**GarageBand as Music Technology**

[Name of Writer]

[Name of Institution]

GarageBand was introduced as a digital software that composed music for macOS and iOS users in 2004 after Apple acquired the German company EMagic. This software has been lurking in the shadows as the undisputed foundation of easily accessible digital music production for fifteen years now. There are no questions asked about the revolutionary status of GarageBand. It has drastically shifted the realm of who can produce music and how. Available for free on all Apple devices including the iPad starting in 2011, it is increasingly understandable why GarageBand has made music production eerily universal. The question that arises amidst such prevailing usability of a music production application is whether the software in question can be deemed worthy of being considered as a legitimate technological advancement in music.

There are logical and believable arguments on both sides of the fence. When on the one hand GarageBand dramatically delivers on the true essence of what it means to have technology everywhere in our homes and our lives; its sweeping and generic service to millions of users all over the globe has also deeply affected the quality and authenticity of the music it creates. A deeper dive into what constitutes as true music technology and whether GarageBand fits into the rhetoric is the only way to answer this question.

There is undeniable growth and advancement associated with GarageBand from its inception all the way to becoming a serious contender in technological factors which have shaped the music we consume today. After the introduction of GarageBand at a MacWorld Expo in 2004 (Sabet) with the help of legendary musician John Mayer, it has seen many historical eras of gradual evolution into the musical phenomenon it is now. In less than a year, a better version of the application with the ability to record eight songs at once and to edit pitch using both audio and MIDI files was already available. Its success was only leading to a greater speed in the innovation and technological upgrades that the application continued to bring. In 2006, a version of GarageBand with a podcast studio was open to public use which also integrated Apple’s iChat so podcast interviews could be done without any hassle. GarageBand went on steadily acquiring various integral parts of a recording studio when as part of the iLife’08, GarageBand emerged as now capable of recording several sections of a song including bridges and chorus lines separately. It can only be named as a musical upheaval by bringing a cheap and easy-to-use recording studio to the doorstep of the common people. A three-dimensional electric guitar track as well as virtual amplifiers had soon made their way to the GarageBand repository in the form of a version called GarageBand 5 which worked strikingly well for contemporary artists looking to make music of their own. The virtual capability of matching the tempo of one track with another and fixing the rhythm of a recorded audio were new additions to the iLife’11 version of GarageBand now usable in an iPad. This specific edition of the software was especially significant as it represented the new era of tablets who were soon expected to outgrow laptops in sales and popularity. (Webster) In the words of Steve Jobs, the era of post-PC was here to stay. People were increasingly drawn to this version of the GarageBand as after the incredible success of the software installed in Apple computers, it was now possible to record music using an increasingly impressive range of musical instruments by simply tapping on a screen. GarageBand 10, released in 2013, brought several new exciting features for music recording and production but took away the podcast recording features. This came as a blow for consumers, but the idea was held up in the subsequent versions of GarageBand 10 introduced in 2014, 2017 and 2018. A bass amp designer, a new drummer module as well as the ability to export MP3 tracks were a few of the upgrades the new versions brought in addition to bug-fixing. The current version of GarageBand for macOS in use is the version 10.3.3 updated in October 2019 while the one for iOS is version 2.3.7 released in November 2018.

A considerable amount of vague obscurity can be created around the technical description of what constitutes as genuine music technology. We can start by attributing this feature to all technological advancements which have furthered the cause of music and continue to improve and diversify the human musical experience. Going by this definition, GarageBand falls smack in the middle of all things that are music technology. Even though it emerged as a scaled down version of an actual studio audio software, its user interface made it possible for everyone from first timers to professionals to easily work and play with the sound they created. Multitrack recording and sequencing without any essential prior training was now in the reach of every Apple customer. It has introduced the standardization and universal distribution of something as historically exclusive and restrictive as music production. Without the need for a posh recording studio that hardly any fresh musician can afford, anyone with an Apple computer could plug in and start recording genuine, raw music of whatever kind they wished for. There is no truer explanation for this radical upheaval of the concept of music production than the fact that GarageBand democratized music production technology. (Slater) There is a certain ubiquity that GarageBand has brought to music technology and even if there are arguments against the legitimacy of this universality, its presence can simply never be denied.

The second but equally significant argument for the declaration of GarageBand as the groundbreaking innovation in music technology that it is, is the fact that its integration of an overpowering technological takeover on everyday lives with music production is what finally convinced music educators to formally teach music technology. There are several claims that need to be addressed in this realm. Before music production was made as easy and accessible as an application on every macOS computer, music technology was restricted to certain groups of people at universities or colleges that taught music. Select few elites knew the aesthetics and the computing programs that went into music production and created legendary tracks. Only a few very exclusive music technology degree programs and informatics departments in music schools had the license to teach music technology. In conclusion, music technology used to play a small, peripheral role in music education. (Rees) However, ever since the ubiquitous computing period has made a firm place in the collective conscience of our social experience, this tide has considerably shifted. It is the 21st century with its avant-garde approach to allowing technology into every possible crevice in our lives which has let it seep into composing, recording, publishing and performing music. Music technology is everywhere to transform the traditional practices which have defined music creation for decades. It is only fitting that music education as early as secondary schooling has now integrated music technology into classrooms. The practices with a potential to enhance the creative outcome for music students, the expertise obtained from teaching and learning music technology as well as its influence on stakeholders have all shifted. (Wise) This radical curriculum change in music education has been imminent in order to shape students in a way that makes them capable of keeping up with the unceasing technological progress that continues to happen in the real world. It is hence obvious that the a pioneer in shifting the worldview on music technology is, itself, deserving of being termed as ‘music technology’.

Another powerful logic for this side of the argument is the fact that GarageBand has emerged and maintained its position as a potent instigator of musical creativity in all its users. (Crow) There is, of course, a certain attraction to having the option to jot down and preserve musical creations in real time. Life has begun to move in an unflinchingly fast manner. There is hardly enough time or space to wait for a creative light to go off in an artist’s mind only to not have the means to bottle it as it comes. Creativity is not something one can force or slow down for another more appropriate time. If an idea is lost to the everchanging tides of life, it can hardly ever be brought back to life. Technological advancements like GarageBand have turned the complicated process of retaining and successfully communicating a musical idea into a task as easy as humanly possible. Even though many versions of this attractive software now exist, it is the user-friendly interface of GarageBand that continues to lead the way. Amateurs or artists only associated with creating the idea of music and not with the traditional technological training needed to preserve it can also create and produce audio files with the music they believe defines their creative flow. There is no surprise in the fact that countless musical greats of today’s era from Radiohead to Kendrick Lamar have all consistently used GarageBand for giving a musical voice to their ideas.

There is, however, another side to this overflow of supporting arguments for using music technology as a defining term for GarageBand. This side concerns itself mainly with the issues of how the aggravating levels of ubiquity offered by applications like GarageBand have totally changed the idea of ownership, artistry, authenticity, authority and aesthetic when it comes to music. Something that brings a shift this drastic cannot be simply called music technology and assimilated into the general world of music. Musical art must mean something and for that to happen, the exclusivity is of primary importance.

Apple with GarageBand on its iPad has repeatedly claimed to be at the center of the world of musical creation. An application so easily accessible is deemed to be the solution to the problem of speed and an inability to catch up in today’s life. The idea that the software can awaken a hibernating musician in anyone has been termed and hailed as revolutionary and the pinnacle of technological advancement in music. As the public eats up the global accessibility of music production and the endless possibility it promises, the corporate continues to deliberately ignore the downside of this phenomenon including the harm it has brought to what constitutes as music. One of the most potentially dangerous aspects of this new computerized era in music is the fact that the greatest amount of authority and decision-making capability in music education now unfortunately lies with computer programmers and software developers. Original musical talent and creativity have perpetually taken an unfortunate back seat as successful auto tuning becomes the musician of the new era. This problematic insight into a world GarageBand has helped create is why it cannot be normalized and named as any other music technology. Although it all began with the harmless introduction of GarageBand as a digital audio workstation (DAW), it has gradually evolved to become much more than that. Allowing everyone to carry a recording studio in a small device with them at all times has unfortunately stereotyped the idea that anyone can make music. (Bell) Taking this privilege from trained professionals and handing it to the general public has been hailed as an undeniable factor capable of inducing the downfall of the music industry. It is an ongoing debate that only traditionally educated professionals should be allowed access to music production as the quality of the final product suffers immeasurably. Since GarageBand provides its users with loops which can be easily layered or sequenced to create any number of countless compositions, it leaves next to nothing that the users do themselves. An endless twists and forms of the same songs now exist. A popular song is tweaked by millions in millions of different ways. Remixes and medleys have piled up to an alarming extent. However, it has amounted to almost nothing but diluting the once particular musical production into a whole lot of nothing. It is an unquestionable fact that GarageBand and similar applications have dramatically increased the quantity of musical content. It is, however, also true that the average quality of this musical content has been consequentially brought down in an equally dramatic manner.

However, diversity and ubiquity far outgrow the abstract notion of required exclusivity. Even if one eventually concedes to the idea that applications like GarageBand have brought a downpour of unnecessary musical content on us, it still cannot deny that GarageBand is still a technological advancement which has done to the music world precisely what any technology has done to every other walk of life.

Therefore, the conclusion drawn from this juxtaposition of logics and opinions is that no matter how much one quips about the need for exclusivity and professionalism in music, the only logic against GarageBand is elitist and still categorically fails to misconstrue the idea that it should be regarded as music technology.

# References

Bell, Adam Patrick. "Can we afford these affordances? GarageBand and the double-edged sword of the digital audio workstation." *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* (2015): 44-65. Print.

Crow, Bill. "Musical creativity and the new technology." *Music Education Research* (2006): 121-130. Print.

Rees, Fred J. "Redefining music technology in the United States." *Journal of Music, Technology & Education* (2012): 149-155. Print.

Sabet, Steven E. "Study in mobile music technology: high school students composing with GarageBand for iPad." *Diss. Rutgers University-Mason Gross School of the Arts* (2019). Print.

Slater, Mark, and Adam Martin. "A conceptual foundation for understanding musico-technological creativity." *Journal of music, technology & education* (2012): 59-76. Print.

Webster, Peter R. "Key research in music technology and music teaching and learning." *Journal of Music, Technology & Education* (2011): 115-130. Print.

Wise, Stuart, Janinka Greenwood, and Niki Davis. "Teachers' use of digital technology in secondary music education: illustrations of changing classrooms." *British Journal of Music Education* (2011): 117-134. Print.