

Figure 1: The synthesis pipeline of choral music data from sample instruments and the training pipeline to utilize it.

performance when compared to the previous settings.

3.2 Data Synthesis Pipeline

Figure 1 shows our pipeline of choral music dataset creation and training methods. Generally, we need three collection steps:

- 1. The symbolic choral music dataset (MIDI, MusicXML)
- 2. The sampled instrument libraries (standalone VST plugin, or Kontakt sample libraries)
- 3. The synthesis configuration (syllables or lyrics choices, legato, velocity, and tempo)

Then, our provided code can completely automate the data synthesis process. It is built on top of the python-support and free digital audio workstation (DAW) – Reaper². With the above three steps, one could complete any choral music data synthesis process on supported system platforms.

3.3 Data and Instrument Collection

For Step 1, following [15], we use the JSB Chorales Dataset [21], which contains 347 pieces of choral music in MusicXML format. The total duration is 248 minutes at a tempo of 90 bpm (a.k.a. beat per minute). The data is first transformed into MIDI files, which serves as the symbolic dataset source for the creation of choral music audio. For Step 2, a sampled instrument ³ is a sound source plugin applied in a DAW. Unlike a SoundFont, it contains samples of real instruments recorded in a professional acoustic environment. The human singing voice is also considered as an instrument type. And many vocal sampled instruments support a variety of lyrical or syllabic sets (e.g., vowels, Latin words, etc.). We first choose two types of instruments for our purposes: piano and vocal (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass). Then, we choose two sampled instruments for each type, as shown in Table 2. The reason to choose the piano instrument is to evaluate the separation performance of piano as a common and same-source instrument. In this case, the model needs to consider most on the pitch difference between each voice part. When it comes to the vocal dataset, the model can distinguish the timbres slightly between soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voices, but it is more difficult to model the acoustic features of these four voices than piano. This allows us to determine whether the model can improve performance by exploiting the timbre difference between vocal datasets, or if it fails to model these timbres and perform a bad separation result.

Due to the fact that we have two sampled libraries for each type of instrument, each dataset contains $248 \times 2 = 496$ minutes (8.2 hours) of synthesized choral music data. All sampled instrument libraries that we use have a paid license.

3.4 Synthesis Configuration for Expressiveness

For Step 3, we adopt two methods to further improve the scalability and quality of synthesized data: the basic data augmentation, and expressiveness incorporation. The left of Figure 1 shows a specification.

We perform two operations to augment the data. First, we notice that the pitch ranges of sampled instrument libraries do not always correspond exactly to the pitch ranges of tracks in JSB Chorales Dataset. For instance, some bass melodies in JSB appear to be lower than the lowest note in sampled instrument libraries. Instead of directly discarding these tracks, we implement "octave shifting" by shifting out-of-range notes up or down some octaves until they fall within the range. While it produces non-realistic jumps between some melodies, it saves the whole track to preserve more realistic data. Second, we apply "tonality shifting" to each track. The tonality was shifted upward and downward by three semitones before synthesis. Therefore, the effective length of training data will be further augmented several times.

For expressiveness incorporation, we provide several options, which are supported by sampled instrument libraries, to synthesize audio:

• Legato: for vocal, this includes whether or not to change breath or sing continuously. In vocal instrument libraries, legato is controlled by detecting the presence of an overlap between adjacent notes. To support the legato configuration, we begin by segmenting the track into *musical phrases* using the breath break information in MusicXML (if provided) or the note intervals (if specified). Then, in each phrase, we add overlap to adjacent notes (to activate the legato) if their pitch distance is less than 7 semitones (i.e., a perfect fifth).

² https://www.reaper.fm/

³ A detailed introduction can be found at https://tinyurl.com/2p8trn2u

- Velocity: for each phrase, we provide three types of volume/velocity change curves: crescendo, diminuendo, and cresc.→dim.. The configuration establishes the maximum and minimum velocity ranges.
- Word Control: for vocal, we support the word control of sampled instrument libraries by assigning random combinations of words or syllables to each phrase. Note that real-world performance may not contain random word changes, but for model training, this still increases the data richness on each training batch.

The configuration also supports the reverberation as a designed feature, but currently it is not applied in this work.

4. EXPERIMENTS

In this section, we conduct an experiment on evaluating different separation models on our synthesized datasets. The purpose of this experiment is to identify the best model on synthesized datasets and then transfer it to real choral music datasets.

4.1 Datasets, Models and Hyperparameters

As introduced above, we use two datasets (piano and vocal) to train four models (Spec-U-Net, Res-U-Net, Conv-TasNet, and Wave-U-Net). Each track is in 22,050 Hz sample rate. Each dataset contains 496 minutes data. We use 277 tracks for training, 35 tracks for validation and another 35 tracks for testing. Since we have training combinations among four models, two datasets, and four choral voices, to save training time, we first train models on the dataset without the expressiveness incorporation in section 3.4, named as **Standard-Piano** and **Standard-Vocal** datasets. After finding the best model, we will train it on the expressive datasets in section 4.3.

For model hyper-parameters, In Spec-U-Net [7], we use a window size of 2048, FFT size of 2048, and hop size of 441. We apply 7 CNN blocks to downsample the input spectrogram, and another 7 CNN blocks to upsample it into the separation mask. In Res-U-Net, we apply the implementation from [8], with 10 residual CNN blocks to downsample the input spectrogram, then another 6 residual CNN blocks to upsample. In Wave-U-Net, we follow the settings of [9] to adopt 6 downsampling CNN layers and 6 upsampling CNN layers for separation. The filter channels are set from 32 to 1024 in order for each layer. The kernel size is 15 for the first layer and 5 for remaining layers. In Conv-TasNet, we follow the setting of [10] to set hyper-parameters as N=512, L=20, B=128, H = 512, P = 3, R = 3, X = 8. Spec-U-Net and Res-U-Net use their default mean absolute error (MAE) loss function; Conv-TasNet uses the default scale-invariant source-to-noise ratio (SI-SDR) loss; and Wave-U-Net with mean squared error (MSE) loss.

For training hyperparameters, the batch size is 8, the learning rate is 1e-3, and each training sample is a 2-sec audio segment randomly chosen from one music track in the training set. The number of steps for each epoch is 700. We

Standard Dataset	Model	Median S Soprano		Distort Tenor		tio (dB) Avg.
Piano	Spec-U-Net [7]	9.78	9.46	10.35	10.60	10.05
Piano	Res-U-Net [8]	8.53	9.01	9.97	12.23	9.94
Piano	Wave-U-Net [9]	6.95	5.36	7.21	9.82	7.34
Piano	Conv-TasNet [10]	7.04	6.98	7.29	7.82	7.28
Vocal	Spec-U-Net [7]	10.45	10.19	12.25	9.53	10.61
Vocal	Res-U-Net [8]	9.35	10.87	10.20	10.77	10.30
Vocal	Wave-U-Net [9]	2.65	3.08	3.06	3.90	3.17
Vocal	Conv-TasNet [10]	6.60	6.12	6.41	6.58	6.43

Table 3: The separation performance of four models on the test sets of Standard-Piano and Standard-Vocal datasets.

apply the Adam optimizer [22] with $\beta_1=0.9,\,\beta_2=0.999,\,$ $\epsilon=1e-8,\,$ and a learning rate scheduler where the learning rate is reduced with a multiplier f=0.65 if the validation performance does not improve across 3 consecutive epochs. We implemented all methods in Pytorch using NVIDIA RTX 2080Ti GPUs. All models converged within 300 epochs with early stop using a 10-epoch patience.

For evaluation, source-to-distortion ratio (SDR) is one of the most widely used metrics for evaluating a source separation system's output, which measures a ratio between the original source track and the noise, interference, added artifacts in the separation track. It is considered to be an overall measure of how good a separation result sounds. We follow the music separation campaign SiSEC 2018 [23] to use the median SDR to evaluate separation performance. The median SDR is obtained by first computing segment-level SDR of each 2-sec segment in each track, then taking the median over them as track-level SDRs, finally taking the median over the track-level SDRs as the final SDR. The computing library is *mus_eval* [23].

4.2 Separation Performance

Table 3 shows all four parts median SDR performance on two standard datasets by four models. We can see that the frequency-domain models Spec-U-Net and Res-U-Net get similar results that are better than those of the timedomain models Conv-TasNet and Wave-U-Net. Spec-U-Net achieves the best average SDRs over four parts on two datasets as 10.05 and 10.61. The Res-U-Net achieves very close performance. When analyzing the results, frequencydomain models can take advantage of spectrograms in choral music to obtain better separation results. The performance on soprano, alto and tenor in vocal is better than that in the piano dataset, suggesting that the timbre difference can also help further discriminate different source tracks. Time-domain models can model the piano acoustic features well to achieve a good performance, but find it hard to model the vocal features solely on the waveform and face the drops in the vocal dataset.

4.3 Fine-Tuning Evaluation on Real Datasets

After comparing models in standard datasets, we chose the best model, Spec-U-Net, to conduct the next experiments. We trained Spec-U-Net on the **Expressive-Vocal** dataset, as we synthesized the data *with* the expressiveness incorporation. Then, as shown in the right of Figure 1, we saved

Fine-Tuning Evaluation Set	Pretraining Set	Avg. Median SDR (Fine-Tuning Ratio)			
Time-Tunning Evaluation Set	rietianning Set	ratio=10%	ratio=40%	ratio=70%	
	None	1.42	3.91	4.13	
Contonio Dotocat [12]	SoundFont-Synthesis [15]	2.39	3.90	4.03	
Cantoria Dataset [13]	Standard-Vocal (ours)	3.03	4.59	5.08	
	Expressive-Vocal (ours)	3.73	5.48	5.71	
Choral Singing Dataset (CSD) [11]	None	1.98	2.78	5.26	
	SoundFont-Synthesis [15]	2.12	3.38	6.20	
	Standard-Vocal (ours)	3.43	4.23	6.91	
	Expressive-Vocal (ours)	4.19	4.78	7.50	
	None	4.18	6.08	6.94	
Pack & Parkarahan Callaction (PPC) [14]	SoundFont-Synthesis [15]	4.19	6.17	6.93	
Bach & Barbershop Collection (BBC) [14]	Standard-Vocal (ours)	4.98	6.71	7.27	
	Expressive-Vocal (ours)	5.58	7.17	7.64	

Table 4: The fine-tuning performance of three real datasets by our best model – Spec-U-Net.

the best model checkpoints, and conducted a fine-tuning experiment to verify whether our data is useful for transfer learning on real choral music datasets. Table 4 and Figure 2 illustrate the median SDR performance of three real choral music datasets under different fine-tuning ratios with different pretrained models.

For datasets, we chose the Cantoria Dataset, Choral Singing Dataset (CSD), and Bach & Barbershop Collection (BBC). The reason for these choices is that Cantoria contains the best recording quality, CSD is most frequently used in previous works, and BBC contains the longest length. The meta information of each dataset has been described in Table 1.

We considered three ratios for fine-tuning: (1) 10% for training, 90% for evaluation; (2) 40% for training, 60% for evaluation; and (3) 70% for training, 30% for evaluation. The fine-tuning experiments demonstrate if our synthesized datasets can improve the separation performance in real datasets under different settings (e.g., few-shot as 10% and fairly enough as 70%). The intermediate ratio 40% is conducted to further investigate the tendency of the improvement brought by our datasets.

There are four dataset choices on which to pretrain the models: (1) None: without any pretraining; (2) SoundFont-Synthesis: the synthesis dataset in [15] by the *Musescore_General* SoundFont as a baseline; (3) the Standard-Vocal dataset; and (4) the Expressive-Vocal dataset. Since the SoundFont-Synthesis dataset only contains 248 minutes, instead of using two sampled libraries (496 minutes), we only provide the data synthesized from one library – Voices Of Rapture [19] in Standard-Vocal and Expressive-Vocal for the pretraining. Data augmentations of "octave shifting" and "tonality shifting" are applied in all three datasets, except (4) incorporates more expressiveness settings. The fine-tuning learning rate is 1e-4, with the scheduler in section 4.1.

Table 4 shows the average median SDR performance of Spec-U-Net over four voice parts under different fine-tuning ratios and different pretraining settings. We can see that under all three training-test ratios, the performance of the model pretrained on Standard-Vocal and Expressive-

Vocal is better than that on SoundFont-Synthesis and none-dataset, where the performance of Expressive-Vocal achieves the best. When the training-test ratio is small as 10%, the performance of SoundFont-Synthesis and non-dataset has the largeest difference, showing that the model learns some priors from SoundFont-Synthesis and converges to a better optimum. However, when the ratio increases to 40% and 70%, their performance is close to each other and does not vary much, especially on Cantoria and BBC. Thus, pretraining on SoundFont-Synthesis dataset provides a very useful initialization – but gains diminish (or even no gain) as the initializer is dominated by larger and larger quantities of real training data.

However, when the model is pretrained on Standard-Vocal, it has a strong generalization to real choral music datasets under all fine-tuning ratios, because acoustic features of synthesis tracks share large similarity to the real datasets. This performance is further boosted by Expressive-Vocal as we introduce expressiveness during synthesis, such as lyrics and velocity dynamics. Even under the 70% fine-tuning ratio, as the model has received many real data, Standard-Vocal and Expressive-Vocal pretrained model can still get improvements. In conclusion, our synthesized datasets provide not only additional data volume, but also high-quality and close-to-real choral music samples for boosting the separation performance.

To further verify our analysis, we visualized the trends of median SDRs (blue, orange, cyan, and magenta colors), with a 25th-75th percentile range, for each voice part of three real datasets in Figure 2. We can see the performance of our synthesized datasets (magenta & cyan lines) marks a clear performance increase and a large gap to that of SoundFont-Synthesis and non-dataset (orange & blue lines). However, the trends of SoundFont-Synthesis and non-dataset are close to each other, and even overlap in BBC. When analyzing the percentile range of each model, on Cantoria and CSD, our Standard-Vocal and Expressive-Vocal pretrained models reveal a clear difference of percentile ranges to the left two models, demonstrating that our models get a large improvement. However, the percentile ranges of the SoundFont-Synthesis and non-dataset pretrained models have a large overlap, demonstrating no

⁴ We appreciate the help from authors in [14] to offer the dataset.

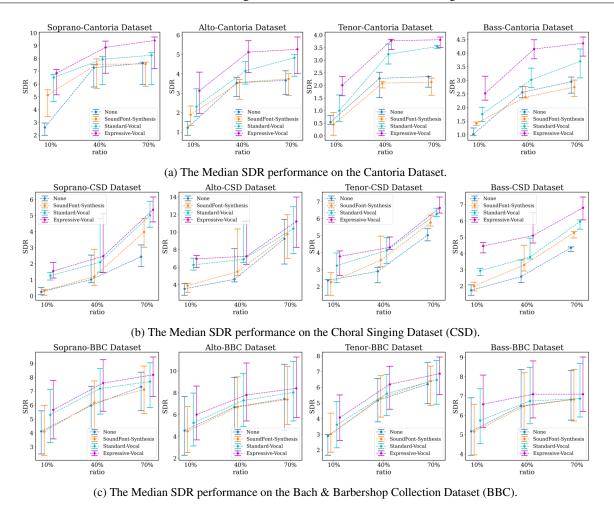


Figure 2: The Median SDR performance, with a 25th–75th percentile range, of soprano, alto, tenor and bass on three datasets by Spec-UNet with different pretrained models and different ratios of training-test sets.

difference even though their median SDRs differ a little. On the BBC dataset, our models yield improvements on both the 25th and 75th percentile values but are not as pronounced as those observed on Cantoria and CSD. The potential reason is because the BBC dataset contains a relatively large data size (105 minutes), which makes the model already achieve a good convergence and hard to get more significant improvements without model designs. These trends further demonstrates that our synthesized dataset plays a role in making up the data scarcity and improving generalization ability.

5. EXTENSIBILITY AND LIMITATIONS

Our provided synthesis pipeline from symbolic datasets to real audio datasets not only benefits choral music separation tasks, but also other choral-related separation tasks. For example, string quartet separation, to separate two violins, viola, and cello parts from a mixed audio, can also be trained with synthesized data of our pipeline. The details of the string quartet separation experiment can be accessed in the code repository. Similarly, our best pretrained model shows a 100%/30% performance increase to the SoundFont-Synthesis and non-dataset pretrained models. This further shows a potential application of our synthesis pipeline to improve other choral-related separation tasks.

There are also some limitations and future improvements to our work. First of all, our implementations of expressiveness are still based on random template modes. Deep learning methods can improve this expressiveness modeling [24]. Second, the design of the choral separation model is needed to learn more priors from weak synthesized data that can be transferred to real data, then it will complement our proposed pipeline better. These limitations are planned for exploration in our future work.

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we proposed an automated pipeline for synthesizing choral music data from sampled instrument plugins, and created an 8.2-hour choral music dataset to improve separation performance on real choral music datasets. We comprehensively evaluated multiple separation models to demonstrate that synthesized choral data is of sufficient quality to improve model's performance on real datasets. This provides additional experimental statistics and data support for choral music separation study. In the future, we will focus on the design of timbre-pitch disentanglement model [25] for achieving better separation performance. The application of choral music separation results into other music-related tasks, such as music recommendation [26], is also planned as the future work.

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ETHICS OF SINGING VOICE SYNTHESIS: PERCEPTIONS OF USERS AND DEVELOPERS

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ABSTRACT

Singing Voice Synthesis (SVS) has recently garnered much attention as its quality has improved vastly with the use of artificial intelligence (AI), creating many opportunities for supporting music creators and listeners. Recently, there have been growing concerns about ethical issues related to AI development in general, and to AI-based SVS development specifically. Many questions remain unexplored about how to ethically develop and use such technology. In this paper, we investigate the perception of ethical issues related to SVS from the perspectives of two different groups: the general public and developers. We collected 3,075 user comments from YouTube videos showcasing various uses of SVS as part of a mainstream variety show. Additionally, we interviewed six researchers developing SVS technology. Through thematic analysis, we identify and discuss three different aspects related to ethical issues in SVS development, highlighting the similarities and differences between the perspectives of the general public and developers: (1) Use scenarios, (2) Attitudes towards development, and (3) Meaning of "Creativity", and (4) Concerns about human rights, intellectual property (IP) and legal issues.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Artificial intelligence (AI) is developing rapidly and becoming increasingly pervasive in our lives through various forms of technology, including robots and smart devices. The AI field has been thriving over the past decade due to the increasing availability of massive data, computational resources, and deep-learning-based architectures [1,2]. Related to music, there are various AI technologies to support music organization, production, and enjoyment, including recommendation [3, 4], music generation [5, 6], instrument sound synthesis [7] and singing voice synthesis [8-10]. Singing Voice Synthesis (SVS) has existed since the late 1950s [11] and has been used and enjoyed by many users through applications like singing synthe-

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sizers and vocaloids [8]. The significant improvement in the quality of voices due to the use of recent techniques, specifically deep learning, has given rise to more opportunities for the use of SVS, but has also led to more questions regarding its ethical use and increased concern for potential misuse. While the SVS community has started discussing some of the ethical issues related to the development and use of SVS, the discussion is in the early, nascent stage [2]. Furthermore, there is limited research investigating how the general public, as potential users, perceive and feel about the use of SVS, especially since the synthesized singing voices are sounding increasingly realistic and almost indistinguishable from human voices.

The ethical issues encompass multiple areas, including intellectual property (IP) (e.g., the ownership of the media with AI voices) and human rights (e.g., who decides how the voices are used). In addition to understanding how the general public thinks about SVS, it is important to consider what influences their perceptions and whether developers are aware of them. If developers are aware, does that impact their goals and direction? Understanding how the general public perceives AI technology may offer useful insights to developers on how to address negative perception and ensure AI is well-received by users. It is not only important for envisioning the potential commercialization of such technologies, but also for discussing ethical issues and collaboratively thinking about how society should address such issues.

In this paper, we aim to improve our understanding of how people perceive the uses of SVS technology through a content analysis of user comments collected from online videos showcasing various applications of SVS. To examine how user perception on ethical issues related to SVS can influence the development of the technology and vice versa, we also interviewed SVS developers regarding viewpoints on potential ethical issues. We aim to answer the following research questions: (1) How does the general public react to AI-generated singing voices, and what are the implications to SVS developers? (2) What kinds of ethical issues do users and SVS developers consider?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Music-related AI Technologies and SVS

With the advancement of generative models in deep learning, creative applications of music AI technology have become a popular research topic in music information retrieval (MIR). Music generation is one area, encompassing various tasks, such as melody generation [5], expressive performance generation [12], sound synthesis [7] and pop song generation [6]. Research in generative music not only varies in tasks, but also in their data formats, which can be at a symbolic-level (e.g., scores and MIDI tracks), at an audio-level (e.g., mp3 and way files) or a mix of both. In the past years, music AI technologies have become increasingly available and accessible to the public. One example is the BachDoodle, a Bach-like harmonization system from Google Magenta [13], which received much attention when made publicly available as an interactive Google Doodle ¹. Another example is an audio-level pop music generation system, called Jukebox, which generates raw audio of pop songs, including singing voices [6]. This system is conditioned on lyrics and artists, therefore allowing control over such features to obtain desired outcomes. The quality of generated music has vastly improved, even motivating musicians, such as The Flaming Lips, to experiment with AI systems in their music creation process ².

SVS has been researched for more than two decades. The goal of SVS is to learn human-like singing voices given input conditions, like speech, lyrics and melodies. A thread of research focuses on creating non-existent voices as seen in popular applications like vocaloids [14]. Other areas handle existing voices: replicating existing singing voices [9,10] such as those of popular artists, correcting the singing expressions for performance improvement [15], and converting speech to singing voice [16]. We have observed significant improvements in the synthesis quality through the adaptation of advanced deep learning models, such as Tacotron [17] and DeepVoice [18]. In particular, the YouTube videos analyzed in this paper replicated voices of popular singers from music scores and lyrics [9], incorporating techniques from text-to-speech (TTS) with adversarial training to achieve state-of-the-art results.

2.2 Ethical Issues Related to Music AI

Concerns regarding intellectual property and AI are growing. Many are concerned about how to protect artists' value in the music industry when "automation" may drive music production costs to zero [19]. While we may still doubt the quality of AI musicality, SKYGGE's Hello World ³ and virtual musicians such as Vocaloid Hatsune Miku ⁴ are clear signs that the "trend to autonomous and human-like virtual musicians is extremely well established" [20]. As such, ethical concerns are also tied to concerns over excessive loss in human creativity [14]. There is also an aspect of insufficient public knowledge about these technologies, which in turn, informs the lack of legal regulations. Furthermore, such regulations would be heavily influenced by corporations which have "incentives to ignore public input and shift regulation to their benefit" [21]. According

to Floridi, there are five digital ethics pitfalls that can be applied when examining case studies and potential consequences of SVS/AI technologies: 1) Ethics Shopping, 2) Ethics Bluewashing, 3) Ethics Lobbying, 4) Ethics dumping, 5) and Ethics Shirking [22].

Beyond the ethics of artist getting compensated for their voices or work, there are also additional questions with regards to human rights – should artists be allowed to "refuse" having their voices or work serve as data sets for generating new voices, and potentially a third party profiting from it [23, 24]?

Existing literature emphasizes the importance of drawing ethical considerations and conclusion within the context of AI's socio-technical systems, rather than on the specific features of AI itself as today's digital technology "ecosystem" necessitates the inclusion of more stakeholders and perspectives [25]. Research finds that Western perspectives often dominate the conversation surrounding AI [26-28] and increasingly emphasizes the importance of considering cultural differences when examining human-AI interactions and attitudes towards AI [29, 30]. There is a pressing need for specific applications of ethics and accountability measures rather than current abstract principles [26] with the argument that stakeholders in the music ecosystem must be the ones responsible for establishing an ethical response for the purpose of a sustainable music industry that includes humans and non-humans [31].

3. STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

To understand users' and developers' perspectives on AIbased SVS technology, we employed a mixed method approach using thematic analysis of online user comments and interviews. Given that there is currently no widely distributed commercial application using this technology (other than vocaloid communities which are generally considered to be niche), it was challenging to identify a specific community to represent the perception of the general public. Inviting people to react in an experimental setting also has the potential for increased participant response bias [32]. Therefore we opted to find data sources which would allow us to capture user reactions in a more natural setting. We looked into public online videos showcasing state of the art technology and found promising examples from Korean TV shows called "AI versus Humans" 5 and "One More Time," 6 where several different use cases for this technology were presented, such as generating voices of artists (both currently active and deceased), manipulating the artists' voice, generating singing voices in languages different from the language of the original voice samples, and joint performance of artist and AI. A total of 3,075 comments were collected from eight videos from 2020 to 2021 where they presented various applications of AI-based SVS technology.

Most comments were in Korean and a few in English. Two authors who are fluent in Korean independently coded

¹ https://www.google.com/doodles/celebrating-johann-sebastian-bach

² https://magenta.tensorflow.org/fruitgenie

³ https://www.skygge.fr/

⁴ https://ec.crypton.co.jp/pages/prod/virtualsinger/cv01

⁵ https://programs.sbs.co.kr/enter/aivshuman/about/67201

⁶ https://program.genie.co.kr/onemoretime/main