



ERIC WHITACRE

COMPOSER, CONDUCTOR, SPEAKER

"Whitacre is that rare thing, a modern composer who is both popular and original"

- The Daily Telegraph, London

Eric Whitacre is one of today's most popular and frequently-performed composers. His remarkable global appeal has been enhanced by his achievements as conductor, innovator, broadcaster and charismatic public speaker, and by the success of his recordings. Born in Nevada in 1970, Eric is a graduate of the prestigious Juilliard School of Music (New York). He completed his second and final term as Artist in Residence with the Los Angeles Master Chorale in 2020 following five years as Composer in Residence at the University of Cambridge (UK).

In addition to his extensive output for choir, Eric's instrumental works have been performed by some of the world's most distinguished orchestras, ensembles, and concert bands. In 2019, he signed a publishing deal with Boosey & Hawkes, while his sheet music has been distributed worldwide by Hal Leonard since 2000.

Eric's first album as composer and conductor, released by Universal Decca as *Light & Gold*, won the Grammy® Award for Best Choral Recording. It reaped a harvest of five-star reviews and topped the US and UK classical album charts within a week of its release. His second album for Decca, *Water Night*, secured the No.1 position in the iTunes and Billboard classical charts on the day of its release. *Water Night* includes seven world premiere recordings performed by the Eric Whitacre Singers – the composer's UK-based professional choir – and the London Symphony Orchestra. In 2013, Eric and his managers at Music Productions created a joint-venture label, UNQUIET, to develop new projects and expand his catalog. Its titles have reached No.1 in the classical charts, scoring critical and commercial success with *Deep Field* and releases such as a vinyl EP cover of Trent Reznor's 'Hurt' and Eric's setting of e. e. cummings' 'i carry your heart'. Many artists from around the world have recorded Eric's original compositions, broadening his global audience and opening fresh perspectives on his music.

The range of Eric Whitacre's international reach increased in 2010 with the launch of his groundbreaking Virtual Choir. The online project, inspired by a young singer's video recording of the soprano part of one of his pieces, was created by 185 singers from a dozen different countries. Over a period of ten years the project grew in numbers and in 2020 Virtual Choir 6: "Sing Gently" brought together 17,572 singers from 129 countries. The words and music for "Sing Gently" were written especially for the Virtual Choir in April 2020 during the global pandemic. Earlier Virtual Choir projects include 'Glow' written for the Winter Dreams holiday show at Disneyland® Adventure Park, California, and the Virtual Youth Choir, in association with UNICEF, which premiered at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. To date, the Virtual Choirs have registered over 60 million views.

Now hailed as the pioneer of Virtual Choirs, drawing large numbers of singers and using high production values in the films, Eric has long shared the beauty and value of the project as a means of creating something beautiful together. A huge global community come together as one, making new friends and musical ensembles, solving problems together and supporting one another. Among the guiding principles of the Virtual Choir, Eric and his managers and producers at Music Productions (Claire Long & Meg Davies) have sought to make the Virtual Choir as accessible as possible. Singers join at no cost; learning tools of multiple types are provided to learn by ear, using sheet music & braille sheet music; the deaf and those using sign-language are supported along with those with mental and physical

disabilities. Multiple workshops are provided for the singers in the Virtual Choir. Among them in 2020, Ashley Ballou-Bonnema – a singer who lives life with cystic fibrosis – gave practical advice and solutions for those suffering with lung-limiting conditions in Virtual Choir 6. This included singers who had experienced Covid-19 in recent weeks, singers with asthma and those recovering from lung cancer.

Growing up in Nevada, Eric joined a marching band at school and also played in a techno-pop group. His musical passions widened during his student years at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, inspired initially by the life-changing experience of singing Mozart's Requiem. Eric completed his first choral composition, 'Go, Lovely Rose', in 1990 as a gift for David Weiller, his college choral director. The piece and two companions were published as 'Three Flower Songs'. Eric subsequently studied composition with John Corigliano and David Diamond at the Juilliard School in New York, graduating as Master of Music in 1997. His early output for choir and symphonic wind ensemble was well received by critics in the United States and eagerly taken up by performers; meanwhile, news of his music's luminous beauty and harmonic richness travelled overseas.

Many of Eric's works have entered the core choral and symphonic repertoires and have become the subject of scholarly works and doctoral dissertations. He has received composition awards from the Barlow International Composition Competition, the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and the American Composers Forum. In 2001 Eric became the youngest recipient of the ACDA's coveted Raymond C. Brock commission, an outstanding achievement for a composer who discovered classical music relatively late in life. His list of works includes prestigious commissions for, among others, the BBC Proms, the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Minnesota Orchestra, Chanticleer, Julian Lloyd Webber and the Philharmonia Orchestra, Dallas Winds, The Tallis Scholars, the Berlin Rundfunkchor and The King's Singers. His musical, *Paradise Lost*, won both the ASCAP Harold Arlen Award and the Richard Rodgers Award, and earned ten nominations at the Los Angeles Stage Alliance Ovation Awards. Eric's versatility is likewise reflected in his collaboration with legendary film composer, Hans Zimmer, with whom he collaborated with on *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* (2011) and *Batman vs Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016).

As a natural and persuasive orator, Eric Whitacre has been invited to address the UN Leaders Programme and to speak for UNICEF and Google amongst others. He has appeared twice on the mainstage at the hugely influential TED conference in Long Beach CA, earning standing ovations on both occasions; his 2011 TEDWeekend talk, co-hosted by TED and *The Huffington Post*, was among the most popular in the event's history. He was invited back to TED2020 mainstage to present Virtual Choir 6: Sing Gently to mark this global community project in the time of crisis. In recent years he has addressed audiences worldwide, at leading universities, *The Economist*, Seoul Digital Forum and other high-profile global institutions. In October 2012 Eric presented his Virtual Choir at the Founders Conference, an annual private gathering for 150 of the world's leading technology company founders and participated in a discussion with YouTube co-founder Jawed Karim. Eric was invited to the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2013, where he led a debate on the role of arts in society and the impact of technology on the arts, and gave a presentation to the closing session.

His work as creative and cultural leader and educator has also been recognised with an Honorary Patronage from Trinity College Philosophical Society (Dublin), Alumnus of the Year (2012) University of Las Vegas, and the SupportMusic Champion Award at the NAMM Grand Rally for Education 2019. Eric was honored with the prestigious Richard D. Colburn Award from the Colburn School in Los Angeles, 2020, joining previous honorees Esa-Pekka Salonen, Benjamin Millepied, Frank Gehry, Valery Gergiev, Elizabeth Segerstrom and Michael Tilson Thomas.

The range of Eric's work crosses conventional borders between different musical genres. His open-minded, compassionate approach acknowledges music's extraordinary capacity to unite people from all backgrounds. Broadcast live to 119 countries worldwide, Eric made his iTunes Festival debut with his professional choir in 2014, inviting multi award-winning composer and conductor Hans Zimmer to the stage for a new choral arrangement of 'Time'. Over recent years, Eric has collaborated with British soul

artist Laura Mvula, Annie Lennox, *House of Cards* composer Jeff Beal, accordionist Ksenija Sidorova and Norwegian singer-songwriter Marius Beck.

Eric served on the jury of the Abbey Road 80th Anniversary Anthem Competition and conducted the London Symphony Orchestra and Eric Whitacre Singers in recordings of the winning entries at Abbey Road Studio 1. He and his choir shared the stage with renowned singer-songwriter Annie Lennox and the London African Gospel Choir at London's Guildhall, performing at the ceremonial presentation of the Templeton Prize to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and were invited to return to perform the following year. Eric gave a live webcast from the Kennedy Center in June 2014 and subsequently conducted a massed choir of 400 singers on the Mall, Washington D.C. to mark Flag Day and the bicentenary of 'The Star Spangled Banner'.

Eric's recent projects include *Deep Field: The Impossible Magnitude of our Universe*, a compelling fusion of music, images of the far-flung galaxies of the Hubble Space Telescope's Deep Field, and visualisations specially created by the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) in Baltimore, Maryland. The film premiered at Kennedy Space Center in November 2018 and has since been released on YouTube. Its voyage into the sublime beauty and mystery of the universe is crowned by music from Virtual Choir's fifth iteration, comprising 8,000 voices from 120 countries. *Deep Field* grew from a unique collaboration between the composer, NASA, producers Music Productions, multiple award-winning artists 59 Productions and STScI. The film has been seen at the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum (DC), Dolby Theatre (London), the World Science Festival (New York), Griffith Observatory (Los Angeles), the American Astronomical Society Annual Meeting (Seattle) and in concert halls, science and music festival on both sides of the Atlantic. The film sits at the core of STEAM education programmes in North America, Europe and elsewhere.

His collaboration with Spitfire Audio in 2019 resulted in a trail-blazing vocal sample library, became an instant best-seller and is used by composers the world-over.

The Sacred Veil, a profound choral meditation on love, loss, grief and solace, stands among Eric Whitacre's most substantial works. The 50-minute composition for choir, cello and piano, was created in partnership with the composer's long-term collaborator, the poet, author and composer Charles Anthony Silvestri. The text for *The Sacred Veil* include words written by his wife during her fight against terminal cancer, lyrics written by both Silvestri and Whitacre. *The Sacred Veil* was co-commissioned by the Los Angeles Master Chorale and first performed by them under Eric's direction in February 2019 at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, released on Signum Records in 2020.

Eric lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Belgian soprano Laurence Servaes.

www.ericwhitacre.com