



Resource Guide for Educators and Students Grades 4–12

What is traditional music? It's music that's passed on from one person to another, music that arises from one or more cultures, from their history and geography. It's music that can tell a story or evoke emotions ranging from celebratory joy to quiet reflection. Traditional music is usually played live in community settings such as dances, people's houses and small halls.

In each 30-minute episode of Carry On™, musical explorer and TikTok sensation Hal Walker interviews a musician who plays traditional music. Episodes air live, allowing students to pose questions. Programs are then archived so you can listen to them any time from your classroom or home. Visit Carry On's [YouTube channel](#) for live shows and archived episodes.

[Episode 29, Hal Walker](#)

For the past 28 episodes of Carry On, **Hal Walker** has interviewed traditional artists from around the globe. This week, he shares his own music and his artistic philosophy. Hal is a singer, songwriter and musical explorer with hundreds of thousands of fans online, where his social media presence celebrates generosity in music making.

Hal's musical journey began in Kent, Ohio, where he still lives. Music has always been part of his life. As a young child he sang in church, where his father and grandfather loved to sing hymns. Hal tells us, "My father was the loudest voice in the church, and *his* dad was the loudest voice in the church." As he grew up, Hal's own voice became a rich, sonorous baritone like his father's and grandfather's. As a prolific songwriter, singing has remained important to him.

Hal took ten years of piano lessons as a child, which gave him a strong musical foundation: "Knowing the rhythms, how to read music, has been a huge benefit for my life." He listened to pop music, absorbing those influences as well. In high school, he branched out with 1960s and 1970s rock and roll artists like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones.

In college, Hal studied history but continued his musical journey. He acquired his first minor-key harmonica and discovered musical instruments from around the world. After college, he bought his first guitar, began writing songs and decided to focus on music as his life's work. He is the long-time music director of a Unitarian church; his album [Life Wonderful](#) gathers songs he has written for the church over the past two decades.

Hal conducts numerous music programs for young people. He teaches singing technique, harmonica, improvisation, songwriting and how to play unusual instruments. He is the consummate music explorer, looking at new and different ways to make music and sharing what he knows with the world. During the pandemic, this has meant sharing online—Hal has nearly 1.5 million followers on TikTok alone!

On our episode, Hal demonstrates making music with an ordinary [turkey baster](#) and [your hands](#). (His video on how to play the "ancient hand whistle" has attracted 4 million views on YouTube! See Resources, below, for a link to Cool Music Tricks.) He also introduces us to the [minor-key harmonica](#) and instruments from other parts of the world.

Hal studies instruments from other cultures to learn how they are used in their tradition. He then puts his own spin on them, making music in a brand new way. All his music has a strong rhythmic base, no matter what instrument he plays.

The banakula, which Hal demonstrates [HERE](#), originates in West Africa, specifically Ghana. It is also called the kashaka, the aslatua and many other names. It consists of a pair of gourds (seed pods) from the Swaswa tree that are filled with gravel, beans or shells, tied together with a string. They are played by holding and shaking one gourd and swinging the other around to make a percussive sound as it hits the first. Played in pairs—one in each hand—the banakula lets the player create complex rhythms called polyrhythms. Hal is such a fan of this instrument that [@banakula](#) is the name of his TikTok account.

Another of Hal's favorite instruments is the khaen, a truly ancient instrument from Laos he calls the grandmother of the harmonica. Like the harmonica, it is a free-reed instrument (see Vocabulary, below). Its bamboo pipes are embedded with small brass reeds that vibrate when the musician blows into—or "draws" air from—the wooden air chamber. The sound is continuous, and the musician can play melody and harmony at the same time, often creating a drone underneath the melody. Traditionally, the khaen (also spelled khene and sometimes called a mouth organ) is played in Laos and northeast Thailand socially and in ritual settings. It's now used in [Asian folk-pop fusion music](#)—and of course, by Hal on TikTok.

Vocabulary

Baritone – A male voice that sings in a lower range. It lies between the bass (the lowest male voice) and the tenor (the highest male voice). Female voices are (from low to high) alto, mezzo-soprano, and soprano.

Drone – A sustained sound of a single pitch that continues through all or most of a musical piece. "Drone" also refers to the instrument or voice that produces and sustains the sound.

Duet – Two people playing or singing together.

Free-reed instruments – Free reeds are flexible strips of metal or wood attached on one end, allowing the other (free) end to vibrate to produce sound. Free-reed instruments were used in eastern Asia starting around 3,000 BC, probably with the [Chinese sheng](#). Other free-reed instruments include the shō in Japan and the khaen in Laos and Thailand. Concertinas and harmonicas are also free-reed instruments.

Hymn – A religious song, usually used in Christian worship to praise God. It is often written in four parts that are sung by choirs and/or congregations. Sometimes just the main melody is sung; other times, all four parts are sung to create a rich harmony.

Minor and major – Diatonic scales (series of notes) of half and whole steps. (On a piano, a half-step is moving from one key to the key right next to it; a whole step skips one half-step.) The difference between minor and major scales involves changing the order of whole and half-steps. [See and hear](#) a C major (diatonic) scale on the piano; [see and hear](#) a minor scale. Major and minor keys are based on major and minor scales.

Polyrhythm – Use of two or more markedly different rhythms at the same time. For example, playing three beats against an underlying meter of two regular beats, or four beats against a meter of three beats. [This video illustrates polyrhythms beautifully.](#)

Become a Musical Explorer!

Before you watch the episode—Locate the following places on [Google Maps](#) or a printed map; these are the places Hal talks about.

Countries: Thailand and Laos, home of the khaen.

Region: West Africa, especially the country of Ghana, the home of the banakula.

State: Ohio; find the city of Kent, where Hal lives and makes music.

After you watch the episode—Complete assigned activities and questions from this list. They are in no particular order—the goal is just to have fun exploring music!

1. Learn how to play the ancient hand whistle [with Hal's YouTube video](#). It might take some practice but try until you get a sound or until you're tired. (Try NOT to hyperventilate!) Can you practice a little each day to make different sounds? And eventually to play a little song? Is it easier or harder than you thought it would be?
2. What other music can you make with your hands? Use your creativity! You can slap them against each other, snap your fingers, smack them against your face or arms... the possibilities are endless. Make up a rhythm song using your hands.
3. [Watch Hal teach the "ancient echo clap"](#) to a student volunteer. Listen to how the sound changes as the shape of his mouth (the resonating chamber) changes. Now you try. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again! Do it as long as you like at appropriate times.
4. [Watch Hal's video on how to play the turkey baster](#). If you can get your hands on a turkey baster, give it a try!
5. Make and play a "harmoni-kazoo." [Watch Hal's instructional YouTube video](#) and make your own cross between a harmonica and a kazoo—your harmoni-kazoo—and play a song of your choice. If you can hum, you can play a harmoni-kazoo. Delight your friends and annoy your family!
6. Compare the sound of [minor-key](#) and the [major-key](#) harmonicas. Pretend you're describing them to someone who hasn't heard either one. How would you describe the character of the minor-key harmonica? How about the major-key harmonica? What kinds of emotions would the different harmonicas evoke?

7. [Follow Hal's instructions](#) on making your own set of banakulas. (Be sure to have fun doing it.)
8. If you've made a set of banakulas as instructed in Activity #7, [watch Hal's YouTube video](#) on how to play. Now you try! Can you make the basic rhythm?
9. Watch these three people play the banakulas: 1) [A man in West Africa](#) (looks like he makes and sells banakulas!), 2) Master African drummer [Tuza from Ghana](#) and 3) [Hal, with his own banakulas](#). What do you enjoy about the way each of these musicians plays this instrument? What differences do you note between their playing?
10. You are a reporter for your school's newspaper. Write and illustrate a review of Hal's music making, what he talked about, and the music you heard. Describe the music, your favorite things about it, and what more you wish you could see or know about. Be sure to give your article a descriptive title!
11. Hal's voice sounds like his father's and grandfather's. Why do you think this is? No research required—just your opinion, please!
12. Take a musical visit to any country you like with [World Radio Map](#). Just click on the map, choose a radio station and listen. Where did you "travel"? What kind of music did you hear?
13. Listen to these two traditional khaen players: [Master Sombat Simlah](#) and [Master Lung Kong](#). You may not know anything about traditional khaen music (probably not many of us do!) but use your listening powers. What differences do you notice between the two musicians, or in the tunes they play? Your musical opinion, please!
14. Hal has created quite a sensation on TikTok with the khaen and the banakula. He has inspired duets with artists like NemRaps. [Watch and listen to their duet](#). What do you think about bringing these sounds together online? The khaen could have stayed in Laos, used only for traditional music, and the banakula could have stayed in Ghana to be played only by street musicians. What does taking them out of their country do for musicians everywhere? Do you think it's had any effect on traditional musicians in their countries?
15. Watch and listen to these TikTok duets between Hal and other musical artists: [@jackiecolemamusic](#), [@brandonobailey](#), and [Melanie DeMore](#). What do Hal's unique instrumental sounds contribute to the other artists' music? What would happen if you stripped out Hal's sounds? Once again, your musical opinion, please!
16. Hal has released two albums of his original songs. The song [featured on our episode](#) is a "list" song of all the counties in Ohio. Write a list song! It can be short (a grocery list or a list of the places you've lived) or long (for example, a song listing all the states of the US—bonus points for alphabetical order!).
17. How might studying history help with musical exploration, especially exploring instruments from other parts of the world?

Additional Resources

Hal Walker

[Hal's website](#).

[Hal on Spotify](#) – Hal has two albums on Spotify, [Home in Ohio](#) and [Life Wonderful](#).
Hal [on Patreon](#), one of the places he teaches online.

Hal on Social Media

[Hal's Facebook Music page](#).

[Hal on TikTok](#) – Enjoy Hal's musical exploration with nearly 1.5 million followers.

[Hal's TikTok story](#) (YouTube) – Hal tells the tale of being introduced to TikTok by a fifth grader. He fell in love with the app and its positive vibes and started posting short music videos that people all over the world began to engage with.

[This Moment in Music](#) (YouTube) – "A laid-back, musical exploration of the creative process with musicians and creatives from around the globe." There are 84 episodes and counting in this live series with artists from Flamenco guitarists to smooth saxophonists to neo-soul singers.

[Beginning Harmonica](#) (YouTube) – Hal's series of harmonica lessons for beginners.

[How to Play Rhythm Harmonica](#) (YouTube) – Breathing and nonsense syllables that help you learn to play rhythm harmonica.

[Learn Cool Music Tricks](#) (YouTube) – Hal's videos for beginners on how to play the hand whistle, the turkey baster, rhythm harmonica, the echo clap and the banakulas.

Tell us what you think!

We want to make Carry On™ even more useful and enjoyable for students and educators across the country. [Send us your feedback!](#) Tell us what you liked and what we could do better. And please... tell other educators and schools about the show. Help us all carry on!

With the help of generous donors, [Carry On](#)™ is produced by the nonprofit [Northeast Ohio Musical Heritage Association](#) (NEOMHA). The show is programmed by [Laura Lewis](#), artistic director of NEOMHA's [Lake Erie Folk Fest](#). Carry On's resource guides are the work of writer and musician [Rita Lewis](#).

© 2020 Northeast Ohio Musical Association, all rights reserved