

Hula: Demonstration revives program formality

FROM PAGE D1

be presented, pure, unadulterated hula in its pristine preservation.”

Keaulana, 46, studied the longest under Adeline Maunupau Lee, who in turn was a student of the hula and chant master Joseph Ilalaole.

The demonstration will include a discussion of some of the symbolism and poetic devices of chant.

“Hawaiians did not have rhyme,” he said. “Rhyme is a Western device. Hawaiians did have what is called linked assonance — when we have couplets in poetry, the last word in the couplet will have a sound-alike in the line following it.”

Examples include these lines from a hula dedicated to Queen Emma. One couplet:

*Aia e ka nani i Puaka'ilima
Kēlā 'ailana noho i ke kai
(There is beauty in Puaka'ilima
That island that nestles in the
sea)*

*No kai ka makani la a he Kona
Ha'iha'i lau la'au o ka uka ...
(From the sea comes the
Kona wind
Tearing the leaves from the
trees from the upland ...)*

The word “kai” ending the first couplet reappears in “no kai ka makani.”

As for symbolism, it applies to so much in chant that it's hard to know where to start. Keaulana's students will perform a hula from the repertoire of chants about the fire goddess Pele, her lover Lohi'au and her sister Hi'iaka. Encounters among these three are fraught with drama, he said, because of Pele's explosive temper. Place names might actually be a symbol for an emotional aspect.

“One of the numbers we're going to be doing is called 'Pu'uonioni,' which means 'trembling hill,’” he said. “Pele wants one of her sisters to get Lohi'au. Hi'iaka feels obligated to go, but she knows how Pele is. In her mind, she's 'at Pu'uonioni' because she's unstable in her thinking (about the journey).”

There always more to hula than meets the eye or ear.

“Hula is rampant all over the world now, but people now equate hula with competition, as was not the case in old Hawai'i,” Keaulana said. “What we will be doing is to explain the poetry of the poetry, and how it all fits into the scheme of things in a formal presentation of Hawaiian dance.”



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Kimo Keaulana and his hālau will present a formal hula program in which the chants, dances and choreography performed will be those that were passed down from previous generations.