

PAPER PROPOSAL

Title : **Telematic Resonance in Digital Performance: Choral Crowdsourcing Considered**

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Abstract : Digital technology and virtual environments have enabled classical artistic forms and activities to take new shape—traversing spatial divides and transcending temporal disjunctions, recent telematic practices have ranged from real-time online ensemble rehearsals with players scattered across the globe to interactive double-projection dance installations in offline black box theatres. Testing the limits of collaboration and experimenting with the fluidity of creative communities, musicians and sonologists also stepped boldly into the 21<sup>st</sup> century to challenge paradigms of collective musical and auditory experience. Whether intended as a transposition of democracy, a cutting edge for self-promotion, or a meditation on medial agency, the steady proliferation of digital musical performance capitalises on the development and popularisation of the internet, social media, virtual reality, and augmented reality. Musical Academy Online’s multimedia festivals hosted in Second Life,<sup>1</sup> the Deep Listening Institute’s telepresent concerts in co-located sites,<sup>2</sup> and the Princeton Laptop Orchestra’s ontological investigation of music-making<sup>3</sup> are a few noteworthy instances of fore-runners in telematic practice, research, and technology.

This paper explores a particular case of telematic musical process and performance: Eric Whitacre’s Virtual Choir project,<sup>4</sup> which started in 2009 and has since produced four digital choral collages, attracted participation of 5,905 singers from 101 countries via 13,291 self-administered YouTube videos of single voice parts, and instigated a choral revival for 21<sup>st</sup>-century netizens. The following questions motivate this exploration:

- Premised on the intimacy and immediacy of the human voice and the affective components of collective singing, how does the compartmentalisation of individual vocal documentation and the subsequent suturing of such isolated digital recordings fundamentally change the choral experience?
- How does crowdsourcing choral contributions online contrast with the embodied resonance of collective singing?
- How do the various visualisations of the Virtual Choir project speak to telematic artistry?
- What are the implications of telematism for choral directorship, interpretative authority, and the dynamic relationship between the conductor and the choir inherent in live performance?
- How do digital editing and new media networking catalyse a shift in the paradigm of musical performance in terms of participation and reception?

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.musicacademyonline.com/second\\_life.php](http://www.musicacademyonline.com/second_life.php)

<sup>2</sup> <http://deeplisting.org/site/content/telematic>

<sup>3</sup> <http://plork.cs.princeton.edu>

<sup>4</sup> <http://ericwhitacre.com/the-virtual-choir>

At its core, this paper facilitates an interdisciplinary methodological dialogue amongst digital anthropology, philosophical phenomenology, and practice-led research in performance studies. Attuned to sound art, social acoustics, and aural community-building, this paper ultimately critiques the architectonics of the Virtual Choir and considers its conservative and innovative elements, towards a theory of disembodied telematic resonance which nonetheless retains the physiological and psychological aspects of collective human endeavour.