Music Down Under
Grad Student Performs with YouTube
Last Spring, John DiCesare joined more than 100 musicians from around the world in saying “G’day” to the YouTube Symphony Orchestra.

DiCesare, a graduate-level student in the School of Music’s Artist Diploma program, participated in a week of master classes and community concerts in Sydney, Australia in March.

The Artist Diploma program is reserved for advanced performers who have completed academic degrees or their foreign equivalent and whose accomplishments have already been amply demonstrated in various performance venues. Artist Diploma students devote most of their time perfecting their performance skills with private lessons from an artist-teacher, many of whom are members of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. DiCesare studies with Craig Knox, adjunct professor of tuba and principal tuba with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

The only tuba player selected, DiCesare was among thousands of musicians who submitted online auditions for the YouTube Symphony Orchestra. DiCesare received a Bachelor’s degree in Music Education and a Master’s degree in Tuba Performance from Kent State University.

“I was just browsing through YouTube one day and found information about the Symphony,” he said. “I thought it would be an interesting experience.”

The YouTube Symphony contains mentors, artistic directors and principal players from some of the world’s best ensembles. The first YouTube Symphony was held in New York City, and the Sydney concert was streamed live by 33 million people.

DiCesare, who teaches middle school band at three Catholic schools in western Pennsylvania, had to submit a video of himself playing excerpts which he uploaded to YouTube. From all those who posted video auditions, expert judges narrowed the field to 336 finalists, including DiCesare and two other tuba players, one from Asia and one from South America.

Ultimately, online voting, as well as conductor Michael Tilson Thomas, Grammy Award-winning director of the San Francisco Symphony, determined the final selections – 101 musicians from 33 countries.

“It was an honor to be selected from that field and to play at the Sydney Opera House,” DiCesare said. “I got to climb the Sydney Harbor Bridge and even go surfing during the trip.”

DiCesare also said it has been an honor to learn from and perform with knowledgeable faculty at Duquesne.

“Duquesne has some of the best teachers in the country,” he said. “Many of them are members of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and to have the opportunity to play and study with musicians of that caliber is amazing.”