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THE VIRTUAL CHOIR OF ERIC WHITACRE – A UNIQUE REALITY

The new stage in the development of choral performance is associated with the beginning of the 21st century and is focused on the realization of purely performative tasks – the formation, implementation, and concert performance of a creative idea. Currently, significant specific features of choral performance include: the human factor (the choir is a living organism created by people with different thoughts and emotions); synthetic nature (connection with the word); collective nature (the presence of a conductor, who acts as the creative link between the composer and the performers) [1].

It should be noted that at the modern stage, the standard of choral sound is actively changing under the influence of mass media. Virtual art, by its nature, is quite multifaceted. It reflects in life as both material and conceptual, as well as functional phenomena. This art can be associated with the Internet, television, and computer technologies. Recently, a new form of choral existence has emerged – the virtual choir. It can have an unlimited number of singers, all of whom can perform together with the help of available multimedia tools or computer programs.

Let us describe the concept of the "virtual choir." It is a project that allows musicians to create video montages, record themselves, import recordings from friends, and synchronize everything. The novelty of the virtual choir lies in several aspects:

- **Technological interaction:** The virtual choir uses cutting-edge technologies for synchronizing audio and video recordings, enabling musicians from different corners of the world to perform the same composition. This opens up new opportunities for collective creative processes.

- **Social aspects:** It demonstrates how connections between people can exist even in distant conditions, contributing to the strengthening of community and cultural identity. Virtual choirs became important for maintaining social connections during the pandemic when physical meetings were limited.

- **Creative processes:** Virtual choirs stimulate innovative approaches to musical performance and composition. Musicians can experiment with new styles, techniques, and forms that would be impossible in a traditional format.

- **Academic research:** They are becoming subjects of studies in musicology, sociology, and psychology, examining the impact of collective performance on the emotional state and interaction of participants.

- **Pedagogical innovations:** Virtual choirs are used in educational programs, offering new ways of teaching music and developing vocal skills, especially for students who are physically distant [2, 212].

Thus, the virtual choir becomes an example of how modern technologies can transform traditional artistic practices and foster new forms of interaction in art. The

creation of a virtual choir is an exciting process that can be realized with modern technologies. One of the most renowned contemporary composers and conductors working in this direction is Eric Whitacre, whose works are sung by thousands of choirs worldwide. This is a rare phenomenon: a contemporary composer who is both popular and original. The composer and conductor, who has won Grammy Awards, is one of the most popular musicians today. Among his recent honors and awards, Eric received the Richard D. Colburn Award from the Colburn School and an honorary Doctor of Arts degree from Chapman University (California). His long-standing relationship with Decca Classics has resulted in several No. 1 albums that have sustained success. He is also an ambassador for the Royal College of Music in London and takes pride in being a Yamaha composer.

A widely respected conductor, Eric has collaborated with leading global choirs and orchestras, including the Minnesota Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2024, he prepared Mozart's Requiem along with his own works with the Louisville Orchestra. His collaboration with Spitfire Audio led to the inclusion of this performance in a vocal sample library, which became an instant bestseller and is used by composers worldwide.

Eric is considered a pioneer of virtual choirs. He created his first project as an experiment with social media and digital technologies. Virtual Choir 1: Lux Aurumque was published in 2010 and featured 185 singers from 12 countries. Ten years later, in 2020, Virtual Choir 6 was created. Previous virtual choir projects include "Glow," written for the holiday show "Winter Dreams" at Disneyland, California, and a virtual youth choir that raised substantial funds for UNICEF. To date, virtual choirs have accumulated over 60 million views and have been featured on global television. In 2021, Eric launched a virtual school with the first course, "Beautiful Chaos: A Masterclass in Composition and Creativity."

Eric Whitacre's choir is a global phenomenon that brings together singers from all over the world, overcoming distances and boundaries, demonstrating an innovative approach to choral art. He is known for his innovations in choral music, which include:

- **Use of technologies:** Whitacre actively employs modern technologies such as video and audio recordings to create virtual choirs. His "Virtual Choir" project allows participants from various parts of the world to record their voices and combine them into one performance.

- **Innovative use of textures:** Whitacre experiments with various vocal textures, combining dense harmonies with light, transparent melodies. This creates a unique sound that distinguishes his works from traditional choral pieces.

- **Emotional and spiritual context:** His compositions often carry a deep emotional and spiritual subtext. Whitacre strives to convey feelings and moods through music, making it accessible and understandable to listeners.

- **Inclusion and diversity:** Whitacre encourage participation from singers with varying vocal abilities and experience, creating more diverse and engaging musical compositions.

- **Genre synthesis:** He successfully blends elements from various musical styles, from classical music to pop music and more, creating unique works that transcend

genre boundaries. These innovations make Whitacre's work stand out in contemporary choral music and inspire a new generation of musicians.

Thus, at the current stage of choral performance development, there is a deepening significance of the virtual choir in the creation of an artistic image. Reproducing the unique features of a performer's style in such presentations is one of the main criteria for interpretation: this is what has allowed choral creativity to shine with diversity.

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