

ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

PORTABLE INSTRUMENTS
GRADES K-6



BILHORN BROTHERS
PORTABLE ORGAN, c. 1900

Wood, fabric, metal
1981.012.001

ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE

Learn about portable instruments. Look closely at a portable reed organ from the late 1800s/early 1900s. Learn more about the organ and its owner. Listen to a video of a similar organ being played and learn more about how the instrument works. Brainstorm and sketch a portable instrument. Investigate other portable instruments in the Anchorage Museum collection. Create an instrument from recycled materials.



PORTABLE ORGAN

Begin by looking closely at the portable organ made by the Bilhorn Brothers company.

If investigating the portable organ with another person, use the questions below to guide your discussions. If working alone, consider recording thoughts on paper:

CLOSE-LOOKING

Look closely, quietly at the organ for a few minutes.

OBSERVE

Share your observations about the organ or record your initial thoughts

ASK

- *What do I notice about the organ?*
- *What colors and materials does the artist use?*
- *What sounds might the organ create?*
- *What does it remind you of?*
- *What more do you see?*
- *What more can you find?*

DISCUSS

USE [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the organ.

LEARN MORE

ABOUT THE MANUFACTURER

Peter Philip Bilhorn was a well-known evangelist singer and composer who invented a portable reed organ to support his musical endeavors. With the support of his brother, George Bilhorn, he founded Bilhorn Brothers Organ Company of Chicago in 1885. Bilhorn Brothers manufactured portable reed organs, including the *World-Famous Folding Organ* in the Anchorage Museum collection. They purchased reeds and reed boards from Hinners Organ Company, a larger company which manufactured their own reeds. Bilhorn Brothers sold organs directly to the customer as well as manufacturing organs for sale through department stores, such as Sears Roebuck (c. 1902). The company also published religious music and was active through at least 1941.

ABOUT THE OWNER

Hudson Stuck (1863–1920) was born in London, England and graduated from King's College London before immigrating to the United States in 1885. Stuck worked as a cowboy and teacher for several years in Texas before returning to the University of the South to study theology and become an Episcopal priest. Stuck moved to Alaska in 1904 and was made Archdeacon of the Yukon and the Arctic. He established Episcopal churches, missions, and hospitals in numerous communities throughout Alaska, including: Fairbanks, Nenana, Chena, Tanacross, and Allakaket, at the junction of the Koyukuk River and the Alatna River.



Stuck was also an avid outdoorsman. In 1913, Stuck and Harry Karstens co-led the first expedition to summit the south summit of Denali. Stuck traveled more than 2,000 miles via dogsled to visit the Episcopal missions and villages they served each winter. He purchased a shallow riverboat, “The Pelican”, in 1908, which allowed him to travel up and down the Yukon River to minister to the Dene in their summer camps. Stuck wrote five books detailing his time in Alaska, in part to detail the exploitation of Alaska Natives that he witnessed during his years in Episcopal ministry.

LISTEN:

[Pianist Artis Wodehouse performs a Norwegian folk melody on a Bilhorn Brothers Organ](#)

[Pianist Artis Wodehouse explains how portable reed organs work and compares their sounds](#)

A NOTE ABOUT ALASKA HISTORY FOR EDUCATORS The Anchorage Museum recognizes that groups of white, Christian evangelists and missionaries sought to change Alaska Native cultural practices. Some evangelists and missionaries were active, or complicit, in the forcible suppression of Alaska Native music, language, and spiritual practices as well as other traditions and lifeways. The United States government leveraged Christian religious organizations for the purpose of assimilating Indigenous peoples through church-sponsored schools, healthcare, and other means. These organizations, and their members and leaders, were often involved in perpetuating systemic colonization. Acts of physical, emotional, and sexual trauma are a part of this legacy, a legacy which is still felt today in Alaska. Indigenous peoples throughout North America continue to heal from similar historical traumas.

DESCRIBING SOUND

MATERIALS Pencil
Paper

DIRECTIONS

1. Return to the Bilhorn Brothers portable organ. Listen to the sound it makes as pianist Artis Wodehouse plays.

Deep River

Wedding Medley

Tomorrow I Shall Marry Her

2. Reflect on the sounds produced by the organ and record your thoughts. Ask: *how would I describe the sound of the organ? What type of music would I want to hear performed on this instrument?*



DESIGNING PORTABLE INSTRUMENTS K-2

MATERIALS Paper
Pencil

- DIRECTIONS**
1. Think about your favorite kind of music. Ask: *what instruments play this music? Are these instruments easy to bring with me when I travel?*
 2. Brainstorm how to create portable versions of these instruments. Ask: *does my instrument need a protective case? Do I need to add a handle? Does my instrument need to fold so that someone can easily carry it?*
 3. Using your pencil and paper, draw a portable instrument that you could easily bring with you on your travel.
 4. Add a written description of the sounds your instrument makes. Ask: *how would I describe this sound for someone who had not heard it yet? Does it have a high pitch or a low pitch? What type of music does it play well?*

DESIGNING PORTABLE INSTRUMENTS 3-6

MATERIALS Paper
Pencil

- DIRECTIONS**
1. Think about your favorite kind of music. Ask: *what instruments play this music? Are these instruments easy to bring with me when I travel?*
 2. Brainstorm how to create portable versions of these instruments. Ask: *does my instrument need a protective case? Do I need to add a handle? Does my instrument need to fold so that someone can easily carry it? What materials are these instruments made out of? How can I ensure the portability of the instrument does not affect its quality of sound?*
 3. Using your pencil and paper, sketch a portable instrument that you could bring with you on your travel. Label the materials that are used to create the instrument
 4. Add a written description of the sounds your instrument makes. Ask: *how would I describe this sound for someone who had not heard it yet? Does it have a high pitch or a low pitch? What type of music does it play well?*



INVESTIGATE INSTRUMENTS IN THE ANCHORAGE MUSEUM COLLECTION



***T*LINGIT RATTLE**

Look closely at the Tlingit rattle made by James Schoppert.

If investigating the rattle with another person, use the questions below to guide discussions. If working alone, consider recording thoughts on paper:

CLOSE-LOOKING

Look closely, quietly at the rattle for a few minutes.

OBSERVE

Share your observations about the rattle or record your initial thoughts

ASK

- *What do I notice about the rattle?*
- *What colors and materials does the artist use?*
- *What sounds might the rattle create?*
- *What does it remind you of?*
- *What more do you see?*
- *What more can you find?*

DISCUSS

USE [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the rattle.

LEARN MORE

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

James Schoppert (1947–1992) was a Tlingit artist born in Juneau, Alaska. Schoppert attended Anchorage Community College before receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Sculpture and Printmaking from the University of Alaska in 1987 and a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture from the University of Washington in 1981. Schoppert described himself as an innovator, who took traditional Alaska Native images and take them beyond their original design and purpose to create art pieces of his own artistic vision. Schoppert is well-known for his carved panels, though he also carved other forms, painted, and made masks.

LISTEN:

Download and listen to the recording of the Schoppert rattles

[Learn more about James Schoppert's work](#)



HAIDA FLUTE

Look closely at the Haida flute made by George Gunyah.

If investigating the flute with another person, use the questions below to guide discussions. If working alone, consider recording thoughts on paper:

CLOSE-LOOKING Look closely, quietly at the flute for a few minutes.

OBSERVE Share your observations about the flute or record your initial thoughts

ASK

- *What do I notice about the flute?*
- *What colors and materials does the artist use?*
- *What sounds might the flute create?*
- *What does it remind you of?*
- *What more do you see?*
- *What more can you find?*

DISCUSS USE [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the flute.

LEARN MORE

ABOUT THE INSTRUMENT

Early versions of Haida flutes are thought to be modeled after European recorders. They are carved out of argillite, a fine grained sedimentary rock. Haida are the only Indigenous group in the Pacific Northwest to use argillite in their carvings.

CREATE A PORTABLE INSTRUMENT

MATERIALS	Recycled materials: cardboard, empty containers, rubber bands, string, etc. Glue Paper Pencil
DIRECTIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Look at the materials that you have on hand. Using your paper and pencil, sketch a design for a portable instrument prototype using these materials. Label which material you will use for each portion of the instrument.2. Build your instrument out of the recycled materials.3. Test the sound quality of your instrument. You may need to make changes to your instrument in order to achieve the desired sound.4. Once your instrument makes the desired sounds, create a song to be played on your new instrument.

KEY TERMS

<i>Argillite</i>	a fine grained sedentary rock used in Haida carving
<i>Evangelist</i>	a person who seeks to convert others to the Christian faith; from the 18th century to the middle of the 20th century evangelists in Alaska were largely responsible for the suppression of Alaska Native culture—especially dancing, language, and spiritual practices
<i>Flute</i>	a wind instrument made from a tube, played by blowing air through the instrument and opening and covering different combinations of openings; Haida flutes are similar to European recorders and held pointed down from the mouth at an angle rather than parallel to the ground
<i>Instrument</i>	an object used for producing music
<i>Organ</i>	a wind instrument played by pushing compressed air through reeds or pipes controlled by a keyboard or multiple keyboards
<i>Pitch</i>	the quality of sound that listeners perceive as higher or lower on the musical scale
<i>Prototype</i>	a sample of a product created to test the design; sometimes created out of less expensive materials than those utilized in final production
<i>Reed</i>	a piece in many wind instruments that creates sound by vibrating at a certain pitch as air is forced past; in portable organs the reed is typically made of a thin brass strip

