

# An Inherent Desire to Attain Balance

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*In every person, even in such as appear most reckless, there is an inherent desire to attain balance.*  
—*Jakob Wasserman*

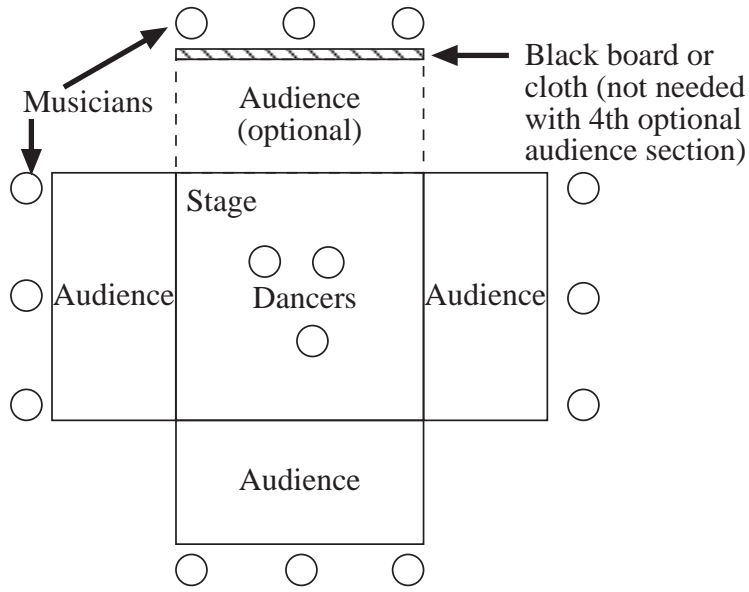


Figure 1: Layout of stage.

Setup:

- The stage should be rectangular (figure ??) with three to four sections of audience seating facing the center. If there are three sections of audience seating, a dark colored panel or curtain should be placed some distance back from the edge of the stage. It should be low enough for the musicians positioned behind it to see over, but high enough to keep them in the background.
- Lighting should be minimal. At its most intense it should be very low & focused on the stage area. The musicians should not be visible.

*Note: The primary purpose of this setup is to allow the black-clothed dancers to blend in with their surroundings. The white balloons (see below) should capture most of the light.*

Cast:

- 3 dancers
- There should be enough musicians to comfortably surround the stage and audience. The score is written with 12 musicians in mind.

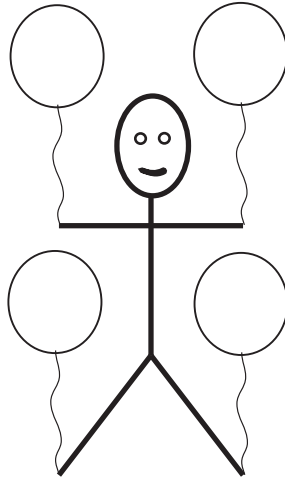


Figure 2: Dancer with balloons.

Equipment:

- Dancers:
  - all black clothing
  - 4 helium balloons
  - 4 1-meter lengths of dark-colored string
  - Balloons should be tied to dancers' wrists and ankles (figure ??)
  - 3 unblown balloons tucked into an accessible part of the clothing (see Frame 6)
- Musicians:
  - black or dark colored clothing
  - at least two blown up balloons (not helium)
  - 7 unblown balloons
  - the mouthpiece of a balloon that has been cut from its body
  - 1 six-sided die (see Frame 5)
  - 1 container appropriately sized to roll die in (e.g. plastic cup)
  - optional standlight or flashlight to help keep track of position in score. Be mindful to keep the area as dark as possible.
  - one musician behind each area of audience should have a container filled with small helium balloons. Water balloons work well. They should be filled with little enough helium that the weight of the balloon keeps the balloon from rising. Ideally, the balloons will hover, although many will probably rise or fall slowly (see Frame 7).

## Types of Balloon Actions

Name	Type	Description
Blow	Air	Blow up unfilled balloon.
Blow Cut-Off	Air	Blow into mouthpiece of balloon that has been cut from its body.
Release	Air	Release a balloon that has been blown up but not tied off.
Squeal	Air	Pinch mouthpiece of balloon that has been blown up but not tied off between thumb and forefingers of both hands. Pull apart, stretching it flat & letting air slowly flow out, producing a squealing sound.
Tap	Percussive	Tap blown up balloon with finger.
Drum	Percussive	Hold blown up balloon in palms of both hands and rapidly tap successive fingers against the balloon
Hit with Palm	Percussive	Hit blown up balloon with palm of hand.
Hit 2 together	Percussive	Hit two blown-up balloons together.
Hit against ...	Percussive	Hit blown-up balloon against specified object.
Maraca	Percussive	Hold several unblown balloons between the fingers of one hand. Shake that hand back and forth so that the balloons slap against each other.
Rub	Rub	Rub blown-up balloon with fingertip. If this produces no sound, try moistening fingers before rubbing the balloon. For a fuller sound, use whole hand.
Snap	Snap	Hold body of blown-up balloon in one hand. Grasp the mouthpiece with the other hand. Stretch hands apart then release the mouthpiece, allowing it to snap back against the body of the balloon. This can be done with either a blown-up or an unblown balloon.
Flick	Flick	This is almost exactly like flicking a rubber-band. Put the body of an unblown balloon over the thumb of one hand. Hold the mouthpiece of the balloon between the thumb and forefinger of the other hand. Aim balloon-covered thumb at target, pull back mouthpiece, and release.
Tie-off	Tie-off	Tie the end of a blown up balloon so that it stays inflated.

**Note to Performers:** The piece is made up of frames that consist of rules that define interactions between the performers. This creates a system in which noise from human error makes for slightly different results at each performance, although each frame will retain its distinctive character. Frames are similar to movements in that they are parts of the piece that progress in a linear fashion, but instead of following one after the other with slight pauses in between, each follows immediately on the heels of the last.

Frames can overlap when rules cause some performers to move to the next frame without causing all performers to move at that time. Sometimes the rules will instruct you to move to the next frame. If you are not told to move to the next frame before a frame's 'End' conditions are met, move to the next frame when the 'End' conditions are met, regardless of what you are doing. If you are directed to move to the next frame before your fellow performers have transitioned, you should neither hesitate nor wait for the entire cast to transition together; you should begin applying rules for your new frame immediately and never return to the previous frame.

Although the piece is primarily improvisatory, spend some time experimenting with the balloons. Musicians will want to get a feel for them as instruments; dancers will want to get a feel for the sorts of motions that will avoid tangling their balloons.

### **Frame 1**

*Begin with lights off. Everyone should get into position after the lights go out.*

#### **Dancers:**

- All 3 dancers crouch together in the center of the stage with their balloons held down in front of them in bouquets. The configuration should be reminiscent of a cage filled with balloons.
- Remain frozen for the duration of this frame.

#### **Musicians:**

- Drum a blown-up balloon with your fingertips.
- After 10-15 seconds, a predetermined musician will stop drumming & blow up a balloon.
- If one of your neighbors starts blowing up a balloon, count three seconds (while still drumming) then start to blow up a balloon.
- When the balloon you have just blown up is fully inflated, squeal the balloon.
- When the balloon has emptied from squealing, pick up a blown-up balloon and resume drumming with fingertips.

#### **Lighting:**

- When first squeal begins, slowly begin to fade on lights.

**End:** Frame ends when only drumming sounds remain.

## Frame 2

### Dancers:

- Slowly begin to leave huddle using long, slow movements.
- Release balloons sporadically; one dancer should release a balloon every few seconds. Some dancers should release balloons more quickly than others—assign this in advance.
- When all of your balloons have been released, begin extending and stretching limbs and gradually moving further from the huddle.
- When all dancers have released their balloons, move to the next frame.

**Musicians:** In advance, musicians should be assigned a number from 1–4. Numbers should be evenly distributed throughout the space.

- Until the dancer that is nearest to you releases a balloon, continue to drum (from end of frame 1).
- If the dancer nearest to you releases a balloon, react as follows:
  1. Hit blown-up balloon with your palm.
  2. Hit 2 blown-up balloons together.
  3. Hit blown-up balloon against your music stand.
  4. Balloon maraca—Initially loud with a rapid decrease in volume.
- After three balloons have been released in the quadrant of the stage closest to you, react to subsequent balloon releases by rubbing a blown-up balloon.

**End:** Frame ends when all dancers' balloons have been released.

## Frame 3

**Dancers:** In advance, assign two dancers to change position 3 times; the other dancer will change position 4 times.

- Try to maintain positions such that three balloons are kept at the same horizontal level at all times.
- If no other dancer appears to be moving, you may change to a new position. You should attempt to reach each new position while maintaining three balloons at the same horizontal level, but the position change needs to be daring enough to risk losing the three-balloon balance (e.g. trade out which balloons are part of the three).
- After repositioning, hold for several seconds.
- After repositioning the predetermined number of times, move to the next frame.

**Musicians:** Throughout frame, unless otherwise specified, blow up balloons. Try to blow with a constant rhythm, in sync with your neighbors.

- If the nearest dancer fails to maintain three balloons at the same horizontal level, squeal the balloon you have been blowing up.
- If you feel lightheaded from too much blowing, rub blown-up balloon—it can be the one you've been blowing up, but keep the mouth sealed to avoid losing air. Resume blowing as soon as you feel up to it.
- If balloon is full and no occasion arises in which to squeal, rub the balloon.

**End:** Frame ends when it is apparent that all dancers have transitioned to the next frame.

#### **Frame 4**

**Dancers:** In advance, each dancer is assigned a sound type to respond to: air, percussion, or rub.

- Move towards the loudest sound of your type.
- If you can't hear any sound of your type, stay in roughly the same place and begin gathering and releasing your balloons.
- If you connect with another dancer, grab your balloons and move, as if rebounding, in the direction of your choice. Ignore your assigned sound until you have reached the edge of the stage area.
- After the fourth collision (involving any dancer, not just you), move to the next frame.

**Musicians:** Use any sound of type air, percussion, or rub. Your goal is to work together with other musicians to lure dancers into collisions.

**End:** The frame ends after the fourth rebound is completed.

#### **Frame 5**

**Dancers:** Your movements should be frantic.

- Move towards the sound you hear as loudest. Avoid moving towards sounds that other dancers seem to hear as loudest if another sound seems louder to you.
- If you are hit by a deflating balloon flying in from the musicians, move to the next frame regardless of what the other dancers are doing.
- If you no longer hear rolling dice, move to the next frame.

**Musicians:** Put your die into its container and roll repeatedly throughout the frame.

- On a roll of 1, blow into a cutoff balloon.
- On a roll of 2-6, keep rolling.
- Keep an estimate of the number of rolls between 1s. The longer it takes you to roll a 1, the more intense your next sound should be.
- After you roll 1 three times, move to the next frame, regardless of what other musicians are doing.

**End:** Frame ends when no more dice are rolling.



## **Frame 6**

**Dancers:** Attempt to clear the stage of deflated balloons. Alternate between the following:

- Remove one of the balloons that has been tucked into your clothing. Blow it up and release it. Attempt to direct it away from the stage area. For the second of the three balloons, first blow it up and squeal it until deflated then blow it up and release it.
- Run to the nearest balloon on the floor. Pick it up and flick it away from the stage.

**Musicians:** Attempt to get as many balloons as possible onto the stage area.

- Blow up balloons then release them. Aim them towards the stage area.
- If one of your balloons misses the stage & a balloon from either a musician or a dancer lands near you, flick it into the stage area.
- If there are too many (more than 6 or so) balloons are on the stage, wait before releasing.
- After you have released three balloons, move to the next frame, regardless of what other musicians are doing.
- If the stage is empty of balloons before you have released your three balloons, move to the next frame.

**End:** Frame ends when no empty balloons remain on stage.

## **Frame 7**

**Dancers:** In advance, each dancer is assigned to a section of the audience.

- React to the enthusiasm of your section of the audience.
- Make full use of the stage area. Do not stay in the area immediately in front of your section of audience.
- Respond creatively. Don't respond to the same audience event in the same way twice.
- If you can't get anything else from responding to your section of audience (spend at least a minute trying), gather your four balloons into a clump and freeze.
- If the other two dancers have frozen, gather your balloons into a clump and freeze.

**Musicians:**

- At the beginning of the frame, designated musicians should release their partially filled helium balloons into the section of the audience in front of them. Be sure to spread them throughout the entire section rather than dumping them only on the area immediately in front of you.
- React to the nearest dancer with the sounds of your choice.

**End:** The frame ends when all three dancers are frozen with their balloons in clumps.

## Frame 8

**Dancers:** In advance, each dancer is assigned an event to respond to: snap, circle of rubs, or circle of squeals. For circle of rubs or circle of squeals, if musicians repeatedly fail to finish the circle, it is acceptable to respond to a partial arc as well.

- Unless otherwise specified, move in slow improvisation.
- When your assigned event happens, gather your balloons into a clump and freeze for five seconds.
- After three clump-and-holds, try to clump with your nearest neighbor when that neighbor clumps (i.e. form 1 clump of 8 balloons and hold).
- If your assigned event is too infrequent, you may attempt to elicit that event from the musicians.

**Musicians:** Musicians should only react to a dancer if they are the closest musician to that dancer, but should react to ambiguous cases as well. In other words, if any other musician is closer to your nearest dancer, don't react. React only if you don't believe another musician is closer than you or if the dancer is equidistant to you and another musician. The first 6 reaction rules are marked with an asterisk (\*). These should be given higher priority than others since they are the ones that cue the dancers. The remaining reaction rules should be followed whenever possible but abandoned in favor of the high-priority rules, should a conflict arise.

- \*Dancer expands—snap balloon.
- \*Dancer rolls—rub balloon.
- \*Musician to your left rubs—rub balloon (unless you started the circle, in which case stop). Try to make your rub overlap with the rubs produced by both of your neighbors to create a continuous rubbing sound that moves smoothly around the room.
- \*Dancer touches corner of stage—blow up balloon then squeal.
- \*Musician to your right blows up balloon—start blowing up balloon.
- \*Musician to your right squeals—squeal balloon (unless you started the circle, in which case stop). Try to make your squeal overlap with the squeals produced by your neighbors to create a continuous squealing sound that moves smoothly around the room.
- Dancer sits—blow up balloon then release.
- Dancer lays on back—blow into cutoff balloon.
- Dancer constricts—hit blown up balloon with palm.
- Dancer makes vertical circular motion—drum.
- Dancer makes horizontal circular motion—maraca.
- Dancer raises leg—hit balloon against stand.
- Dancer raises arm—hit two balloons together.

**End:** The frame ends when all dancers are frozen in a single clump.

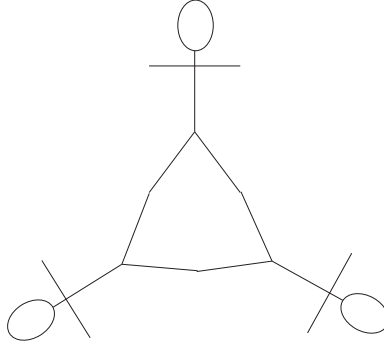


Figure 3: Penultimate position.

### Frame 9

**Dancers:** Make predetermined shapes. The first two shapes are of the dancers' choosing and should be worked out ahead of time, the third is defined in the score.

- Transitions from one shape to the next should be fluid.
- Third shape: lie on your backs so that your feet connect and point to the center of the stage and your head faces the outside of the stage (figure ??). Hold for a moment then sit up, lean forwards, and point your arms towards the center of the configuration. As your hands move to the center, grab the balloons attached to your feet so that the 12 balloons are in a single clump when your hands reach the center.
- After completing the final shape, freeze until the lights go out.

### Musicians:

- Freely improvise with percussive sounds.
- If the lights cut out, stop playing immediately.

**Lighting:** After the dancers have maintained their final position for two seconds, the lights cut out immediately. Do not fade.

**End:** The frame ends when the lights cut out.