

*Press Release from the  
Derwent Valley Mills  
World Heritage Site*



## **‘The Machinery’ steps up for an immersive mill experience**



THERE'S a rare chance to see the earliest known machine dance, originally performed by millworkers, as part of an immersive sound and video installation coming to the Derwent valley Mills World Heritage Site later this month.

‘The Machinery’ projects a dance performance by Caroline Radcliffe, captured by filmmaker Jon Harrison, and augmented with the sounds and movements from the Industrial Revolution’s textile industries by composer and digital artist Sarah Angliss and Caroline Radcliffe. It mixes dance steps with music and video to reflect the conditions of the women millworkers’ repetitive labour and the human/automaton relationship created by the Industrial Revolution.

First chance to see this performance will be at the Strutt’s North Mill museum in Belper, from Wednesday 20 to Sunday 24 October, during opening hours of 11am to 4pm. Then it moves to Richard Arkwright’s Cromford Mills from Wednesday 27 to Sunday 31 October, open 10am to 4pm. There’s free entry to the installation at both sites, thanks to support funding from Arts Council England.

To celebrate The Machinery’s arrival in Cromford during the half-term break, Caroline Radcliffe will be leading a free family-friendly workshop in the marquee at Cromford Mills on Tuesday 26 October, from 3pm to 4pm. Caroline will introduce attendees to the costume and working conditions of a nineteenth century textile mill worker and teach some of the clog dance steps from ‘The Machinery’. Please wear hard-soled flat shoes if possible and sign up to save a place at the workshop. No need for any previous dance experience! Although tickets are free, places are limited, so please sign up at [www.wegotickets.com/event/527173/](http://www.wegotickets.com/event/527173/).

More information:

'The Machinery' was conceived as an original piece of contemporary theatre; its primary aim was to recontextualise clog dancing for a contemporary audience. It could be seen as a dance about technology or as a comment on our post-industrial age. The performance was awarded a Quake contemporary dance festival award in 2008 and in 2018 The Machinery received Arts Council England and Heritage Lottery Funding and funding from the University of Birmingham to develop the work with digital film maker, Jon Harrison, into an audio-visual, immersive art installation.

'The Machinery' is a 'heel-and-toe' clog dance passed on to Caroline Radcliffe by clog dancer, Pat Tracey. Mill workers tapped their feet in time to the rhythms of the cotton machinery while they operated the machines with their hands. They developed these rhythmic patterns and steps into dances which they shared with their families and communities. 'The Machinery' copies the mechanical components and actions of the cotton machines through the dance's steps.

These machines were mainly operated by women and children; by imitating the machines, they found a way to combat the mental and physical constraints of repetitive factory labour and to literally dance with the machines.

'The Machinery' is the earliest form of machine dance we know, predating the Futurist dances of the early-twentieth century by over a hundred years. Taken back to its original solo context – one dancer, alone with the machines – 'The Machinery' reflects the individual's relationship with work and technology.

Caroline Radcliffe says: "After a year in which our working lives have changed beyond recognition, The Machinery takes on an uncanny resemblance to the now familiar home 'zoom meeting'. When John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx commented on the relationship of technologies to the worker, they could hardly have foreseen the point we are at in 2021. Far from just being a dance imitating machinery, the steps speak to us now – as they did to the nineteenth-century factory workers who devised them – about our ability to be creative in the face of adversity."



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