



Motionhouse

CHARGE

ELECTRIFYING DANCE CIRCUS

SCENE 2: FROGS

Questions

What are the dancers wearing?

What do you notice about the shape of their legs and feet?

How would you describe the way they move?

Are they human, amphibian or a mixture of both?

Can you draw any of the images projected in the film?

Which instruments can you hear in the music?

Are you aware of other sounds? What do they make you think of?

Make sketches of some of the still positions, balances and lifts

Who breaks free from the group & uses naturalistic gestures to direct the action?

What happens to the tall male dancer towards the end of the scene?

SIGNIFIERS	DESCRIPTION	EFFECTS
VISUALS	<p>Lab coats, laboratory apparatus, sparks and flashes of electricity, frogs in petri dishes</p> <p>Human electrocution image followed by a sideways mechanical shutter effect</p>	<p>Scientific experiments in electricity; Frankenstein. Death by electrocution. Stark, cruel, brutal, functional</p>
SOUND	<p>Electrical fizzes at the start disappear inside ascending and descending string arpeggios and are overlaid by new baroque-style music.</p> <p>Beat is relentlessly regular, rhythmic & bouncy; an octave jump on strings is played in a detached, staccato manner.</p> <p>Busy little melodic semi-quaver runs and scales ascend and descend on violins</p> <p>The music is in a minor key & the bouncy rhythm fades beneath the return of sharp, electrical sound effects: hums, buzzes and 'zsst' noises and thunder and more metallic harmonics on ascending violins</p>	<p>Locates the period as early c18th Baroque; the era of experiments in electricity. Comedic, lively, bouncy, twitchy: optimistic, positive</p> <p>Multiple notes all leap about at different times – the frogs have escaped!</p> <p>The bouncy, lively comedic mood is disrupted with hints of pain, cruelty & confusion.</p>

MOVEMENT

Repeated images of flexed knees & feet, sharp twitching gestures of head, knees; arms are inertly tied to sides.
'Frog-shaped' balances, lifts and jumps of varying sizes eventually give way to straight legs and a more upright stance; dynamic remains jerky and sudden
Chris breaks from the group – flambouyant, naturalistic gestures: beckoning, pointing, nodding. He manipulates AI into a standing position & removes his lab coat
AI is hauled up to the roof. He kicks, struggles, then hangs still.

Electrified dead frogs
Comedic light mood turns more sinister with the gradual transformation to more human shapes
Chris is the lead scientist – Frankenstein perhaps? So AI is the monster.
Discomforting: we witness death by electrocution

Summary of meaning, mood and significance

This scene is definitely about frogs. Or is it about scientists? The dancers wear white lab coats and horizontal lines of light streak and sizzle across their bodies. They seem entirely human, watchful throughout, pragmatic and precise, but their movements and shapes are decidedly frog-like. From the watchful stillness of the very beginning, they all suddenly shift to one side sinking over a bent knee. After a short pause, they shift back raising one bent leg in the air with the foot at the end noticeably flexed; then six heads twitch to one side and they drop back into their starting positions. These quirky, rhythmic movements repeat but the dancers begin to fall out of sync and formation and gradually build an expanding repertoire of frog-like jumps, twitches and leaps which are picked up and imitated by the others. The movements come suddenly. They are repetitive but also varied, random and it all happens so fast and there is now so much happening that you're not quite sure where to look or what you saw.

Projected behind the dancers are images of frogs and scientific apparatus – metal coils and wires, petri dishes – and in the soundtrack, there are hums, buzzes and 'zssst' noises accompanying the metallic sounds of bows streaking across rising violin strings. It looks as though the lab-coated frogs are moving in response to electric shocks administered by scientists; and tension is building.

The dancers break further out of formation shifting sideways, diagonally and inverting into headstands in duos, trios, picking up new movement ideas from each other and criss-crossing the space reaching new heights in lifts, assisted jumps, throws and catches. It is as though the frogs are alive and escaping across the laboratory!

An unusually slow melodramatic and ostentatious gesture by one of the male dancers (Chris) draws attention and leads him out of the group to identify him as human and a leader (and probably a bit mad!) One dancer is lifted and placed sideways half way up the back wall. Chris directs the attention of two nearby scientists to assist him in hauling her roughly off the wall and swinging her through the air.

Towards the end of the section, a group of dancers strain upwards with audible gasps, as though the frogs are really alive, surfacing and trying to breathe. Or are these human cadavers and is there a moral difference between experimenting on dead animals and dead humans? Poor frogs. Ten-a-penny.

Meanwhile on the opposite side of the stage, a tall male dancer stands alone, motionless, having been lifted by Chris, carried around and placed on his feet. His lab coat is removed. Next to him two females move busily in precise unison: the positions and shapes they trace with their arms and legs are detailed, angular, awkward and, although now more upright and human, contain elements of the electrified frog motifs seen earlier. Before leaving, they unceremoniously grab the male dancer and tangle him in a silk drape that hangs from the roof. He is hauled 15 ft up into the roof space, where he kicks and struggles, clearly in great distress. Then he is still.

The scene seems to pursue no singular narrative. Instead, it is awash with layers of meaning and association challenging us to hold multiple thoughts and ideas simultaneously: from the very positive life-changing ideas of scientific endeavor, progress and discovery to the discomfiting experimentation on dead frogs and dead people and the downright dangerous use of electrical power in the story of Frankenstein and the punishment of death by electrocution.