

Aggie Cope

I was brought up in Kalihi and when I was five-years-old I would sit up and watch tutu Keaka Kanahale who was a hula master of the 30's. She used to live next door to our house and every so often I would get up and dance in the back of her girls as they practiced. After awhile my mother asked me if I wanted to dance and that's how I began my training.

I started with the kahiko. In those days we had to put our hands up against the wall, bend our knees and go down to the floor until the back of our heads touched the ground. Then tutu Keaka would have us rise to our feet and repeat the motion until she was satisfied. It was the old way of training as far as I'm concerned. I stayed with tutu Keaka for fifteen years and it wasn't until 1969 that I went onto another kumu.

In 1969 the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts asked Iolani Luahine and Lokalia Montgomery to select someone to leave their knowledge to. Everyone knew there was Hoakalei Kamauu to step into Auntie Io's place but there was no one for Lokalia. At a conference in Kona at Halehalewai she took fifteen of us out to lunch and announced that I was the one she had chosen. I told her she had to make another choice because I had other obligations. She pounded the table and said if I didn't accept, she would take it with her. So I stayed with her in Kona for one year, coming home a few days a week to be with my family. She left with me many chants that have not been heard of but she never uniki'd me. There came a time when the arthritis in my legs began to bother me and I couldn't bend or rise. At that point my son, Kamaki, took my place and continued on with her.

Every halau has its own way and who am I to criticize them, but I can only hope and pray that the traditional hula will be carried into the future correctly. The hula kahiko are the deep ancient dances and they have been changed by many halau today to fit their own methods and ways. Modern teachers have added innovations on to what has been handed down to them and students are accepting these innovations as traditional. The hula kahiko has been changed to fit the interest and appetite of a modern world and I regret to see it happening.

omit

There is nothing that can compare with the lessons that I have received from these great masters.

I would like to pay tribute to these great masters for their efforts and support and the incomparable opportunity to study the hula under their ^{Hula} guidance, I must also etc.

Aggie Cope

When I was about five years old I was brought up in Kalihi and it was at that time that I used to sit up and watch Tutu Keaka Kanahale, who was a dance master in the early thirties. I used to watch the other girls dance and once in a while I would get up and dance in the back of them. She used to live in the back of our home and my mother who spoke fluent Hawaiian and was pure Hawaiian, asked me if I wanted to dance and I said yes and that's how it began.

As long as Tutu Keaka lived next door to us I took classes from her. I didn't start with the modern auwana hula, I started with the kahikio. In those days you had to be flexible we had to put our hands up against the wall bend our knees and start. It was the old way as far as I'm concerned. We would go down to the floor with our knees bent and the back of our heads touching the ground and then we would have to rise again up to our feet.

Kamaki

I didn't realize I was interested in the hula because we were already in it when my mother was teaching us when we were little. To me it was a natural and normal thing to do. She corrected us constantly. The hula was not the hula to me because when we were in the process of learning we not only learned basic hula movements but mother also taught us laaukahea, the practicing of basic herbology, the use of herbs for healing and other purposes. We were raised as children to not only dance, and sit right and stand right and talk right but to also understand the healing ingredients in Nature. And without us realizing it we were learning hula.

It became a natural thing. Some of the ways that mother taught us became easy only because they were so enjoyable. It was only after we had started growing up that we realized we had been given something that very few people had been raised with.

Aggie

Keaka Kanahale was my first kumu. I've had two in my life. After Keaka moved from Kalihi she moved to King Street near Liliha and I went there also every Saturday morning. I stayed with Tutu Keaka for fifteen years and it wasn't until 1969 that I went onto another kumu. The State Foundation asked Auntie Iolani Luahine and Lokalia Montgomery to select someone to leave all their knowledge to. Everyone knew that there was Hoakalei Kamauu to step into Auntie Io's place but there was no one for Lokalia. At a conference in Kona in Halehalewai Lokalia selected a fifteen people to have lunch with her, and she would make her announcement. She announced that she wanted to leave all her knowledge to me. I told her she had to give it to somebody else because I was too busy. She then she pounded the table and said if you did not take it I'll take it with me. So I stayed with her for one year actually, coming home a few days a week and staying in Kona with her.

What she left with me were many many chants that today have not been heard of. She left quite a few things with me but neither kumu nor uniki me. There was a time when the arthritis in my knees began to bother me and I couldn't bend or rise. At that point I asked if my son could take my place and he continued with her.

Kamaki

The most interesting part of my childhood was the healing practices we were taught. Through the influence of my mother and being raised by my grandparents we were taught the importance of first to heal then to develop the body. The healing was laaukahea and the developing was hula. The dual action gave us a more thorough education than just learning one. Mama's influence was an overall appreciation for the dancer. Take care of the body and learn to heal oneself, and practice what you have learned constantly and repetitiously. From our grandparents we learned the naanaa, the ancient arts. When we were little and when we ^{were} ~~lived~~ with our grandparents our job was simply to nail the blankets up to the windows to block the light out and let the kahuna go and do his healing. We were there and we lived it and we didn't know what was happening in our lives until we actually grew up like all children. Like all children we didn't like it because we wanted to play... We were taught every morning and every afternoon. If someone had a cold we would head out to the side of the mountain. We knew we were going to get something to heal ourselves with. And while we were there mother or grandpa would say can you sound like the wind.

amaki

While we were

As children we would go ooh and we would get a spanking because we weren't sounding like the wind. Without us knowing it we were also chanting. I have never stopped learning from my mother. I live it everyday still, from Washington Dc. even in Washington D.C.. I have trained under and worked for George Naope when I stayed with him in Hilo. I danced with Aunty Sally Wood at PCC from 1963-69. I trained and danced under Emma Paishon. Finally through all of that I came o to Grandam Lokalia.

Grandma Lokalia finished my formal training in ancient hula. I studied with George between 1967-69 training off and on. I studied with all of these people between 1963 when I entered church college and 1969 when I graduated. I went on with Grandma Lokalia until 1972 when I graduated.

My grandparents and my mother taught me that the feeling for hula should come naturally from within you, Grandma Lokalia formalized it. She took the feelings of hula and put them into a hula class, into ~~annaradama~~ hula structure into a hula halau. She made hula a formal learning experience and it was then that I came to see hula in it's classical form. No one had ever taken me and said let's do this according to the way it is in the hula category.

The hula is not an acceptable art form in the Western world and especially in America. We are still having a difficult time in Washington realizing that jazz is an acceptable art form. Hula has not begun to be recognized as an acceptable art form in this country. It has finally begun to be recognized in Hawaii as a viable and very rooted art form. One that is required within Hawaiian culture and governed by kings at one time. Controlled by religion through a body of laws. And if laws govern an art form then the hula has an existing structure and foundation.

The hula will survive in it's traditional form only as long as we Hawaiians want it to. If we want the hula to be perpetuated as it was during the Dorothy Lamour times, the hula-hula, the wicky wacky hula, then we as a race have to make sure that we are in a position to ^{clarify} ~~change~~ correct, and prevent a rebirth of that horrible era. An ugly time where the culture was blatantly abused by the haole to serve his purpose. Now, we have to speak up if we don't want the same thing to happen again. We have to speak up and say it is our culture, it is a classical art form and it is required to be accepted as such. Like the ballet, like the symphony like baroque music. I am glad to see that the hula is beginning to restore itself ^{as a} ~~to~~ classic art form. We need to do that now and soon and start defining it. We have to get it out of the Waikiki entertainment stereotype because that's where it has been for the last fifty years. Now let's correct that and make it acceptable on the concert stage let's get the chants and the music written. Let's follow the whole r hal haole route and legalize the ownership of the chant. Let's begin to classify identify the correct basic steps for the kahiko and classify them.

We have to structure the hula like the ~~other art forms and make it acceptable to the other art forms~~. classical art forms and do it within a structure that is acceptable. My uniki with Lokalia was in 1972. I think I was invited my Grandma Lokalia into the house one day and she sat down and eat. And when I was eating I was eating different kinds of things at that are normally not eaten. The next day I came and she told me bathe myself and then to come and sit by her and rest. I went through different kinds of protocol which finally uniki'd me. One day I arrived and I did the cooking and she did the sitting and I fed her. On the final day the fifth day I recall she had a luau for me. She blessed me and chanted and we said the Hawaiian prayer together. We ate together, we cried, she entertained me with slack key, I entertained her with hula. When it was over she said I was finished. She said she had done her best for me and to take her knowledge. She gave me a word of warning which was never to mistreat or change what she had taught me. I remember riding ~~in~~ one day to Kona in aunty Io's wonderful little truck and I asked her what made her the greatest living dancer of the hula and she said because she had never consciously changed anything that she had been taught. What my kupunas gave to me I've danced it exactly that same way. Grandma Lokalia finished my uniki by giving me the same law. Do not change what I have given you and you will do fine. That in my opinion is the basis of a classical art form. It was quite a graduation because it was a long learning experience. Grandma Lokalia was a very hard-nosed no fooling around, correct, stout teacher. When you came to learn she immediately told you to get to the pahu, sit down, stand up, and when it was over I just got into my car and went back to Laie. She would call the dorm room and tell me to come whether I had classes or not and I would have to come. That was the structure of the learning. I would be summoned whenever she felt the spirit and the mood and the time. What I am trying to say is that hula was more than following your ukumu and getting up to dance. Getting up to dance was the last thing, dancing was something that finished everything off. Dancing is not the beginning of hula nor is it even 75 percent of hula.

Aggie

To me hula kahiko are the deep ancient dances. And these deep ancient dances have been changed by many many halau to fit their own methods and ways. The kahiko has not been continued the way that it was tua tuataught. Many of the motions and steps have been changed to fit the interests of the audience and the kumu. I regret to see that it happened.

I think the teachers should continue what they have been taught. Every halau has its own way and who am I to criticize but I only can hope that the traditional hula is carried on to the future. We have to treat the hula with respect and it will come back to us properly. Teachers are adding extra twirls and steps to the traditional dances and training students who then accept the dances as traditional. I can only hope that somehow this will be corrected in the long run.

Kamaki

In Washington D.C. I know who I am because I am the exception. I am proud to be Hawaiian in Washington because I am the exception. I'm frightened that the creativity in today's version of kahiko will take it so far away from its original structure that you will not believe that the classical hulas like Kaulilua are the same hulas that previous generations were taught. Many people say that they have uniki from this or that teacher but I've seen their master teachers. When today's teachers dance their creativity has changed the structure of the hula kahiko so much that you can't even see a specific motion anymore. I'm frightened by the theatrics which is a priority today. Everyone seems to think that bombastic overexaggeration morio motions is what is saleable. Which is so sad, Why do we have to change the hula? When we change it we change the mana and the power of the culture. The most magnificent people were chosen to be dancers. The culture in the past did not need exaggeration because the culture was intact. It is different today. With the innovations of ~~the~~ today the culture is getting lost. Hula kahiko today will never be the same ten years from now unless the kumu of today gather in a conference of four or five days and put our thoughts down. Should we structurally preserve it or should we allow each halau go independent and on their own. If we do the latter then there will constantly be confusion and conflict. I guess my problem is the hula is only a small portion of the Hawaiian culture. but today it is a priority. People are trying to bring in language as part of it, the kahuna system, the alii system, the old structures of our culture, the makaaihana system, the kawa system, the love of the land all of these things are inclusive to the foundation the culture that needs to be rebuilt again.

This has to be done before we can even unify as a people. Should you stop to think about hula in its overall aspect of the culture. It is a very minute aspect of the culture, of the total picture. Like it or not, it was not even secondary. Under the old laws the alii system was first, the kahuna system and the education of the alii was foremost. The guidance and care of the alii was foremost. The kahuna was the counselor, seer, advisor. Then came the people. Sometime the makaeana might have seen hula but rarely. It belonged to the privileged eyes of the alii. Right now the hula has become a priority in the culture in order to best identify who we are and I'm all behind that. We can use it as an instrument to get where we're going as a people. Is it a source to re-identify ourselves? I say definitely.

Out of the 100,000 native Hawaiians left today, 75% are under the age of 18. The potential is tremendous. The state of the Hawaiian today in finding out who he is is wonderful. It has never been at a greater peak than this moment, and it's the youth that are correcting things and bringing to light knowledge that before hand was not even whispered in public. The youth want to know and they're asking. But according to the old system you don't ask questions you just sit and learn. Many people have no use for the young Hawaiian radicals but I count ^{our} blessings for them. They're telling people we're Hawaiians, we love who we are, we're smart. We're ready to speak up and be heard and finally be counted since the fall of our monarchy. It's 1983 and it's taken this long for us to get our act together. From this point where we sit today we are doing better than many many native American races. It's positive for me.