

Volker Straebel

“Every promise of the soul has innumerable fulfilments.”

Emerson attributes

for speaker and two-channel digital audio (2010)

for Gerhard Schultz

Program note:

In five sections, *Emerson attributes* presents, in alternating fashion, the adjectives and nouns from an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson. The piece alternates between live performance and recordings made on the streets of New York of around sixty different voices. The single words are isolated and spread out in time, providing space for the listener’s imagination.

Duration ca. 36 minutes. Recordings by David Barron and Volker Straebel.

Technical details:

For the speaker: a table, a chair, a stopwatch, light. (The speaker is not amplified.)

For the audio playback: 1) a CD player, iPod, or Laptop, 2) a mixing board with four outputs, 3) four loudspeakers, to be set up around the audience (the primary audio playback should not necessarily come from the same direction as the speaker). If playback through four loudspeakers is too cumbersome, a stereo system can be used.

Digital stereo audio files are provided for sections II and IV.

Performance:

The speaker should be seated in front of the audience. The single words should be read calmly and objectively (timings are indicated in the score). Any impression of a theater situation is to be avoided.

The speaker also operates the audio playback, as indicated in the score. Sections II and IV are on separate tracks.

No additional visuals are to be presented.

Documentation:

Section I presents the adjectives of the first paragraph of Emerson's essay in the order of their occurrence, section II presents the nouns, likewise in the original order. In the same fashion, sections III and IV present the adjectives and nouns of the second paragraph, while only the adjectives from the third paragraph are presented in section V.

The adjectives are spoken live in performance.

For the recording of the nouns: a stack of index cards was first created, with one word written on each. A new word order was created using *I Ching* chance operations. The single words were then presented in this new order to individuals at Lincoln Center, Central Park, Union Square, and Park Slope, Brooklyn, New York, where they were read aloud, and recorded. Later, the individual takes were rearranged to once again reflect the original order of nouns in Emerson's Essay, and to become the audio tracks for sections II and IV. Those words that were not recorded, due to time constraints, are marked gray in the score, and are not presented in the piece.

Recordings by David Barron and Volker Straebel. Thanks to Chiyoko Szlavnic.

First performed at The Wulf, Los Angeles, on March 2nd, 2011, by Gerhard Schultz, speaker.

I – live speaker

0:00	every
0:15	innumerable
0:30	each
0:45	new
1:00	uncontainable
1:15	flowing
1:30	forelooking
1:45	first
2:00	particular
2:15	general
2:30	private
2:45	tender
3:00	divine
3:15	domestic
3:30	civic
3:45	new
4:00	heroic
4:15	sacred
4:30	human

II – recorded voices

promise

soul

fulfilments

joys

want

nature

sentiment

kindness

benevolence

regards

light

introduction

felicity

relation

enchantment

life

rage

enthusiasm

man

period

revolution

mind

body

race

relations

sympathy

nature

power

senses

imagination

character

attributes

marriage
permanence
society
[7' duration]

III – live speaker

0:00	natural
0:15	vivid
0:30	every
0:45	true
1:00	throbbing
1:15	old
1:30	delicious
1:45	least
2:00	mature
2:15	chilling
2:30	purple
2:45	unnecessary
3:00	formidable
3:15	truly
3:30	aged
3:45	tender
4:00	different
4:15	nobler
4:30	kindling
4:45	first
5:00	narrow
5:15	private
5:30	wandering
5:45	another
6:00	private
6:15	universal
6:30	whole
6:45	all
7:00	generous
7:15	first
7:30	some
7:45	later

8:00 some
8:15 earlier
8:30 young
8:45 beautiful
9:00 central
9:15 whatever

IV – recorded voices

association

sentinent

love

heyday

blood

tints

youth

maid

experience

fancies

youth

savour

philosophy

age

pedantry

bloom

imputation

hardness

stoicism

court

parliament

love

censors

seniors

passion

young

old

servant

participators

maiden

sort

fire

embers
nook
bosom
spark
heart
multitudes
men
women
heart
all
world
nature
flames
passion
period
traits
patience
Muses
aid
view
law
truth
eye
angle
[9' duration]

V – live speaker

0:00	first
0:15	too close
0:30	lingering
0:45	not
1:00	each
1:15	not
1:30	other
1:45	fair
2:00	ideal
2:15	delicious
2:30	sincerest
2:45	not
3:00	infinitive
3:15	mature
3:30	budding
3:45	every
4:00	beloved
4:15	every
4:30	beautiful
4:45	sour
5:00	melancholy
5:15	seemly
5:30	noble
5:45	actual
6:00	painful
6:15	immortal
6:30	partial