

Olana Ai

It's very exciting to be living during an era of Renaissance in Hawaii. A time, not only of rebirths of the old arts and culture, but also a time of new growth and development in these areas.

Finally, the Hawaiians are dancing for themselves. Not just for the Gods, not just for the Alii, not just for the tourists, but finally for themselves. Their pride and allegiance are stirred by this resurgence, they are moved to cheers and tears.

My mother, Blossom Clark Kaipō, is my Kumu. She is the source, the teacher, the inspiration for all that evolves in our halau. I did not study outside her classes. I thought it disloyal to go to another hula teacher. Nor did she prod us to continue her work. My sister and I were trained to dance with her regular classes, however through the years I observed her interaction with people. It was her graciousness, on stage, back stage, in the class room, that caused people to feel the real joy of the hula.

In class she taught the basic steps, the way she was taught by her mother. Knees are bent, steps are definite and shoulders steady. Hips then sway naturally. She taught chants, traditional Hawaiian mele and hapa haole songs, but there was no definite division between Kahiko and Auwana. I try to define both and teach them separately. This is part of teaching today. Mom always translated Hawaiian songs and words as she taught. I try to give as much history and insight to the poetry as I possibly can. Today it's much more appreciated.



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I began teaching 8 years ago mainly because I wanted my daughter to learn the hula style of my family. My growth was slow because I was then in training as a kumu and also, I wanted to fit the hula into our family life. Today we are all involved. My husband, Howard K. Ai is a marvelous talent. He is my musician, advisor, and artistic designer. I don't let him into my classroom because he is such a disciplinarian. Three of my sons sing and dance. The eldest is our technician. My daughter Natalie Nolan assists me in teaching. She's now fifteen and is the most exciting dancer I've ever seen, she loves it so. She'd like to become a kumu hula, but she's so strict like her dad. I have a few more years to teach her that hula should not change or mask a person, just bring out the very best in them.

Aloha is the very essence of the hula. Without it, the dancer is trapped within the steps and motions of choreography.

Clare M. Ai