

| dance touring partnership |



Blanca Li
presents

Elektro Kif

Teachers' Notes

for GCSE, A Level and BTEC students

• Interviews • Background on
company and work • Suggestions for
creative movement tasks

stunning street dance meets theatre

www.elektrokif.co.uk

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1. ABOUT BLANCA LI

Blanca Li is a Spanish choreographer, film director, actress and dancer, living and working in Paris, France. As a child in her native Granada, Blanca represented Spain in the national rhythmic gymnastics team. Her passion for dance and theatre saw her leave home at 17, travelling to New York where she studied with Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey for five years. When she returned home to Spain she set up her own company and was commissioned to make a piece for the World Exhibition in Seville in 1992. The following year Blanca moved to France and began making work there – founding a company, a rehearsal and production space for dancers, and creating a diverse and eclectic back catalogue of pieces that now span two decades. Of her drive and ambition to make work, she simply says this; “I like to give life to all that’s in my brain”.

Over the years Blanca has made work in every genre you can imagine, drawing from a broad palette of movement styles from flamenco and classical ballet, to physical theatre and Hip Hop. She has directed and choreographed for feature films, made documentaries, choreographed and directed musicals and opera, and has created numerous installations and exhibitions. Her work in the commercial sector has seen her choreograph for Gap, Jean Paul Gaultier, Prada, Daft Punk and Gorillaz. Blanca clearly has phenomenal energy and an extraordinary creative drive. She is also trilingual, speaking and working in Spanish, French and English. Here we meet her and find out a little bit more about what inspires her.

Hello Blanca, thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule to chat with us. You clearly have a vast output of work. What drives you to create? How do you combine this with a life outside work? A family? A social life?

Since I was very little I always wanted to tell stories... with dance as my language. It's as simple as that in the beginning, that is what makes me want to create, and keep on creating. As for the rest of my life – yes I think having a good balance between work and the rest of life is very important. My work is a very big part of my life so for me the way this works is that my kids, my husband, my friends, they are all included in my work, they participate a lot. My kids come to rehearsals with me; they are part of the process. My husband is part of the company. If you think about it, this is a very efficient way of running your life actually!

What are your influences – favourite film-makers, artists?

That's such a tough question, there are so many... Well, all the old Hollywood musicals really inspire me – they knew how to tell a story with dancing at the heart of it, not just added on here and there. I take much inspiration from these old movies. I am very much inspired by many different artists, in fact I look for inspiration in art depending on what piece I am creating. Some of my work in the past has been based on a particular painting, but actually in general I often look for inspiration and ideas in contemporary art. Gymnastics has also been a very important influence for me – I started very young and represented my country. Then my years at the Martha Graham School in New York had a big influence on me... but even then when I was still so young, I already was looking for my own style, my own movement. I knew I didn't want to be like anyone else, I was looking for something that was mine entirely and came from me.



Photo by Ali Mahdavi

“Blanca Li is never where we usually expect her to be...”
– Les Inrocks

“Blanca Li draws characters easily and knows exactly how to transform the most daily situations.”
– Le Monde

You have worked with so many people over the years – do you have a wish list? Who would you love to collaborate with and why?

Well... that's a long list! I'll tell you about who I'm working with at the moment. I'm starting a collaboration with a Japanese artist called Nobumichi Tosa – part of the Maywa Denki Artists' Collective. He's very interesting indeed, he makes moving robotic machines – he calls them nonsense machines - quite incredible. Our collaboration will explore how we can dance with these machines. It's going to be very exciting!

Apart from the forthcoming Elektro Kif tour, what other things are you working on at the moment?

I always have many projects going on at all times... at the moment I have another of my pieces *Garden of Earthly Delights*, touring. I'm also preparing to work on a musical, and have a project coming up with a circus company.

You sound extremely busy! When do you find time to sleep?
Oh believe me... I sleep!

Ten years from now, what will you be doing? Are there any other art forms you'd like to conquer?

Really I have no idea actually... I love cinema so I'd be extremely happy to work more in that genre in the future. I also want to work even more with opera and musicals. Having said all that, dance is always at the centre of my work so will certainly be part of my future plans. Yes, dance is my centre...

How are you feeling about bringing Elektro Kif to the UK? Have you toured your work here before?

No, this will be our first time in UK! I have tried so many times over the years to bring my work over to your country, but it's always been very complicated and for various reasons it hasn't ever worked before now. I'm very happy to be bringing this piece to the UK, because the Electro style of dancing is not at all well known in the world, it's a very new type of dancing that has come out of France in the last ten years. I'm excited to see how it evolves, and to watch it grow.

Any messages for your young UK audience?

Well the piece is for all ages actually, but yes we have found that it is very appealing to a young audience. They enjoy it because it is so fresh and full of energy. I hope that young people watching *Elektro Kif* might recognise that you can discover a style of movement on the streets and that it's possible to make that step from the street to the theatre, to get something quite unknown seen by a wide audience. For my dancers, all of whom are very young, it's good for them to see that 'their' dance can make it into big institutions like theatres. This was their dream in fact, that they could one day do this. So this proves you have to think big!

We have some questions for you now, from some of your young audience members in this country – Emma and Samira are both Youth Dance Ambassadors with The Lowry, in Salford.

Hi Blanca! After growing up in Granada, Spain and moving to New York to train with Martha Graham, why did you decide to form your dance company in Paris?

You know, this is a very simple answer. It was a love story. I met my husband in New York, he's French – he had an opportunity to go back to France to work and we decided that it was also a good place to start a company. And anyway, Paris had a better dance scene than Granada so in the end it was a good decision for me professionally too!

Your work has taken you through many artistic forms, from the stage to the music video, working both behind and in front of the camera. Do you feel that your experiences in the world of film have influenced your choreographic aesthetic at all?

Possibly... I don't think of this at all actually. For me, the stage and film are two very different ways of choreographing, so I have a different mind-set when I am working on one or the other. No, it's not something I think of. Maybe instead you can tell me if you think my film work has influenced my aesthetic...

A lot of your work has involved directorial collaboration, especially in the cases of the operas you have choreographed. Do you prefer to work collaboratively, or do you prefer to direct alone and commission your own work?

Well I like working with others, of course... I love collaborating. So yes, if I'm collaborating on an opera for example, I love that dialogue with the director, I bring my ideas, my vision, thoughts, energy, it's an exchange beneficial to both. I really enjoy this process but I always let the director take the final decision. However, when it's my own piece of work, I know what I want, I'm very directive! There needs to be somebody in charge to make the final decisions, I start giving my team my ideas for costume, lighting and so on, and then I let them propose things, but in the end I take the final decisions. So to answer your question I'd have to say that I love both equally... as long as there is a person who has a clear vision of the artistic project.

Your work is very diverse, ranging from flamenco to Hip Hop. Do you prefer one type of dance over others?

No, I love them all, dance is dance! I love the body, I love movement, for me it's like good food, it's a total pleasure. I love the dancer's body; the dancer's body is to me like a brush for a painter. I love it when you have a dancer in front of you and you say 'Yes, can you do this bit more like that, and take this arm further this way...' and so on. And then they do it exactly as you asked, and so beautifully, with real precision... it's such a thrill, it's total pleasure.

Where did the inspiration for Elektro Kif come from, and your own unique style of Hip Hop as shown in the piece?

Well first, the style is not my own! Electro has its own history, it's quite a new style of dance but I definitely didn't invent it. I came across it in a park one day with my children. Some young guys were dancing like this, and I was overwhelmed by the movement. I was trying to film it a bit with my phone so I could see it again and do some research later... I said to my assistant, 'One day I want to make a piece with this type of movement and energy...'. I'm so happy that this wish came true! So yes, maybe my first inspiration for *Elektro Kif* were the movements and energy of those young guys in the park, some years ago...

Do you find that audiences react differently to your work in different countries? Where would you say your work has been the most successful?

Well I think that if you have a good piece... you have a good piece! And the public is the public, whatever country you are showing your work in. I watch the audiences from many different countries and I notice that they seem to feel and react in all the same ways. We are all human beings, and dance is our universal language, so for me that's very simple. Once, I took one of my pieces to a theatre in Tunisia, and for various reasons we had to show it without any of the set and with minimum lights. So the piece was stripped bare... and yet the audience reaction was just as enthusiastic as the previous performance, when we had full lighting and set. This was real proof to me, that underneath all the elements of lighting, design, music and so on, if you have the essence of a good piece... the audience will see that.

You've been quoted saying that you "like to give life to all that's in my brain". With this in mind, you must have very many unfulfilled projects and creations, so how do you choose from your diverse range of skills what you want to create next?

I have a long list of projects, of things I want to do or try... For me it's not a case of choosing the next thing, but collaborations and opportunities arise when the timing is right. I'm starting a collaboration with a Japanese artist next, which I am very excited about.

"Outstanding, funny, intelligent"
– Femme

*"A phenomenon of extravagance and versatility.
Choreographer, dancer, clown, transformist;
she has made an art out of her folly."*
– Paris Match

"An acclaimed one-woman tour de force."
– Time Out

2. ABOUT HER COMPANY AND THE UK TOUR

“Blanca Li is revealed as an artist with unlimited talent, irresistible, impressive...”

– Le Figaro

“...a visual shock as well as an intellectual manifesto.”

– Le Monde

In 2010 Blanca assembled a group of eight Electro dancers to work on this piece, which premiered in October of that year at the Suresnes Cite Dance Festival. Here is a list of who's who:

Direction, choreography: Blanca Li

Dancers : Jeremy Alberge (Jerem), Khaled Abdulahi (Cerizz), Arnaud Bacharach (Ardirx), Roger Bepet (Big Jay), William Falla (Treaxy), Slate Hemedi (Crazy), Alou Sdibe (Kyrra), Adrien Sissoko (Fiasco)

Music: Tao Gutierrez

Lighting Design: Jacques Châtelet

Choreography assistant: Glyslein Lefever

Costumes design: Françoise Yapo

Technical director: Sylvie Debare

Stage Manager: Luigi Totaro

Here we meet William Falla (known as Treaxy) one of the dancers in *Elektro Kif*, and ask about his background and how he feels about the piece.

Hello Treaxy, thanks for chatting with us. Can you tell us about Elektro Kif – if you had to describe the piece in three words, could you?

OK... in just three words it's hard! How about 'energy, youthful and fresh'. In French we say something is "frais" meaning it's fresh, it's cool, it's of the moment.

And does it mean all those things for you when you are performing it?

Yes. For me it's very fresh, it has an explosive energy... It's a dance style, a dance culture that is still quite young, though it's maturing fast.

What drew you to Electro dancing – can you remember when you first danced this way?

Yes I was one of the very first Electro dancers, so I was a precursor of this movement style. I can remember when I first started dancing in this style – I was in a club, a big party in the outskirts of the south of Paris. I remember it very well, it was a great night!

How does it feel to be at the beginning of a new dance style, do you feel like you are making a little bit of dance history?

Yes it does feel a little bit like I'm making history. I was there at the start, so even though many others were there too and founded this style, and lots of dancers are dancing this way today, I have my place in this movement, and in the story and culture of Electro so far. I'm proud of that. My biggest dream is for everyone to know this dance style, for it to be part of life. I live this dance, literally. This dream has been realised

with the creation of *Elektro Kif*. It was a dance from the streets and now it's in theatres, thanks to Blanca. As it evolves it will become richer. And as it gains more profile, more of an audience, it becomes codified, structured and so it evolves further. With Electro in clubs we battle and compete against each other, with *Elektro Kif* we've taken out the competition, adapted the movement for a theatre setting. Blanca added design, soundscore and so on...

So Blanca has been very important for the story of Electro so far?

Yes, Blanca is extremely important to Electro. She took something from the street, from an underground culture and gave it a place in mainstream culture in theatres. This has been amazing. We took four months to create the piece and during that time we developed such a strong connection with her. She is very important to the story of Electro, but she's also extremely important to us. I'm extremely proud to know her.

How much has Electro movement evolved and changed since its birth?

There has been a huge evolution so far... if you look back at the old clips we posted on Youtube, we were so young, the steps were not as clear as they are now. We were at the birth of this movement back then. The steps have changed, the movements have become clearer.

How do you feel about the forthcoming UK tour of Elektro Kif? Have you performed in the UK before now?

Yes, 2012! I'm very, very excited about this opportunity... I've always wanted to perform in the UK, it's an incredible culture for us. Not many Electro artists have had the chance to do a tour like this. London and Paris are so close in distance, and there is such a connection between our two countries, we're all very excited and thinking about nothing else. I think it will be very interesting, a rich experience. It's going to be an incredible experience for me personally. And I'm looking forward to practicing my English because it's rubbish, totally rubbish at the moment!

What do you hope UK audiences will take away from a performance of Elektro Kif? Do you think the piece has a message?

Yes, I think it brings a message that young people, we're doing ok, and we've got lots to share! The title *Elektro Kif* is adding two things together: Elektro, the dance style, and Kif meaning something giving you pleasure, something you really like. I hope young people watching it will think, 'What is this? This is movement that I've never seen before!' For us it's about sharing this movement, sharing this feeling. When we dance, we're not looking for anything else. We need nothing else. It's all good.

And with that, Treaxy rushes off to change and teach a workshop to staff from all the venues showing Elektro Kif on the UK tour. See the Elektro Kif Facebook page for the evidence!

We were also lucky enough to catch five minutes with Glysein, in the busy run up to the company's UK tour. Here we ask her how she juggles Blanca's schedule and the company on tour.

Hello Glysein. Please can you tell us about your background, how did you come to be working with Blanca?

I was born in Chile, I started to dance when I was five years old in Santiago, and when I was seven I entered the National Ballet Conservatory. I moved to France with my parents at the age of ten and continued my dance studies in the south of France in the International Center of Dance Rossella Hightower. I met Blanca Li in Paris in an audition in 1993 for her first piece 'Nana Lila' and have worked with her ever since then, first as a dancer, and now as Tour Manager and Assistant.

What does being Blanca's assistant help her to achieve?

I help Blanca with the rehearsals and supervise the choreography. I do the planning and I check different details about the shows, so Blanca has time for the artistic parts of the different projects.

Can you describe some of your responsibilities as Tour Manager when the company are on tour?

I take care of all the promotion, the logistics, but in particular my work is on the stage: rehearsals with the dancers and checking sound and light with the technicians, because every theatre is different on a tour.

Is it hard having two job titles? Is it easy for you to work in two different roles or do they merge into one?

Yes, they merge into one big super job!

It sounds like Blanca is extremely busy, with pieces touring simultaneously, as well as other creative projects, so you must be extremely organised to manage all this! Can you tell us four important qualities you need in order to do your job?

You need to be organised, to listen carefully, to be flexible and to have a big memory!

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

When I see the opening of the show, and it's great.

What is the hardest part of your job, or the part you like the least?

I like every thing about my job, but some times I get tired of counting dance steps 1-2-3-4 5-6-7-8... 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8... 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8...

How are you feeling about the UK tour? What are you working on at the moment in preparation for this?

I feel fantastic about this because it will be the first time I'm on tour in the UK. At the moment I'm on tour in France with *Elektro Kif* and am dancing in Blanca's other touring piece called *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

How do you relax when you are not working?

I have a son, he's eight years old, so when I'm not working I have fun with him – I go to the theatre and cinema and travel a lot with him, especially in USA.

Following our chats with Treaxy and Glysein, we wanted a UK perspective on the *Elektro Kif* tour. So we met with Tiffany Evans, UK Tour Marketing Consultant and asked her about her job and how she has worked with the company and our UK venues, to get the show on the road.

Hello Tiffany, can you tell us what your job as Marketing Consultant for Dance Touring Partnership entails?

I'm involved from the start of choosing a company to bring to the UK to tour, identifying the right audience for the work, seeing how it will fit into the longer term strategy of the organisation, writing the marketing strategy for the funding application, planning and managing all aspects of the marketing campaigns including print, advertising, distribution, display, mailings etc, creating content for and co-ordinating the online activity, liaising with the venues' marketing teams, and the post show analysis of statistics and reporting.

Sounds like a lot! So how did you come to do this type of work? Did you always want to work in the dance/theatre sector?

My degree was in Business Administration and I originally thought I'd go into the hotel industry. But while I was at University I was involved in all the orchestras, choirs, plays and musicals as a performer. In my final year I was the Arts Co-ordinator, responsible for bringing all the arts societies together for joint cross-art form performances. During my degree I worked at the Bath International Festival as the Marketing Officer and from then knew that I wanted to work in the Arts. I discovered dance theatre some years later, when I was the Head of Marketing for the Wycombe Swan. We programmed a dance festival and one of the companies I saw perform was V-TOL Dance Company. I knew that this was the most exciting art form I'd ever seen and went to work with them. Since then I've exclusively worked in dance theatre.

Of all your responsibilities in this role, which do you enjoy the most or is the most rewarding for you?

The buzz you get when the house is full of excited people waiting to see the show start after months of hard work getting them there. It's also the most nerve wracking because you don't know if they are going to enjoy it or not and whether they will give you good reviews via the website, Facebook or Twitter to bring in more people.

What did you think when you first saw footage of Elektro Kif? How would you describe it in three words?

Funky, funny, exciting – I couldn't stop my head bobbing or my feet tapping and I had a huge grin on my face throughout!

Have you ever marketed a piece like this before?

No. Electro is completely new to UK theatres. It's a street dance form from the clubs and suburbs of Paris and is quite unknown over here. Because the show has a kind of story to it, it's really theatrical and I think will appeal to our hip-hop and dance audiences as well as our theatre audience.

What is the first thing on your 'to do list' when you begin a job marketing a dance company in preparation for a tour?

Getting hold of photos. Often the success or failure of the marketing will be down to good or bad photos!

Is there anything in particular that you need to do differently when the company are based abroad like Blanca Li?

Yes, you have to be quite careful with your English and translating things into another language, in this case French. Some words and phrases that we use regularly to describe the leaflets or programmes don't translate. Also, sometimes the way shows are marketed in other countries is very different to how we do it in the UK. You have to manage the expectations of the company and make sure they know what you want from them in plenty of time.

Elektro Kif is an Electro piece, a new and emerging dance style – how do you approach this in terms of 'selling' something unknown to venues?

Video trailers are a great tool to have. Since editing software, broadband speeds and websites have got better we can use footage to sell the show. It's much easier than trying to describe such physicality in words.

How much contact do you have with the venues booking the piece, particularly in the run up to the tour?

I have a group meeting where all the venues marketing teams come together in advance of the tour so I can tell them all about the show and discuss the online and press strategies. We watch video footage and if we are lucky the Artistic Director of the company will be there to talk about their work. I present them with the print designs so they can see what the leaflets, posters and other front of house materials are going to be like. We discuss the target audiences and various methods to attract those audiences. Then I usually have regular weekly contact by phone and email with them all to help fine tune their individual campaigns and keep up to date with sales figures.

What is next for you, once the Blanca Li tour is underway, or are you multi-tasking and working on lots of things simultaneously?

Once the tour opens I continue to work closely with the venues to make sure they are benefiting from audience word of mouth as well as press coverage and maintaining the online social media. We edit audience vox pops after the opening night of the tour, which is video footage of members of the audience coming out after the show and giving their opinions. I monitor weekly sales and give extra support to venues that might not be doing as well with ticket sales as others. We continue to produce marketing materials like adverts, html emails, newsletters,

special promotional postcards etc as the tour goes on. I will often be starting work on the next tour at the same time and the cycle continues!

And finally, we talked to Blanca about her current company of Elektro Kif dancers.

Blanca, your dancers look amazing – young, committed, enthusiastic. They clearly love the performance element of this work! Do you ever worry or feel anxious about their bodies and the care they must take not to get injured?

Of course! It's a very important part of becoming a dancer, to learn how to take care of your body... I'm always anxious about this for my *Elektro Kif* dancers – to make sure they know how important it is to warm up properly, and to take care of themselves on tour. We've been together a year now, creating the piece and touring, and they have learnt these important things along the way. Though they are still very young people, they are learning that to be dancers in a professional company, that they need to take responsibility for their own bodies, knowing to watch for the signs when they are tired and more likely to get injured, knowing that you need to be on time for rehearsals, not miss your train... that they are not kids anymore.

Some of the dancers (in their biographies) cite you as a very important element in getting Electro dance seen by a wider audience. What are your thoughts on this?

For me when I decided to make this Electro show, I knew it was going to be the first time this new and emerging Electro style was going to be put on a stage for a paying audience. I thought. 'OK if we're going to do this, we have to do it right!' These young Electro dancers trusted me with this and I felt a HUGE responsibility, I was very nervous about it! They were putting their dance, their art, their life into my hands. I hope I've done a good job and that they are proud of what we've achieved so far with this piece... and excited about everything that will come."

"It's breathtaking. Sumptuous..."

– Provence



3. ELEKTRO KIF

“I love it that you can’t easily describe what she does. The shows are simple, but they have great power.”

– Madonna

“Blanca is very intuitive, daring and innovative. She is on her way to becoming one of the greats.”

– Malcolm McLaren

MOVEMENT STYLE

“This show was born because I wanted to work with this new type of dance called Electro. The first time I saw it... there was something very fresh that one can only see during the first moments of a dance that has not yet come to maturity, in the creative passion that the interpreters have when they invent new movements with all their freedom and excitement. At that moment I knew that I was witness to the beginnings of a new dance style full of promise that might one day gather dancers from around the world. I knew immediately that one day I would create a choreography from that unique moment I had experienced...”

– Blanca Li

As with many urban street dance styles, it is hard to describe Electro as a single type of movement. It is a fascinating and furiously fast hybrid of many street dance styles – breaking, disco, vogue, popping and locking. (See Section 6. Supporting Information for a brief history of Electro dance). In her piece *Elektro Kif*, Blanca Li mixes this raw and emergent style of movement with contemporary dance and theatre.

Blanca explains what she felt when she first encountered this style of movement, “I was with my kids in the park, when I saw two students rehearsing this piece of movement and I was fascinated by it. I thought ‘What is this?’ I did some research and found it was a very popular style of dancing with young people in the schools and colleges around the outskirts of Paris. After a few years this style grew and grew, becoming more popular across France. I happened to meet a few dancers using this particular style of movement, which is characterised by very fast arm work found in vogueing and disco, combined with locking, popping and breaking work. It is usually performed to Electro house music. I recognised it immediately from those dancers in the park. By then this movement style had become known as Electro. I started to assemble a group of young dancers to work with me on creating a piece with this Electro style of dancing at its centre.

From the start, I knew I was going to call the piece *Elektro Kif*. It’s simple, easy. In French we say ‘Je kif’ often, it’s everyday slang for ‘I love it’. In English I guess you’d say ‘That’s really cool’ or ‘That’s sick!’ It means the same thing for us, so *Elektro Kif* literally means I Love Electro. It’s that simple!”

CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS

Elektro Kif was four months in the making. Blanca explains how they started work, “We played lots of games. I gave them the setting of a schoolroom, and we worked with props, (desks and chairs). I’d say, ‘OK, the bell has just gone for lunch time... what happens next?’... and they would play with different ideas and scenarios, each time acting and dancing them out. From these little scenes we might agree on something that really felt good or that we thought was going in a good direction, and we’d repeat it and try to get a little deeper. We worked for four months, eight hours a day, five days a week. It was hard and required a lot of commitment and trust from the dancers involved. For these young men I had invited to work on this piece, it was a lot to ask – to take them out of the street environment they were comfortable in, and to put them in a studio relentlessly day after day, to ask them in fact to become professional dancers and actors.

I wanted each dancer to have a character, so there was variety in the piece, and real people on stage for an audience to identify with. So this required every dancer to work towards a character, thinking who that was, how they might react in different situations, I gave them lots to think about too, plenty of homework! I’d send them home at the end of the day and say, ‘OK tomorrow please bring in something your character loves to wear, or your character’s favourite object...’ Just things like that – to help to build a picture for them, to make their characters believable to an audience. These characters were something we worked on together very collaboratively.”

Elektro Kif has a lot of humour in it, with the audience laughing out loud on occasion. For Blanca this came quite naturally emerging from the choreographic process, as she describes here, “Humour is natural for me, it is present in many of my pieces. Many times in rehearsals we were laughing about something, and often I keep those funny moments in the final piece. It is important for me to acknowledge humour on stage, it is part of life.” Blanca explains how the exam-cheating scene evolved, “We all went through school, we know how it is to be in that situation in an exam, to literally have a blank brain, everything you thought you knew has disappeared. We played around with this idea, exploring all the different ways you could try to show your neighbour the answer. The humour came from the exaggeration of each moment.”

There are some references in the piece that fit very easily within the work – for example the computer gaming scene – whilst there are others that provide a beautiful contrast – for example the Electro duet paired with classical music. Here Blanca describes how these references grew out of her choreographic process, “To make a piece in this style of Electro dancing that runs for over an hour, if it only stayed within that context, with one phrase of Electro after another, it would be tiring, a bit dull after a while. I wanted the movement to travel to another place, I asked myself if Electro movement could be independent from the music it is usually danced to. This is where the idea came from, for the duet to classical music – we tried to slow the movement right down to see what

it became. In Electro there is something very lyrical about the use of the arms, I wanted to draw out the lyrical dynamic. Electro dance has a very independent aesthetic to it, it's not like anything else, so I wanted to try other things with it and alongside it. I pushed myself and the dancers with questions like, 'Can we use the floor more, to alter the dynamic?' and "What happens if we slow this movement down?" That is where the slow duet emerged, I think about it like a pas de deux."

DESIGN, SOUNDSORE, LIGHTING AND COSTUME ELEMENTS

Design

The piece has a narrative, following the eight dancers through a typical day at college, in and out of lessons and break times. Blanca explains, "I knew early on that I wanted to set it in a school and give it that narrative. The dancers really related to this setting, being at school or college was very recent for them; it was all so fresh in the memory as they are very young! They got a lot from this as a starting point for our creative work and improvisation. For me when I was at school I remember every single moment in the day was marked by time, there was a clear schedule, and whatever was happening when the bell rang, you stopped and moved to another room, another lesson. The bell was central to the day, it was the element of control within the building, so for me, putting this school bell in the piece was very helpful in its construction."

Soundscore

There is much use of voice in the piece, the dancers are vocal at times, and use percussive beats on the desks to mark rhythm at other times. The piece is accompanied by an exhilarating soundscore that has been specially composed by Tao Gutierrez, a musician and composer with an eclectic background, which he draws upon for the soundtrack to *Elektro Kif*. His score for the piece mixes techno and electro house music with elements of afrobeat, sampling, and classical music. Blanca describes the collaborative process with Tao here, "For me during the construction of the piece I am already thinking very clearly of the music. I'm working on a scene with the dancers and I'm thinking 'OK the teacher's voice comes here...'. So as I was choreographing, the soundtrack was already in my head. This is normal for me when I make work – the choreography happens first, and the music is created exactly for the movement. So it is made to fit perfectly, like an haute couture dress! I gave Tao a video of the piece and we watched it together. I said 'I'd like music like this here with this part, and music like that here with that part...'. That is always the way I work. It's like the movies – the soundtrack is often created afterwards. This way the choreography has freedom and is not confined in its early stages by the soundtrack."

Lighting

"Whilst I'm making the piece I also see the lights in my head..." says Blanca. Her lighting designer for *Elektro Kif* was Jacques Châtelet, with whom she has collaborated before. "Jacques comes to rehearsal to see

the piece and I'm sitting next to him telling him what lighting I imagine for every scene. I'm obsessed with lighting! By the time we arrive at the point in the process where we design the lights for the piece, that's the final part of my input. It feels like we are almost at the end of the creation by then," she explains. "I spend hours with him as he designs the lighting states, I love this collaboration, it's a magical moment when you see your work lit properly and as you imagine it might be. I love to be part of that."

Within the piece there is a specific lighting reference to the origins of Electro dancing in the clubs around the outskirts of Paris about ten years ago. The scene occurs with a simple strip of white light, illuminating the hands and forearms of the dancers as they move them at lightning speed. (See the *Elektro Kif* trailer at 1:22 seconds <http://elektrokif.co.uk/the-show/>) Blanca explains further, "The dancers told me they used to play with the ultra violet lights in the clubs, they would wrap white tape around their wrists, or use white wrist bands, then move their hands and arms in and out of the ultraviolet rays of light. Some of the gestures within the Electro style of movement certainly were influenced by this playing with ultraviolet light. I thought to myself, 'Wow, this was happening at the birth of the Electro movement. We have to put this in the piece.' Which is how that particular scene was born."

Costume

The costumes in *Elektro Kif* are compiled by Françoise Yapo. Here Blanca explains how their collaboration works, "For me the costume is the same as the lighting, I have clear ideas about what I want to see and what I think will work. During the process of the creation I asked the dancers to bring things in to wear, that they felt their character would have. We constructed each dancer's look as we went along, little by little. Then it got to a point where I could say to Françoise, 'OK for this guy can we try him in trousers like this, a top this colour...'. and so on. Françoise then then assembled all the costumes and we tried them on in the studio during rehearsals. She was looking for colours that work well together, what the overall effect is, how certain clothes move... Getting the costumes right is a dialogue that goes alongside the creation of the piece, not just something we add on at the end."

The process

Finally, following months of collaboration and hard work, the piece was made and premiered at the Suresnes Cite Dance Festival, France. Here Blanca talks about her feelings on putting street dance into a theatrical context. "It was a big step for me, to take a piece of street dance culture with its own code that centres around the dancers in a kind of contest, dancing 'against' each other often... it was going to be hard to see it in another context, on a stage. But then I reminded myself that fifteen years ago Hip Hop was not on many stages or in many theatres, and now it is totally part of popular culture. We see it on stage, on film, on the television. My aim was to make this happen with Electro, to put it into a choreographic structure and system."

It's difficult to put them together, make it poetic, tell a story, give it emotion, make it a theatrical piece, to take out some of the competition and battling that occurs in the art form in its natural habitat. For the dancers, used to working in an improvised way, it was hard for them at first to do the things that come very naturally to formally trained dancers, like counting, being in the same place every time, dancing in perfect unison, memorising a whole show. Yes in those early rehearsals it was so hard to work in unison! Then there was the nature of every day rehearsal – each day going over material again and again to refine it – this is the direct opposite of throwing out moves in a club as they are different every time and may never get repeated. For the dancers I was working with this was all totally new. They needed to learn how to be professional dancers, to train every day like this. But at the same time they wanted it SO badly, to get this Electro style to a wider audience, to become respected as professional dancers in their own right... so there was no resistance from them when I worked at this level every day. For me it was an honour to be part of this process.

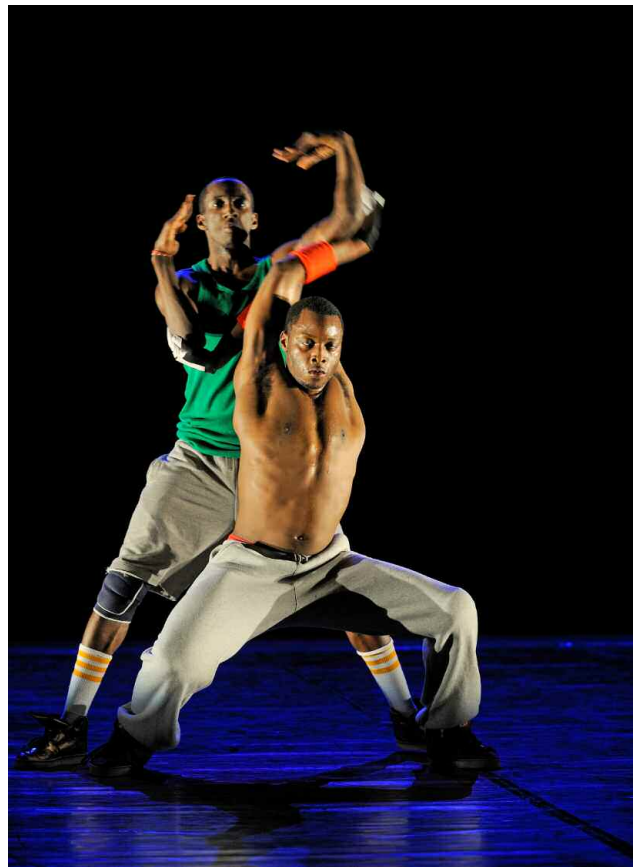
I asked them to start going to other performances, to get a sense of what was possible. I took them to see my other piece that was touring at the time Garden of Earthly Delights, and they started to see how you

don't need to be yourself on stage, they got inspired when they realized they could portray somebody else on stage, to really push themselves in this way. That was very rewarding for me, to see this realization grow for them, and as a result the work in the studio grew too."

Finally, Blanca reflects on how she feels about *Elektro Kif*, now that the piece is made and touring. "I'm happy it's out there now. I'm very pleased with the piece. It has its own life without me; it's growing and travelling. Due to my schedule I'm not always with the dancers when they perform it, sometimes they just have Gyslein, our Tour Manager with them. But they call me afterwards and say 'It was great! The audience were standing at the end!' They are always happy with the piece. And if the dancers are happy, and if the audience is happy... well then I'm happy..."

"...the outstanding, unclassifiable talent of Blanca Li, a choreographer who practices dance-theatre with humour and originality. Through witty and colourful scenes, she translates the nonsense of urban life."

– Le Figaro



4. IDEAS FOR CREATIVE TASKS

“Witty and clever... its striking power is irresistible.”

– Le Monde, reviewing an earlier work

Here are some practical ideas to explore in the studio after you have seen *Elektro Kif*.

ELECTRO ARMS SOLO TASK

“There are not so many places to learn the Electro style at the moment... but we do have this great learning tool, it’s called Youtube! It’s where I did my initial research, and where you can find little master classes in this style. In a few years from now Electro will have spread more widely, but for now the learning happens almost hand to hand between friends and crews in France and only a few other countries (Italy, Mexico, Ukraine). When a new style is emerging, if more and more people get into it, it will grow, like Hip Hop has. It’s a nice time to be involved in Electro – the future is bright...” Blanca Li

(See Section 6 Supporting Information, for a list of links recommended by Treaxy, an Electro founder and one of the dancers in *Elektro Kif*).

Visit the *Elektro Kif* UK tour website <http://elektrokif.co.uk/the-show/> and watch the *Elektro Kif* trailer. One element of the Electro style of movement is swift and accurate gestures of the hands and arms. Have a look at an example at 0:56 seconds. Think of words you might use to describe this type of arm movement, eg. tight, fast, clean lines etc. Use these words and the clip of this gestural movement as a stimulus to make your own ‘Electro arms’ solo.

After you have all warmed up, stand on your own in a space and think about those descriptive words. Using some Electro house music as a sound backdrop, start to try a few simple gestural movements in response to the words and the clip. You could start with something you saw on stage, or in the clips that you liked, eg. both hands over the eyes. Or you can devise all of your own movements from scratch. Keep it simple – go for clear shapes and lines. Start to compile at least 5 or 6 of these movements, more if you like. Keep your lower body at rest and just focus on the arms and hands for now.

Once you have decided on the order of your gestural movements, practice them until you can do them without pausing to think about what comes next. Once you have mastered your phrase and feel confident, start to increase the speed of your movements. Ensure your lines and shapes remain clear and strong each time. Loop your phrase of movement so you can repeat it over and over again. This is your Electro Arms solo.

Ideas for Development

Loop your solo four times so you have a longer movement phrase. Add a sudden pause to your phrase – stop suddenly, midway through a fast movement then resume the phrase.

Let the movement develop to include your upper body now. See the trailer <http://elektrokif.co.uk/the-show/> at 1:09 seconds for inspiration. Allowing your upper body to get involved will naturally alter your centre of balance, and so shift your weight off the spot. Let this happen and see where your solo takes you in space.

Can you still keep your arms and hands working fast and clearly, as the phrase develops?

Think about how the pulsing music is driving your movement. Explore some of Blanca’s thoughts on musical choices for Electro work. Try to dance your solo accompanied by a totally contrasting tune, eg Chopin Nocturne Opus 1 (this is the classical piece of music that Blanca uses in *Elektro Kif*). Go to <http://elektrokif.co.uk/the-show/music/> to listen to the full soundtrack to the piece.

How does dancing a fast Electro inspired phrase, to a classical piece of music change the movement, if at all? Does it alter the way we think about the movement?

Share your solos as a group, first to one piece of music, then to the other, then evaluate each other’s work. How is the audience’s perception of your movement affected?

HANDSHAKE DUET TASK

“I find these ways of saying hello so interesting... Each group of young people have their own codes, their own style. In the morning in the studio when the dancers arrive, they all do their handshakes; some of them are so complex, so fast... we were all laughing about this! So I said ‘let’s explore this a bit more’...” Blanca Li

There is an elaborate handshake and greeting in the opening scene between two of the characters – can you remember any elements of this greeting? Do some research into handshaking – how far does it date back? How does it differ from culture to culture? How far has it evolved and changed in our everyday culture now?

With a partner, start to play around with some simple handshake greetings using just your hands. Try to be simple but speedy, so you build a phrase of movement that you can repeat clearly. Practice it in slow motion to ensure you are keeping real clarity and precision in your movements, then speed it up and try to do it with just as much precision.

Now start to add more elements – let the movements of your hands move fluidly into your arms and upper body. How can these initial movements ‘grow’ into something that involves the upper body? Then even further, perhaps into movement that travels off the spot. Keep exploring and playing with this idea to see what emerges. Remember, professional dancers spend hours in the studio playing with a single

idea, so don't be satisfied with the first thing you come up with! Keep working at it! Often the most brilliant bits of movement happen through happy accidents, so give yourselves enough time to make some of these...

Once you have set a phrase, team up with another partnership. One duet gives feedback on the other duo's handshake duet. Watch it close up and from a distance. Give helpful comments on elements that were clear and others that may have been less so. When evaluating and feeding back on somebody else's hard work, it's really important to think about the language you use. Don't crush with your feedback; instead aim to help each other. So for example instead of saying 'That bit didn't work at all, it was really messy', find a different way of commenting, eg 'I think you could make that bit look really clear by watching each other for the timing...'

Ideas for Development

With your partner explore different levels in space – are there any parts of your handshake duet that could take you into the floor, or up into the space above your head?

With your foursome teach each other your handshake motifs so you all know more material. See if you can all dance both handshake phrases in unison

Try playing with the timing now, dancing them in canon instead.

Stand in a small circle, partners facing each other. Both groups start to dance your handshake motif with your partner, across the circle. See where the two handshake duets connect with each other, either in timing, or literally where arms/hands meet. Make more of these moments by pausing or exaggerating the movement. Start to build this quartet and see where it takes you.

Explore proximity and distance – can you still dance this handshake quartet with your partners on the other side of the space? How does this change the movement or your focus?

Working just with your partner, agree to start in different places in the space, and move towards each other using the beginning of your handshake duet as your opening motif. When you meet in the space, dance the full handshake phrase. Now do this at the same time as your quartet partners do their entrances and duet.

GROUP TASKS

"This final section is exhausting. At first when we had made the piece and were trying to do full runs of it, the dancers couldn't finish it, they were just too tired. A piece like this isn't like doing Electro on the street where you show your best stuff in a single minute. To do this piece you

have to be super fit! I needed this last section to be the most amazing part, where they really show themselves off... I said to the dancers 'If you arrive at this moment and you are so tired you can't dance it well, it's awful!' So they had to learn to work full-out every time we rehearsed, to build stamina and strength. For me, this last section needs to impress!" Blanca Li

Visit the *Elektro Kif* UK tour website <http://elektrokif.co.uk/the-show/> and watch the *Elektro Kif* trailer at 1:32 seconds. Discuss unison work – what makes it hard to dance like this? As a dancer, what things do you need to do in order to perform as a group in tight formation like this?

In a small group of 5 or 6, form a circle and start gently marching on the spot. Keep a good rhythm going and try not to speed up or slow down! Playing a track in the background to help you mark time will help.

Take it in turns around the circle to show a fast Electro style arm movement that can be copied and repeated 4 times. Go around the circle like this a few times to try lots of different arm motifs. Eg all marching, dancer 1 shows an idea, whole group joins in and does it 4 times. Keep marching/marking the beat, dancer 2 shows an idea, whole group joins in and does it 4 times, etc until everyone has had a few goes.

As a group, discuss an order for these movements, which ones work well in contrast to each other, which ones flow well into the next. Take time for everyone to give an idea or opinion and all try things out physically. When you have agreed on a good order, take up your circle marching again and try this order for the arm motif. Do every movement 4 times.

Work on flow and precision – look at the clip again for inspiration! When you are ready, move out of the circle and all face front, making a tight formation. Start the marching/marking the beat and add the arm movements making them as clear as you can. Speed the movement up as comfortably as you can, but keep the pulse steady with the marching legs. Be careful when you are dancing closely with others – be responsible with your arms to avoid hitting anyone!

Ideas for development

Each group shows their piece, other groups give useful feedback and evaluation.

Discuss cues and their importance in a group work. Is one person taking all the responsibility to lead the movement? Play around with the cues, perhaps other people can try to lead or cue the group.

Start to experiment with some freestyle work if any of the group want to try this – so any dancer can step forward of the group and take a few moments to show their favourite type of Electro-inspired movement. The rest of the group keep the beat and encourage your dancing mates!

CREATIVE TASKS USING IMAGES FROM ELEKTRO KIF AS A STIMULUS



Look at these 3 images. Discuss how each one captures the dancer(s) using a different level in the space. Look at the intensity of each image – the dancers are working hard to be clear and strong. This is the result of much rehearsing!

Using each image in turn, brainstorm some words or visual images that come to your mind immediately when you are looking at the photo. Now either alone or with a partner, use each image as a stimulus to create your own version of this moment captured by the camera. Use the words or visual images you have brainstormed as a stimulus to add a layer of intensity to your own still image.

Make sure you really capture the different levels in space that each image shows, e.g. Image 1: lying or sitting, weight right into the floor, energy out towards the audience. Image 2: low centre of gravity, knees bent, weight down towards the floor. Image 3: elevated jump, arms and energy thrown high, using the space above our heads.

Now look at the focus in each image. Where are the dancers looking? Have a think about the focus in your own still images – decide where you want to be looking, why and how.

Link these 3 still images together to form a phrase of movement, in any order that makes sense to you. Think about how you make a transition

from one to the next, how you move your weight and centre of balance into each position. Use some simple additions for each transition between one still image and the next. You could try a melt, roll, explosive jump, run, walk. Don't be satisfied with the first thing you try, give yourself lots of options, plenty of choice and see what feels right and gives you a good sense of flow.

Now start to run through this short phrase of movement, rehearsing it for order, clarity, focus, and dynamic. Ask for some feedback – does it need some variation? How would it look if you added a moment of tenderness? A pause perhaps? Start to play with your phrase and see where it leads you. Don't be afraid to explore options when you make dance. By not sticking to a set of 'rules' you often find the most interesting movements can emerge.

Go back and explore some of the ideas for development from the previous tasks and see how they relate to this one.

“Everything is brisk, new, expressive.”
– Elle Magazine

5. IDEAS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

“With this creation, Blanca Li proves once again the originality of her inspiration, the diversity of her gifts and refined taste.”

– Le Figaro reviewing an earlier work

Here are some things to discuss in class/in small groups once you have seen the show.

THEMES IN ELEKTRO KIF

There are many clear themes in the piece, let's have a look at some of them:

Friendship – can you think of a scene or scenes in the piece that made you think of friendship? How would you define friendship? How do you think the choreographer has portrayed it in *Elektro Kif*? Is there anything you would have added to the piece, or done more of on stage, in order to portray the theme of friendship?

Rivalry – what does this mean? How did the choreographer portray this on stage? Can you think of scenes where the rivalry was subtle? And perhaps other scenes where it was more explicit? Did the rivalry in the piece ever feel threatening? If you think it did, why did it feel threatening? Perhaps you disagree... maybe you feel that the theme of rivalry was explored less overtly? Can you think of a scene you remember that fits with this?

Hopes and fears – how do you think these themes were explored? Can you remember any particular moments or scenes that made you think about these two opposing feelings? Did you find a message of hope within the piece? What was it?

Structure and discipline – Blanca has spoken about how she used certain tools/props on and off stage in order to portray the structures of a school environment. What were they? What other theatrical tools might you use to show this type of setting on stage? Would the piece have 'worked' without these things? How did the dancers portray structure and discipline within the movement itself?

Freedom – what does this mean to you? What did it mean within the context of the piece? Describe a moment when the dancers were portraying freedom – perhaps it was within a particular movement, or maybe it was a bigger part of the action on stage? Think about the origins of Electro dancing which grew as a movement amongst young people; how does this relate to the idea of freedom for you? Can you think of other movements, political or otherwise, that have been born out of young people's search for freedom or change?

RESEARCH AND FEEDBACK TASKS

Do some research on Electro – what can you learn about it from the Internet? It's a new style, so it's still developing and growing... where could you go to for information on this dance style when there isn't much on the web?

Now do some research on Val-de-Marne, the area outside Paris where Electro originated. Compile some statistics on the history of the area, its housing, education, the different populations there, and think about how these might have influenced the young dancers growing up there who started the Electro craze. What is the equivalent of a French 'department' in this country?

Think about Electro and how it must have spread through word of mouth, viral media and social networking sites. Discuss how the use of technology has been central to recent activity across the globe – think about the Arab Spring uprisings across the Middle East, the peaceful protests in London and New York against the banking sector, and any others that have grabbed your attention in recent years. How do you think the use of this new media has influenced the worlds of art, education and politics positively? Can you think about how new media might have had a negative effect on these things?

Imagine a world (not so long ago in reality!) where mobile phones were very rare, computers were only found in office buildings, there were no personal laptops, no Internet or email, and YouTube, Facebook, Twitter etc had not yet been invented. Now think about what this meant to the generation before you, in terms of making and getting access to art (be it theatre, street dance, writing etc). Talk to somebody in their 40's or 50's and older, or somebody who was a teenager in the 1980's – ask them about their teenage years and how today's technology might have changed their own experiences as a teenager and young adult.

Read what Tiffany Evans, Marketing Consultant for the UK tour of *Elektro Kif*, says about how she employs new media to the company's benefit when marketing a show (see Section 2). If you had a piece of art, in a totally new style, to market and get out to a broad audience across the country, how might you go about it using the resources technology offers? And how did we go about this type of marketing work before new media (the Internet etc) existed?

DISCUSSION THOUGHTS FROM BLANCA

*“One of the things I really wanted to get across in *Elektro Kif* is that when you have a problem with somebody, a disagreement... there are ways of resolving it without violence. It's a very important theme for me. In English I think you call it conflict-resolution.”*

Discuss this as a theme in the piece. Can you remember moments where there were clear tensions between the characters, and how you felt these were resolved. How does this theme relate to your own life? Can you talk about non-violent solutions to disagreements in your own community? And on a world stage?

“I wanted to be clear in this piece, that what a person looks like, what they are wearing, their race, origin and culture... all of this does not give you the full story. This is another very important theme for me. I think it's vital that you must not judge a person by their appearance, and

this happens so much from adults towards the younger generation. In Paris, we have 'les banlieues' which means the suburbs of the city – here there is poverty, low incomes, a lot of social housing... in other words plenty of struggle. There is often the presumption that if a young person is from les banlieues – he or she is no good as a student, doesn't wish to work, and just wants to get into trouble. This is not true, in fact often it's the total opposite. I know a teacher who works in a school in this area and he says he has many students who are aspiring to better things, looking for a big change in their life, wanting to work hard, and get themselves out of their situation. In *Elektro Kif* we have certain characters that you could easily judge to be no good based on their appearance, but who turn out to be good students. This was a deliberate action for me. I want to challenge you not to jump to a conclusion about anyone."

Discuss this as a theme in relation to the piece. Which characters could you make assumptions about, based on their appearance? What sort of assumptions might you make? Have you ever felt judged by your appearance or your culture? Discuss this. How do you feel it is best to handle such a situation – by ignoring it or by engaging in discussion?



"...an exuberance so cleverly structured that it seems spontaneous."

– Le Journal Du Dimanche

BREAKDOWN SCENE FOR DISCUSSION OR WRITTEN WORK

Opening scene, where we meet each character in turn, up until the teacher's voice is heard calling order:

"For us this scene developed as an introduction to each person in the piece. It's that moment when you arrive; there are all these greetings and chat, lots of excitement. Then the bell goes and it all stops, it's time to work. This is the same way we work in the studio, the dancers come in first thing in the morning, there is chat, laughter, joking, then I say 'OK let's get to work' and within a minute we are all warming up, working as a team." Blanca Li

For a reminder, look at a short clip of the end of this scene on this link <http://elektrokif.co.uk/the-show/> from the start until 0:06 seconds

What was your reaction to this opening scene?

Movement

Each character enters the space, doing something that gives us a sense of who they are. For example, the first dancer to appear does so playing a game on his Nintendo/PSP (or similar). The second character bursts onto the stage and plays air guitar wildly before yelling and thrusting his fist to the ceiling. As the scene unfolds, all eight dancers emerge and take their places.

Can you remember what some of the individual characters did by way of introduction? If you had to name or label each character according to their behaviour, what would you call them?

Design

The stage is bare except for eight desks and chairs arranged in pairs. What did you think you were looking at when the lights came up? Was there anything on the back wall? What were the characters wearing? Did their costumes communicate anything to you? How individual were they in terms of their clothing? Apart from the furniture, did the dancers have any other props?

Aural

Was there any music playing as each dancer entered? Did the dancers use their voices? If so, how? Towards the end of this scene, high spirits erupt into a bit of chaos before the teacher calms them down. How do we know there is a teacher? How effective is this 'off stage' character?

6. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

CHOREO-CHRONICLE OF BLANCA LI'S WORK

Dance Company Blanca Li

2010	<i>Elektro Kif</i> premiered Festival Suresnes Cite Danse, France
2009	<i>Garden of Earthly Delights</i>
2007	<i>Poeta en Nueva York</i>
2007	<i>Corazón Loco</i>
1999/2006	<i>Macadam Macadam</i>
2004	<i>Alarme</i>
1998/2002	<i>Le Songe du Minotaure</i>
2002	<i>Borderline</i>
1998/2000	<i>ZAP ! ZAP ! ZAP !</i>
1997/2004	<i>L'Amour Sorcier – Al Andalus</i>
1997	<i>Stress</i>
1995	<i>Salomé</i>
1993	<i>Nana et Lila</i>

Director and/or choreographer for ballet, opera, theatre and musical theatre

2010	<i>Very Gentle – Un Parque</i> , an opera by Luis de Pablo, directed and choreographed by Blanca Li, Teatros del Canal, Madrid
2010	<i>Treemonisha</i> , an opera by Scott Joplin, directed and choreographed by Blanca Li for the Théâtre du Chatelet, Paris
2009	<i>Am Anfang</i> created by Anselm Kiefer, music by Jörg Widmann, Opéra National de Paris Bastille. (Choreography for Lilith by Blanca Li)
2008	<i>Enamorados Anonimos</i> , at the Teatro Rialto Gran Via à Madrid Musical comedy directed by Blanca Li, musical direction by Javier Limón, story by David Serrano, Daniel Sanchez Arevalo, Fernando Castets, Olga Iglesias Durán
2008	<i>Le Songe du Minotaure</i> , ballet directed and choreographed by Blanca Li, Opéra de Toulon-Provence-Méditerranée.
2006	<i>La folle et véritable vie de Luigi Prizzoti</i> , music hall performance, directed by Edouard Baer and his company
2005	<i>Bagdad Café</i> , written and directed by Percy Adlon, choreographed by Blanca Li, music by Bob Telson, Barcelonae, MC Nevers, Le Quartz Brest, Maison de la Danse Lyon
2004	<i>Don Giovanni</i> , opera by Mozart, directed by Marthe Keller, musical direction by David Levine, Metropolitan Opera, New York
2003	<i>Guillaume Tell</i> , opera by Rossini, directed by Francesca Zambello, Opéra Bastille
2003	<i>Opérette</i> (Witold Gombrowicz), Arcal
2002	<i>Borderline</i> , a ballet directed and choreographed by Blanca Li, music by Matthew Herbert and Tao Gutierrez, Berlin Ballett Komische Oper.
2002	<i>Le Songe du Minotaure</i> , a ballet directed and choreographed by Blanca Li, music by Fauré, Ravel, Debussy... , Berlin Ballett Komische Oper.

2001	<i>Shéhérazade</i> , a ballet by Rimski-Korsakov, with the Ballet de l'Opéra National de Paris, Opéra Garnier, Paris.
2001	<i>Cyrano de Bergerac</i> (Edmond Rostand), directed by Jacques Weber, Théâtre de Nice
1999	<i>Les Indes galantes</i> , an opera ballet by Rameau, musical direction by William Christie, directed by Andrei Serban. Opéra Garnier de Paris. Reprise 2000 et 2003.
1998	<i>Un Tango pour Monsieur Lautrec</i> by Jacobo Romano and Jorge Zulueta, musical direction by Rüdiger Bohn, Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine.
1997	<i>La Vie brève et L'Amour sorcier</i> , operas by Manuel de Falla, musical direction by Jérôme Kaltenbach, Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine.
1994	<i>Central Station</i> , a ballet chorégraphed by Blanca Li, music by Jean Sébastien Bach for the Introdans company (Arnhem, Hollande). Revised for Berlin Ballett Komische Oper 2003.

Film Credits

Director/Producer, Fiction:

2009	<i>Pour Elle</i> , a short film with Victoria Abril (Canal Plus série X-Femmes, 23 min)
2007	<i>Home Fitness</i> , a short film with Blanca Li, Rafa Linares (MUSAC Léon, 3 min)
2002	<i>Le Poulet</i> , a short film with Blanca Li (2 min)
2002	<i>Le Défi</i> , a full length film with Blanca Li, Sofia Boutella, Benji Chaouat, and 100 hip hop dancers. Musical hip-hop comedy written, directed and choreographed by Blanca Li. Director of photography: Manuel Teran (SPI Jean-Claude Fleury, 35mm 1h34).
2000	<i>La Paella</i> , a short film by Blanca Li with Blanca Li and Lola Mercier (vidéo 7 min)
1998	<i>Angoisse</i> , a short film with Blanca Li. Director of photography : John Mathieson (Première Heure, 35mm couleur 5 min). Projected as part of the performance of "Zap ! Zap ! Zap !".

Documentary Director :

2009	<i>Pas à Pas</i> – Documentary by Blanca Li on the creation of her piece <i>Corazón Loco</i> – Released January 2010 (production Film Addict, 1h30).
2006	<i>Al Andalus</i> – Choreographed for ARTE, produced directed and choreographed by Blanca Li (Les Films d'ici, 26 min)

Music videos and Events

MTV BRIT Awards – Gorillaz (2002); Lilly Allen (2010)

2011	Jeremy Hills – <i>Let the Love In</i> directed by Blanca Li (Suburb) and interpreted by the dancers of <i>Elektro Kif</i> and the singer Paula Ajala King
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- 2007 Paul Mc Cartney – *Dance Tonight*, directed by Michel Gondry (Partizan)
- 2005 Kanye West – *Heard'em say*, directed by Michel Gondry (Partizan)
- 2002 Goldfrapp – *Train*, Dawn Shadforth (Black Dog)
- 2001 Matthew Herbert – *And so on*, directed by Blanca Li
- 2000 Blur – *Music is my radar*, directed by D. Cameron (Tsunami)
- 2000 Rita Mitsouko – *Cool frénésie*, directed by S. Caudron (Ninety Nine)
- 1997 Daft Punk – *Around the World*, directed by Michel Gondry (Vanguard)
- 1997 Khaled – *Le Jour viendra*, directed by Hélène Guétary (Barclay)
- 1997 Les Mamas – *Ammaria*, directed by Michel Meyer (BMG)

Advertisements

- 2011 JP Gaultier Kokorico, directed by JB Mondino (BPI)
- 2004/06 "Nike women" photographic campaign with Sofia Boutella (Works).
- 2005 Lancôme Hypnôse, directed by Javier Valhonrat (Milly films)
- 2004 JP Gaultier Puissance 2, directed by JB Mondino (BPI)
- 2004 Prada Thunder perfect Mind, directed by Jordan & Ridley Scott (RSA)
- 1999 Perrier, directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud (Franco American)
- 1999 GAP, directed by Michel Gondry (Partizan, Los Angeles)
- 1997 Findus, directed by Hélène Guétary (Planète Spots)
- 1997 Cegetel, directed by Roland Joffé (Pirates)
- 1995 Perrier Sensations, directed by Tarsem (Planète Spots)

ARTICLES/LINKS OF INTEREST

- <http://www.blancali.com/en/e/2/focus> Blanca Li's website with full information about all her past productions
- <http://www.blancali.com/en/s/6/studios-calentito> the studios where Blanca's company is based and where she creates her work
- <http://www.elektrokif.co.uk/> the Dance Touring Partnership UK tour website for *Elektro Kif*

ELECTRO RELATED LINKS

These links are recommended by Treaxy, one of the dancers in *Elektro Kif* and a pioneer in the original Electro underground movement:

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpJoj4_ywAg The Rival School crew (*Elektro Kif* dancers) showing their freestyle moves at the Grand Palais, Paris
- <http://www.vertifight.com/> the official world championships of Electro dance
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fITzG71gqtQ> footage from the 2011 Vertifight World Finals in Electro dancing
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55sy0y6BWHA> Treaxy and Kyrra at the Vertifight Semi-Finals 2011

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=su09rC64FLg> short documentary about the Vertifight Master Championships
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmmaWZEYGaE> Electro Street (Treaxy's crew) and Say Braah in their final battle in the 2011 World Championships
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7BKpzuXxw8> Treaxy on CNN news
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-720TAiBT8&feature=related> Treaxy in 2009 breaking down an Electro phrase to learn
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEAXN7ckpgk> Treaxy's solo at the 2010 World Championships
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=als90oOSKTW> Kyrra and Treaxy, both *Elektro Kif* dancers in a short film
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnKcts7MD> is a short tutorial to learn a phrase with Alliance Crew
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w38QL_jS8Sc&feature=related Treaxy & Jerem dancing Electro in Montreal
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWMMIqFARMQ> Electro moves from Kyrra & Cerrizz, dancers in *Elektro Kif*, in a short film by Treaxy
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjrL6hssG64&feature=related> footage from Electro master class with Jeremy Alberge, one of the *Elektro Kif* dancers

A SHORT HISTORY OF ELECTRO DANCING

Electro dance was invented by young people from Ile-de-France between 14 and 20 years old and was a significant part of the nightclub party scene in 2000 in Paris and the suburbs (Redlight, Mix Club, Metropolis in Rungis).

This new style grew richer through contributions from battles inspired by the Hip Hop movement, mixing specific footwork with extremely fast arm movements which reference techno, disco, vogueing, popping and locking. As anyone could dance in the middle of the street, as they might on a real dance floor, Electro dance was quickly established through word of mouth, online videos and during the Techno Parade in Paris in 2007.

From that point onwards Electro crews started springing up in other countries, most notably Italy, Mexico and Ukraine. Electro Dance has since expanded all around the world, with the first edition of the World Electro Dance Championships appearing in January 2000. The main focus however has remained in France, where there are about 15,000 electro dancers, 10,000 of whom are based in Paris.

UK TOUR 2012 INFORMATION

Dance Touring Partnership

Formed in 2002, Dance Touring Partnership (DTP) is a network of theatres working together to bring exciting and engaging dance to audiences around the UK. It has commissioned new work and, through its national tours of groundbreaking dance, aims to build audiences, increase the range and diversity of work available and encourage new attendees into dance. It also gives people the opportunity to meet artists and experience new dance first-hand through workshops and talks as well as providing useful education resources to students and teachers. The combination of these has helped to dramatically change the face of dance in the UK.

Since 2004 DTP has toured Ultima Vez, Australian Dance Theatre, Jasmin Vardimon, Renegade Theatre, Stan Won't Dance, Theatre Rites, Fabulous Beast, Hofesh Shechter, Tanja Liedtke's Twelfth Floor, Bounce Streetdance Company, Danish Dance Theatre and Shaun Parker & Company.

To find out more about DTP and sign up to receive updates about future tours visit www.dancetouringpartnership.co.uk

TOUR DATES

10 & 11 Feb	Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield www.sheffieldtheatres.co.uk	0114 249 6000
13 & 14 Feb	Nottingham Playhouse www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk	0115 941 9419
15 & 16 Feb	The Lowry, Salford Quays www.thelowry.com	0843 208 6010
19 Feb	Alhambra Theatre, Bradford bradford-theatres.co.uk	01274 432000
21 & 22 Feb	Northern Stage, Newcastle www.northernstage.co.uk	0191 230 5151
24 & 25 Feb	Sherman Cymru, Cardiff www.shermancymru.co.uk	029 2064 6900
27 & 28 Feb	Lighthouse, Poole www.lighthousepoole.co.uk	0844 406 8666
2 & 3 Mar	Southbank Centre, London www.southbankcentre.co.uk	0844 847 9910
6 & 7 Mar	Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry www.warwickartscentre.co.uk	024 7652 4524
10 Mar	Brighton Dome, Corn Exchange brightondome.org	01273 709709
27 & 28 Mar	Oxford Playhouse www.oxfordplayhouse.com	01865 305305
30 & 31 Mar	Hall for Cornwall, Truro www.hallforcornwall.co.uk	01872 262466

Running time 70 minutes [no interval]

DTP core members:

Danceworks UK & Sheffield Theatres
Dome & Corn Exchange, Brighton
Hall for Cornwall, Truro
Lighthouse, Poole
The Lowry, Salford
Northern Stage, Newcastle
Nottingham Playhouse
Oxford Playhouse
Sherman Cymru, Cardiff
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

POST SHOW TALKS

Post Show Talks and after show events are taking place across the tour. For more information visit the tour website <http://www.elektrokif.co.uk/>

UK WORKSHOP INFORMATION

An Introduction to Electro

For *Elektro Kif*, Blanca Li has drawn together eight exceptional and award-winning Electro dancers.

Electro started in around 2005 in a Paris nightclub, and as a style of dance, it is constantly evolving by integrating aesthetic, technical and musical styles. This, linked with the dancer's liberty to create one's own footsteps and use fast arm and hand movements, characterises electro dance above all else and will make these workshops accessible to a wide group of people and abilities.

Since the creation of *Elektro Kif*, the company has successfully delivered workshops to children, school and college groups as well as professional dancers.

The workshop programme has been devised to support the UK dance curriculum by providing students with the opportunity to explore the craft and process of choreography, as well as the chance to learn repertoire and make their own work. The workshop will embrace existing urban dance styles, particularly Electro, whilst also exploring choreographic principles.

Led by two company dancers, the workshop will begin with an introduction to Electro Dance and its history, followed by a warm up. Participants will then learn a short piece of choreography from the show. They will also have the chance to gain an understanding of the starting points, any specific stimulus and the creative process behind this specific motif within the repertoire. Students will then work with some simple choreographic tasks to help them devise their own movement phrases, based in Electro technique.

There will be time at the end for a short Q&A where participants can find out more about the piece, or ask about life as a professional dancer. This is a beginners workshop so no previous experience of Electro dance is necessary but an understanding and interest in street dance will be beneficial.

Suitable for: Age 14+

Maximum Numbers: 25 participants

Cost: £160 + VAT and local travel

The workshop has been devised by Blanca Li and is delivered by two dancers from *Elektro Kif*. Dance Touring Partnership will send you a booking form to complete with details about the participants taking part, the workshop space provided and travel arrangements to and from the local venue. This form must be completed and returned to Dance Touring Partnership to confirm the workshop and ensure that information can be passed onto the company in advance of their arrival to your venue.



For further information on how to book a workshop, look on the Dance Touring Partnership website <http://elektrokif.co.uk/education/> or email education@dancetouringpartnership.co.uk

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED!

On line reviews

Tell us what you think of the show by adding your reviews to the tour site.

Tour blog <http://elektrokif.co.uk/blog/> – find out what happens behind the scenes by following the company as they tour the UK.

Dance Your City Digital Competition

Show us your dance moves and compete for the opportunity to perform in the Queen Elizabeth Hall at London's world famous Southbank Centre. We challenge you to create a one minute dance piece in front of an iconic landmark in your city, film it, upload it to the Facebook page and you just might be chosen by the panel of experts, and perform on stage at the Queen Elizabeth Hall at Southbank Centre before Blanca Li's show *Elektro Kif!* For more information and to enter go to the tour website and click on the competition button www.elektrokif.co.uk Please read the terms and conditions before entering this competition.

Other links / friends of DTP

Lowry Youth Dance Ambassador Scheme

Two dancers from this scheme interview Blanca in Section 1. The scheme aims to create opportunities for young people with an interest for dance in the North West of England to work with world-renowned choreographers and dancers on a number of levels; whether that be holding interviews, writing reviews, watching rehearsals or being mentored by dancers.

<http://www.thelowry.com/>

Youth Dance England: <http://www.yde.org.uk/>

Breakin Convention: <http://www.breakinconvention.com/>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Design: Andrew Lang – www.anglepd.co.uk

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BLANCA LI



"Totally mad but wonderful."
– Ouest France

www.elektrokif.co.uk

| dance touring partnership |