

## THE SUN RISES IN THE EAST

*Kelin Tama*

I awoke on a beautiful morning watching the sun beams filtering through my window bringing forth a warmth in my heart I wanted to share in a song. The words said, "Sunrise, entered my life, just today, filling my heart, its just a start, for the sunrise, its here to stay. The feelings I experienced that day of the sun has never escaped my being for one moment. It re-visits me over and over again as I listen to the mele of the hula ka'i chant HO'OPUKA E KA LA MA KA HIKINA. As I observe dancers entering the stage entrance from the East with the accompaniment of the exciting mele, I am able to experience the important significance of the sun as the word used to describe the dancers coming forth to display the radiant message to the audience. I see the Hawaiian composer developing his idea to represent life, health, and growth and utilizing a dancer to display the composer's feelings through the dance performance.

I feel blessed today to carry on the works of our ancestors without placing myself under strict kapu. I am grateful to be able to participate in a highly developed ancient art that possesses great powers I fully do not understand. I would like to have a deeper understanding of the hula in my life so I will continue to work towards finding the answers that will best satisfy me.

'A'ole i pau ka 'ike i kau halau was the saying that had me searching and looking into many halaus but after participating with the State Foundation on Culture and Arts and studying with Nona Beamer, Maiki Aiu Lake, and Kauai Zuttermeister, I was able to understand Aunty Kauai's advice concerning confusion that sets in if you're trying to learn many hula styles. I certainly did not want to be a jack of all trades and a master of none.

Hula to me encompasses the total person in that it develops discipline, spirituality, health and exercise, love, confidence, self-esteem, pride, and the appreciation for nature which is truly Hawai'i. To comprehend, understand, and apply fifty percent of the gifts of hula can truly reward the student and teacher of this wonderful art.

In the past 13 years I was able to participate in hula as a student, performer, teacher, judge, and spectator and all of these experiences seem to have brought me closer to understanding myself and my culture.

When I was a student, I was able to recognize how physically demanding hula was upon the total self. The repetition of the uwehe and hela steps proved exciting and stimulating but the hula noho literally killed my knees and let me tell you there were a lot of those dances. The hula kala'au, hula 'ili'ili, and hula 'uli'uli were some of the hula noho numbers that dampened my enthusiasm to dance. However, the love that is associated with hula and the sharing and caring of the other haumana in the school certainly helped me through those rough times. In the stages I went through as a student, teacher, and performer, I always found and felt a high degree of spirituality generated through the activity and the people involved in the event.

Performances were always fun and served as a reward for the months of rigorous training. There were no contests available in the 60's and early 70's so the only excitement in performing as a halau group was in concert and graduation ceremonies. Of course, there was still the pressure of performing in front of an audience but all the fears and anxieties were removed as soon as the kahea for HO'OPUKA E KA LA MA KA HIKINA was announced.



The responsibility of a teacher certainly brought about a new role in my life. The focus as a student and performer was on myself but as a teacher the concern was shifted to my haumana. The selection of the haumana helped determine the growth and positive attitude of the entire halau. Since I never participated in a contest as a student, I never felt compelled to enter a contest.

Judging hula contest are truly an honor and very stimulating but definitely a difficult task. As a judge, one looks at the different competing groups from many eyes, makawalu noho'i. I do wish though that there could be some method of rewarding all participants so that they may continue to work towards excellence.

The most exciting sit for me today is to be a spectator and enjoy all of the hula events. I hope I'll be able to see in my life time every island participating in one big hula extravaganza. Aloha a hui hou aku.