

KALENA SILVA

The way I began to learn the hula is probably somewhat unusual. I began as a ho'opa'a for some hula students and only later began to hula myself.

When I was a student at Kamehameha, Aunty Winona Beamer asked that I serve as a ho'opa'a for some fellow students who were preparing for the Hō'ike portion of the Song Contest that year. Because I remembered my utter and complete fascination with the power and beauty of Aunty Kau'i Zuttermeister's chanting and drumming in accompaniment to her daughter Noenoe's dancing at a Hawaiian Civic Club lū'au when I was about five years old, I agreed to serve as a ho'opa'a for those students. Despite my serving as a ho'opa'a for them, I still felt that I needed to learn more.

And so I began studying the hula and chanting with Ho'oulu Richards at Kamehameha. Sometime later, she and I went to study with Aunty Māiki Aiu Lake at the Hālau Hula O Māiki. A few years passed and I graduated from her hālau in 1972 as an 'ōlapa and a ho'opa'a. One year later, I again graduated from her hālau, but as a kumu hula this time. Later, I went to study with Aunty Kau'i Zuttermeister and her daughter, Noenoe, in Kāne'ohe. Soon after studying with the Zuttermeisters, I met Aunty Lōkālia Montgomery and occasionally, when she was in good health, she also taught me the hula.

Ka'upena Wong is my teacher of chanting. Although all of my teachers taught chanting that was related to the hula, it was Ka'upena who broadened my knowledge by teaching me various kinds of chants performed outside of the hula context. Because of the great value and truth in the teachings of my teachers, I shall always be thankful and indebted to them.

When I learned the hula and chanting, I did so only to satisfy my own desire to learn about these arts and not because I thought I might eventually teach others.

At that time, too, I was a student in schools of western education until I finally earned the Ph.D. in ethnomusicology at the University of Washington. Today, as a teacher of Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, I teach hula and chanting through the medium of Hawaiian as a part of the curriculum there.

I believe that much of the kind of hula currently being called "hula kahiko" probably began at around the middle of the 19th century and was then called "hula ku'i." Hula ku'i generally have verses of two lines apiece and a "hā'ina" in the last verse. Examples of hula ku'i are "Aia Lā 'O Pele," "E Ho'i Ke Aloha I Ni'ihau," "Eia Nō Kāwika," and many others. Hawaiian and Haole elements were joined ("ku'i") to produce this type of music and dancing.

I also believe that it is difficult for chanters today to learn proper Hawaiian chant vocal production. Hula teachers can train their students in the intricacies of the 'uehe, the kāholo, the 'ami, the kāwelu, and so on. However, I believe that there aren't many teachers who are able to train their students in the intricacies of chant styles like the olioli, the ho'āeāe, the kepaKepa, the kāwele, and so on. Hula can be seen at parties, concerts, and competitions broadcast on tv. Unfortunately, proper Hawaiian chanting is heard only very rarely. Nonetheless, I have cause to be hopeful as I see that gradually more and more people are earnestly seeking this priceless traditional knowledge of our ancestors.