

## BERNIE BALLOON

Music	Steven Gerrits
Dance	Maria Speth
Time	none
Prelude	none
Formation	open order formation, sitting or lying on the floor
Equipment	balloons (preferably different shapes) and possibly a harmonica
Target Group	suggested 4 - 12 years

### ***Explanation***

- This is an expressive dance where pupils learn about the potential of their body motions in shape, size and direction.
- The main focus in Bernie Balloon is body awareness; understanding the forms that can be made using your body. There are numerous ways to become larger or smaller, and this can also be done with the whole body or different body parts. One can grow in height, but also in the width, length and direction. Just as balloons do!
- Several tones succeed one another in 6 different tempos. Sometimes legato (continuous) and sometimes staccato (short/sharp). With this theme the teacher can tell the story about Bernie Balloon who is able to change in size in so many different ways. The movements follow the music.
- It is advised to dance along with the younger pupil, especially in the beginning. Once the (older) pupils become more familiar with the dance, side-coaching\* will often be sufficient.

### ***Dance Exploration***

- There are various ways to start this theme. For instance by listening to the music first, without telling the story. What kind of images do the pupils envision when they hear the music?
- Visualizing the material is important. Make all kinds of balloons available and you can inflate and deflate them in different ways (bit by bit, slow and squeaky, letting go all at once; 'whoosh!'). Encourage younger pupils to blow along with you; big round cheeks when inflating with effort, or really soft with pouting lips when blowing a little bit of air into the balloon gently. This is a good exercise for motor development of the mouth.
- Show the pupils what happens when a balloon gets filled with air. It is also interesting to notice all the different ways one can deflate a balloon: all at once, little by little, letting go, etc. With several balloons of different shapes one can create a whole family!
- When you begin to move together with the music use hands only. The pupils have to get to know the different tempos while moving with their hands. In this way it is easier to pay attention to the music.

\* Side-coaching: Providing suggestions and ideas while the students are dancing. It is especially useful for exploration and improvisation with the advantage that the coach may feed suggestions to dancers without stopping the dance or causing the dancers to lose concentration.

- Discuss the differences in the music with the pupils. Do they hear that it sometimes goes very fast, very slow or is it a continuous sound? Emphasize also that when the music stops at the end of a scale the movement also stops, although you may not be completely 'deflated'.
- Mention all the different shapes you can make with your body. Movements can be done with the whole body, or with parts of it.

Extending the understanding:

When these concepts are well understood, expand upon the perspectives of balloon behaviour.

- When the pupils have become accustomed to working with the dance and the music, suggestions can be made concerning the various forms to be made with the body. Sometimes a balloon will expand in all kinds of different directions, including possibly with protrusions of twirling arms and pointed knees.
- Working with various levels can also be a possible point of interest in working with a balloon that grows in size from floor level to much, much higher up or in another perspective from a short form to a long stretched out form along the floor. Real balloons don't always deflate in the same way thus the shapes of everyone's bodies can differ at the end.
- One fun variation – once they are really accustomed to the music and dance – the pupils may work together in one large circle responding to the music scale as one large balloon. The pupils hold each other's hands and can only let go at the moment the balloon explodes. Of course this giant balloon continues to change shape with each music scale.



### ***Dance Structure***

- 1e scale becoming larger and smaller in slow tempo on your own spot
- 2e scale slowly increasing and quickly deflating movement on your own spot
- 3e scale growing little by little and quickly deflating movement on your own spot
- 4e scale increasing fast and becoming smaller little by little on your own spot
- 5e scale slowly increasing and, while flittering through space, decrease again
- 6e scale increase very slowly, little by little... BANG!

### ***Tips***

- Try using a harmonica instead of playing the recording. The advantage of doing it this way is that you regulate the tempo as you like but also the way in which the balloon grows in size or deflates: gradually or suddenly. It appears that through the sound of the harmonica the pupils become calm and focused.
- Another way to become familiar with the music is by drawing it out. Give each pupil a piece of paper that can be divided into 6 different sections; one for each scale. Let the pupils draw along while the music is playing. This is a way to visualize the differences between the various music scales. One can often see that afterwards it is easier for the pupils to follow the music and dance to it.
- A nice way to round up the class: without accompanying music, each pupil leaves the class one by one with their own interpretation of a deflating balloon.