LA DANSE

A Game of Dancing and Social Appeal for 2 to 6 Players
by Michael Thomét

La Danse is a game about dancing, influencing guests, and negotiation during the grand social event of a ball. In this game, players represent social factions, such as kingdoms, who want to garner as much favor amongst the other players' social elite, by showing excellent grace and control of the ballroom floor.

OBJECT

Become the talk of the ball by influencing the most dancers at the ball.

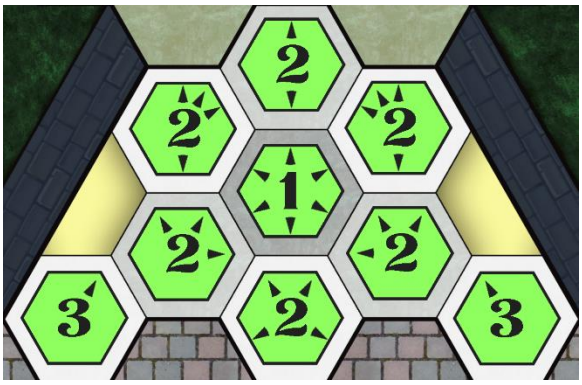
HOW TO PLAY

La Danse is a very formal affair, and it begins before players sit at the table. It begins with an introduction and a negotiation about where each player sits, and then continues play in a series of dances. Before you begin, lay out the board and place six chairs around it, one at each entrance.

Each player then introduces themselves however they would like and then state when they would like to be seated. Players may negotiate for different spots, offering deals such as not using particular dancers for the whole ball, agreeing to not influence another's dancers for the first dance, and others (see Negotiation).

When players have agreed upon a seating order, players seat themselves, in that order, at an empty entrance. When the players are all seated, the first person to seat may move to another empty seat or trade seats with another player (this player is still the first to seat). The last person to seat will decide who is the **host** (the player who will start the first dance).

Each player chooses a color and receives that color's dancers and influence tokens. They place the dancers in the entrance as shown below.



The host takes both the host token and the lead token. The host then decides which direction the first dance will go (to the left or the right) and points the host token in that direction. Then, the first dance begins.

Dances and Measures

The game is played out in a series of dances. A dance plays out in a number of measures equal to the number of players, so a dance in a four-player game would have four measures. When a dance ends, play changes direction. The Host flips the host token to point in the new direction of play.

Measures are where the dancers show off their dance steps. During a measure every player will choose one of their dancers and move them across the dance floor. Since the ball is a social affair, there is always a bit of talk at the start of the measure.

At the start of a measure, players may negotiate to get other players to dance in particular ways. Often times, players will

choose to not negotiate much in the first dance, but as soon as players begin to gain influence players will want to bargain and make deals to gain an advantage on the ballroom floor.

When players are finished negotiating, players will begin announcing which of their dancers will be dancing in this measure. The player with the lead token announces which dancer they will move. Then the next player in play order will announce in kind, and so on until every player has stated which of their dancers will be moving this measure. All the dancers on the ballroom floor will be dancing, of course, but only one dancer from each player will be making grand movements across the ballroom. The other dancers remain in place. If a player is moving more than one dancer this measure (as a result of negotiation, for example), that player will announce all of the dancers they will move this measure. A player cannot select to move the same dancer twice in this special case.

Then, the lead player's chosen dancer moves according to the steps they can take (see How to Dance). The next player in play order does the same, and so on until each player has moved the dancer they announced they would move. If a player is unable to move that dancer, then the player forfeits moving in this measure. Again, if a player is moving more than one dancer this measure, the player moves them at the same time when their turn to move comes up.

Finally, each players check to see if their dancer influences any other dancer, and if their dancer is influenced during the dance (see How Dancer's Influence). At this time, dancers can be reclaimed and freed of another player's influence. Keep in mind that only the dancers who danced this measure can influence the dancers who did not dance. Beware, too, that any dancer who moves is vulnerable to the influence of those around them.

After dancers are finished influencing, the measure ends. When a measure ends, the person with the lead token passes it to the person before them in play. This is opposite play order, so if the host token is pointing to the right, the lead token is passed to the left. A new measure will begin, starting with the person who now has the lead token.

A dance ends when the lead is passed back to the host player. As mentioned earlier, the host will then turn the host token the opposite direction, showing that play now passes the other direction. The new dance will start, and the host will be the first lead for the dance. This ebb and flow of play direction helps players sitting next to one another shift ease the disadvantage of one moving after the other.

Closing the Doors

While arriving a bit late to the ball can be fashionable, arriving too late is a social faux pas and must be avoided at all costs. After a certain number of dances, the doors to the entrances will close and no one may enter or exit the ballroom floor.

The number of dances it takes to reach this point depends on the number of players. In a **two-player game**, it takes **six dances** for the doors to close. For **three players**, the doors close after **five dances**. In a **four-player** game, the doors close after **four dances**. In **a five or six-player** game the doors close after **three dances**.

After the doors have closed, no dancer may move out of the ballroom floor, and dancers that are still in entrances may not be moved at all. Any players who have all of their dancers in an entrance forfeit the game. At the end of the ball, dancers not on the ballroom floor count against their players' score.

The Last Dance

Play will continue until the 16th dance is finished, or until only one Ballare is not influenced, whichever is first.

NEGOTIATION

La Danse is a social affair, and as such, players are expected to talk to one another during the ball. Of course, talk takes time and energy, and the attendees of the ball won't speak without a purpose in mind. Thus, players will be negotiating to get what they want, protect their dancers, and gain advantage. Games with more than two players will get the most out of negotiation, allowing players to pit others against one another.

When to Negotiate

Players negotiate at two different times during play. They negotiate at the start of the game to determine seating order, and they negotiate at the start of a measure to get players to move their dancers in particular ways. These are very different kinds of negotiation, with different considerations, so they are described separately.

Negotiating Seating Order

At the start of the game, players should negotiate with each other to determine who is allowed to choose their seat in what order. Players new to the game might not quite understand why seating order is very important, but with more experience players will form opinions about which seating formations work best in their favor.

Generally, sitting next to another player means that you will be interacting with that player early in the ball. It can be advantageous for a player with a strong early game to sit next to someone they think has a strong late game. Of course, players new to the game or new to each other's play styles won't know this, so often times negotiations for seating seem arbitrary.

Remember that the first player to seat has the opportunity to change where they are sitting after everyone else is seated, and the last person to seat chooses the host and in which direction play begins. Both of these are places of power, so negotiation usually revolves around these two positions.

Negotiation starts out simply: everyone states what position they want in the seating order. If that order is fine with everyone, then players can seat themselves in that order without any further negotiation. If, on the other hand, two people want the same seating position, or players do not like the seating order proposed, they will need to negotiate further. Sometimes it's as easy as asking someone to take a different position. At other times, players will need to offer something to get other players to change their minds.

Offers for Seating

Negotiation goes two ways. If you want a particular position, you're probably going to need to give something up. These negotiations involve everyone present, so players need to offer up things that everyone will agree upon.

You could offer to begin play without one of your dancers, or promise to not move a particular dancer until a particular measure or dance. Another kind of offer is to announce that you will only move a particular dancer for the first dance, or indicate ahead of time that you will move a dancer in a particular measure of a dance. A final concession you can try to make is to promise to not influence another player's dancers during the first measure or dance. It all depends on how badly you want that seating position.

Negotiating During Measures

At the beginning of each measure, players should negotiate to get other players to dance in particular ways. This can be done to protect your own dancers, or to gain an advantageous position on the ballroom floor. It is in your best interest to negotiate to get what you want, but

beware sour deals that put you at a disadvantage.

Negotiations during measures are generally done between two players. Negotiate by offering something to a player in exchange for them playing a particular way. You might ask a player to move a particular dancer, and even dictate that a dancer move in a particular way. Another thing to request might be that a player go after another player's dancers this measure, rather than your own. Finally, you can ask for a player to remove influence from a dancer, freeing it for play again.

Some negotiations can affect the whole ballroom, though. You may ask, for example, to move a second dancer this measure. In this situation you must negotiate with each other player, offering something that is tempting to them all.

Negotiations can simply fail, and you don't get what you want. Sometimes, players will respond with counter offers. Players might even try to steal your negotiation by offering something more tempting for an alternative deal. Players can also offer something to get another player to not accept a negotiation. Be sure to use all these techniques to get what you want!

Offers During Measures

Sometimes, players can simply be convinced that a particular play is in their best interests. If that's the case, then it isn't a binding negotiation, simply a suggestion. Negotiation only happens when players want something from each other. If a player is trying to get you to dance a particular way, or if a player wants something from you, you should ask for something in return. Keep in mind that if you do get something in return, it is a binding negotiation, and you will be held to your agreement.

Generally, anything you could ask for in negotiation, you can offer to tempt players to give you what you want. So you could offer to stay away from a player's dancers, or to move a particular dancer this measure, or even to remove your influence from one of the other player's dancers. If you try to offer the player the chance to move a second dancer, the negotiation opens up to the whole ballroom, and every player must agree to the terms of the deal. This might mean that you need to negotiate with them to accept the original deal.

Breaking Negotiations

It is important for players to remember the negotiations they have made with others, both from seating and during measures. A player who is caught going against something they promised in a negotiation is forced to sit out the entire measure.

Concessions can be made for players who are forced into an action that goes against the terms of a negotiation. For example, a player might agree to not influence another's dancers, but another player moves into the only space where that would have been possible. If the player has no choice in the matter, then they are not considered to have broken a negotiation. Making contradictory negotiations is strictly forbidden, and any player attempting to do so can be considered as breaking a negotiation.

How to Dance

Each dancer has its own way of moving, and some dancers are faster than others. At the center of each dancer is a number showing how many steps they can make when they move. Dancers cannot stop short; they must make all of their steps. Each dancer also has arrows showing the direction they can move. Dancers can also turn as one of their steps, but a dancer must move before turning a second time in the same measure.

Moving

Dancers move as indicated by their arrows. They can move to adjacent spaces, or along lines, depending on where their arrows indicate. All dancers can move through spaces occupied by other dancers, but they cannot stop in another dancer's space. The only exception is via cutting in. You may not move a dancer back into a space it has already occupied this measure.

Cutting In

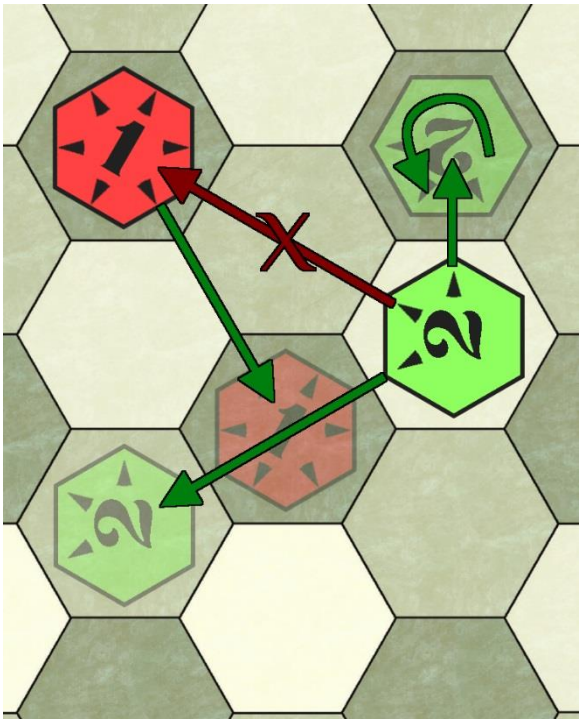
Cutting in is a dance move where a dancer glides into a space that is just about to be vacated by another dancer. A dancer can move into a space that is occupied by another dancer, under the following conditions. First that dancer must be the one its player has announced will move this measure. Second, the dancer must not have moved already this measure (the player's turn to move comes after). Third, the other dancer cannot be the player's Ballare, as there is no guarantee that a Ballare will vacate the space.

Turning

A dancer may turn, changing the direction it can move and influence as one of its steps. This can be the first step a dancer makes. The player rotates the dancer so that its arrows point in any different direction. This could be a slight shift, or even a complete reversal. A dancer must move before it can turn a second time in the same measure (only Waltzes, with three steps, can turn twice in the same measure). When a dancer turns, it must face a different direction. There is no way to use turning to simply skip a step.

Moving the Ballare

The Ballare has only one step, but after a Ballare moves, it may also turn. The extra turn is entirely optional, and must be done after the move, not before. This can make your slowest piece also be quite powerful, given how many spaces it can influence.



An example of dancing. The Rond can move two spaces or one space and turn. The Ballare can move across the line as shown by its arrows. The Rond cannot move into the space that the Ballare occupies.

How to Influence

At the end of a measure, dancers influence the other dancers they are facing. Only the dancers who took steps in the measure can influence other dancers. Dancers who took steps this measure are also at risk to become influenced by those facing them. Dancers who are not on the ballroom floor cannot influence or be influenced by other dancers, but they do count as facing for the purposes of reclaiming dancers.

Facing

Facing is used to determine the spaces that a dancer influences. A dancer faces in the directions of its arrows. Dancers only face the next space in those directions; they cannot influence from across the ballroom floor. Even if a dancer has more than one step, it still only faces the closest space in the directions its arrows point.

Influencing

The object of the game is to influence other players dancers, using your dancers to expertly exert your presence on the ballroom floor. Once a dancer has been influenced by a player, it cannot be moved and cannot be influenced. They no longer face other dancers as well. A dancer must be on the ballroom floor in order to influence or be influenced by other dancers. There's no point if a dancer is influenced in an entrance; there wasn't anyone there to see it!

Dancers influence the spaces that they are facing. To determine who your dancer influences, look for dancers in the spaces that your dancer faces. You can influence a dancer only if the following criteria are true. First, your dancer must have taken a step this measure (turning or moving). Second, the other dancer cannot already be influenced by a player. Third, the other dancer is only faced by your dancers and the other player's dancers. If a third player's dancer faces the one your dancer is trying to influence, **even if it did not take any steps this measure**, do not mark the one your dancer is trying to influence with an influence token.

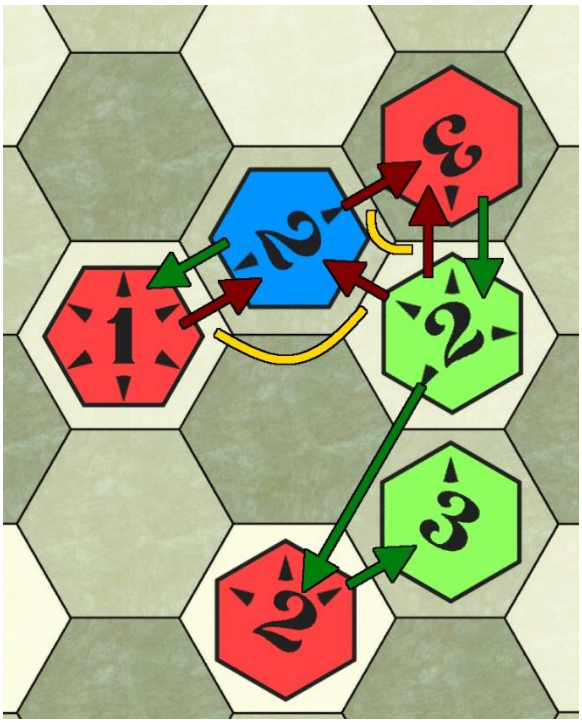
Any dancer who took steps this measure is at a risk for being influenced by other dancers on the ballroom floor. Check to see if any other players' dancers face your dancer. If only one player's dancers are facing your dancer, that player marks it with an influence token. As always, only check dancers on the ballroom floor to see if they face your dancer. Further, if your dancer is not on the ballroom floor, then you do not have to worry about it becoming influenced.

Reclaiming Dancers

You can recover your dancers that other players have influenced. To do so, you must move two of your dancers into a position where they face the dancer you wish to reclaim. One of those dancers must have taken steps in the current measure. Check for this before you check if your dancer influences others.

Reclaimed dancers are not considered to face any dancers during the measure they are reclaimed. Thus, a reclaimed dancer cannot be used to reclaim another dancer right away, and a reclaimed dancer cannot prevent another player's dancer from being influenced.

You can only reclaim your own dancers. A Ballare cannot be reclaimed in this way.



Example of influencing. Green's Quadrado is able to influence Red's Rond across the line, but cannot influence Red's Waltz, because of Blue's Chasse. Red's Waltz does get a chance to influence Greens Quadrado, though. The Blue Chasse is safe from Red's Ballare, due to Green's Quadrado, but the Chasse does get to influence the Ballare anyway. Red's Rond faces and influences Green's Waltz, but does not face Blue's Chasse, as it is too far away.

Influencing the Ballare

Influencing a Ballare, in addition to neutralizing a powerful piece on the ballroom floor, is a step towards ending the ball. When all but one Ballare is influenced, the ball ends. A Ballare can

only be reclaimed through negotiation. Players cannot position their dancers to reclaim a Ballare.

How to Win

Play continues until only one Ballare remains uninfluenced, or until the 16th dance has ended, whichever is first. When the ball ends, players gain one point for each dancer they currently influence. A Ballare counts as two dancers for the purposes of scoring. Players lose one point for each dancer that is still in an entrance, even if it is not the entrance the player started at. Players lose two points instead, if that dancer is their Ballare. The player with the most points was the talk of the ball and wins the game.

The Dancers

Each dancer is identified by its name, how it moves, and where it begins play. Here is a brief look at the various dancers.

Ballare

The Ballare is your most important dancer. If this dancer becomes influenced, the ball is closer to its end, and A Ballare can only be reclaimed through negotiation. It begins play in the middle of your entrance, and is the only dancer that cannot enter the ballroom during the first measure of the first dance. It only gets one step, but it also gets a free turn after every move. In addition to this, the Ballare faces the most number of spaces on the board.

Quadrado

The Quadrado offers a unique style of movement from other dancers. It faces a wide area and can slip in from an unexpected direction. It begins play in behind the Ballare.

Waltzes

Each player has two Waltzes, one on each lower corner of the entrance. Waltzes are the fastest dancers in the room, having three steps, but they only face one direction. Since the Waltz has three actions, it is the only dancer that can turn twice in the same measure, by turning, moving, and then turning again.

Ronds

Each player has two Ronds, nestled between the Ballare and both Waltzes. The Ronds face a wide arc that can be far-reaching if aligned along lines. They can be used for surprise influence, being often far from where they face.

Chasse

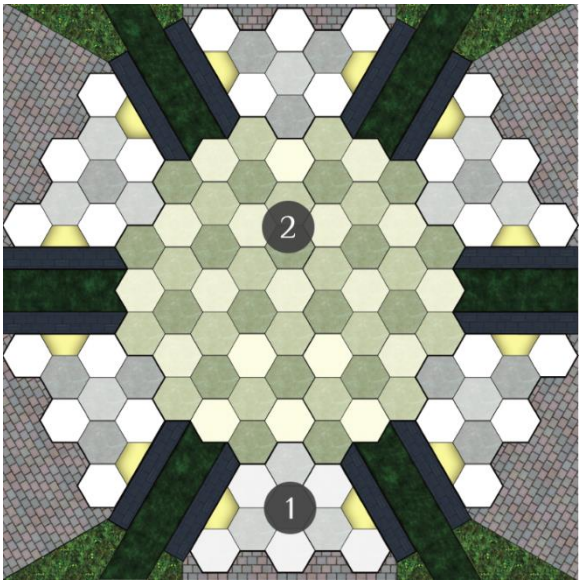
At the very front of the entrance is the Chasse, a dancer who quickly moves forward and backward in a line. The Chasse is poised to occupy the central part of the ballroom floor, so it is commonly an early move when players are seated far apart.

Gancho

The Ganchos are located dancers on either side of the Chasse. These dancers are quick face clusters of three spaces, while also being able to hook in behind them. Ganchos are powerful pieces, but are vulnerable from many angles.

THE BOARD

Pictured below is a diagram of the board upon which La Danse is played. Note that the area marked 1 is one of the entrances, and the area marked 2 is the ballroom floor. On the board, they are offset by differently colored tiles. Refer to this diagram in case of any uncertainty.



VARIATIONS

Sometimes players want a different experience when playing La Danse. Here are a few variations on play. Some of these variations can be combined.

Non-Negotiable

Players do not negotiate. The game plays out as normal, except that instead of proposing moves, players simply move their dancers one at a time in turn order. Influence is still checked only once at the end of a measure.

You're in the Way!

Dancers cannot move through spaces occupied by other players' dancers or influenced dancers. This makes for a much more constrained ballroom, requiring more strategic dancing.

Smitten

Influenced dancers are removed from the ballroom altogether. They cannot be reclaimed. This makes influencing dancers more potent, but slows down the game.

Dancing All Night

Play does not end after the 16th dance. The doors also do not close, and dancers in entrances can influence and be influenced by other dancers.

I Put a Spell on You

Players may move dancers that they have influenced as though they were their own. Those dancers can influence other dancers for the player that influences them.

ASSEMBLY

Provided with this package are all the materials to make your own version of La Danse. This is separated out into the board image file and a printable tokens file. The board is quite large and suitable for large-scale printing or reproduction by hand using hexagonal tiles. The board should be printed once. The tokens should be printed six times, each time on a different color of paper or cardstock. In the end, you should have one board, nine dancer tokens for each of six colors (45 dancer tokens in all), and 45 ringed influence tokens for each color (270 influence tokens in all).

CREDITS

This game and related materials were created and assembled by Michael Thomét ©2017. The fonts used in this document are Agreloy by gluk (www.glukfonts.pl) and Philosopher by Jovanny Lemonad (www.jovanny.ru).