

Johnny Lum Ho

For over 20 years, Johnny Lum Ho has been teaching hula in the same location in Hilo. He named his studio, "Halau Ka Ua Kani Lehua" which means "the rain that patters the lehua."

When I used to sing for George Naope and Edith Kanakaole, I would enjoy and admire the hula girls during their performances. I never took hula lessons. I just watched and started my own. My mother who spoke Hawaiian was there to help me when I needed the meaning of a word. From there, I made my own motions. The steps I teach are basic steps and you can pick it up fast. So long you have the basic steps, know the words and think about it, and the music, the hula will come together.

I have my own style but I do not think I deviated from the hula. To me, it is exciting to do something not like the others. I always thought that if they can make their rain one way, I can do rain my way. You must be yourself. You cannot be another 'Iolani Luahine. God did not make everybody to be the same.

I teach my children songs that I composed and I usually teach them the way I feel I want it to be. I sometimes have something in my mind like a pig and I will tell the girls to try to imitate a pig. I will look around and everyone will do their own and I will see the one I like. Everybody in the halau takes part in the choreography. I do not take the credit alone, but together all of us helped.

My dances express my feelings of the song that I composed. If people like it, good. If not, they can look at another halau because for me I am happy with what I did. My joy in my teaching is knowing that what I composed has been completed with the dance and the music coming together.

To compose, a simple thought may come as I am driving. Somebody mentions something in Hawaiian that I like, and I think this will be good for a dance. I remember when Mama was alive. She mentioned the wahine pou pou hana nu'u. I think, "Oh, that sounds nice." I know it

will be nice in a dance. So with a story and a simple word, the music and the dance will come together. And with those words, I already know which girl will dance the song.

For a competition, I take time to choose the song and I already know which girl I want because I can see how her expression and moves are going to be. That is how my Miss Aloha Hula is chosen. To me, the judges are just a little portion of the whole crowd who paid to come and see you. And if I captivate them all. Oh, right on! When the crowd appreciates you, you know you excited them and you know that you came across to them just the way you wanted to.

To me, my compositions are in the old style because it is an old story with old words made into a dance. But some people will say no because it is not a song that was handed down. To me, it is an ancient story even if you write it and dance it now, and that's kahlko. Because there is no one alive today from the ancient times to put old stories together as how it was when they were alive. If they were alive today, I would gladly ask them about it. The clothes and style one wears might be old but the body that wears it is young.