Choreographer Will Rawls offers a multidisciplinary study and choreographic research of the film and musical score Ballet Mecanique. Rarely performed or screened, Ballet Mecanique, a canonical collaboration between French filmmaker Fernand Leger and American composer George Antheil, premiered in 1924. There was no dance that accompanied this "ballet," and no choreographer has attempted a full-scale concert dance version since. Both the film and music were designed to represent the chaotic energy of post-WWI Europe, taking industrial noise, mass production, Dadaist imagery, kaleidoscopic consciousness, and metaphors of speed as cues for innovation within their respective forms. Both film and music led to actual inventions of technology and instruments. Just over 90 years since the premiere, the themes and techniques of Ballet Mecanique have potential resonance with contemporary life, which is writing its own narratives of society, identity, militarization, speed, global consciousness, and technological evolution.

We will discuss the cultural factors that gave rise to Ballet Mecanique, identify contemporary parallels of these factors, and translate these ideas into the embodied media of dance and voice. How can performers intervene into the crisis of modern (or contemporary) progress by trying to embody it? What are the techniques (somatic, sonic, digital, or otherwise) that we can investigate in relation to this question? While unpacking Ballet Mecanique, we'll explore vocal score composition, dance, political and sociological thought, neurology and computer science. Students from diverse interests and backgrounds are welcome.

References

FILM: Ballet Mecanique (with music)
FILM: Ballet Mécanique (silent)
MUSIC: Ballet Mecanique (musical performance / Ictus Ensemble)

SYLLABUS
All Readings will be uploaded, at the latest, one week before the class when they are due, except for first week assignment. For the first week—Sept 20: all readings available online now, for Sept 21: all readings will be uploaded by Wednesday September 16.

CLASS BREAK DOWN
September 13, 2-5pm

Introduction to Ballet Mécanique
Screening
Physical and Compositional Exercises

September 20, 2-5pm: Context for Ballet Mécanique

Readings Due
The Avant-Garde and the “New Spirit”: The Case of Ballet Mécanique, Malcolm Turvey
Le Ballet Mécanique: Historic Collaboration between Fernand Leger and George Antheil, openculture.com
Critical Definitions of Modernism
The Futurist Manifesto, F.T. Marinetti

In Class
Physical and Vocal Scores
Viewpoints Exploration

September 21, 7-10pm: Context for Practice

Readings Due
Against Interpretation, Susan Sontag
Examples of Postdramatic Theater, Hans Thies-Lehmann
An Inventory of Shimmers, Melissa Gregg & Gregory J. Seigworth
Not The Other Avant-Garde: The Transnational Foundations of the Avant-Garde // “From Cutting Edge to Rough Edges”, James Harding

Assignment Due
3 Mechanical Recordings (recordings where sound, image and repetitive or
rhythmic mechanical sound is evident)

**In Class**
- Physical and Vocal Scores
- Notating Recordings
- Embodying Recordings

**September 27, 2-5pm: The Dancing Body**

**Readings Due**
- *A Dance That Is*, Marten Spangberg
- *Refiguring Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz

**Assignment Due**
- 3 Mechanical Recordings

**In Class**
- Physical Exercises
- Embodying Recordings

**September 28, 7-10pm: The Voice**

**Readings Due**
- *He Stuttered*, Gilles Deleuze
- *Encyclopedie de la Parole*, Choralites + Melodies + Timbres
- EDLP Video
  - EDLP Video

**Assignment Due**
- 3 Personal Vocal Recordings

**In Class**
- Vocal Exercises
- Embodying Recordings

**October 4, 2-5pm: Choreography, Mass Culture, Collectivity**

**Readings Due**
- *The Collaborative Turn in Contemporary Dance: Performance Capitalism and the Emancipation of Artistic Production*, Boyan Manchev
- *The Culture Industry Revisited*, Theodor Adorno
- *What Is An Apparatus?*, Giorgio Agamben
- *Book of Days*, Meredith Monk
- *Shade Compositions*, Rashad Newsome
Assignment Due
3 Recordings of Found Material (e.g. snippets of conversation, muffled music, machines/appliances, distorted sound, recorded sound etc.)

In Class
Embodying or Vocalizing Found Material
Composition

October 5, 7-10pm: America and Its Undersides

Readings Due
*Whitman*, Gilles Deleuze
*under commons*, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten

Assignment Due
Developed Recordings/Embodiments

In Class
Composition

October 11, 2-5pm: Now and Future

Readings Due
*What Is The Contemporary?*, Giorgio Agamben
*The Glitch Studies Manifesto*, Rosa Menkman
*Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Jose Esteban Munoz

Assignment Due
Revised Vocal Arrangements/Embodiments

In Class
Developing Vocal Arrangements/Embodiments
Inventory
Composition

October 12, 7-10pm: Testaments, Transits

Readings Due (subject to change)
*Citizen*, Claudia Rankine
*The Port Authority*, Colson Whitehead
*Eulogy for the Melee*, Jean-Luc Nancy
*Myths and Poetry of Emptiness*, Kader Attia
In Class
Developing Vocal Arrangements/Embodiments
Inventory
Composition

October 13-16: Individual Meetings with Students (TBA)

October 18, 2-5pm: Bio-Electricity, Neuropathways and the Self

Readings Due
TBA (Professor CROSBY)

Assignment Due
TBA (Professor CROBSY)

In Class
Visit from Professor CROSBY

October 19, 7-10pm: Dramaturgy and Performance Time

Readings (Or Watching/Listening) Due
TBA (Student directed)

In Class
Developing Vocal Arrangements/Embodiments
Composition

November 8, 2-5pm: Subjective Process

Readings (Or Watching/Listening) Due
TBA (Student Directed)
Excerpts from Senses of the Subject, Judith Butler
Excerpts from Precarious Life, Judith Butler
Examples of Mediated Subjects (YouTube, Vine, Tumblr etc)

Assignment Due
Solo Material Presentation

In Class
Developing Solo Material
Composition
November 9, 7-10pm: Subjective Process

Readings (Or Watching/Listening) Due
TBA (Student Directed)
Examples of Mediated Subjects (YouTube, Vine, Tumblr etc)

Assignment Due
Solo Material Presentation

In Class
Developing Solo Material
Composition

November 22, 2-5pm: Experimental History

Readings (Or Watching/Listening) Due
TBA (Student Directed)
Excerpts from *Counternarratives*, John Keene
TBA

Assignment Due
Final Versions of Solo and Group Material

In Class
Composition

November 23, 7-10pm: Process

Readings (Or Watching/Listening) Due
TBA (Student Directed)

Assignment Due
Written Statement on Creative Practice (5 pages)

In Class
Composition
Rehearsal

November 29, 7-10pm: Performance and Performativity

Readings (Or Watching/Listening) Due
TBA (Student Directed)

In Class
Composition
Rehearsal

November 30, 7-10pm: Performance and Performativity

Readings (Or Watching/Listening) Due
TBA (Student Directed)

In Class
Rehearsal

December 6, 2-5pm: Presentation

In Class
Rehearsal

December 7, 7-10pm: Presentation and Feedback

Rehearsal: 7-8pm
Presentation: 8pm
Post-presentation discussion: 9-10pm