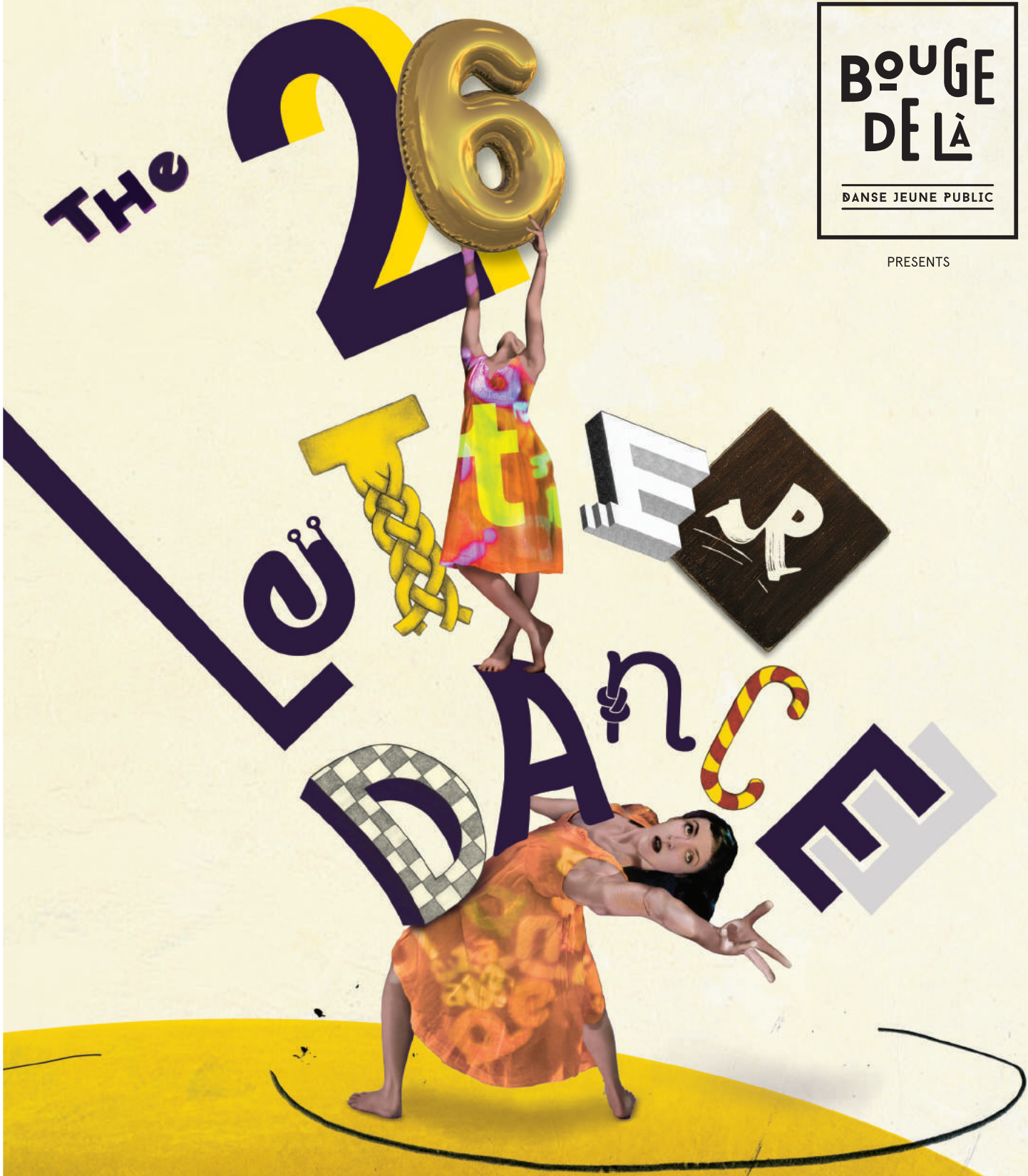


**BOUGE
DE LÀ**
DANSE JEUNE PUBLIC

PRESENTS



THE 26 LETTER DANCE

**TEACHER'S
GUIDE**



WELCOME!

Dear Teachers,

We have prepared a few ideas for you to explore and think about to complement your attendance at Bouge de là's new creation, *The 26 Letter Dance*.

We believe that attending a dance performance with children is an extraordinarily stimulating and rewarding activity. Therefore, we think that some in-class preparation can only increase the children's fun—and yours!—in the theatre hall. Discussing the event after the outing is also relevant because children can talk about what they saw, which will reinforce their dance experience.

In the following pages, we provide a few tools to help you better understand the topics covered in this new work, with the goal of effectively supporting your approach with the children before and after attending this cultural event.

First, we suggest you introduce *Bouge de là* (page 3), and *The 26 Letter Dance* (page 4). You can then provide the backdrop to the creation of the work (page 5). Page 6 presents the show, and the world of dance with students is outlined on page 7; on pages 10 and 11, we offer you a few additional activities to facilitate the experience before and after the performance, respectively. In addition, we have included a fun alphabet bibliography on page 12, which I had the pleasure of discovering during my creative process and which provided me with much food for thought.

Alternately, you can use this teacher's guide as you wish!

We always welcome your students' input after their cultural outing and solicit their feedback about the performances and our activities. Feel free to send them to us.

Enjoy your discoveries!

Hélène Langevin
Artistic Director and Choreographer

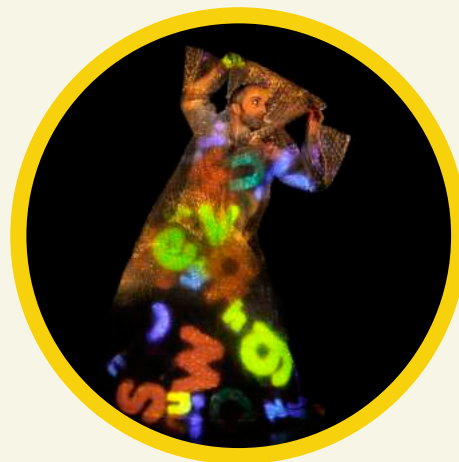


BOUGE DE LÀ

Founded in 2000 under the artistic direction of H el ene Langevin, Bouge de l a remains one of the rare professional dance companies in Qu ebec devoted exclusively to creating dance presentations for children. The company presents contemporary dance performances filled with humour and poetry, combining many artistic disciplines such as video, theatre and shadow puppets. Perhaps you might have seen one of the company's past performances, including *Bedtime!*, *The Studio*, *Old Thomas and the Little Fairy* or *Like the 5 Fingers on your Hand...* *The 26 Letter Dance* is the 7th dance piece by Bouge de l a.



THE 26 LETTER DANCE



THE SHOW

An interactive, multidisciplinary alphabet primer, *The 26 Letter Dance* is a journey into the world of letters and words. Physically and intellectually engaged in the piece, the young spectator is an active participant in this kaleidoscope rich in colours and textured dance.

In this bold and playful work, the choreographer H  l  ne Langevin invites children to take part in a unique experience in which they not only see a dance performance but actively *participate* in the various tableaux that punctuate the piece—loosely structured miniatures. The show gets underway with A of course, with Z being the last to take its leave. In between, the letters in this alphabet book embody a plethora of words, meanings, emotions and tones of voice.

The 26 Letter Dance is a contemporary poetic piece that expands the frontiers of performance for young audiences and turns the conventions of theatre inside out.

EXPLAINING THE SHOW TO CHILDREN

Here is how you can present *The 26 Letter Dance* to your students:

“*The 26 Letter Dance* is an **alphabet primer** that is danced, not an alphabet *about* dance. The performance by creator H  l  ne Langevin, whose job is that of a *choreographer*, differs from traditional alphabet primers. The choreographer presents each letter of the alphabet at random, on stage, through dance and performers. Your job is to find the word(s) the performers are showing you through dance, costumes, decorations or lighting...

For example, let’s take the letter S. When you go to a performance, you might notice that dancers are not going about barefoot. They are wearing...*socks!*

See? It’s not hard. Some words will be easy to guess by looking at the letters, others will be a little more challenging. This performance is like a game. Even better, it’s a search for words. Isn’t that fun?”

P

THE PROCESS



AN INTERVIEW WITH H  L  NE LANGEVIN

What made you think of creating a work about an alphabet primer?

The idea came to me during a tour of my piece *Old Thomas and the Little Fairy* in British Columbia, in 2011. I wanted to create a dance performance featuring words as the main characters.

What inspired you to create your own alphabet primer?

I enjoyed looking for inspiration in children's libraries and bookstores, where I noticed many types of ABC books. Among the most common styles, for instance, are the ones presenting letters stylishly, linking a word and an image, as shown in the AB  C  Daire collection of   ditions l'  dune. I flipped through a few books that represented each letter with many images, but with no words. As a reader, I had to find the words that matched the images illustrating the letter. I really liked this game, which made me guess the words, instantly turning me into an active reader. I came away with the idea of introducing the letters of the alphabet without immediately giving away the word that comes with the image.

We have prepared a bibliography of original alphabet primers to explore with your students, on page 12.

Note:

Do not provide the answer to the next question until you have seen the performance.

What does the strange faceless character represent?

As we were exploring costumes and balloons with interior lights, an unexpected character was born: a white, luminescent balloon inside one of the dancers' black hoodie hoods began the transformative process. This balloon became a sort of blank face—colourless and genderless—and the created character with these extraordinary features naturally found its way into the performance. In this intriguing character, I see the look of someone who either is illiterate, speaks neither English nor French, or hasn't yet acquired the language codes commonly used around them. This character curiously looks at the letters, clearly wanting to understand them and to write words with them. In fact, this character will write only a single word: the last word.

“After seeing the performance, what or who do you think this character is?”

ABOUT THE SHOW



They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. Well, H el ene Langevin believes that a dance is worth a thousand pictures. Think of this performance—and, by extension, contemporary dance—as an open book, where one’s interpretation is extremely personal.

It is important to recognize that *The 26 Letter Dance* breaks down the fourth wall. You may want to explain this concept to the students and talk about what is expected of them during the performance.

At various moments during the performance, performers may ask the audience questions. We expect audience members to answer, of course. Now that the fourth wall has disappeared, the child should feel entitled to name letters and take a guess at finding words. **Let the children take part in this activity; never shush the children or ask them to be quiet.** When the students speak out, they are simply showing their understanding that — they have every right to take part in the action — the performance is thus successful. Our goal is to create a communicative environment between the performers and the audience, making way for a shared experience. The performance was designed to monitor children’s reactions. **We should expect and welcome their reactions.**

SHH! is the only “word” excluded from the alphabet primer and cannot be pronounced during the performance.

WHAT IS THE FOURTH WALL?

This is the invisible wall between the stage and the auditorium, between the performers and the audience.

After explaining the fourth wall concept to your students, you might say:

“ You will notice that the choreographer breaks down the fourth wall during the performance. In doing so, she will signal that dancers will mingle, speak to you and wander around the auditorium. You can answer their questions and dance if the dancers want you to join them. This performance is for you, but it is also *with* you! ”

D

ABOUT DANCE



WHAT IS DANCE?

“With dance we use another language with children, the language of the body. It is a means of expression little used in the classroom, yet it opens up a whole new world, a world without speech. It is a language that also allows us to get beyond the divisions of language and culture, providing access to a poetic, universal language [...] Dance is for one and all: girls and boys, the overweight and the skinny, the able-bodied and the handicapped, the young and the old.”*

Dance also means:

- taking delight in body movement
- inventing our own personal movements
- discovering new ways of thinking, imagining and creating
- expressing images, states of being and feelings with the body

Dance has many benefits:

- reducing stress, for a body in rhythmic motion helps clear the mind
- developing kinetic, spatial and musical intelligence
- increasing concentration
- improving posture, musculature, coordination and endurance
- raising self-esteem
- strengthening the individual in his or her basic nature and well-being

* Excerpt from the book *La danse pour tous les enfants à l'école*, by Marie-France Bonnard (Éditions Retz, collection Pédagogie pratique).

WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY DANCE?

“It is not a story with a beginning, a middle and an end, but instead a series of images, scenes that express an idea, an emotion, an expression, a universe. It is not a form that needs to be understood. [...] It is not coded language like classical ballet or a spoken language such as French or English. It is a place where each choreographer invents his own language of movement. [...]”*



TALKING ABOUT DANCE WITH CHILDREN

There are many different styles of dance, from ballet to hip-hop, not to mention contemporary dance, breakdance, tap dance, tango, salsa, folk dancing, etc. The basis of all these styles is the body. The body is the dancer's instrument. The dancer must know and develop her body and work on endurance, flexibility, coordination and agility. People all over the world dance, and have been dancing since the dawn of time.

Dancing is another form of human expression. It is a way of connecting with the self, of clearing the mind and letting the body speak! Dancing is a great source of joy, whether dancing alone or with others.

“ How would you describe dance?

Do you dance at home?

When do you dance?

Who do you dance with?

Do you make up dance shows with your friends, or with your siblings?

What do you like about dance?

Do you know different styles of dance?

What style do you prefer? ”

* Ibid.



A ACTIVITIES

To express itself fully, dance requires space! For all dance activities, we recommend clearing desks from the centre of the classroom to make space and allow for easy movement without injury. If you have only a little space, divide the group in two for ease of exploration.

Activities may be adapted for any level from kindergarten to upper primary grades. Motor responses will vary with the children's age.

Dance does not come with right or wrong answers. To begin, the body's natural expression must be encouraged and not subjected to judgment.



BEFORE THE SHOW



ACTIVITY 1

The hidden word poster

The little hidden word game in the show you are going to attend is already a part of the visual imagery of *The 26 Letter Dance*. With your students, try to find the words* associated with each letter of the title on the poster (depending on the material you have at hand, you may consult the cardboard sheet, this training guide or the show's official poster). Warning: some words are in English and others in French!

ACTIVITY 2

Body alphabet

Ask your students to form the letters of the alphabet with their bodies. Explore shapes of uppercase or lowercase letters in groups of two, four, eight—or with the entire group—and take a bird's eye picture of your students. Make your own physical alphabet and show your students the results of the activity.



ACTIVITY 3

Words that begin with the letter i

Have fun searching for words beginning with **i**! When your group arrives at the theatre, dancers will ask children to place their words in a hat. Two words will be chosen as the starting point to **improvise** this **i** tableau!

* Answers: **2** double, **L**ong, **E**scargot (snail), **T**resse (braid), **T**ransparent, **E**scalier (stairs), **R**apide (run), **D**amier (checkerboard), **A**ppui (support), **N**œud (knot), **C**ane or **C**andy, **E**mboiter (lock).

AFTER THE SHOW

ACTIVITY 1

Feedback

What were the students' favourite letters? Did they find words for each letter? Do they remember some of the choreographies? If so, which ones? Did they understand the character with the big, luminescent head? How did they interpret that character? What was their favourite moment or tableau?

Ask students the following question:

“ Did you notice which letter was not included in the performance? Which one*? ”

We would like to see your answers to the word search you did during the performance. Write to us! info@bougedela.org

ACTIVITY 2

Dancing to the alphabet in your class!

Here are a few words to explore in motion with your students. You can find others too, of course! The important thing is to find a word that resonates in the body and encourages children to move alone or in groups of two or four.

ACCELERATION

Find a movement that is easy to do, and speed it up.

BATTLE

Two by two or four by four, simulate a battle scene in slow motion, without touching each other but exaggerating gestures and emotions.

MIRROR

Two by two and face to face, imitate as best you can the movements of your partner. Do not move too fast. Then, switch roles.

* Answer: Q, for question(s)!



ACTIVITY 3

Verbs and expressions

Have you noticed certain illustrations in this training guide? Did you find the expressions they illustrate? Talk to your students and try to find other expressions or turns of phrase containing the following verbs. You may use other verbs, too.

FALL

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree; spring forward, fall back; fall in love; fall into line; fall over backwards, etc.

CALL

Call it a night; call back; call the shots; call to attention; call someone names; call a spade a spade; you called?

CRACK

I've heard this book isn't all it's cracked up to be; crack down on crime; the coach thought we'd lose the game, so he cracked the whip on us; crack up; can anyone crack this mystery?

MAKE

The actor made a comeback later in his career; make a fool out of someone; make a living; make arrangements; make sense; stop making faces!



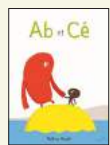
B B b B B BIBLIOGRAPHY IN FRENCH



L'ABÉCÉDAIRE Un alphabet collectif et graphique

Collection de 27 abécédaires, Éditions L'Édune

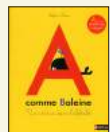
Cet abécédaire est particulier et a plus d'un sens : le mot représenté n'est pas écrit sous l'illustration, mais répertorié dans un index. Il est ludique, pédagogique et artistique. Le lecteur développera sa réflexion et son imagination. Ces aspects novateurs séduiront autant les enfants que les adultes.



AB ET CÉ

Illustrations : Matthieu Maudet
Collection Loulou et Cie, Éditions L'École des loisirs, 2015

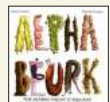
Ab et Cé sont deux amis qui ne parlent pas beaucoup et seulement en onomatopées. Ils nous entraînent dans une aventure dans le monde de l'alphabet grâce à un livre accordéon riche en *tacatac, grrr, ding, klong, zouumm...*



A COMME BALEINE

Illustrations : Delphine Chedru
Série Grands Albums, Éditions Nathan, 2015

Un livre unique et drôle ! L'abécédaire revisité : à chaque double page, l'enfant cherche le mot qui ne commence pas par la lettre présentée.



ALPHA BEURK Petit alphabet marrant et dégoûtant

Textes : Sylvain Dayras, Illustrations : Roland Garrigue
Collection Les Alphabooks, Éditions Gründ, 2011

Dans cet abécédaire marrant et impertinent, tout commence par une devinette et un dessin humoristique, mais se termine toujours par un petit conseil beaucoup plus sérieux qu'il n'y paraît ! 26 lettres pour 26 situations comme vous ne les aviez encore jamais imaginées ! Un moment de lecture réjouissant pour les petits et les grands !



M COMME MAX

Textes : Florence Jenner-Metz, Illustrations : Virginie Cachau
Collection Les Trésors, Éditions Bilibouquet, 2010

Par l'entremise de son alphabet, Max nous entraîne dans son univers. Un univers de sensations, de couleurs, de bonheurs, et aussi de différences. Max est différent... comme tout le monde finalement !



ONCE UPON AN ALPHABET Short Stories for All the Letters

Textes et illustrations : Oliver Jeffers
Collection Children's Books, Éditions HarperCollins

Here you will discover twenty-six short stories introducing a host of new characters (plus the occasional familiar face). From Edmund the astronaut with his awkward fear of heights, via the dynamic new investigative duo of the Owl and the Octopus, through to the Zeppelin that just might get Edmund a little bit closer to where he needs to be, this book is packed with funny, thrilling, perilous and above all entertaining tales inspired by every letter in the alphabet.



SANS LE A : L'ANTI-ABÉCÉDAIRE

Textes : Michaël Escoffier, Illustrations : Kris Di Giacomo
Éditions Kaléidoscope, 2012

Sans le A, carotte devient crotte. À une lettre près, le mot devient autre ; une seule lettre lui manque et son sens a changé. Apprendre à lire et à écrire tout en amenant l'enfant à réfléchir entre deux éclats de rire, c'est la gageure relevée par cet époustoufflant abécédaire.

Most of these books may be obtained by contacting:

LIBRAIRIE MONET
Galeries Normandie, Montréal
librairiemonet.com
514-337-4083



TEAM

THE SHOW

CONCEIVED, DIRECTED AND CO-CHOREOGRAPHED BY
Hélène Langevin

CO-CHOREOGRAPHER AND REHEARSAL DIRECTOR
Jean-François Légaré

DANCERS AND CREATORS

Ariane Boulet
Joannie Douville
Alexandre Parenteau
Georges-Nicolas Tremblay

GUEST CHOREOGRAPHERS

Menka Nagrani (Letter F)
Caroline Laurin-Beaucage (Letter T)
Manuel Roque (Letter U & V)

DESIGNERS

Marilène Bastien (costumes)
Bernard Falaise (music)
Richard Lacroix (set design)
Caroline Ross (lighting)

PLAYWRIGHT

Claudine Robillard

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Martin Lepage

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Catherine Comeau

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Corinne Bève

ILLUSTRATOR

Martin Patenaude

THE COMPANY

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Hélène Langevin

GENERAL MANAGER
Amélie Gauthier

DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT
Mathilde Girard

COMMUNICATION MANAGER
Magalie Morin

BOOKING AGENT, QUEBEC AND CANADA
Élisabeth Comtois (Agence Station bleue)

BOOKING AGENT, USA
Annick-Patricia Carrière (Agence Station bleue)

PHOTOGRAPHER
Rolline Laporte

CONTACT

info@bougedela.org
bougedela.org
514-508-9273

THANK YOU

Bouge de là would like to thank CSDM education advisor Sylvie Berardino for her valuable support in preparing this document.



Conseil des Arts
du Canada

Canada Council
for the Arts



CONSEIL
DES ARTS
DE MONTRÉAL

Montréal



UQÀM | Département de danse

