SPEECH ROULETTE

[part XXIII of the ongoing **TASK** *series]*

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Requirements

- A laptop with a selected audio file(s) from an open source pool
- A smartphone with a speech reversing application [e.g., 'Speak Back']

Context

You will be presented with random audio files. Each audio file contains someone speaking a short phrase that has been reversed. You will be given a short amount of time to learn the reversed speech. You learn and rehearse in full view of the audience. When the learning time has elapsed, perform the reversed version into a speech reversing application. The app will then playback the *un-reversed* version of the spoken phrase. However…

…the CATCH is that the reversed recording you're tasked with performing is randomly selected from an open-source pool of anonymously uploaded recordings. You should be aware that ANYONE, ANYWHERE can upload themselves saying ANYTHING to this pool. Contents of the recordings are NOT screened by any ethical algorithm or human ear. Thus, seeing that this is the internet, there is the real possibility that some fucked up shit will be in there.[1] Furthermore, there is the risk that, upon the speech reversing application un-reversing the speech of the recording, you (and the audience) will hear (what appears to be) your voice potentially saying something at odds with your personal beliefs, offensive, or simply heinous.

Before performing this piece you must DECIDE to perform the piece in full view of these risks. There is a version of the piece corresponding to an affirmative decision (the YEA version), and a version corresponding to a negative decision (the NAY version). Consider the following:

- How much trust do I place in content sourced from the open-net?
- Does my personal experience-with and knowledge-of internet behavior lead me to believe that the majority of the recordings will be random-yet-innocuous or hatefully trollish?
- If I believe that the majority of people are good and ethical when acting in daily life where their observed actions and utterances accrue into their public reputation, does this belief transfer to the virtual realm? Or, in lieu of the potential consequences of having unethical behavior shackled to their public identity (provided by the ability to submit anonymously) do I find myself holding a more pessimistic/relative/complex view of interpersonal behavior?
- How much trust do I place in the audience? Will they hold me accountable when they hear MY voice saying something potentially foul? Would it even be MY voice? If I spoke a reversed version of a text with no knowledge of its semantic content, am I responsible for the content of the speech?
- You may also consult the audience. Read them the 'context' section above and take a poll. How many of them would take the risk? How many want you to take the risk?

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[1] This also means that users may upload recordings that are not text. If, upon your initial listen of the selected recording, you hear something other than reversed speech, have the program select another recording. Additionally, the ONLY screening done to the recordings is to ensure they are 20" or shorter.

- How much trust do I place in the composer? Is his claim that the recordings are unmoderated true? Is the risk I'm being asked to consider real?
- If what the speech reversal application plays back is offensive who is ethically on the hook? Is it the individual who uploaded the speech? If it the composer for creating the forum for its utterance? Is it the performer for giving a physical 'voice' to the originally unintelligible speech? Is it the audience (if they are considered in determining the YEA of NAY version) for granting permission?
- Can this type of ethical complexity occur in our modern world? Or, is it simply a matter of the immediate purveyor of the offense becoming responsible in the eyes of the crowd?

Instructions [NAY version]

(1) Inform the audience of the context of the piece. What the piece wanted you to do.
(2) Describe to the audience why you didn't want to perform the piece. This could take any form: a casual improvised monologue (i.e., a hot take); a well researched, media-savvy presentation of modern internet behavior; a panel discussion; a conversation with the audience; a scene verbally critiquing the composer's creative decisions performed by puppets; etc.
(3) If the NAY version is performed, program it as follows: **SPEECH ~~ROULETTE~~**

Instructions [YEA version]

(1) Inform the audience of the context of the piece. What the piece instructs you to do.
(2) Prior to performance, decide how many audio files you want to perform. A computer program will randomly select the desired number of recordings.
(3) For each recording do the following:
    (1) Set a timer for two minutes
    (2) Learn how to speak the contents of the recording to the best of your ability. You may listen to the recording as many times as you want. You may isolate portions of the recording. Attempt to memorize the contents.
    (3) Once the timer ends, perform what you've practiced into the speech reversal app. You can try up to three takes.
    (4) Play the now un-reversed version of the text.
(4) All sounds made in rehearsal should be done in full view of the audience. They should be able to hear you rehearse and hear the original reversed audio file.
(5) If the YEA version is performed, program it as follows: **SPEECH ROULETTE**

Note

Contact composer for the audio selection program: ryan@ryancarraher.com