



WOLFSONIAN

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**BALLET MECANIQUE: A SENSATIONAL MUSICAL EVENT TO PREVIEW DECEMBER 1 AT THE
WOLFSONIAN-FIU**

New World Symphony Percussion Consort to Play Version Live on November 20

MIAMI BEACH, FL (August 14, 2007) –The Wolfsonian-Florida International University will mount a fully automated/robotic orchestration of the then-scandalous 1924 *Ballet mécanique*, the most notorious “lost” musical composition of the twentieth century, which was both hailed and hated upon its debut. Its young American composer George Antheil, known for his outrageous composition and piano recitals and for stirring up controversy, was considered by the Parisian artistic community as the musical spokesman for modernist ideals. *Ballet mécanique* was considered Antheil’s magnum opus. The original composition calls for ten human musicians, including two pianists; four bass drums; three xylophones; a tam-tam; seven electric bells; three airplane propellers; a siren; and sixteen player pianos. Highly rhythmic, often brutalistic, the piece combines atonal music and jazz.

Originally conceived as a score to accompany a film by French Dadaist artist Fernand Léger and American cinematographer Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* was never performed the way the composer envisioned it, because the technology—most significantly, the ability to synchronize multiple player pianos—did not then exist. The film, which runs for approximately 16 minutes, is a highly abstract collage of images, ranging from an animated Cubist caricature of Charlie Chaplin to half-a-dozen kitchen funnels dancing on a string cut together in the Dadaist fashion of continuously looping images backwards, forwards, and upside down. There were several attempts to present the film with Antheil’s music, but it wasn’t until the 1990s that music technology advanced to where Antheil’s piece could finally be played in its original orchestration. The first full performance of the piece was produced in 1999. The extraordinary robotic performance that will be mounted by The Wolfsonian is presented by Paul D. Lehrman, coordinator of music technology at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts and Eric Singer, director of the League of Electrical Musical Urban Robots (LEMUR) in Brooklyn, New York. Together they created the programming and the robotic mechanisms to bring this work to life.

The Wolfsonian is planning a DADA weekend celebration, consisting of a performance of *Ballet mécanique* by the New World Symphony Percussion Consort on Friday, November 30 at the Lincoln Theatre. The performance will feature a 1953 arrangement of the work for four pianos and the same extensive percussion battery. The following evening, Saturday December 1, from 7 to 11 pm, The Wolfsonian will present the robotic version at a DADA party, which also includes a screening of Léger's film from 1925. Tickets \$100; \$85 for members and NWS subscribers. This includes the Friday NWS performance and Saturday evening DADA party and performance. Saturday-only tickets \$85; \$75 for members and NWS subscribers. RSVP required: 305.535.2631 or rsvp@thewolf.fiu.edu. Dada inspired attire desired. Yamaha digital pianos and other instrumentation installed in the museum's sixth-floor gallery from December 2-11 will play *Ballet mécanique* and *Bad Boy Made Good*, a documentary about Antheil. Sponsored by Northern Trust; John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; and the Dade Community Foundation through the John S. and James L. Knight Donor- Advised Fund.

About The Wolfsonian-Florida International University

The Wolfsonian is a museum, library, and research center that uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design. The collections comprise approximately 120,000 pieces from the period 1885 to 1945 — the height of the Industrial Revolution until the end of the Second World War — in a variety of media, including: furniture; industrial-design objects; works in glass; ceramics; metal; rare books; periodicals; ephemera; works on paper; paintings; textiles; and medals. The curatorial goal is to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the story of social, historical, and technological changes that have transformed our world.

The Wolfsonian-FIU is located at 1001 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida. Admission is \$7 for adults; \$5 for seniors, students, and children ages six to twelve. Admission is free for Wolfsonian members, State University System of Florida staff and students with ID, children under six, and Miami Beach residents with ID. The museum is open Monday, Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday from noon-6pm; Thursday and Friday from noon-9pm; and it is closed on Wednesday. Contact us at 305.531.1001 or visit us online at www.wolfsonian.org.

The Wolfsonian receives ongoing support from the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts; Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council; Crispin Porter + Bogusky; Continental Airlines, the preferred airline of The Wolfsonian; the Arthur F. and Alice E. Adams Foundation; and Karla Conceptual Event Experiences.

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