in the ‘ukulele, more and more people in Hawai‘i and abroad are learning how to play. In both the continental United States and Europe, ‘ukulele clubs are gaining popularity.

Female artists are beginning to emerge in what is mainly a male-dominated genre. Performers like Taimane Gardner and a handful of others are beginning to make their presence known. As their visibility grows, their performances would offer an interesting research potential in terms of gender and the interconnectedness or marginality of these female musicians in this genre of music.

Another possibility includes a look into the organology of the instrument. Both Byron and Benny have suggested physical changes to the 'ukulele. Byron's concern was with adjusting the neck and body size to accommodate his playing style and the size of his hands. Benny likewise likes to see a fret board that accommodates his wide spread fingerings and a cut-away in the body to allow for easier play higher on the neck. The potential for these musicians to have long term effects on 'ukulele production is evident in Kamaka's development of an 'ukulele called the "Jake," an instrument made to the specifications and preferences of Jake Shimabukuro. A future study could research these changes and the music that is inspiring and demanding these changes.

In documenting Byron's 'ukulele performances, I have discovered that singular biographies are not sufficient. Artists go through a variety of stages and phases of development, each stage bringing changes in stylistic approach and artistic motivation. I find that qualitative research that spans social and artistic development should occur multiple times throughout the span of the artist's lifetime.

A possible future case study could involve the collecting of additional transcriptions of these songs and comparing them for similarities and differences. I speculate that this *local* 'ukulele repertoire will change to adapt to newer generations of recording artists and 'ukulele enthusiasts. Research into this transmission might help

music educators to develop systems and musical curriculum that would be culturally appropriate for future generations.

Such potential studies help to build bridges between musical and ethnic communities in Hawai'i and abroad. More biographical work in oral/aural-centered places like Oceania can develop histories, knowledge, and broader perspectives for oral cultures and people who prefer an oral environment. Merging ethnographic methodologies with postmodern critical analysis can develop holistic approaches and epistemologies for future scholars and communities.

APPENDIX A. PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo by Cheyne Gallarde, Honolulu, August 7, 2008



Photo by Cheyne Gallarde, Honolulu, August 7, 2008



Photo by Cheyne Gallarde, Honolulu, August 7, 2008

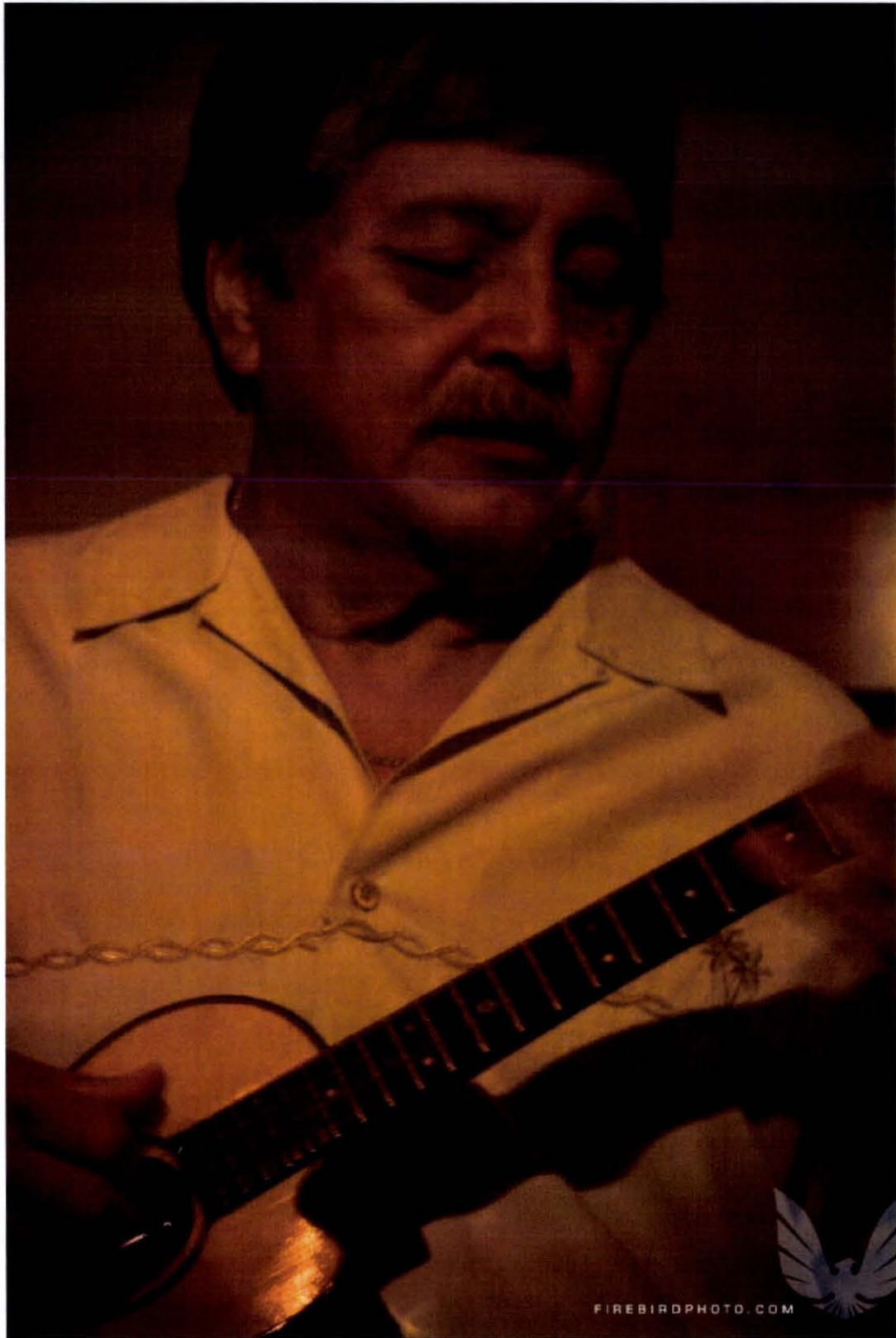


Photo by Cheyne Gallarde, Honolulu, August 7, 2008



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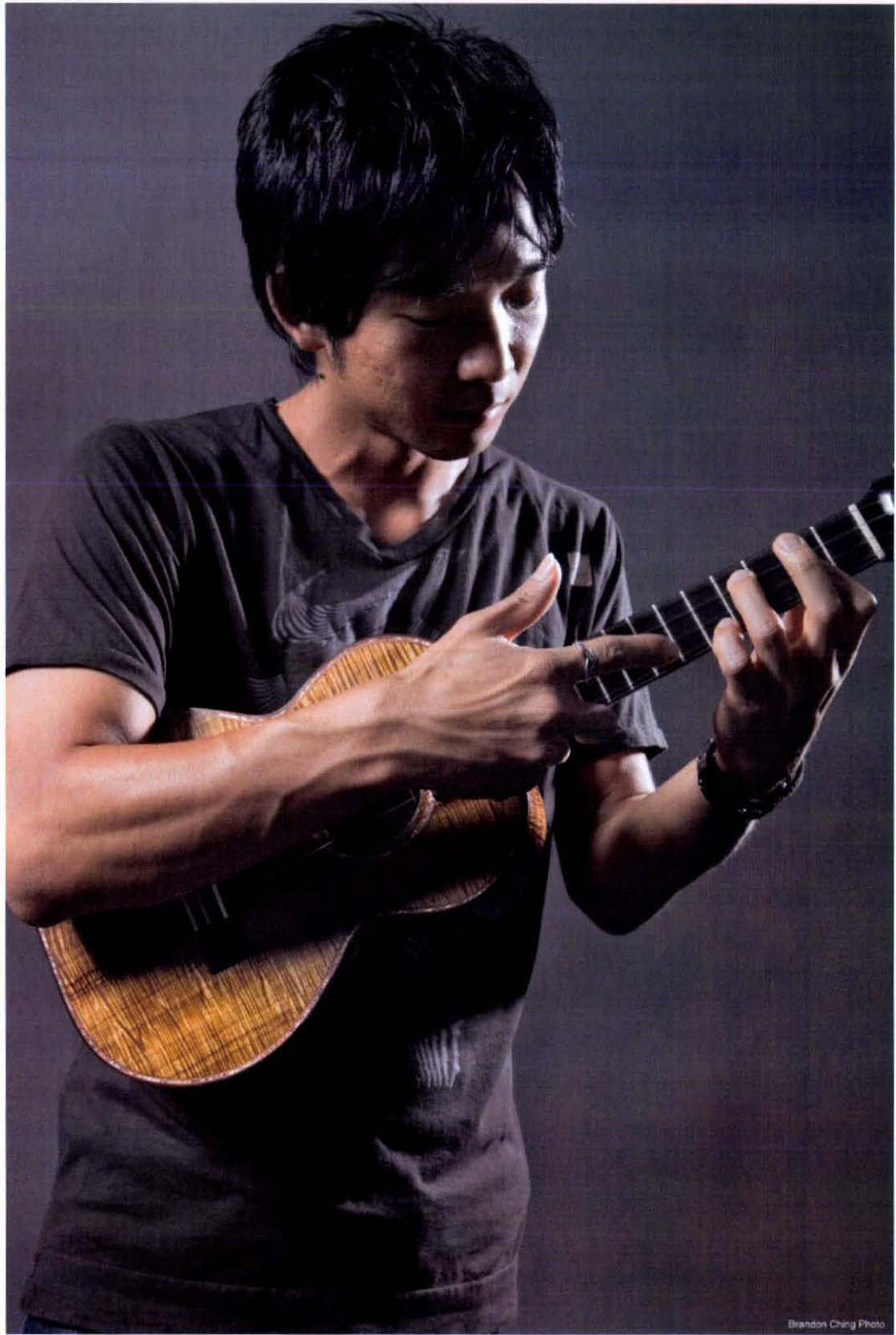


Photo by Brandon Ching courtesy of Toastman, Inc.



Photo by Brandon Ching courtesy of Toastman, Inc.

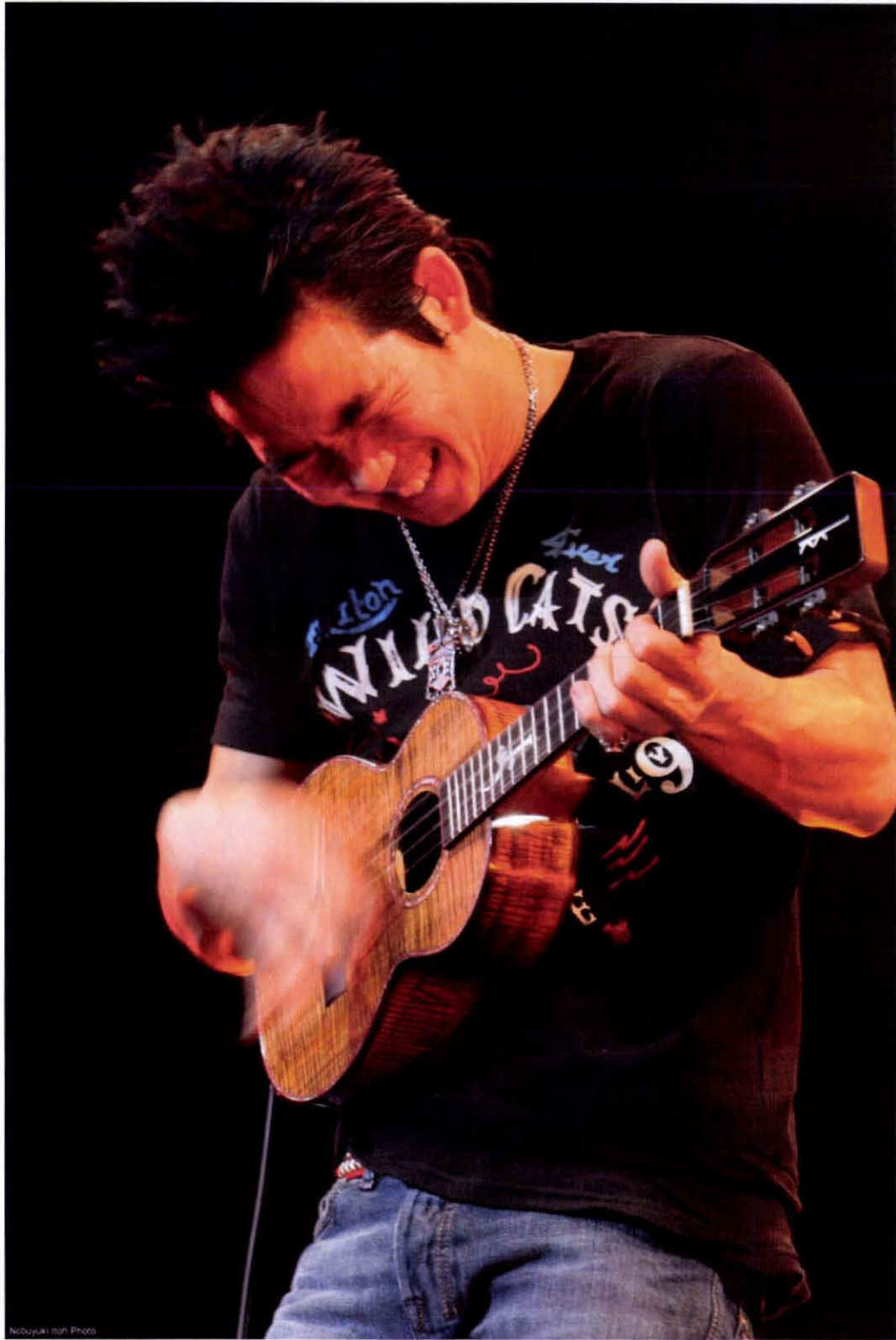


Photo by Nobuyuki Itoh courtesy of Toastman, Inc.



Photo by Nobuyuki Itoh courtesy of Toastman, Inc.



Photo by Nobuyuki Itoh courtesy of Toastman, Inc.



Photo by Nobuyuki Itoh courtesy of Toastman, Inc.



Photo by Nobuyuki Itoh courtesy of Toastman, Inc.



Photo by Nobuyuki Itoh courtesy of Toastman, Inc.

APPENDIX B. SONGS

Hanohano Hanalei

Words & music by Alfred Unauna Alohikea¹

Hanohano Hanalei i ka ua nui
E pakika i kahi limu o Manu`akepa
I laila ho`i au i `ike iho ai
I ka hana hu`i konikoni i ka `ili
Aloha kahi one o Puarose
I ka ho`ope `ia e ka huna kai
`Akahi ho`i au a `ike i ka nani
Hanohano Hanalei i ka ua nui

Grand is Hanalei in the pouring rain
Making the moss of Manu`akepa slick
It is there that I saw
Things that made me tingle
Beloved the sands of Puarose
Wetted by the spray of the sea
Finally I`ve witnessed the beauty
Grand is Hanalei in the pouring rain

Kilakila kahi wai Nāmolokama
I ke kau `ia mai ho`i e ka `ohu
He `ohu ho`i `oe no ka `āina
A Hanalei a`e ha`aheo nei
Kilohi i ka nani Māmalahoa
I ka ho`opē `ia e ke kēhau
`Elua wale iho nō māua
`Ekolu i ka hone a ka `ehu kai

Majestic are the waters of Nāmolokama
Overlaid by the sweeping mists
You are an adornment for the land
That makes Hanalei proud
Gaze at the beauty of Māmalahoa
Moistened by the dew
There was just the two of us
Three with the murmur of sea spray

¹Translation was derived from *He Mele Aloha: A Hawaiian Songbook*.

This Nearly Was Mine

Words & music by Richard Rogers

One dream in my heart, One love to be livin' for,
One love to be livin' for, This nearly was mine.

One girl for my dream, One partner in paradise,
This promise of paradise, This nearly was mine.

Close to my heart she came
Only to fly away,
Only to fly as day flies from moonlight

Now, now I'm alone, Still dreamin' of paradise,
Still sayin' that paradise, Once nearly was mine.

I'll keep rememberin' kisses, From lips I've never owned,
And all that lovely adventures, That we have never known.

One dream in my heart, One love to be livin' for,
One love to be livin' for, This nearly was mine.

Close to my heart she came
Only to fly away,
Only to fly as day flies from moonlight.

Now, now I'm alone, Still a-dreamin' of paradise,
Still sayin' that paradise, Once nearly was mine!

Anahola

Words & music by Byron Yasui

Soft, the breezes from the sea,
Sweet, the flower scented air,
Warm, the glow my heart can feel,
Love, surrounds me ev'rywhere,

Anahola, my soul will always be
At the bay where the river meets the sea,
Bring me back to you,
Bring me home to stay,
Your Golden sunrise calls to me each day.

Ev'ryday your gentle river flows,
Into Anahola Bay,
The waters meet at places no one knows,
Now it's here and now it's there,

Anahola, my soul will always be
At the bay where the river meets the sea,
Bring me back to you,
Bring me home to stay,
Your Golden sunrise calls to me each day.

Mary Had a Little Lamb

Written By: Sarah Josepha Hale

Mary had a little lamb, Little lamb, little lamb,
Mary had a little lamb, Its fleece was white as snow

Everywhere that Mary went, Mary went, Mary went,
Everywhere that Mary went, The lamb was sure to go

It followed her to school one day, School one day, school one day
It followed her to school one day, Which was against the rules.

It made the children laugh and play, Laugh and play, laugh and play,
It made the children laugh and play, To see a lamb at school
Mary had a little lamb, Little lamb, little lamb,
Mary had a little lamb, Its fleece was white as snow

Everywhere that Mary went, Mary went, Mary went,
Everywhere that Mary went, The lamb was sure to go

It followed her to school one day, School one day, school one day
It followed her to school one day, Which was against the rules.

And so the teacher turned it out, Turned it out, turned it out,
And so the teacher turned it out, But still it lingered near

Ka Wailele 'O Nu'uaniu

Words & music by Jay Kauka

I laila i nā pali 'ike ai
Ka wailele 'o Nu'uaniu
E ho'okahe pau 'ole
He wai nō ia e iho ai
E ka'aka'a kou maka e 'ike ai
Ke kahe nei ka wailele pahihī
'Ole mai nō
He kahe mau nō ia

There on the cliffs can be seen
The waterfall of Nu'uaniu
It never stops flowing
It just keeps coming down
The waterfall is flowing
It keeps on flowing
Never locked
It flows forever

While My Guitar Gently Weeps

Composed by George Harrison

I look at you all see the love there that's sleeping
While my guitar gently weeps
I look at the floor and I see it need sweeping
Still my guitar gently weeps

I don't know why nobody told you
how to unfold you love
I don't know how someone controlled you
they bought and sold you

I look at the world and I notice it's turning
While my guitar gently weeps
With every mistake we must surely be learning
Still my guitar gently weeps

I don't know how you were diverted
you were perverted too
I don't know how you were inverted
no one alerted you

I look at you all see the love there that's sleeping
While my guitar gently weeps
I look at you all
Still my guitar gently weeps

Sakura, Sakura

Traditional Japanese Folk song

Sakura! Sakura!
Yayoi no sora wa
Miwatasu kagiri
Kasumi ka kumo ka.
Nioi zo izuru
Iza ya! Iza ya!
Mi ni yukan.

Saita sakura,
Hanamite modoro,
Yoshino wa sakura,
Tatsuta wa momiji,
Karasaki no matsu.
Toki wa! toki wa!
Iza yukan.

Cherry blossoms! Cherry blossoms!
Under the April sky,
As far as the eye can see—
Are they mist, are they clouds?—
Blooming fragrantly.
Let us go! Let us go,
To see them!

After seeing the cherry blossoms,
Let us return home,
Yoshino for cherry blossoms,
Tatsuta for maple trees,
Karasaki for pine trees.
Forever! Forever!
Let us go!

APPENDIX C. DISCOGRAPHY

Artist	Album Name	Date
Byron Yasui	Anahola	2006
Benny Chong	'Ukulele Jazz	2005
Jake Shimabukuro	Hula Girls	2007
	My Life	2007
	Gently Weeps	2007
	Dragon	2005
	Walking Down Rainhill	2004
	Crosscurrent	2003
	Sunday Morning	2002
	Million Miles Away ¹	2005
	Play Loud Ukulele ¹	2004
	Ehime Maru ²	2001

¹ DVD

² Single

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