

Motionhouse

CHARGE

ELECTRIFYING DANCE CIRCUS



SCENE 7: AERIAL TOWERS

Questions

Look at the location of the two dancers and the darkness between them.

Where do you think they are?

What does their body language and behaviour tell you about how they are each feeling?

Why do you think lightbulbs are suspended in the space?

What is odd about how the dancers travel?

How would you describe the mood of the music?

Something dramatic happens at the end of the scene. What is it?

SIGNIFIERS	DESCRIPTION	EFFECTS
VISUALS	Two rooms lit by bare lightbulbs on opposite raised platforms; tower blocks between them. A sea of lightbulbs. A single lightbulb lowers over a body	Isolation. Mood is strange, surreal, wary
SOUND	Taps dripping, tinkling sounds, and the drum beat continues. Continuous high-pitched synthesised notes assault the	Indoors in the city in a squalid bedsit with leaks. Restricted, trapped,

SIGNIFIERS	DESCRIPTION	EFFECTS
	<p>brain</p> <p>Intermittent 5-note riff appears, repeats then transforms into a more syncopated idea.</p> <p>Sound fades to one long whistle which segues into scene 8</p>	<p>unable to escape – like a migraine</p> <p>Development; progress?</p> <p>Very tense, unnerving</p>
MOVEMENT	<p>Two women: one clutching her head & pacing, the other watching and reaching out with a familiar arm gesture across the dark space between them</p> <p>Eventually they drift from their rooms across the darkness; one trying to evade the other. When contact is finally made, it is accepted & they move between tense holds & balances a-top precarious group sculptures. The arm gestures recur between sculptures</p> <p>One is thrown to the roof, hangs there for a moment, then drops and falls in a corner; a man rushes over to her.</p>	<p>One is evasive, in pain, trying to escape; the other sympathetic. She wants to help</p> <p>The women move like automatons/puppets; mechanically & awkwardly with arms held out. Wary</p> <p>A death drop: a sudden, dramatic, character-driven event that pulls us back to the narrative.</p>

Summary of meaning, mood and significance

This scene is abstract and surreal so you have to look carefully at what the choreographer has decided to include: a women and a girl, a sea of darkness, a migraine headache, a lightbulb obstacle course, and a death. You may not understand who the characters are now or why the sequence of movements are so bizarre and full of tension but both the characters and the events will become significant to the story.

The women occupy two tiny rooms in tower blocks on opposite sides of the street. They are close enough to see each other but too far away to communicate. The older of the two is pacing the floor and clutching at her head in confusion, or perhaps pain. The younger sees her distress and reacts by moving as close as she can and reaching out; but her efforts are futile.

Then, miraculously, they are floating free of the confines of their rooms, carried high up on the shoulders of two unlit men, through a sea of lightbulbs. This cannot be real; they move like automatons with wooden arm gestures (we have seen this arm gesture before); perhaps this is a nightmare caused by the intense headache. The older woman initially evades the younger but when contact is made, she welcomes the warmth and assistance and a succession of wary holds and lifts ensue where both are entirely dependent on the support

of the other. Perhaps the message is that trust and openness are not easily or carelessly given and received in the city.

At the end of the scene, the girl is suddenly launched upwards – 10 feet into the roofspace. She hangs there for a moment, then drops like a dead weight and falls to the floor. A lightbulb drops rapidly to hover just above her body and a man runs to her. He carries her still body off stage. For now, this incident is out of the blue and inexplicable, but you will see this interaction happen again – same characters, same fall, same reaction – and understand its significance.

When you think of electricity, what words come to mind? Cables, wires, batteries, friction, plugs, sockets, lightbulbs? The earliest breakthrough experiments in electricity involved Galvani's frogs and human cadavers but today (thanks to Volta) we are more likely to think of city lights, busy streets, shop windows, central heating, lightbulbs, machines and computers and not about our own fascinatingly complex brain and nervous system. This scene seems to pit the two types of electricity against each other: perhaps the way we live in cities is making us lose sight of the most important things in life: our own health and wellbeing, and each other.