

Chubby Mahoe

I think I have to go back to an age when anybody starts to remember which was about three or four-years-old. Being at family parties, I was always attracted to music and to rythms. I was always attracted to sweet music, to music with heavy percussion. I listened to Harry Owens Orchestra, the chang-a-lang music of Elmer Lee and Uncle Jimmy Wong, and I found all of this kind of music so refreshing. My father was invited to many kamaaina parties so I saw people like Flora Hayes and Uncle Rennie Burks dance, elegant men and women dancing.

I started off watching my sister learn the kahiko in Kalihi Valley from a lady named Daisy Bell Young. We would make fun of my sister as all brothers would do but at the same time we were watching and learning. My first kumu was George Naope. He came to Puuhale School where I was a fifth grader. He came to teach us a popular song at that time "Mahine O Hoku" for a pageant we were having, and it was a one-day lesson.

I met Nalani Kanakaole when I was working for Waiakea Village. I learned two chants from her. It was many years between George and Nalani so in the interim I just watched other people dance, and I watched their interpretations. There were very few male dancers because it was considered mahu to dance. So I admired the few men that did dance because their spirit seemed to transcend this type of criticism.

I trained informally under hula master Henry Moikeha Pa while a member of the Prince Kuhio Hawaiian Civic Club. In preparing for a concert, Uncle Henry wanted us to build a kuahu or altar for laka, the goddess of the hula, and I couldn't participate in it because of the religious convictions I felt within me. In my heart, I felt I could not rightfully worship Jehovah and at the same time participate in the offering of prayer chants to laka, pele, or hopoe.

I began to teach in 1970 when I became the social director at the Kauai Surf Hotel. Every morning at ten o'clock we would teach the hotel guests how to dance simple songs like the "Hukilau" hula. It was tourist oriented but it was a way for them to learn about the culture. I didn't teach it kapulu and I paid every respect to the hula. I had great respect for the people who came to learn because they wanted to learn about our culture and they were earnest and sincere. I didn't feel it was a scam. The visitors are very interested in learning what we are all about. I think they are searching for a way to learn about our music, our dance, our food, our culture, and I think we owe them some kind of instruction to satisfy that hunger.

In 1978 I formed the Lamalani Hula Academy in partnership with my dear friend Lahela Kaaihue. I took care of the books and trained the children while Lahela was responsible for the adults. Lahela and I parted and I moved the Academy to Kawai-ahao Church where Madonna O'Rourke, a student of Henry Pa, became my helper. In time I was asked by St. Andrew's to move to the Cathedral's facilities and I've been here ever since.

I wanted to respect God as my creator so I went into Scriptual hula. Can you see David and Goliath, the Nativity, the Songs of Solomon done to traditional hula? I felt if the missionaries had gone to the temples and asked the natives to put the Bible to hula kahiko, the Hawaiians would have accepted Christianity much faster and easier. I must honestly say that the hula that I do today; the interpretation, the motions all came from God. There was no real kumu that taught me what I am presenting today.

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