

PAT BACON

Some of the people today would find the kahiko of my day dull because today's kahiko is performed with much more vim and vigor. I think today's ancient hula is aimed at the visitor because if you don't understand the language, you won't understand the kauna of the mele. The emphasis in the traditional hula was on the poetry of the language and you have to understand the language if you are going to appreciate the poetry. The changes in kahiko have come about because you have to keep the audience interested.

I was thirteen when I studied with Keahi Luahine. Kawena's grandmother had been a court dancer for Queen Emma so informally there were always aunties teaching us. My mother trained us in the dances handed down through the family but it was under Keahi that I began my formal training in the hula. Keahi taught us the pig dance, the hula ki'i, the hula pahu, the kalaau with the ~~papahehe~~, and dances that were strictly from Kauai.

*papahehe*

After a year, I went on to Keahi's cousin, Kapua who I trained under for another year. Kapua spoke very little and only showed us the dance once so we would have to absorb as much as we could. This was just before the war and we would go once a week and dance without a break from 6p.m. to 8 p.m. Back in those days you didn't question the kumu, instead they questioned you. It was an era where children were seen and not heard. At eight o'clock, the siren atop Aloha Tower would sound signalling the curfew and we would pick up our things and hurry home.

When I turned fifteen I trained under Joseph Ilalaole with whom I stayed for the next three years. From Ilalaole I learned dances with a faster tempo and greater foot movement. In those days many of the teachers carried a long rod of bamboo and if you made a sloppy motion you got a little sting on your ankles. Every teacher in those days was strict and if they didn't feel you were ready to progress you just stayed put.

I went through two uniki with Ilalaole. The first night of the graduation would be a paina involving only the dancers and the hoopaa. The second night would be a hoike where all the parents and friends would be invited.

When I teach someone, it's important that they adhere to what they have been taught. My elders always stressed that ancient hula, the chants and dances passed down from generation to generation, should be taught as it was learned. I find it discouraging because there have been occasions where I have taught a traditional dance and later found it unrecognizable because of changes by my students.

*Kawena*

Pat Bacon

Pat Bacon, ~~was~~ born in Waimea, Kauai ~~and~~ was adopted at birth in the hanai tradition of the Hawaiians by Mary Kawena Pukui.

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