

Megan Interviews Grandpa Hap for a Class Assignment
Interview Assignment with Hap Palmer
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What is your primary professional role?

Songwriter, Publisher, Early Childhood Music and Movement Education Specialist.

What is your work today?

I began my professional career early in 1968, writing, recording and performing my songs. Since 1987 I have been producing and manufacturing my own recordings. I publish all my songs through my publishing company Hap-Pal Music. Hap-Pal Music also owns all the master recordings of my songs. My work involves many different facets. Here is a summary:

Songwriter -

Create music and lyrics. This includes research on the topic of the song, drafts of the lyrics along with drafts of the music; trying various versions before arriving at the final copy.
Make lead sheets using Finale
Record home demos of new songs.*

Music Publisher -

Secure copyrights.
Answer requests and grant permissions to use music.
Keep track of different organizations that collect royalties.

Music Producer -

Arrange songs and/or work with arrangers.
Book musicians and studio time.
Learning to use LogicX and make recordings at home.
Make a master of the finished product.**
Work with graphic designer for cover and disc art
Send finished product to manufacturer.
Order CDs and DVDs from the manufacturer.

Record Label Owner -

Negotiate agreements for use of master recordings***
Negotiate agreements with distributors such as CD Baby and Amazon.com
Finance the production of the recordings
Promote recordings through personal website and social media outlets
Maintain and track Inventory -
Fulfill orders for CDs and DVDs
Send WAV files of songs to digital distributors and streaming services.
Select and work with videographers in creating video versions of my songs for use on
YouTube, various social media outlets, and my website.
Maintain my YouTube channel to insure quality control.

Performer -

Practice singing and guitar (and other instruments as needed -- flute, clarinet, saxophone among others)

Test songs and activities in classroom settings.

Plan and rehearse workshops and concerts.

Sing and play on recordings.

Aside: I also do volunteer work playing guitar and singing in the choir and small groups at the Unitarian Church and Leo Baeck Temple as well as providing occasional music and movement sessions for Serrania Elementary School (Your mom's class).

*A *Demo*, is a sample recording of your music. It is a rough recording of a song typically just guitar or piano and vocal. Demos are frequently sent by songwriters and performers to record labels to try and land a deal.

***Mastering* is the final step of audio post-production. The purpose of *mastering* is to balance sonic elements of a stereo mix and optimize playback across all systems and media formats. Traditionally, *mastering* is done using tools like equalization, compression, limiting and stereo enhancement

***A *master recording* is the first recording of a song or other sound, from which all the later copies are made. Master recordings (usually called just "masters") can be made on discs, tapes, and computer data storage formats. Master recordings often become valuable, especially if the recording artist is popular. Most masters are owned by record companies, but many artists and bands own their own master recordings

A master license gives the license holder the right to use a recorded piece of music in a media project such as film, TV show, commercial, or another visual creation or audio project. A master license is obtained from the person who owns the recording (Record Label Owner), which is the party that financed the recording.

Does your income flow directly from your musical life?

Yes. What is different today is that there are small amounts of income that come from many different sources and organizations. For example, royalties come from ASCAP, YouTube, Google Music, Amazon Streaming, Sound Exchange, Pandora, and Spotify.

Although sales of CDs and DVDs have dropped off dramatically as people go to streaming services there is still some income through Amazon.com, CD Baby, and other distributors.

When I started out all my music was on LP records. I was paid a flat royalty of 7 ½% of the wholesale price. I didn't know anything about the music business.

A friend of my parents who was in the music business, advised them that I should own all the copyrights and publishing for my songs. This turned out to be excellent advice. In today's complicated music business it's very hard to make a living as a singer/songwriter without owning your copyrights and master recordings.

If not, do you generate income from pragmatic means to support your creative work?

For the first three years of my working life, my income came from being the music teacher at a special education school in East Los Angeles. Since then, I have generated most of my income from songwriting, publishing, distributing my music, and doing workshops for teachers and concerts for children.

What is the path by which you arrived in your current professional role?

As a classroom teacher, I wanted to create music that children could participate with actively – music they could sing and move with. I also found that active participation was an effective way to reinforce the school curriculum so I wrote many songs which involve children in activities such as moving and naming body parts, identifying directions in space as well as learning colors, numbers and letters of the alphabet.

What educational preparation did you pursue?

My undergraduate work was a double major of Speech/Drama and Recreation Leadership from Chapman College. I received a Provisional Teaching Credential and took courses in musicianship at Cal State University Long Beach. I took private sight singing lessons from Lillian Mann (mother of Johnny Mann) and attended the Dick Grove Music School. (Grove established the school in 1973 to teach people to make music and to make a living as musicians. He has since passed away and the school no longer exists.) I also attended an ASCAP songwriters' weekly workshop for a year. I received an MA from UCLA in Dance Education and my thesis was titled "Songs to Enhance the Movement Vocabulary of Young Children."

What life experiences prepared you?

This has been a long process that has taken me through learning many different instruments and musical styles. This exposure to a variety of musical experiences and influences has been very helpful to me as a songwriter.

When I was around nine years old I told my mother I wanted to play the drums. She said the drums were too noisy and bought me a clarinet. This was in the 50's when rock and roll was becoming popular so after a few years I also took up the saxophone. In middle school, I played in the orchestra, marching band, and dance band.

The summer before I went into college, my sister Penny went to summer school in Mexico. She came back with a guitar and I got really excited about this instrument because I could sing a melody and provide rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment at the same time. This was the period where I started to find my singing voice. It was during the 60's and I started singing folk songs and leading singalongs as part of my job with the Hollywood YMCA. I was also a member of the Chapman College pep band where I played sax and clarinet so at this time I was dabbling in a lot of different musical styles from folk music to Dixieland and jazz.

After I graduated from college and went into teaching special education, I was also working part time as a musician. Since there were a million guitar players, and not much call for clarinet and saxophone, I took up the electric bass. For several years I played with a combo that performed in night clubs and restaurants on the weekends. For a short time I took up the flute just for my own personal pleasure but the guitar remains the instrument I play most because it makes it so easy to bring live music into the classroom and I can accompany myself as I write and sing songs.

Were there particular relationships that led you to this work?

There are three people who were especially influential in my career path; Ken Nelson, Roger Carter and Della Blakeway.

Ken Nelson. My parents had a bridge club and Ken Nelson and his wife were one of the couples in their club. Ken was the head of A&R for Capitol Records Country Music Division. (A&R = artists and repertoire). A big part of his job was to find the right songs for the right artist. He advised my parents that I should own the copyrights to my songs and he recommended an attorney for me to work with. The attorney helped me form my own publishing company, Hap-Pal Music.

Ken also listened to a demo of my songs and gave me valuable feedback. We had a meeting and he said my melodies were okay but that my lyrics were not good. He quoted some lines from one of my songs -- *"Because I love you so, the little differences we have are like a tiny grain of sand, a melting flake of snow..."* He looked at me and said: "Now would you really say that to a girl?" I sheepishly answered "No". He asked his wife June who was sitting quietly in the background, "What would you do if I said that to you?" June said: "I would probably throw a banana at you!" - a reaction I never fully understood but never forgot. He said the idea of a song lyric is to talk the way people talk in real life. He read some lyrics from hit country songs one of which was titled "He'll Have To Go." The opening lines were, *"Put your sweet lips a little closer to the phone. Let's pretend that we're together all alone...."* This songwriting advice turned out to be especially helpful in writing for young children -- clear, simple lyrics.

Ken also believed that singer/songwriters should have a lot of live performing experience before they get into a recording studio. He introduced me to the director of a group called the Doodletown Pipers. I auditioned and was accepted and performed with this group for a year or so.

Roger Carter. Roger was the Youth Director of the Hollywood YMCA. He thought I had something to offer because I could sing and play the guitar and he encouraged me to work with teenagers. He wanted to start a weekend evening activities program for teenagers at the Hollywood YMCA. Upstairs there was dancing and downstairs we had a hootenanny. I would play the guitar and lead songs and people would join in singing popular folk songs of the day (e.g. Michael Row the Boat Ashore, Where Have All The Flowers Gone, Hey Lilee, Lilee, Low, etc...). The audience would sing along and make requests. I learned a lot of folk songs and we'd have singalongs. Also I worked as a counselor on teenage caravan trips (kids rode in the back of a big truck and we'd take them on trips). One of the trips was to Yosemite. In the evenings we had campfires and we would sing songs. People from other campsites would gather around our singalongs, and soon the crowds got bigger. The rangers suggested we move to a bigger area. We did and more people kept showing up. *Aside: there was another counselor named Kenny who was very charismatic and charming and the two of us would lead these singalongs. They became quite popular.* This was when I realized I had something to offer with my guitar-playing and singing music.

Della Blakeway. I was hired to teach at a special education school, McDonald Avenue School in East L.A. for students with Intellectual Developmental Disorders. Della Blakeway was the Principal of the school. I was playing music for my class and Della noted my success in working with the children in this mode. She suggested I become the music teacher for the whole school. I had my own room - a separate bungalow - at the school, and every 20 minutes a new group of students would come in for a session. I was trying to sing folk songs of the day and but the students wanted to jump up and move while I kept wanting them to stay seated and sing along. This was not helpful. So I started writing songs that would tap the students' natural desire to move and be actively involved with the music. This worked well but, with 6 or 7 classes a day I was getting sore throats from singing all day. I started recording tapes of my songs. I could play these tapes and lead the students in movement and not be stuck behind a guitar.

Della was at an educator's conference and was listening to music at a booth. She told the salesperson from Educational Activities that, "I have someone at her school who has better stuff than this!" So the area salesman visited my class at the school, listened to some of my songs, and watched the children moving. I was asked to send demos of the songs to the owner of Educational Activities. This led to their working with me to produce my songs. I went to a studio with four track recording equipment that enabled me to do multi-track recording. I sang lead and harmony vocals, and played all the instruments including guitar, bongo drums, tambourine, saxophone, and recorders. Teachers and students seemed to like the songs and I started doing teacher workshops arranged by Educational Activities. This launched my career. Educational Activities produced my recordings until 1987 when I decided to become the record label owner along with being the music publisher and recording artist, giving me full control of my work.

Do you have a personal statement "Mission" or "Purpose?" If so, when did you discern or create this for yourself?

Here is a summary from my website at www.happalmer.com:

Music and Movement for Children

Young children learn best by doing. Music and movement promotes active involvement in developing vocabulary and mastering a wealth of skills and concepts. Many of the songs and activities on this website can support preschool through third grade curriculum.

Building Vocabulary

Increasing a child's vocabulary is one of the many benefits of music and movement activities. Words that describe movement are a fundamental part of language. Therefore, to enhance a child's movement vocabulary is to enhance a child's overall vocabulary.

Examples of these words are included in [A Movement Vocabulary For Young Children](#) from Hap Palmer's MA thesis. This vocabulary, including words that describe actions, space, energy and time, is incorporated in the [Lyrics and Activities](#) of many of Hap Palmer's songs.

Integrating Music and Movement With Academic Curriculum

Music and movement can support the academic curriculum from preschool through third grade. The activities use a variety of sensory modalities to engage the learner and make learning fun.

For example the teaching of word families can be combined with movement skills by playing a freeze dance based on movements from the "-op" family. This activity reinforces phonics skills as children hop, pop, stop, mop, chop, flop, and bop with the music.

Teaching the Whole Child

Music and Movement is a way of teaching the whole child:

Mental

Physical

Emotional

Social

As children improve vocabulary and language comprehension they also improve movement skills, developing coordination, balance, strength and endurance. In this way, children are learning to move and moving to learn at the same time.

When a wide range of movement skills are applied to creative movement they expand the range of expressive possibilities enabling children to communicate through movement and respond to the mood and quality of literature, art, and music.

Music and movement activities also involve relating to others. Children share space and work individually, in partners and in small groups. They share ideas, thoughts and feelings through the mediums of music and creative dance.

Most of the activities are non-competitive and non-comparative. Each child can experience success at her/his level of development. Success and accomplishment lead to a healthy self-image.

Teaching the whole child engages the learner. In my article, [The Music, Movement and Learning Connection](#), from the NAEYC Journal "Young Children" September 2001 issue. I share some of my early learning experiences that lead to my commitment to music and movement in early childhood education.

If you had to do it over again, is there anything you would do differently, either in choice of career or path along the way?

I would definitely choose the same work but I would start learning about the music business and owning my own publishing and master recordings sooner in my career.