



Motionhouse
CHARGE
ELECTRIFYING DANCE CIRCUS

SCENE 3: ZOETROPE

Questions

Do you recognize this special lighting effect?

How does the lighting restrict what you see?

What are the dancers doing when they are lit?

Can you sketch some of the shapes?

How does it make you feel?

Does it remind you of anything?

Did you spot Becky and Danny in a succession of repeated images – what was happening?

How would you describe the soundtrack?

SIGNIFIERS	DESCRIPTION	EFFECTS
VISUALS	Strobe: complete darkness broken every 4 beats with a flash of stark white light	Zoetrope effect
SOUND	A regular, repeated rhythmic pounding beat on drum synthesiser and tambourine. Strings ascend and descend using 'metallic' glissando harmonics	Exciting, energising Eerie, slightly dangerous undertones
MOVEMENT	A succession of 26 images in which the dancers are lit, only when in the air Most poses are extreme: caricatures of figures running mid-flight, jumping stretched and splayed in taut shapes, some facing front, others in profile. 2 dancers connect in an embrace; then move increasingly further apart by degrees. He dives repeatedly towards her but makes no progress. She is always half-reaching an arm toward him	Zoetrope ties in with c18th animation; simple story-telling A human connection: the story of Becci & Danny in miniature? Futile gesture

Summary of meaning, mood and significance

The strobe lights the dancers *only* when they are jumping in the air so their movement appears frozen in time, fragmented and we only see a fraction of what they are doing. The rest of the time, everything is dark. The effect is quite super-natural: there are no joins between movements; no preparations for the jumps or landings, just the extremes with the dancers caught running in mid-flight or fully extended in stretched taut shapes (is this a reference back to the bodies of frogs splayed and pinned in the lab?) It is exhilarating to watch because you don't know how many dancers you will see, where they will be next or what they will be doing.

Some of the jumps are facing the audience, others are in profile and make you think of the succession of still images in flip books. In fact, the idea for this scene was to imitate the effect of a Zoetrope, a spinning cylinder with slits cut vertically in the sides and a sequence

of drawings or photographs on the inside showing something moving in progressive stages. The Zoetrope was a popular scientific toy in pre-Victorian times before electricity was discovered. Why would a Zoetrope be included at this point?

Partway through, there is a distinct change in mood, with a succession of related images involving a connection between two dancers. Becci and Danny start in an embrace then gradually move further apart with each frame. She is always reaching out to him with one arm, as though pleading for something. In the final two images, he is diving through the air towards her but failing to make any progress. Later scenes will place this in context: this is the abridged story of Danny and Becci stripped back to its basics and relayed in a child's toy.

The pounding beat in the soundtrack is energising and makes the heart beat faster as though something "mad or bad" is about to happen.