

Ripopée

Mise en scène / Direction : Christine Rossignol
Direction de personnage / Director of character: Michel Dallaire
Auteurs et interprètes / Authors and performers:
Ariane Cabana, Vanessa Kneale, Philibert Hébert-Fillon, Myriam Sutton
Scénographie / Scenography: Huguette Lauzé
Musique / Music: Fred Lebrasseur
Éclairages / Lighting: Emilie Vachon
Masques / Masks: Myriam Sutton

Educational Guide



EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

Dear teachers,

Some of your students may have already attended a theatrical performance. Others will be enjoying the experience for the first time when they come to see Ripopée.

This is a show that spotlights the art of clowning, bringing children face to face with clowns who evolve in a dazzling environment throughout the storyline.

It would be helpful to explain to younger children who are about to see their first performance that listening is of paramount importance when attending a show. This is especially important when attending a performance that is punctuated with humour and stunning physical feats: kids must be able to refocus and go back to listening.

In this guide, you'll find a wealth of information that you can use in class to prepare your students. It contains a series of exercises they can do before or after the show to better understand or continue on the adventure with Ripopée's characters.

We invite students and their teachers to write to us with feedback on the show. The younger ones may also send us drawings or just a few words. On our website, you'll find drawings that you can print as well as a fun quiz about our shows, available at the following link:

<http://www.laubergine.qc.ca/en/kids/>

Enjoy the show !

L'Aubergine
112-801, 4e Rue
Québec, QC
G1J 2T7
Phone : 418.529.0677
admin@laubergine.qc.ca
www.laubergine.qc.ca



L'Aubergine

Founded in 1974 by Paul Vachon, Josette Déchène and Lina Vachon, the company L'Aubergine has carved out a unique niche for itself by specializing in clowning theatre. To date, L'Aubergine has produced more than fifty theatrical creations for young people and family audiences, leaving a lasting impression on hundreds of thousands of spectators. We're happy to present to you our latest play, *Ripopée*.

Ripopée Synopsis

Clownesque fable about the strength of friendship

Four artists arrive in the night at the place where their show is to be presented. They fall asleep only to discover upon waking that their audience is already there. The show begins, but things get all mixed up: day-to-day life interferes with the performance, forcing it down a new, unpredictable path.

In these artists' hands, everyday objects become tools to create a quirky universe, sometimes bordering on the absurd. The characters let their imaginations run wild to the point where they even lose sight of reality for a while. They dive head first into the unpredictable, with virtuosity guiding their fantasy.

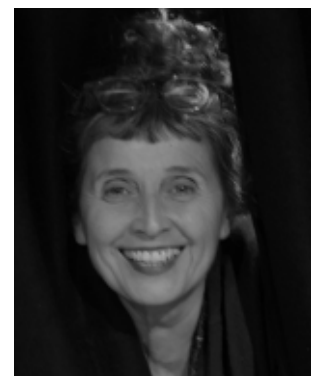
And that's where the real journey begins: for these four pals, time is a great travel companion that sparks their curiosity, stimulates their sense of awe, and enhances their tremendous joy in being together. One thread leads to another as they weave the present moment, driven by their uncontrollable whimsicalness and overwhelming desire to share their adventure with the audience.

A word from the Stage Director

Sure, they should have gotten everything ready, tidied up and put in order. Sure, they should have laced up their shoes, smoothed their hair, ironed their collars and buttoned their cuffs. But the Unexpected arrived with great fanfare and tripped over itself on the carpet. And while it was trying to get back up, the clowns took advantage of the occasion to call up their imagination, talk-text their fantasy, summon their humour and give their quirkiness free rein.

That's how clowns respond when faced with unpredictability: with resiliency, desire, enthusiasm, a zest for life, an adventurous spirit... Call it whatever you want, in fact—as long as one thread leads to another, the endless turn of events never ceases to amaze, weave in surprises, mend pleasure with darned patches, stitch bouts of laughter and skillfully sew it all together into one seamless production.

Ladies, gentlemen and children, welcome to *Ripopée*!!!



Christine Rossignol

The clown and its environment

The Clown

The first circuses didn't star clowns: the public rather came to admire acrobats and animal tamers. In fact, clowns would appear early in the show to play "sketches" and encourage spectators to move inside the circus tent. This is why their brief scenes are called "entrées," French for "entrance." Then, the clowns would play interludes between acts to keep the audience's attention while the athletes would prepare for their next stunts.

The audience was delighted by the clowns' entrées and antics, so they gradually gained status and their sketches became more musical. At the end of the 19th century, clowns shifted to performing music-halls¹, which allowed them to find their way into variety shows and become more verbal. Towards the middle of the 20th century, clowns advanced into theaters where they enriched their characters with dramatic progressions and themes, enabling them to create complete plays.

All artists who set out to discover their own inner clown embark on a journey that takes them deep inside themselves. Discovering your inner clown is an act of creation that requires you to engage your whole being, down to its most hidden dimensions. Clowns bring out their creator's playful spirit and—wanting to have fun at all costs and continue amusing the audience—they don't let social conventions stop them. Clowns aren't afraid to cross the line. They live in the present moment and draw the audience into their world to bring people back in touch with their own humanity.



The Marx Brothers are American comedians from New York who made a career in cinema, as well as on television and on stage.



As Dario Fo², a famous Italian author, wrote, "The clown relies on the voice, body, gestures, music and mask. Clowns must be entertainers and know how to do back flips. The clown must know how to fall, play a musical instrument, be knowledgeable about stage design." Which makes us realize that there is more to being a clown than gesticulating on a stage. It is above all the work of a lifetime on what it means to be human.

The character

It is the characters that bring a story to life. They make us laugh, think and cry, and stick in our memory. A lot of time must be devoted to "developing characters" in order to create new worlds, but also to help the actors get into their roles and play them convincingly. Several techniques can be used to reach that goal.

¹ This type of variety show was introduced around 1848 and incorporated songs, comedy acts, and sometimes attractions. Source: **Larousse dictionary**

² Dario Fo is an Italian writer, direct heir to the Tabarins and Harlequins, who wrote zany and political comedies.

The clown entrée

The clown entrée is an act designed to put the main focus on comedy, whereas the circus disciplines (juggling, acrobatics, music, etc.) serve only as secondary elements. There is not much dialogue: good clowns are never talkative. We must not forget that the dialogue is also subject to change from one day to another to adapt to each audience's reaction and depending on what the clown remembers, the general atmosphere, and the unpredictability of improvisation.

The right word to describe a clown's performance is neither "act" nor "skit." It seems that the word "entrée" comes from the fact that the first comic effect is produced by the very appearance of the clown on the stage. Originally, these entrées served as a mere framework that, after being used over and over again, gradually gave birth to a repertoire of routines.

The clown entrée is one of the most difficult facets of the show to fine tune as it requires extreme attention to detail. It must run like a Swiss watch! Comedy is so fragile that the effectiveness of a comic effect must be constantly reassessed. It takes a lot of patience to develop a gag to the point of being able to perform it successfully. Clowns must continually readjust, through a series of trial and error. Sometimes, changing only one small detail makes the whole act fall flat. This is why a clown entrée sometimes requires a high level of elaboration.

Charlie Chaplin - *La Ruée vers l'or* - La danse des petits pains :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DLdMa98JdM>

Dimitri Clown - *Porteur* - Kurztrailer : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ci2w3hh6Kjg>

Amo Gulinello - *Cirque du Soleil - Saltimbanco* - Clown René Bazinet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rqkQPMwW-U>



Fields and disciplines you'll discover in Ripopée

Makeup

A clown's makeup is not mere decoration. On the contrary, it must complement the comedian's face, features and expressions. In addition, it's not enough to put on clown makeup to convince the audience that what they're seeing is a clown. Authentic clowns find their own personal makeup design. It evolves in stages. What's more, the face alone is worthless if it doesn't harmonize with the clown's look. It's the combination of these two aspects—the makeup and the character—that makes the clown whole.

Masks

Wearing a mask is universal and is not limited to carnivalesque uses. From time immemorial, in most parts of the world, people have felt the need to disguise themselves, whether to invoke gods or the forces of nature, to assert their strength and power or, of course, to entertain themselves.

The mask is an artificial face whose origin dates back to antiquity; however, we don't know exactly who invented it. We find masks in most civilizations where they were mainly used in religious ceremonies.

The first masks were made of tree bark, then leather, and later still, carved wood.



Terracotta figurine of a theater mask depicting Dionysos, 200 BC.

Wearing masks allowed actors to embody characters of different genres. There were four: comic, tragic, satiric, and those worn by dancers. Then, there was the two-faced mask that depicted two different expressions when the actor would present one side or the other to the audience. For example, the mask would show satisfaction on one side and anger on the other, so that the actor would turn and reveal the side whose expression suited the current situation. Using a mask allows actors to use their body as an instrument of expression. "An actor doesn't act under a mask, he acts the mask out."³

Wearing a mask exaggerates the actor's performance, what the character has to say and the situation. It clarifies the actor's body gestures and tone of voice. Many types of masks exist, but the main families are neutral masks, expressive masks, larval masks, and half-masks.

The neutral mask and the larval mask

The neutral mask is a simple representation of the human face that is devoid of expression and evokes silence and a state of calm. This type of mask led to the larval mask, which is an even simpler representation of a face than the neutral mask, with smaller eyes (just two holes) and an elongated, pointed, round, or crooked nose. These masks were created in the 20th century, more precisely by Jacques Lecoq in 1960, at the Carnival of Basel, Switzerland. They were invented to return all the power of human expressions to theatrical play.



These types of mask feature simple and undefined characteristics that vaguely recall a human face. We can see in it the naivety of a newborn, but also a baby's curiosity and maladjustment to the world, along with the intelligence to adapt to it or reinvent it. The mask has no prejudice. It places the one who wears it in a situation of discovery.

In Ripopée, we use these masks to help children discover a mysterious world where movement reigns. Rather than creating expressions, we give life to sometimes endearing, sometimes amusing characters who revel in amazement.

The Trombone

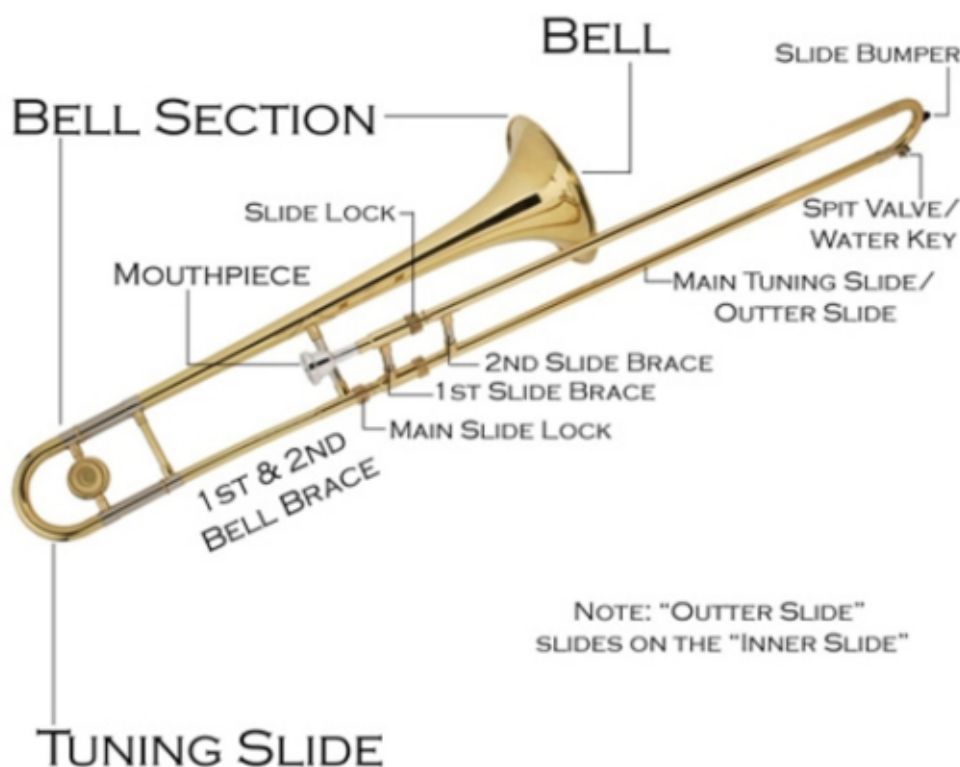
The trombone as we know it appeared around 1450, and was then referred to as a "sackbut," from the French "saquebouter" which is derived from the Old French words "saquer" (to pull) and "bouter" (to push). The trombone is a wind instrument from the brass family, along with the trumpet, horn and tuba. It consists of a mouthpiece, a bell and a long slide that can be lengthened or shortened to 7 positions to produce different notes.

There are two types of trombones: the slide trombone, characterized by the use of a telescopic slide, and the valve trombone. The slide trombone is one of the few wind instruments that does not require the use of individual fingers to play it. It is this type of trombone that is used in our show Ripopée.

The slide trombone's range is lower than that of a trumpet and its brighter sound comes from its elongated S-shape, especially its cylindrical tube section.

It is used in many musical genres, from classical music to jazz, salsa, ska, funk and military music, and is played in symphony orchestras, brass bands, big bands, and more.

Like all instruments with a mouthpiece, sound is produced by the upper and lower lips by inducing a vibration in the instrument's air column. The air pressure creates a wave whose frequency is determined by the instrument itself. The slide is used to modify this frequency. It is divided into several positions—up to seven for the tenor trombone. The slide is in 1st position when it is fully retracted and in 7th position when it is stretched to its maximal length. The player must change the length of the slide by one position to lower or raise the note by one semitone.



EXERCICE BOOK



IDEAS FOR LEARNING ACTIVITIES TO HELP DEVELOP SKILLS IN THE DRAMATIC ARTS

Here are a few suggestions for continuing the Ripopée adventure in the classroom with your students. Our goal is to inspire you and help you make the fun last longer.

Enjoy!

SKILL 1: INVENTING DRAMA SEQUENCES

It is the characters that bring a story to life. They make us laugh, think and cry, and stick in our memory. In addition to thinking about “their own clown,” students are invited to identify the comic effects used by their characters (word games, physical games, repetitions and exaggeration). They can also take utilitarian, everyday objects and attribute comic effects and character traits to them to transform them into something playful.

It is important to develop a preparation sheet for the drama sequence.

(See Appendix I)

THE SCRIPT:

When creating a clown show or a play, in addition to developing the characters, you have to write a script, which is to say, the story in which the characters will come to life.

To do this, you can complete the following activity:

Have the students experiment with different creative approaches to their object (a broom, a pencil, a ruler, etc.). This improvisation will enable them explore the comic effects the object can create and slowly transform it so as to give it a playful function. The teacher can suggest spontaneous improvisations where the clowns must solve a problem by integrating comic effects and a surprising ending.

SKILL 2: PERFORMING

Your students will now bring their characters to life based on the previously created drama sequences using improvisation, with an emphasis on clowning: exaggeration, repetition and all the components of the language of play-acting (bodily and vocal resources) that lend themselves to clownish play.

Example: the same action repeated several times, with a bit more exaggeration each time.

After repeating your clown act a few times, it’s now time to perform your creation for the other students!

SKILL 3: EVALUATING

After the performances, each group shares their reactions, impressions, emotions and feelings.

Example: What emotions did you feel during the show? Were they similar to the emotions of any of the characters you saw in Ripopée?

OTHER FIELDS OF TRAINING

Ripopée is an artistic work that encompasses different fields of training, and most particularly:

THE ARTS: PLASTIC ARTS

Creation of a papier-mâché larval mask:

- Inflate balloons to a slightly bigger size than the children's heads.
- Cut the newspapers into 2-inch strips.
- Prepare the glue. Soak the paper strips in the glue and place them on the balloon, making sure they overlap in a criss-cross pattern. You must cover the equivalent of half your head with 4 to 5 layers of paper strips.
- Personalize the mask by exaggerating the nose, lips and eyebrows.
- Make small round holes for the eyes.
- Allow to air dry at least 48 hours, then remove the balloon.

THE ARTS: MUSIC

Suggestions for music-related learning activities:

- Using various instruments and other accessories, find sounds to accompany different actions (sound effects).
- Using an instrument, produce sounds that express different emotions.
- Using an instrument, produce various rhythms to reflect different emotions.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Suggestions for learning activities related to health and physical education:

Exploring coordination and balance.

In this exercise, students train their sense of balance on a rocking board or rola bola (a board and a cylinder).

Maintaining balance on a rola bola. Beginners can use the wall to help themselves climb on the board.

Many elements are available in your surroundings to develop your sense of balance: you can try to find balance on unstable ground, walk on a ramp or the edge of a wall, walk on pebbles, etc. The smaller and more unstable the support surface, the more balance is required to execute the task.

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Appendix I

Preparation Sheet

Choose your object for the clowning comedy: _____

Choose the context of the clowns' entrée:

Scene 1: The play starts

Introduction of the characters and object

How they enter the stage: _____

What movements they will do: _____

Lines they will say:

Scene 2: The problem with the object is introduced using exaggeration

How will you use the object to create comical effects? Explain. (E.g. physical play, puns, repetition, exaggeration)

Movements they will use: _____

Lines they will say:

Scene 3: The final effect (how the story unfolds)

How will the clowns solve the problem with the object? Explain.

Movements they will use: _____

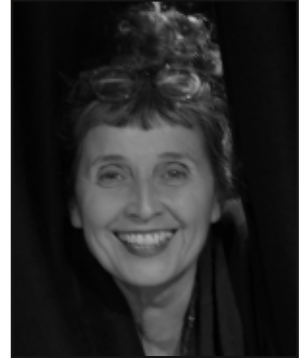
Lines they will say:

Appendix II

CREATORS' TEAM OF RIPOPÉE

CHRISTINE ROSSIGNOL, Artistic Director and Stage Director

Christine Rossignol began her professional career in Tours where she first interpreted characters from the classical repertoire. She made her debut with the company Champ Libre, writing shows to be presented in different settings (streets, rooms, shop windows, etc.). In 1983, she moved to Paris where she worked as an actress and clown, mainly with the companies Extincteur, Les Appicateurs and La Revue Éclair. In 1990, she co-founded the company Contre Pour with Michel Dallaire and staged many shows that toured all over Europe and on this side of the Atlantic (including *Les Hommes en Noir*, *Circo Bidon*, *Cie Wure Wure*, *Cirque Éloize*, and *Hop la Circus*). All while continuing writing and staging, she has also performed in various shows (*Les Girls*, *La Circonférence de Rien*, and *Gold and Finger*, among others).



Christine has since taken to exploring clowning and the writing process while creating shows for both the theatre and the street. In 1997, still working as co-director alongside Michel Dallaire, she founded the Hangar des Mines, a world-renowned clown training centre. She worked there from 2004 to 2016, staging many shows and teaching the sensitive clown. Christine joined the L'Aubergine family in 2009 during the creation of *Burletta*, which she co-staged with Michel Dallaire and Paul Vachon. From 2014 onward, her collaboration with the company intensified. Since then, she has been involved in the creation of *Ç4 D3M3N4G3*, *TerZetto*, *Burletta à 4 temps*, *DODÉ*, as well as *Ripopée*. Christine Rossignol was artistic director of L'Aubergine from 2014 to 2018.

MICHEL DALLAIRE, Artistic Director and Clown Coaching



Michel has taken several courses in Quebec, Canada and in France. He has played in the theatre, taught the art of the clown and also founded *La Bébelle* (Sherbrooke), *The Ratatouille* (Vancouver), *Les Hommes en Noir* (France), and has worked for many other troupes in the US and in Europe. He was responsible for the educational principles of training module used for clowning/music/staging in *Le Hangar des Mines*, a place where national and international artists are trained in the art of the clown, in addition to transferring his know-how to other organizations. Michel Dallaire has been collaborating with L'Aubergine for many years. Along with Christine Rossignol, he is also behind the successes of *Burletta* and *TerZetto*.

HUGUETTE LAUZÉ, Scenography

Having a background in visual arts from Laval University and a great interest for textile arts, Huguette Lauzé was quickly drawn to scenography.

Huguette is a costume and prop designer for the musical ensemble Strada (*La Fanfarnienté della Strada* and the *Fanfare Monfarleau*) and the Théâtre À Tempo (*L'Oubliette*, *Muche truc* and *Bidule Band*). As such, she also worked on several productions at L'Aubergine, namely *Burletta*, *TerZetto* and *DODÉ*, the *Farfaelfes* animations, and more recently *ÖHÉ*. She also regularly collaborates with various productions by the École de cirque de Québec (Christmas cabarets and *Mâts et Cordages*). She loves handmade felt work, which allows her to create original hats and accessories.



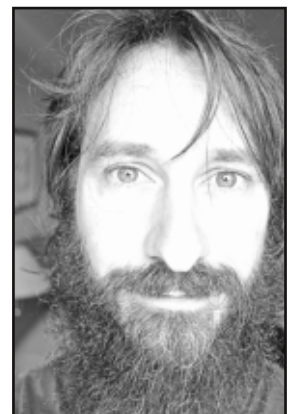
EMILIE VACHON, Lighting



After studying production at CEGEP Lionel Groulx in the Theatre program, Emilie served as Stage Manager for Quebec companies and Assistant Director with instructors and trainers in the art of the clown. She took care of stage management in places such as the Cabaret du Capitole and the la Bordée, and similarly for events such as La Bourse Rideau and the Festival d'été. For l'Aubergine, Emilie has participated in several shows including *DADA*, *Burletta*, *Aatchoum!*, *Staccato*, *Nwolc* and *La Crèche Vivante*. Currently acting as Executive Director of L'Aubergine, Emilie Vachon nevertheless continues to exploit her technical knowledge by designing the lighting effects for the latest productions.

FRED LABRASSEUR, Original Music

A self-taught musician and multidisciplinary artist, Fred Lebrasseur has been exploring the world of percussion since he was a child. A creator of unique sound universes, he composes, directs and improvises with different musical styles in several music formations. He is a musician-composer for the theater (Robert Lepage), puppetry (*Pupulus Mordicus*), animated films (the *NFB*, *Kiwistiti*), visual arts (Claudie Gagnon), circus (*Machine de Cirque*), and dance. Born in Gaspésie and the son of a pedagogue, he teaches musical creation workshops around the world to diverse audiences, including children, professional musicians, circus performers, and theatre actors. Fred Lebrasseur has performed in over 25 countries.



THE PERFORMERS

ARIANE CABANA, clown, acrobat, musician



Ariane Cabana discovered a passion for the performing arts as a teenager and quickly became interested in clowning. As her interest grew, she took clown lessons with Yves Dagenais. She has also practiced figure skating for seven years and holds a second-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do. Her sports background is clearly a major asset as it gives her the strength, agility, and flexibility she needs for the trade. Ariane has worked for Quebec's major circus companies, including *Cirque du Soleil*, *Cirque Éloïze*, *Cirque Akyà*, and *Les Parfaits Inconnus*. The clownish duo *Caberlion*, which she formed with Philibert Hébert-Filion, has appeared on TV shows including *La Vie est un Cirque* on TV5 Monde, and is acclaimed throughout the province and beyond.

VANESSA KNEALE, clown

Vanessa grew up living in New York City, Madrid and Quito. She started dancing at the age of 4 and pursued her stage and dance training at the Centre d'Excellence Artistique of De La Salle High School and The School of Dance in Ottawa. She later completed a B.F.A. in Contemporary Dance and Business at Concordia University (2011). Having discovered the art of clown, Vanessa completed the full-time program of the Francine Côté Clown and Comedy School, and later trained with Joe de Paul and Yves Dagenais. From then on, Vanessa has dedicated her artistic career to clowning on and off stage. Her endeavors have brought her to perform on America's Got Talent and other television shows and festivals internationally.



Equally as passionate about community arts, Vanessa has taught clown and dance in Cambodia at the *Phare Ponleu Selpak Circus* (2012), in Melbourne with *e.motion21* (2013) and in Igloolik, Nunavut with *Artcirq* (2016-2018). With a burning desire for adventure and true love for comedy, Vanessa continues pursue her endeavors in the wonderful world of clown.

FÉLIX IMBAULT, clown, musician



A drummer and percussionist by training, Félix Imbault discovered a passion for acting and the art of clowning when he happened upon the street arts and theatre. He immediately fell in love with what he saw and took it upon himself to get training from the masters, including Francine Côté, Yves Dagenais and René Bazinet. He later decided that he wanted to dedicate his career to clowning, performance and audience engagement and went on to found his own street arts company in 2014. His work led him to perform across Eastern Canada, from Toronto to Gaspé, and occasionally abroad.

A multidisciplinary artist skilled in music, clowning, stunts, juggling, acrobatics and marionettes, he creates magical moments for his audiences, full of surprises from his unique universe.

MYRIAM SUTTON, clown, musician

At the tender age of eight, Myriam Sutton began as a flutist and then perfected her training in the arts-studies program at the Joseph-François-Perrault School, in the classical music option, where she first discovered the performing arts. She first dabbled in the circus arts in 2006. In awe of this new fascinating world, Myriam then decided to devote herself entirely to circus arts and developed a keen interest in clowning.

Graduating from the École de cirque de Québec in 2008, she pursued her studies at the École de danse de Québec to finally complete her training, in 2013, in movement theatre at the Accademia Teatro Dimitri, a professional institution in Southern Switzerland. Through all these trainings, she discovered a passion for a life spent touring around the world. Between travels from Berlin to Mexico City, Lugano, Stuttgart, Paris, Cape Town and Milan, she goes on stage as a performing artist.



Appendix III

Enjoy colouring a Ripopée's scene

