

19 June 2020 AGO Technical Webinar

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List of Considerations and Needs for Smaller, Budget Conscious Situations. Criteria below describes my situation at St. David's Episcopal Church, Roswell, GA (suburb of Atlanta).

- I. Singers (30 in choir)
 - a. Age range from 20-80 (various levels of computer comfort and skills)
 - b. No paid staff singers; mostly non-professional singers
 - c. Shy about recording "alone" – feel very "exposed"
 - d. Realize the importance of singing every day to maintain vocal instrument and music skills
 - e. Individual choir member equipment required:
 - i. Computer
 - ii. Headphones
 - iii. Smartphone
 1. Possibility of adding microphone to smartphone for better range and clarity
 - iv. Schedule flexibility, enthusiasm, dedication and consistency
- II. Software for Organist – Music Director/Recording & Video Editor
 - a. Music Graphic Software, i.e. Finale, Sibelius, etc.
 - b. Music Editing Software, i.e. Audacity (free and comprehensive)
 - c. Video Editing software, i.e. Camtasia for Windows

- d. PowerPoint (Windows Microsoft 365)
 - e. YouTube “Studio” account (Free, Register through Google)
 - f. Zoom video conference account (for choir / staff “gatherings”)
- III. Hardware
- a. Computer with at least 16 GB Ram (I have 32 GB Ram and it is immensely faster)
 - b. Computer with split screen capabilities – useful for tutorials while learning software programs!
 - c. External Hard Drive (minimum 1 T. size; 4-5 T. preferred) for peace-of-mind and safe-keeping.
 - d. Digital Recording device (Very necessary for capturing organ). I use a ZOOM stereo portable recorder and am very pleased with its range, fidelity, quality and portability.
 - e. Tripods (digital recorder; smartphone/tablet recording)
 - f. Metronome (with earpiece)
 - g. COMFORTABLE, high-end headphones. You will be wearing them for many hours!!
- IV. The WHOLE Process
- a. Meet with clergy and staff members
 - i. Share ideas, build new “sheltering” esprit d’corps
 - ii. Develop a workable weekly schedule for everyone involved with virtual worship
 1. We pre-film actual service on Wednesday evenings. My music associate is the final editor for everything in the service.
 2. I prepare everything musical in the service and send it to music associate on Thursday.
 3. Entire service is edited and completed by Friday.

- iii. Meet with choir via ZOOM on a weekly basis to explore and expand online fellowship, singing skills, warm-ups and anthem prep
- iv. Set up recording schedule for choir that links up with staff schedule/editing needs
- v. Our plan: materials sent to choir members 10 days before specific liturgy.
- vi. I work two weeks ahead.
 - 1. Prepare music score/PDF's for hymns/anthems
 - a. I use music graphic software and enter vocal lines or use snip and paste for PDF's of music score.
 - b. Mark phrasing, cut-off's, special dynamics, etc.
 - 2. Record accompaniment, using a metronome earpiece to assure accompaniment will mesh with choir's click track for their preparation and recording. This accompaniment recording does NOT include an audible click track because.....
 - a. This recording serves two purposes
 - i. Rehearsal-click track for choir.
 - ii. Recording track for each singer's recording.
 - 3. To prepare Click-track recording for choir, connect digital recording to computer and download the recorded accompaniment files.
 - 4. Import recorded accompaniment file into Audacity program and create a click-track.
 - 5. Export that "merged" file into WAV format.

- a. This file will be used by choir for rehearsal and recording
 - b. This file will also be used by me for editing purposes
 - c. At conclusion of editing all the returned vocal tracks, I remove click track and thus, have merged the original accompaniment recording with every choir member's recording into a complete entity.
 - d. Export the completed accompaniment/chorus file in WAV format as this format works best in Camtasia software.
6. For choir members' study and preparation, I either send the PDF's and WAV files to them separately, using "WETRANSFER" or prepare a "study video" which combines their vocal parts visually with hearing the accompaniment/click track simultaneously.
 - a. The study video is prepared by recording "staff view" score in Finale, importing that recording and click track into Camtasia and merging files into a "rehearse/practice video" and uploading it as an "unlisted" file on YouTube. Send the YouTube link to choir members. They can then view music, listen, practice and eventually record on their smartphones with this one video.
7. WETRANSFER is a free, online service that allows the emailing of large, dense files that most email

services do not permit. This is very helpful if I do not have time to prepare a “practice video”.

Choir members use the PDF score while listening to click-track on their computer and record into their smart phones.

8. Once choir has returned their recordings and I have completed all the final editing in Audacity, this is the final process:
9. Using Camtasia video editing software, import PowerPoint slides and completed audio WAV recording.
 - a. Align hymn / anthem verse text/image slides with music. Add transitions, special effects, etc.
 - b. Export the completed video into “Completed File” for Worship service. Each worship service contains 3-4 hymns, prelude, offertory, music during communion and possibly a postlude.
10. Send completed files to music colleague for inclusion into the full service 45-50 video that was filmed on Wednesday evening, prior to the Sunday liturgy. The “rendering” (creating final video version / uploading that final version to YouTube) often takes 4-5+ hours due to its huge graphic intensity size.
11. This is the “behind the scenes” schedule I maintain for choir members’ participation for the week of the worship service:

- a. On Mondays, I prepare the PowerPoint slides for hymns and anthems.
 - b. Slides include hymn verses and images pertinent to each verse.
 - c. Choir hymn recordings returned to me by Tuesday. I edit Tuesday evening/Wednesday mornings.
 - d. Choir anthems returned to me by Wednesday. I edit Wednesday evenings/Thursday mornings.
 - e. Upon receiving choir members recordings, I edit in Audacity, as described earlier in this outline. When those WAV files are completed, begin final stages of video preparation and usually have that completed on Thursday, so that files can be added to final service video by Thursday evening or early Friday morning.
12. This schedule means that we are juggling a service two weeks ahead plus the current service.
 13. Then, the whole process begins all over again, with the Saturday sending of files to choir members to be recorded by the next Tuesday/Wednesday.

V. BENEFITS

- a. Clergy and Congregation feel great support by having well-coordinated and appropriate music for each service.
- b. Choir members are using their love of music in a new way.
- c. Choir members are keeping voices in shape.

- d. This “virtual” ministry has meant so much to shut-ins and those unable to attend church, during non-pandemic times.
- e. This virtual work will probably continue when services return live on a regular schedule.
- f. Personally, have learned a great deal and feel a sense of accomplishment in expanding our music ministry during these “sheltering” times.
- g. The creativity and increased knowledge over these recent months have been exhilarating and illuminating.

VI. NON-BENEFITS

- a. Time involvement is huge (initially, 70+ hours per week)
 - i. Now, 40+ hours per week.
- b. There are only two people doing this; we have to schedule “rest” time very carefully.
- c. Not sure people realize how labor intensive this process is.