

Kuu'ei Punua

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When I was ~~five~~²-years-old I was taken by my mother to Elizabeth Pahukoa ~~Hudowski~~^{Lewandowski} of Keanae, Maui and she was my first kumu. ~~She~~⁵ was one of the original Leilani Village dancers on Kuhio Avenue. This was during the ~~War~~^{World II} and she would teach me in her apartment. I studied with Auntie Elizabeth for a year and a half and then I was taken to Ruby Ahakuelo. She had her studio ~~down~~^{was} on Smith Street and ~~I~~^{years old} would go to class after school. When I ~~turned~~^{was} nine I was taken by my mother to Iolani ~~Smithine~~^{Smithine} who was ~~down~~ in Kakaako in the Forties. I had not seen anything like the training we were put through under Iolani. We had to prepare ourselves by going to the ocean and gathering seaweed and we had to be very cautious that no one had their mai at this time. Nothing was explained, we just did whatever we were told to do. Auntie Hoakalei was a young girl at that time but she was the one that taught us the dances. What I remember most is that nothing was explained to us. I suppose it was because ~~of~~^{we} our age so we were being protected. ~~Background~~^{we} was not freely given so ~~you~~^{you} had to learn everything by observing. ~~you~~^{we} just learned whatever ~~your~~^{our} kumu felt she wanted ~~you~~^{us} to know. Everything depended on sound, memory, and ~~your~~^{our} senses. ~~our~~

When I was 10 years old

Auntie

At ten I graduated traditionally (uniki) with Iolani and the presentation was held at McKinley Auditorium. After a few years I was asked by Kent Ghirard to join his hula troupe. I learned everything I know about kahiko from Auntie Io. When I went to Kent Ghirard, I learned everything about entertaining. This was when nobody could touch Kent Ghirard. It was the Fifties and he was the best. He was very explicit about our dancing, our routines, our appearance, and our mannerisms on stage. There is a difference between learning the hula as a dancer and as a performer. Every dancer's hair had to be the same length and we were trained to even put on our make-up a certain way. We were trained to become professional dancers.

In 1954 I moved to Kauai. I had no intention of teaching the hula when I moved but I began with one student then two and ~~it has just grown~~^{many}. When I started teaching, ~~the~~^{many} Hawaiians felt that there was kahunaism attached to the ancient hula so no one wanted to learn. But ~~Iolani~~^{Auntie} taught me not to be afraid of the kahiko and Kaupena (Wong) told me to put my faith in the Lord and my kupuna and go forward. So I began to teach kahiko that was simple and fun because I felt all the fear was based on hearsay. If we Hawaiians don't dance and teach the ancient hula how can we expect it to be perpetuated? If some of our kupuna like Auntie Hoakalei (Kamaau) and Auntie Edith (Kanakanole) didn't share their dances in the Seventies there ~~is no way~~^{would} all the doors would be opened ~~for everybody today~~^{is no way}. We cannot ~~last~~^{survive} if we ~~cannot~~^{do not} come together and acknowledge each other. ~~to share~~

The hula offers everything a Hawaiian should know and a Hawaiian is everyone that makes ~~their~~^{this} home here. We are having a lot of people moving here and we ~~are going~~^{must} to lose our language. In New Zealand it is mandatory that all residents learn the language and the same should hold true for our islands. Without the language there is no culture. ~~presence~~

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After I went to Aunty Liddie, my mother took me to Iolani Luahine. I was about 9 years old. This was down in Kakaako in the forties. We would train down in Kakaako at her grandmother's home and also at her newly-opened studio in Kakaako. I was about 10 years old when we did our uniki. The training that we did I have seen nothing like it anywhere. We had to prepare ourselves by going to the ocean and gathering seaweed. We had to be very cautious that when we went to the ocean nobody had their ma'i. Nothing was explained, we just did whatever we were told to do. During the uniki we gathered together and participated in the ailolo I will always remember this. In our classes we did our dances and rem did what we were told. I suppose we were to young to have things explained so we just followed orders like students. In that year we had the uniki at Mckinley and it was a very big celebration. Aunty Hoakalei was a young girl but she was Aunty's protege and she was the one that taught us the dancing. When she opened a studio on King Street near Mckinley I went to study there to. I was very young then so I don't remember much except that we learned the dances and chants by repetition and heart. It was never explained because we were learning the dances to perform for Don the Beachcombers, Tripler Hospital, or Queen Emma. etc. Aunty Io got married and Kent Ghirard

I left Aunty Io and Kent Ghirard asked me to perform with him. This was after Aunty Io had gotten married. From Aunty Io I learned everything I know about kahiko. When I went with Kent Ghirard, I learned everything I know about entertaining. There is a difference between learning the hula as a dancer and learning the hula as a performer. This was when nobody could touch Kent Ghirard. It was the fifties and he was the best. There can never be a performer like Kent because he was very explicit about our dancing, our routines, our mannerisms. I have never seen anyone at that time perform like him. There was nobody who could cut their hair. You had to have long hair. Even in putting on your make-up you were trained professionally. You were trained to become a professional. I moved to Kauai in 1954 and started on my own.

I also began to dance for Alfred Apaka, Auntie Paūline Issaccs.

I learned both ancient and modern with Betty and auwana with ruby. Back then the only terms used was ancient and modern. Back then you just did steps it wasn't as categorized as it is today. The teaching method back then was not for the kumu to explain but for the student to just follow instructions and memorize. Background was not freely given. You learned everything by observing. You just learned whatever the kumu felt she wanted to ~~teach~~ show you. You learned all on sound, on memory, on your senses.

When I moved to Kauai people knew I danced the hula and invited me to come and dance. I would dance at the church and they asked me if I would consider teaching their daughters. I had no intention of teaching when I moved here but I began with one student then two and it grew. When I started the Hawaiians did not want to learn hula because they felt it was very restricted and that there was kahunaism attached to it. But their knowledge was based on hearsay. They didn't realize that hula could be auwana because their parents and grandparents had only performed the hula within the temples. I tried to teach an enjoyable hula. I taught auwana and the ancient that I taught was Kawika. I started off with very simple numbers but as I taught I began to recall the kahiko that was taught to me by aunty iolani. ~~When I moved to Kauai~~ Kauai I was the outsider but through the help of Aunty Sarah K. I slowly became accepted. I always knew I could teach. Kaupena told me that he ~~would help~~ me in whatever I needed but that I had to know what where I was going

Kaupena told me not to be afraid of kahiko. To put my faith in the Lord and my kupunas and go forward into it. I give Aunty Hoakalei a lot of credit for getting the kumu in Kauai involved inchanteng through her State Council workshops. No matter what Halau you are coming from the only way we are going to last is for all of us to get together. We have to acknowledge each other. To me it was Aunty Hoakalei through the state program that was responsible for getting hula revived in all the islands. If people such as her and Aunty Edith K. didn't share their dances there is no way the doors would have been opened for everybody. It's very difficult but you have to know where you're going when you get into ~~teaching~~ the hula. There are a lot of sacrifices that you and the people in your life have to make and so they have to be understanding people. As I grew up I could see what entertainment can do to a person's life. It can change you. You have to prioritize things in your life. I taught in my house when I began but I moved the studio out when it began to interfere with the privacy of my family.

Imoved to a gym and soon I was forced to teach in three different places. I had to move form Kapaa, to Lihue to ~~Maunaloa~~ Eleele. ~~Maunaloa~~ It has only been in the last three years that I've stayed in one place and that's what I have called my halau.

Peopole were not interested in learning the ancient hula. I have to also give dc credit to the Cazimeros. I attended the Merry Monarch since it started and there is no one i that had done more for the men's hula then the Cazimeros. If it wasn't for them I don't think any of the aother male dancers would be as popular. Knowledge is bing open and sharing. the only way we are going to grow is if we share.

Mary Kennison who lived on our island was in charge of a May Festival and soshe asked me to perform at the Wailua River. She wanted me to take my dancers up the Wailua River. Up until that time they were only haveing the weekend boat trips. They wanted to bring tourism up into that region. Many Hawaiians said no because they knew of all the legends. These Hawaiians were all Mormons so I told them they ahd to believe in God and He would take care. So we prayed and then went up there and did the opening ceremony and nothing befell us.

To me preparing the dancer for the performance is the most ~~im~~portant thing. When I go to a sacrificial heiau. I am dancing for the Lord and my kupuna. My dancers try to prepare everything as close as possible to ~~the~~ real thing except wea are dancing for God. If we as Hawaiians don't continue these dances at the heiau who will. The men clear where we are going to dance. We dress in a separate clearing. The girls dance topless because that's the way it was done. The girls go down and collect the kauna oa and make their skirts which are yellow and brown. The parents who dropped off their girls said they saw a rainbow and a rain cloud over the heizu as they left. I never chantd like that before and the girls were crying as they danced. They were dancing on rocks and their feet were getting cut and they idn didn't feel it.

To me hula kahiko is the feeling. I think you have to keep the basic steps the same as how you were taught them. I have the same basic steps that Aunty Io taught me. If Aunty Edith K. taught me that step I have never changed it.

Aunty Io left with me a special feeling that it was all up to me that she never made any decisions. People tell me that my line work looks like Kent Ghirard and it makes me laugh because that's ~~what~~ I was working towards but nobody knows KentGhirard on this islnad. What I do is a reflection of whoever ~~ta~~ught me. I consider Aunty Hoakaleiand Aunty Maiki grandmasters. I feel that Nalani and Pua, Wazimero, and Leinaala ~~aman~~ although young are also grandmasters. Maybe I'm shortsigtjed but this is what i see. I feel like I'm really great because i have the knowldge of the art and professionalism and not manh people have that.

Astudent should stick with their kumu and not be so anxious about getting ahead but learn as much they can.with their kumu because it is thier kumu that has taught them everythikng they know. The hula offers everything a hawaiian should know and a hawaiian is everyone that is on thés island. There will never be a dance like the hula unless it is preserved in Hawaii. ~~It~~ It should be law that people should learn the language and the hula. In New Zealand it is maddatory that everyone learn the language. We are not going to have ahawaii unless the languageis retained. We are having a lot of people move in and we are gining to lose the language.

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I started when I was a year and a half when my mother took me to Betty Pahukoa Luadowski (Auntie Eliz) who was originally from Keanai, Maui. She was one of the original Leilani Village dancers on Kuhio Avenue. She was my first hula teacher. She would teach me in her apartment, this was during the war and I was about five or six years old to watch. After Liddie, I went to Ruby Ahakuelo. She had her studio down on Smith St. at the time. Her studio was upstairs and we would go to class after school. He would have her uniki's at St. Louis Manor on King St.. This is where Ruby would have her dancers and her uniki's/ I first remember learning "Pahaikealoha." This was during the war time and I remember her classes being very enjoyable. At the time of our learning we just did what we were told, we didn't ask questions. I can remember very well that all of the dancers of that time were very, very disciplined. This was also true for Auntie Elizabeth's classes. You had to have a keen sense of memory. There were no tape recorders, you just practiced and practiced and practiced.