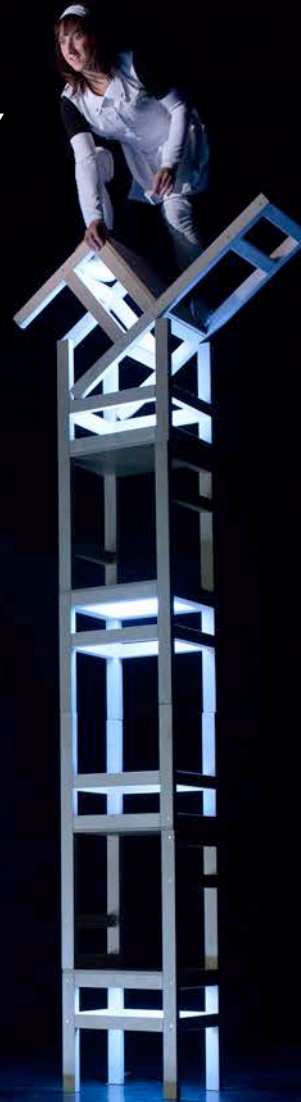


# BEYOND THE NIGHT SKY

A teacher's guide



## The study guide

This study guide is a resource full of ideas and tools to help teachers prepare their students for *Beyond the Night Sky*, an exciting theatrical adventure.

In it, you will find information on the two companies that created the show, their creative process, as well as the central themes of the show.

We hope this guide serves an entry point into the playful and enigmatic world of this theatrical event. We encourage teachers to use the play as a means to open the creative space inherent to every member of the audience and to build on their imagination. As such, through our artistic process, we encourage audience members to develop their own analysis of the themes of the play.

When we free our imagination, and start to think and search for answers, we notice that no perspective is unchanging nor universal. Just like the world around us, things are shifting, transforming, adapting and will forever be subject to change.

And *this* is where we want to take you, to a place of fascination and immensity. We hope that your students will delight in Stella's dizzying journey, as she takes them along for the ride. We hope that they too will gaze up at the night sky with curious eyes, and just perhaps, see beyond...

## Nuages en pantalon – compagnie de création



**NUAGES  
EN PANTALON**  
**COMPAGNIE DE CRÉATION**

Founded in 2001 in Quebec City (the capital of the province of Quebec), *Nuages en pantalon*, means “Clouds in trousers” in French. The company brings together artists from different backgrounds, exploring the expressive potential of a performer’s body, in order to create original theatre for audiences of all ages.

To this day, the company has created a dozen productions in Quebec City, seven of which have toured throughout Quebec and Canada. The company has been to France twice with two of its TYA (Theatre for Young Audiences) productions, and has also performed *Snail’s Shadow*, the English version of their creation *L’Ombre de l’escargot*, in Western Canada.

Ever-present with its audiences, the company has not only led hundreds of workshops for children, adolescents, and adults from different backgrounds, but also participated in various cultural mediation projects.

To this day, over 500 performances have been shared with over 50 000 audience members... and the journey continues!

For more details about the company, please visit [nuagesenpantalon.qc.ca](http://nuagesenpantalon.qc.ca)

## Cirque-théâtre des bouts du monde



The company *Cirque-théâtre des bouts du monde* came into existence in 2012. The cofounders, Gaël Della Valle, Andréanne Joubert and Gabrielle Garant, offer a different kind of circus. Theirs flirts with theatre, mixes artistic genres, and partners with artists from diverse spheres. The company creates and produces circus-theatre shows adapted for touring throughout Quebec's cultural landscape, and the world.

It aims to reach audiences of all ages. The cofounders' creative work aims to foster rewarding artistic encounters through focus on each performer's specialty and uniqueness. *Beyond the Night Sky* is the company's first production.





For many years now, the circus has been a prominent part of my professional life. And for a while now, I've wished for Nuages en pantalon to invite the circus to the theatre. So, when I heard Andréanne Joubert and Gaël Della Valle, of the *Cirque-théâtre des bouts du monde* company, muse about their project *Dans le noir, les yeux s'ouvrent* (the original title), I knew that if our two companies met, the result would be... luminous!

Looking at the sky full of stars, we wonder how we fit in this great universe. And where we come from. Oh, and what was there *before* it all began? The perfect time for pondering those vast and quintessential questions comes at night, looking at the sky full of stars. Those are the very questions that children always have for us as adults. Questions that are so difficult that there are no answers. Questions so difficult they open a huge hole, as vast as the universe.

*Beyond the Night Sky* is a story about curiosity. Curiosity is no small matter. It's what drives us, like an engine. Humankind evolves precisely because we as humans want to learn things and know more. The evolution is constant. And the entirety of human history has danced along that very line.

Curiosity pushes us, with courage, to leave our bedrooms, to explore the world, to discover strength within ourselves that we never knew existed and to emerge transformed, full of questions that will help us to evolve even further.

I wish you a wonderful adventure alongside Stella, in search of the forces that comprise her universe.

Jean-Philippe Joubert

## The show

Combining circus, theatre and lighting technology, *Beyond the Night Sky* draws from children's thirst for knowledge. The audience delves into a playful world of shadow and light, an exhilarating space that leads that common experience: the infinite space around us sparking our curiosity.

## Synopsis

Stella gazes at the night sky through her tiny bedroom window. Questions clutter her mind. Then, as they suddenly begin to swirl around in her head, her bedroom bursts into pieces! Stella is launched into the dark, into space, where she finds herself at the heart of her dizzying thoughts. Through a series of physical, movement-based scenes, she embarks on a journey to rediscover the light, the power of the universe, and the strength of her own curiosity. An adventure that brings Stella to learn about falling, balance and collaboration, opening her eyes to new perspectives.

*“Here. I’m here. No I’m there. Here. And there. I am. I am not. Who am I? Where is light? I don’t know. Too many questions. Only questions. What do I know? I’m Stella. Stella means Star. Am I Stella? Am I a star? Am I a child? A girl? A human? Do I exist? Does my body exist? Does my mind exist? What makes me be me? Does something exist if no one can see it? What exists that I can’t see? What exists? What? Why? How? Me... I... And... There!”*

## Circus arts

*Beyond the Night Sky* explores different circus disciplines. We have integrated a form of lighting technology to each one.

### Cyr Wheel

The Cyr Wheel is an acrobatic discipline invented in 2003 by Daniel Cyr, a Québécois who cofounded Cirque Éloize. Outstretched inside a metallic hoop, the circus performers execute a virtually infinite number of acrobatic figures, each more complex and awe-inspiring than the last. Today, the Cyr Wheel forms an integral part of the circus arts, and continues to reveal new and unexpected potential for stage creation.



### Juggling



Juggling, a precise and agile art, can be traced to the days of antiquity. It may be practiced individually or in groups and involves tossing into the air or along the ground several objects that may be of any kind. This discipline is frequently combined with another circus discipline.

## Acrobatic Chair



The *Acrobatic Chair* is straight and solid enough to allow the balancing acrobat to execute various balancing and acrobatic moves on the ground.

The *Chair Pyramid* is a circus discipline in which the artist stacks a large number of chairs on top of one another, and then performs balancing moves at the top of the structure.

## Stilts

Stilts consist of long pole-like pieces placed under the stilt walker's feet that allow him or her to stand at a height above the ground. They are widely used throughout the world, and for various purposes (i.e. fishing, fruit farming and harvesting, mail delivery, traditional dance, etc.). Street theatre and circus arts started using stilts as a tool for artistic expression, and contributed greatly to their popularity.



## Trampoline

The trampoline is a strong, taut fabric supported by springs in a metal frame, on which acrobats perform various acrobatic figures. It is often used in combination with other acrobatic disciplines to highlight the acrobat's moves. In the show, the trampoline has been designed as an integrated part of the set.

## Sources

NATIONAL CIRCUS SCHOOL OF MONTREAL, "Circus disciplines", Available from: <<http://ecolenationaledecirque.ca/en/school/circus-disciplines>> [8 July 2015]

CIRQUE ÉLOIZE, "The Cyr Wheel", Available from: <<http://www.cirque-eloize.com/en/who-are-we/the-cyr-wheel>> [8 July 2015]

WIKIPEDIA, "Trampolining", Available from: <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trampolining>> [8 July 2015]



## Lighting technology

We have created various lighting systems that are directly integrated into the circus devices and props. We have developed a self-lighting Cyr Wheel, and programmable glowing juggling clubs, enabling us to create dynamic and exciting special effects. We have also made “lamp-puppets”, as well as costumes and chairs that light up. In order to achieve a progression in the lighting intensity, we have used black lights as well as a ceiling grid of light bulbs controlled by video matrix, thus creating a starry sky. We also use video as a light source. This audiovisual medium allows for more interaction with the other light sources.



## **Inspiration**

At the outset of the project, we were inspired by the idea of the first light in the universe. How did it appear? Where did it come from? This brought us to explore the steps surrounding the origin of the universe.

## **The universe's origin**

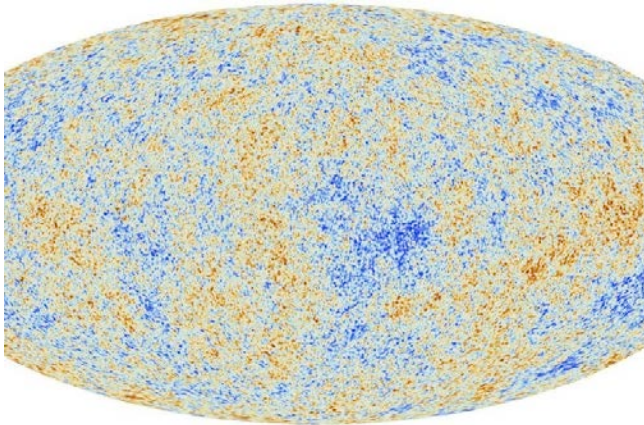
At the start, it is all just a tiny little speck, and the rest was unknown. Then, temperatures rose, combined with high intensity, triggering an explosion. This is called the Big Bang. From this explosion, the four fundamental forces of nature emerged: strong interaction, electromagnetic force, gravitational force and weak interaction. Next, all this energy became matter and from this matter, the first particle of light called *photon* was born. More particles (*electrons, protons, neutrons*) then formed, joined and structured to make up the first nucleus. The formation of the nucleus created space, which allowed light to flow freely. Atoms were created. Thanks to the force of gravity, the denser zones attracted nearby matter and became bigger. Clouds of very hot gas formed in these dense zones. In these clouds, stars shone by the billions. Some of these clouds of gas brimming with stars fused to form galaxies. The bigger galaxies swallowed the smaller ones. In the dominating galaxies, the big stars exploded, died and became planets. Planets were born from the death of stars. Our planet, Earth, is part of a galaxy we call the Milky Way.

## When light appeared

The show's structure mirrors the birth of the universe.

After Stella's Big Bang of questions that leads to her room exploding, darkness is everywhere. Then slowly, light appears. The little girl discovers the forces of the universe, chases after them and gradually tames them. She also becomes aware of her own strengths: her agility, her kinetic energy, her balance and her curiosity. In the show, each force has a colour: green for agility, blue for kinetic energy, red for balance and white for curiosity.

Like the universe that was built on the fusion and cooperation of elements, Stella progressively rebuilds her room using that which she explores, realizes and comes to understand. In the end, her room has grown to be as vast as her mind, opened through her journey of discovery.



*Fossil traces of the first photons captured by the Planck satellite.*

*Yes, this is the first light ever!*

## Metaphysics

*“Looking at the sky is a unique experience. [...] As far back as we can conceive Man’s beginnings, as far ahead as we can imagine his demise, lifting our eyes to the starry sky is the only truly common practice we have. [...] The cosmos is the locus of the true, open, human question.”*

(TRANSLATION of ROBREDO, Jean-François. *Du cosmos au big bang : La révolution philosophique*, Presses universitaires de France, 2006, 127p.)

Metaphysics is an experience of pure enquiry where a basic question leads to philosophical astonishment and wonder. Our ability to be astonished is what brings us to think, to ask ourselves questions. Something happens, and we seek to understand it. Our surroundings influence our energy, our thoughts, and our actions. We are part of a much larger whole, and our desire to understand the space that surrounds us is proportional to our ability to be astonished.

We engage in metaphysics from childhood. It’s a phase in life where we engage in the purest form of metaphysics. In other words, it is a period when we question the fundamental aspects of our existence in time and space, still free of the bias of knowledge and life experience. As they evolve, humans abandon metaphysical questions to replace them with ethical ones. But a child still has great potential for abstract thinking and dreaming that is easily accessible. Its questions are pure, and as is the ability to be astonished.

*Where do I come from? Where was I before that? Why am I here? What is being? What is spirit? Mind? What really exists? What is a thought? Knowledge? Where do ideas come from? What is time? Why do things end? Does the world have a beginning? Will it have an end? Why is the night dark? What is emptiness made of?*

Looking at the sky, we see our life and our world differently. We feel astonishment, a core philosophical emotion, in the same truthful way a child sees the world for the first time. Children exemplify the quality of pure curiosity,

asking humankind's eternal questions for the very first time. We chose to be guided by this precious and wonderful quality in our creative process.

*“Answers cannot be given brashly to these fundamental questions, [...] because if the question is immediate, being part of the human condition, then the answer is a path demanding patience, slowness, but also a taste for mystery, enigma, wrong turns and ultimate revelations.”*

(TRANSLATION OF ROBREDO, Jean-François. *Du cosmos au big bang : La révolution philosophique*)

*Beyond the Night Sky* doesn't provide answers to the great metaphysical questions; it explores them through Stella's journey. The audience is drawn into the little girl's curiosity, which will lead it to discover the birth of the universe.

## **Metaphysics and the circus arts**

Why use the circus to explore metaphysics?

Great metaphysical questions are the essential questions the circus embodies. The acts of juggling, twirling in a wheel, jumping on a trampoline, walking on stilts, bring us to cast a new look on human beings. Watching these artists, we are moved, astonished, and changed in our perspective on the world, seeing it differently.

## Before the show

Why should we prepare for seeing theatre with children? How? These are simple yet essential questions.

As adults, buying a theatre ticket involves taking the time to find out about the show. We know the title, the subject, the artists involved. Perhaps we have read or heard an interview with the artists who've hinted at the form and content of the show. We're curious to see the result.

For students, it's the same idea, except for the fact they haven't quite *chosen* what they're about to see... Time to spike their curiosity! Talk to them about the show, and the information you have gathered from this study guide. Try to imagine the show with them. Fuel their questions, but don't necessarily answer them! The students will discover their own answers in seeing the show.

You will have online access to different resources that complement the show.

On our website, you will find pictures and video excerpts: [www.nuagesenpantalon.qc.ca](http://www.nuagesenpantalon.qc.ca)

The icon "Discover the creation" will bring you to a microsite dedicated exclusively to the creation of our show: [danslenoir.net](http://danslenoir.net)

Sometimes, a picture is worth a thousand words!

## After the show

The show will have sparked various emotions, sensations, thoughts and questions, specific to each audience member. Each person will see, experience, and understand theatre in his or her own way. Valuing differing perspectives and reactions will allow you to stimulate discussion and push those questions further.

The story in the show is based on Stella's questions, and on her journey to better grasp her thoughts on the world. Accompany your students in their thought process. Let them identify the themes explored and define the questions that touched them. Help them share their ideas, and put them in common as a group. Encourage them to map out their thought process, which can lead them to better understand their relationship to the questions they have. Support your young philosophers in their reasoning by facilitating the conversations and prompting new questions, trying to avoid converging thoughts and ideas.

Let yourself be surprised by your students' comments and points of view. Even the creators behind *Beyond the Night Sky* are still learning new things about the show by hearing audience comments and reactions.



Source : UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL. FACULTÉ DE PHILOSOPHIE. «La philosophie pour les enfants à l'Université Laval», Available from : <<http://philoenfant.org/>>, [March 2013].

## **React to the show!**

You have comments about the show?

Your students revealed hidden secrets from the production?

You built a special activity based on the show?

We are always happy to hear from you! Your testimonials are crucial to us. They allow us to deepen the subject matter, perfect the show and improve our pedagogical tools. Thank you!

## **There are many ways to become a creative partner**

Contact us: [info@nuagesenpantalon.qc.ca](mailto:info@nuagesenpantalon.qc.ca)

Visit us: [www.nuagesenpantalon.qc.ca](http://www.nuagesenpantalon.qc.ca)

React, comment! There's a special section just for you!

Follow us on Facebook. Look for Nuages en pantalon.

Write us:

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## Cast

### Production

A coproduction de Nuages en pantalon - compagnie de création, Cirque-théâtre des bouts du monde and LA TOHU

### CREATIVE TEAM

Scenario : *Gaël Della Valle, Claudia Gendreau, Jean-Philippe Joubert and Andréanne Joubert*  
Original idea: *Gaël Della Valle and Andréanne Joubert*  
Writer and director : *Jean-Philippe Joubert*  
Translator : *Danielle Le Saux-Farmer*  
Performers and creators: *Andréanne Joubert, Gaël Della Valle, Gabrielle Garant and Hugues Sarra-Bournet*  
Set, costumes and props: *Claudia Gendreau*  
Music and sound environment : *Mathieu Campagna*  
Lighting and projections : *Jean-Philippe Joubert*  
Glowing circus devices: *Gaël Della Valle*

### PRODUCTION TEAM

Coordinator : *Caroline Martin*  
Technical assistant and stage manager : *Marc Doucet*  
Stage manager on tour : *Émilie Potvin*  
Set and circus devices construction : *Hugues Bernatchez, Chloé Blanchet, Danielle Boutin, Gaël Della Valle, Claude Gendreau, Claudia Gendreau, Cynthia Gendreau, Nicole Gendreau, Dominique Giguère, Janie Lavoie, Hugo Noël and Circus concepts Inc., Dave Ross and Rebounds products, Hélène Ruel.*  
Technical assistant: *Alexandra Gendron*  
Photographer and graphic designer : *Vincent Champoux*

Nuages en pantalon-compagnie de création thanks the LANTISS and Maison de la culture Frontenac for their support during the creation of the project.

Artistic director of Nuages en pantalon : *Jean-Philippe Joubert*  
Coordinator of Nuages en pantalon: *Caroline Martin*  
Artistic directors Cirque-théâtre des bouts du monde : *Gaël Della Valle and Andréanne Joubert*

Photos : Nicola-Frank Vachon