



Motionhouse

CHARGE

ELECTRIFYING DANCE CIRCUS

SCENE 6: HIVE CITY

Questions

What happens to the moon in the film projection?

What in the film tells you where – and when – the scene has shifted?

The cityscape intermittently disappears and is replaced by what images?

The music was slow and haunting during Frank; What is it like now?

What are the dancers wearing?

What types of movement can you see?

How do the dancers react to the jostling and falls?

What kinds of interactions are going on?

During the headstands, what are the dancers doing with their feet?

What three incidents connect the film to the live action?

SIGNIFIERS	DESCRIPTION	EFFECTS
VISUALS	<p>Speeded up film through a tunnel of space rocks; hundreds of windows lighting up across a city at night intercut with images of electricity.</p> <p>Film is an integral part of the scene – the live movement an extension of the busyness.</p> <p>Three rooms and events are defined by the film: a girl checks the dials on a washing machine in a utility; petals from a vase of flowers are repeatedly blown by a fan into a woman’s face; slices of toast fly out from a toaster in a kitchen</p> <p>At the end, the stage is plunged into darkness except for 2 lightbulbs in upper ‘rooms’</p> <p>Coats and jackets worn over costumes</p>	<p>Fast forward 200 years to a modern city – lit up, busy, energised and running on electricity. The contrast with previous scene lends a sense of reassurance in numbers. Peeking into other people’s lives – pedestrian, a sense of everydayness</p> <p>Isolation</p> <p>Modern day, everyday story</p>
SOUND	<p>Electrical sizzling accompanies a busy repeated ‘double quaver-crotchet’ rhythm which drives the scene along below string harmonics with metallic screeches & an echoing train whistle.</p> <p>Some live warning shouts from dancers.</p> <p>Busy, layered texture becomes a wash of sound around the rhythm</p>	<p>Busy. Traffic.</p> <p>Electric trains rocketing along a track in a tunnel; brakes screeching; metal-on-metal</p> <p>On-going, relentless busyness</p>
MOVEMENT	<p>Running, walking, falling, watching, following, slow motion headstand walking, 1-1 interactions (duets), brushing past and knocking into people, live movement/film interaction of everyday incidences</p>	<p>Frenetic, threatening, isolating, tense, naturalistic, real, chaotic</p>

Summary of meaning, mood and significance

The scene contains some complicated and quite abstract ideas but it helps to think about every element separately – the film, sound, lighting and movement.

The quiet stillness of the moon gives way to a speeding tunnel of space rocks and debris and Frankenstein's monster is transported to a dark alien environment that rapidly lights up, window by window, to reveal a twenty-first century city crowded with towering blocks of bedsits. It is night but thousands of lights are switched on across the city. The contrast with the 18th century Frankenstein era could not be more striking and the difference (as suggested by the rapid searing bolts of light being fired through pipes and wires in the film) is the advent of electricity. The world has speeded up and is unrecognisable. The dancers wear coats and jackets suggesting they are outdoors in the street. Initially, following the eerie loneliness of the previous scene, there is a sense of relief – a reassurance that there is safety in numbers. Movement is simple but fast moving: running, walking, criss-crossing in circles and straight lines. Dancers exchange glances and skim swiftly past each other, until someone is inevitably jolted. This starts to happen more frequently and some fall to the ground. They start to watch each other intently; square up to one another; some confrontational, others try to diffuse tension. Everyone seems to be in their own world and too busy to take time to connect or befriend, so things are getting nasty and the dancers look warily about them to see who will be the next to be shoved or thrown.

Then suddenly the world inverts: everyone is standing on their heads with their feet moving, as though walking, and attention is drawn to three cameo scenes in which live action responds to the film: Naomi checks the dials on a washing machine; Martina irritably bats away petals blown by a fan from a vase of flowers; and, after several attempts, Chris, late for work, manages to catch a flying slice of toast that pings out from his toaster: the wonders of electricity! Life is fast-moving. No time to stop, reflect, connect.

Finally Al (Frank) is left alone on stage, reminding us of the previous scene and leaving us with the notion that dangerous people lurk in city crowds. He pulls a cord to plunge the stage floor into darkness, isolating just two tiny upper rooms on opposite sides of the space. They are starkly lit by bare lightbulbs.