

Performance Notes:

Instrumentation: This ensemble requires 14 balloons, although it is advised to have extras in pants pockets. The balloons should be of helium quality, 9” and/or 12” in size. Various colors are recommended.

Dress Code: As “nerdy” as possible. Short pants with belt, white socks with black shoes. A white shirt with front pocket, wearing a bow or neck tie. Greased-back hair. Eye glasses that are taped in the middle will add to the effect. At least two sharpened pencils in the front pocket, (you’ll need these for popping the balloons). And any other “nerdy” prop you may have seen walking down *your* science hall.

Set-Up:

player 1 - Two deflated balloons in pants pocket.

player 2 - Two deflated balloons in pants pocket.

player 3 - One pre-blown balloon inside a briefcase that is brought out on stage by player 3 and one deflated in pants pocket.

player 4 - Two deflated balloons, one each placed inside a shoe for easy access. (inside heel area.)

player 5 - One pre-blown balloon inside a second briefcase brought out by player 5. (any method may be used for transporting this balloon out on stage, but it must be pre-blown.)

One trash can containing 5 balloons must be placed in the middle of the stage before the performance. These balloons are pre-blown and contain confetti. (stuff these balloons with any type of confetti material before they are blown up and tied.)

Balloon Techniques:

“The Rub” - This sound is achieved by holding the blown-up balloon in the left hand and rubbing it with the middle and ring fingers of the right hand. The balloon may either be held up against the chest or in a “head-lock” position by the left arm. Sometimes it may be necessary to moisten the fingers before rubbing the balloon. Experiment with this technique. A balloon that is fully inflated tends to have a higher pitch and is easier to get sound from. Pressing the balloon against the chest while rubbing also produces different sounds and textures. Staccato articulations call for a short rub while legato markings mean a longer sustained rub.

“The Skweek” - We’ve all done this before. This sound is produced by holding the open end of a blown-up balloon between the thumb and forefinger of each hand. Pull the opening apart to make the “skweek” sound. This sound is articulated by the amount of time the fingers are apart.

“The Two-Hand Rub” (player 3, bar 9)) - This is achieved by holding the entire balloon between both hands and turning the wrists in opposite directions.

Balloon Techniques continued -

“The Tap” (player 5, bar 17) - With the right hand, hold the tied blown-up balloon at the knot and beat it against the open left palm. This technique will take some practice for controlling the double strokes on the left palm.

“The Pop” - Players remove sharpened pencil from their shirt pocket with the right hand while holding the balloon, firmly by the knot and at head level, in the left hand. Simply pop the balloon with the pencil at the given time.

“Smiley” - Holding a deflated balloon in the right hand between the thumb and index finger, blow just enough air in the balloon to allow it to “perk”. Then close off the opening with the thumb and index finger, and grab the body of the balloon with the middle, ring and pinky fingers of the same hand. Squeeze the balloon so you have a tight bubble in your hand. Now, put a big smile on your face and rub the balloon against your front top teeth to achieve a high “skwecky” sound. (pretty wacky, huh?) This technique will require some practice for perfecting the solo beginning in bar 31. By applying pressure from the fingers and thus tightening the balloon, the player can accomplish different pitches from it.

Notes for the Show

Each player should enter, one at a time, and nonchalantly pull their balloon from its respective place, (blow it up if needed), and begin playing. Each entrance may be made at the players discretion, (bars 1 through 17), giving the piece a more relaxed feel. Player 2 should enter the stage after player 1 begins and pull out his balloon, blow it up, and begin bar 5. (When players are blowing up balloons, have them do it in tempo with the music.) The same pace should continue with players 3, 4, and 5. Players should act startled when the popping begins in bar 21. On the last pop in bar 22 (by player 4) player 2 lets his balloon fly out into the audience. This is denoted throughout the score with “let fly”. Treat bars 31 through 38 as a solo spot for player 5, perhaps having him step-out from the ensemble. Player 3 tries to step-out playing “Jingle Bells” at bar 39 but isn’t able to pull it off, and is given disapproving looks from the rest of the ensemble. At this point, players begin pulling the confetti balloons from the trash can beginning with player 6 who starts the new tempo at bar 44. Work for a balance in volume between the four different parts in bar 46. Have player 3 come out and act rather “wacky” on his 16th note solo in bars 50 through 53. Keep the tempo moving through all of the split parts starting in bar 54, and especially in bars 66 and 67. Bar 70 to the end should really be “hammed-up”, (maybe have the players incorporate a “kick line”). Make a big show out of the last fermata “rub” and pop. This will take some practice for getting a unison “pop” at the end. Players should reach for their pencils as soon as possible and make a big production out of this final “pop”, holding the balloons out toward the audience and allowing the confetti to spray them!

Key



Balloonology

pg 2

Loon 1

Loon 2

Loon 3

Loon 4

Loon 5

13 14 15 16 17 18

skweck

tap blown-up balloon
beat on left open palm

Loon 1

Loon 2

Loon 3

Loon 4

Loon 5

19 20 21 22 23 24

Pop! \wedge \ast

pencil back in pocket
extract new balloon
blow-up and tie

let fly

extract new balloon
blow-up new balloon

Pop! \wedge \ast

extract new balloon
blow-up new balloon

Pop! \wedge \ast

get new balloon from other shoe

rub same balloon

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