



HANANA KŪIKAWĀ

SPECIAL EVENTS FEATURE

Sonny Ching hula production sets foot on Maui Nov. 17, 18

By *Manu Boyd*

Just one day after we celebrate the birth of King Kalākaua who helped revive the hula more than 125 years ago, Kumu Hula William Haunu'u Kahakuleilehua "Sonny" Ching and his Hālau Nā Mamo O Pu'uauhulu will take Maui by storm with their mega hula production, "Ho'oulu I Ka Na'auao" (to grow in wisdom). With a cast of 80 dancers and chanters, Ching will for the first time perform at the Valley Isle's world-class facility, the Maui Arts and Cultural Center, known to enthusiasts as "the MACC." Performing also will be Māhiehie, the trio of Sam Kaina, Mark Tang and Helene Woodward, the hālau's mainstay ensemble.

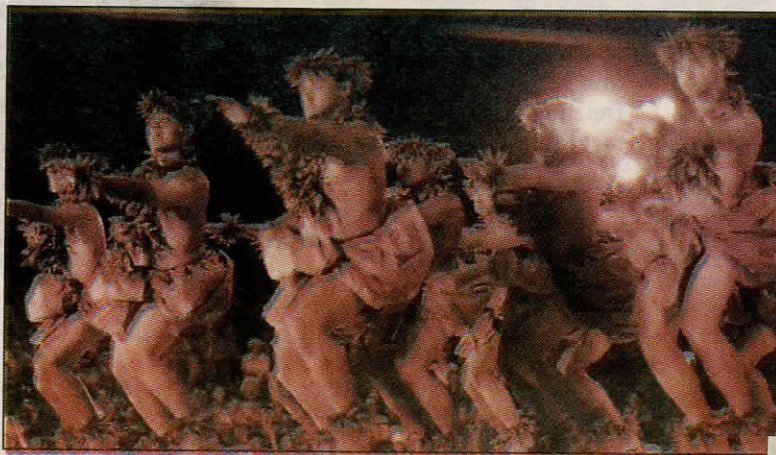
"Maui seems to really appreciate cultural events and the arts," said Ching who only recently identified his own Maui

roots through the 'ohana of his dad, Billy Ching. "We look forward to working in that theater."

Typically, local ensembles start small touring modest venues and building toward more presti-

gious theaters, but in 2000, Ching debuted "Ho'oulu I Ka Na'auao" at Carnegie Hall, considered the pinnacle of performing arts venues. According to Haunani Ching, family matriarch who also serves as the hālau's general manager, the experience was awesome and heart-warming – the result of a year- and-a-half of preparing and fund-raising. "Family members and friends flew in from all over," she reported.

For the award-winning kumu, hula is second nature, with generations in his family practicing the art form. His grandmother, Lena Guerrero, a well-known performer in her day, gave him his foundation, also instructing Ching's mother, Haunani, and aunts. A grand-aunt, Luika Pele Kaio, was a noted kumu



Hālau Nā Mamo O Pu'uauhulu performs hula kahiko at Merrie Monarch

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hula in Lā'ie. Additionally, Ching studied with Kawaikapuokalani Hewett and Lahela Ka'aihue.

The two-and-a-half hour production is a compressed glimpse of Hawaiian history from ancient lifestyles and spirituality through the present. Themes of gods, chiefs and the land will be woven throughout the hula kahiko performances, in sharp contrast with the Hollywood-influenced cellophane skirt numbers and the charm of mu'umu'u-clad kūpuna whose smiles are priceless.

"There are a lot of hālau on Maui and many people who are involved in music, dance and other art forms. We invite Maui to Ho'oulu i ka Na'auao to experience a little of what we do in Hālau Nā Mamo O Pu'uauhulu," said Ching. Tickets are \$40, \$30 and \$10, and may be ordered by calling 808-242-7469. ■