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Kelii Taua

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In 1970 I was teaching Hawaiiana for the Department of Education at Waimanalo Intermediate School. Aunty Nona Beamer was serving as my consultant. I was required to learn hula for teaching purposes and so Aunty Nona invited me to train under her informally. I stayed with her for a year and in 1972, Aunty Maiki Aiu publicly announced that she would be holding classes for hula teachers.

The halau at that time was on Keeaumoku Street and after some practices, I could hardly walk down the stairs of the second-floor studio. The Hawaiian Renaissance to coin a phrase of that time, was just starting to turn its wheels. Anything that was Hawaiian was a joy to learn. I think the greatest thing that I came to recognize was that hula was not just motions, but Hawaiian life, language, and folklore. That was the greatest joy, being in a place where I was learning not only the dance but something about myself in relationship to the past Hawaiian culture. What was there, and what it could be in the future.

The answer came from another kumu named Kauai Zuttermeister. I started studying intensively in 1973 with a style and a feeling that I still possess today and transfer the stylings of Aunty Kauai to others. I started to teach in 1975. Two of my former classmates in Aunty Maiki's halau, Robert Cazimero, and John Topolinski were really getting into men's hula and it was exciting to me. There had been men's hula when we were learning but there wasn't halaus as we understand it today. They set the pace and helped to establish respectability for men to dance.

My approach was to show that hula was physical and demanding and required dedication and learning. That's how in 1978 I ended up with a halau of fifty-five men, half of them college or professional football players. My work has centered on kahiko because auwana, as the word indicates, can be created by anyone, anytime, anywhere. My definition of hula kahiko is that of Edith Kanakaole's. It would have to be movements passed down from generation to generation.

In the old days we were taught to wait for the right time but in today's society the opportunity for knowledge is so great that it behooves each student to search out all opportunities. At the same time, the student has to be committed and dedicated. I'd rather see the student free to go after what they really want than be frustrated waiting.

The young kumu are criticized for their commerciality but the older people have to realize that there are exorbitant costs to be met. The expenses of 1983 are not the same as in the forties and fifties, and they have to be paid if the halaus are to survive. It has been said that a culture dies if creativity stops. I am happy to see the young perpetuating the culture and traditions for in them is the future of Hawaii nei.

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78

80

~~Pele Chants~~ ~~to~~ ~~Kam Chants~~

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The halau at that time was on the second floor of ~~Keaumoku St.~~ and after some practices, I could hardly walk down the stairs. The "Hawaiian Renaissance", to coin a phrase of that time, was just starting to turn its wheels. Anything that was Hawaiian was a joy to learn. I think the greatest thing that I came to recognize was that hula was not just motions, it's Hawaiian life, language, and folklore. That was the greatest joy, being in a place where I was learning not only the dance but something about myself in relationship to the past Hawaiian culture. What was there, and what it could be in the future.

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The young kumu are criticized for their commerciality but the older people have to realize that there are exorbitant costs to be met. The expenses of 1983 are not the same as in the 40's and 50's and they have to be paid if the halaus are to survive.

I have all the love and respect for the kupuna, but if you look at the bottom line what have they left the present and future generations in terms of knowledge of the culture. Too many of the resources for right or wrong reasons have hidden themselves away and the culture has suffered for it.

*closing paragraph?*

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In 1973, Kelii Taua took part in the second voyage of the Hokulea to Tahiti, a voyage of <sup>3,000</sup> miles in the open ocean using only ancient Hawaiian navigational skills.

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My definition of hula kahiko is that of Edith Kanakaole's. It would have to be steps passed down from generation to generation. All other steps express a traditional sense but would have to come under the category of traditional in a contemporary sense.

I don't want to be a hypocrite and put a damper on creativity in kahiko because I myself have created but I do think we have a responsibility not to confuse the young students about what is kahiko and what is auwana. Although she may not recognize her influence on me, Auntie Kai has shaped much of my work.

My work has been centered on kahiko because auwana as the word indicates can be created by anyone, anytime, anywhere.

I believe that it is a very important art form that in the future will gain world-wide recognition, and validity like any other classical art form.

In the old days we were taught to wait for the right time but in today's society the opportunity for knowledge is so great that it behooves each student to search out all opportunities. At the same time the student has to give the heart and soul to each teacher. I rather see the student be released to go after what they really want than be frustrated waiting.

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