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Grammy Award-Winning Composer Hosts Virtual Music Workshop for Río Hondo Choral Students

WHITTIER – Grammy Award-winning composer Eric Whitacre joined Río Hondo College choral students for a virtual music workshop on March 11, providing guidance for those seeking to pursue a career as a professional singer or music composer.

“It is important to show our students that industry leaders are just like them, normal people, who happen to be successful at what they do,” Río Hondo College Choir Professor Joanne Choe said. “Listening about their journey to success gives our students hope, goals, guidance, and inspiration. Eric did just that by treating everyone with such kindness, respect, and honesty.”

Whitacre discussed his influences, his early years as a student at the Julliard School of Music, moving to Los Angeles to work as a film composer, his initial successes in the music industry, the value of chance in the songwriting process, how to turn failure into success and the inspirations that led to the formation of his Virtual Choir project.

“My music is as much informed by the Beatles, Queen and Billie Eilish as it is Debussy, Bach and Mozart,” Whitacre said. “You will never know enough about music to compose. There is always more to know. Just do your thing intuitively and more than anything: rely on your ear. Listen and write music that speaks deeply to you. Use your barriers and turn them into your superpower.”

In 2010, Whitacre created the Virtual Choir project, a collaborative effort that combined the talents of nearly 200 singers performing his composition *Lux Aurumque*. With each singer recording their parts separately, Whitacre combined the performances into one video and posted it on YouTube, where it quickly went viral.

“The music workshop was a tremendous success,” Río Hondo College Acting Superintendent/President Teresa Dreyfuss said. “Thank you to the choral music department staff for bringing in a musician of Mr. Whitacre’s stature, giving our students an opportunity to gain from his knowledge and wisdom and continuing our focus on student success.”

Río Hondo College is an educational and community partner committed to advancing social justice and equity as an antiracist institution that collectively invests in all students’ academic and career pathways that lead to attainment of degree, certificate, transfer, and lifelong-learning goals. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit www.riohondo.edu.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

RHC_WHITACRE_2: Grammy Award-winning composer Eric Whitacre joined Río Hondo College choral students for a virtual music workshop on March 11, providing guidance for those interested in professional music careers.

RHC_WHITACRE_3: Grammy Award-winning composer Eric Whitacre spoke to Río Hondo College choral music students on the challenges of putting together a virtual choir, during a virtual music workshop on March 11.

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