

Roselle  
Bailey

When a person is four years old, they are never interested in the hula. I was just told to dance. My first kumu was Auntie Emma Sharpe. From four years old to fourth grade I really didn't know anything but to be a good child and follow directions.

I studied with Auntie Edith Kanakaole for ten lessons so I can't say she trained me, but what I learned from Auntie Edith -- I had just come back from living abroad. I was literally more Arab than Hawaiian. From head to toe I was Arab, from my clothes to my speech to my gestures--what hand I used and what hand I didn't use. When I got together with Auntie Edith it was like coming back down to my own roots. While living in Iraq, I would have dreams of home. I would dream of Hawaiian words and phrases half a world away. When I came home, Auntie Edith was the only one that said yes I'll help you. So I would go once a week to her home and we would have chanting lessons. The lessons included much more than chanting. We did a lot of talking. We talked about ohana, family, giving openly, and not holding back anything. That's what I give Auntie Edith a lot of credit for that kind of soul thinking and feeling. The feeling for a Hawaiian to their family and to their fellow beings. I did learn a lot of chanting knowledge that helped to set my foundation.

Auntie Kau'i Zuttermeister is the kumu that gave me the background that I now base a lot of my work on. The techniques of chanting, the style, is a combination of Auntie Edith and Auntie Kau'i. Auntie Edith's teaching helped me to do what later on Auntie Kau'i would stress.

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So therefore Auntie Kauai, Auntie Edith, even Auntie Emma all have given me different backgrounds. To me the background is solid in different aspects of the culture. Now as far as my mother and father they are my keepers. They tell me whether I am on the right road or the wrong road. My mother didn't dance until she was an adult and had children. Then she took her hula from Auntie Emma She then went onto tutu Lydia Kekuewa who coached her on the fine points. That's how my mother developed a background. My father often talked with my great-granduncle who we called tutu Lama and he often told him things about the hula.

I started teaching in highschool because of school programs. I would take my own peers teach them a couple hulas and present a program. I don't consider myself a kumu hula, it's other peoples conception of me. I've never uniki'd. To me an uniki means that you have been graduated to go on and teach. What those qualifications to go on and teach would be in the mind of the kumu. I think the qualifications are tremendous. Not only do you have to know the motions of the hula but you have to know how to interpret a mele. You have to know how to visually and vocally interpret it. A true kumu has to be a psychologist, a psychoanalyst, a priest, and a choreographer, mother, sister, nurse, naturalist, and a historian. In terms of auwana I tell my haumana at what age I learned the hula and whether it was Auntie Emma or my mother who taught me the hula. I also tell them at what points I had forgotten what I had been taught and put in my own. Kahiko is basically the motions and style of what kaui taught me. I teach my students to dance flat-footed with bended knees. I consider that traditional but other people don't. I think there has to be an awareness of two categories within the kahiko. There is kahiko hula that has been handed down from generation to generation and that is a classical dance. Then there is kahiko hula composed today in the style of the classical kahiko hula. It is this secondary contemporary kahiko that we see today. It's all mixed up, part classical part contemporary. A teacher is a teacher but a kumu is someone who can get to the very base, and give the answers with no hesitation.

I think learning to chant was my greatest accomplishment as a student. Hula offers the modern hawaiian of today a sense of identification. I feel that is the most important thing. It is something that they can actually see that has been done for eons. They can say that's a part of me. Today you have a lot more people doing it so you have a lot more influences. I see a lot ballet a lot of modern dance in it and perhaps a little Japanese martial arts. It's getting to be a bit chop suey. If we're not careful we will lose that part of the hula which is classical. If we don't keep the classical within its own realm meaning if we let in other influences or if we use a mele that dictates using one type of hula and we use another, then something's going to be lost. Even to the extent of the drumming. Certain styles of drumming belong to one instrument as opposed to another instrument. You don't put an ipu beat on a pahu or vice versa but its being done. We are taking the classical out of its realm and putting it into another element. Then the general public becomes confused and misunderstands what is the proper way.

Today kumus are given melees and asked to create the motions and now even the melody to accompany the melees. This is fine but as a teacher you have to be very sure that the visual images you put onstage are true to the words of the melees. My favorite hula kahiko is kaulana ka because that was the first hula i learned. I was four years old. This was taught to me by Auntie Emma and it was taught to her by her grand aunt. The mele is connected with Lahaina and I'm a Lahaina girl.