



Tools for Teaching Improvisation

Balloon Music

What You Need

- a variety of 11- or 12-inch latex balloons in different colours
- cups of water for all participants

Directions

Step 1: Inflate balloons to 70% or 80 % of their capacity. Do not over-inflate. This will minimize the risk of popping.

Step 2: Moisten fingers using water provided and then rub fingers on balloons to create sounds. Ask participants to experiment with different shapes and explore the different sounds and rhythms that result. For example, tracing an equilateral triangle on the surface of the balloon will yield a triplet if all sides are drawn at a consistent tempo. A square will yield a binary division of the beat (i.e. eighth notes or sixteenth notes).

Step 3: Collectively develop a graphic score that consists of different coloured shapes that correspond to the different colours of the balloons as well as the shapes (and resulting rhythms) that are to be drawn on the surface of the balloons.

An important note of caution: This exercise works well with children over the age of 6. However, safety precautions must be taken. Before undertaking this exercise, find out if any of the participants has a latex allergy. If so, do not proceed with the activity. It is recommended that the adult facilitators of this exercise inflate all balloons. Children should not be allowed to handle uninflated or broken balloon fragments which are choking hazards. If a balloon pops during the activity, collect and remove all fragments of the broken balloon immediately.

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Source: Matt Edwards and the Balloon Orchestra: <http://www.myspace.com/balloonorchestra>

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