

Holoua Stender

Holoua Stender teaches five classes of Hawaiian chant and dance everyday as part of the regular school curriculum of the Kamehameha Schools. He has been teaching since 1979.

I was raised by my grandparents and my great-grandparents. They all spoke Hawaiian to me when I was little. When I attended St. Louis High School, I studied formal Hawaiian language with John Lake and I continued learning language throughout my years at the University of Hawai'i.

John Lake was a wonderful and an exciting teacher. I took hula from him when I was fifteen and enrolled at St. Louis High School. He was a very bombastic teacher. He motivated you to want to learn. He must have had over sixty students that came to the afterschool rehearsals to learn from him. He had that charismatic way of teaching. He used to take us all over the island to learn from different kumu hula. We took from Aunty Alice Namakelua, Pua Dela Cerna and Aunty Hattie Au. He provided us with many opportunities to learn hula and we performed and traveled to the neighbor islands and to different conventions. We would also sing and dance to earn money for travel.

After John Lake, I went to the University of Hawai'i where I took hula classes from Ho'oulu Cambra and language from Larry Kimura. Concurrently, I joined "Ka Pā Hula Hawai'i" under John Topolinski.

Kaha'i Topolinski had the greatest influence on me because of the depth of his teaching and because I was with him the longest. He would take chants and tear them apart and study the different levels of the language in the chant. I used to wonder why it took so long to learn a dance when the dance was so easy. But what he was doing was that he took each layer of the chant apart and made us study it. Sometimes we would go to Mrs. Mary Kawena Puku'i to ask her questions about different chants and she would unravel the real intricacies of the language which is very

important for studying the chant and for the dance. I was fortunate to go through that with Kaha'i.

In 1977, I left Kaha'i and went to study with Darrell Lupenui. Darrell was the most loving person. I have special memories of him and the way he taught. He would sit on the floor and he would teach us by describing the motions to us. He would never perform the motion but he would tell us what to do and the dances would come out so perfectly and so beautifully. He hardly ever changed things. He had a mental picture of the dance in his head and he didn't have to have it performed for him. It's like someone who is a genius at creating music. They have the music in their heads already. He would explain it to his alaka'i and they would then show us the motion. Darrell Lupenui was an artist, and maybe a genius in hula. He worked within the perimeters of traditional steps, but he created art right inside ~~of~~ his head.

When Keli'i Tau'a asked me to join his kumu hula class, Darrell was very gracious and released me to go with Keli'i. My entire two years with Keli'i was spent training for graduation. Part of our training for graduation was to compose mele. Keli'i invited renown kumu hula, Manuel Silva, Henry Pā, Kalena Silva and other people to come to our graduation. He wanted them to watch us perform hula to our own compositions with our own choreography, working of course within the perimeters of his tutelage. The kumu hula came to watch and comment on our creations and our compositions when we performed at the Star of the Sea Hall on the evening following our formal graduation ceremony. Charles Ka'upu and I were the only two fortunate ones to be trained and graduated by Keli'i Tau'a in 1979.

I teach Hawaiian chant and dance at Kamehameha Schools. We have a beginning level, an intermediate level and a "select" level. Anyone can register for the beginning and intermediate level class. Randie Fong and Wayne Chang work very closely with me and we hold auditions for the select class. Three hundred students show up for our auditions and we'll select maybe forty.

They don't have to have taken the beginning and intermediate levels to be in this class. They have to demonstrate their skill in dancing and language.

We try to groom our students. We tell them that, "A'ohe pau ka 'ike i kau hālau," which means that what you learn with your teacher, you have to keep pure but separate. What we give you, we want you to keep pure but separate. We try as much as possible to give them a new style and enhance their dancing; ^{ing} make them better than they were and not ~~to~~ change somebody else's style. We are fortunate that they come to us with all the experience so we don't want to dampen that experience. We want to give them another experience.

motivation?

Our "select" students start outside on the lanai. They line up and at a designated time they will start their 'oli kāhea. If we feel that the chant is sincere, they will be welcomed inside. Sometimes they stay out for twenty to half an hour just chanting. When they walk in, it's perfectly quiet. Then we start the basics for anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour. After the basics, we break up into three groups and ~~we~~ each of us will teach a different dance.

I consider myself more a language expert than I do a hula expert. I got involved with hula because of language. I could see the beauty of the poetry and the beauty of the Hawaiian language. That's what made me interested in hula, because hula has the highest use of the language.