

Mary Keolaulani A Wong
McCabe

ALOHA DALIRE

I think the reason why the hula kahiko will prevail and never die is because of all the creativity being done today by the kumu.

I was put into the hula at an age when I really didn't have a mind of my own. When you're brought up in a family that consists of dancers, you dance. My mother's name was Mary Kay Keolaulani Wong and I consider her the backbone of my career. Without her I wouldn't be enjoying the hula the way I am today.

I started the hula at the age of three under Uncle George Naope who had uniki my mother and my older sister. Uncle George was a perfectionist and I was trained mostly in auwana.

When I turned ten, Uncle George decided to return to the Big Island. At that time Tahitian and Maori dancing were starting to influence the hula. This was in the sixties and people started to change the scope of their dancing. It wasn't so much hula anymore but Polynesian dancing.

My mother needed a chanter for her uniki so I began listening to chanting records of Iolani Luahine and tried to imitate her. So I suppose my first lessons in kahiko were taught to me by a record. At the age of twelve, I chanted at my mother's first uniki and I was approached by Elke Ross-Lane, the executive director of Aloha Week. She asked me to train under her and it was Elke that brought me out of my shell. She showed me how to research material and to make sure that a song or a mele must be understood thoroughly if it's going to be used.

I ^{graduated} ~~uniki~~ from my mother at the age of eighteen but it was a very modern ^{uniki} ~~graduation~~. I had to pass certain tests that were basically a lot of paper work and research into different phases of the hula. It was an exercise in making sure you understood what you were doing and what you were getting into.

I began to teach for my mother at the age of fifteen but I still don't consider myself a kumu because there is so much to learn. When I was growing up in the fifties, there was always a fear of the kahiko because of the consequences of breaking a kapu. I was not able to learn what I consider the real ancient hula because people were not as open and they wouldn't share. They would just show you and teach you so much and that was it. It's important that the haumana be given more today because many students of the past were left with only a half-baked understanding and perspective of the culture.

Aloha Dalire

Aloha Dalire established Keolalaulani Halau Olapa 'O Laka in 1975 in Kaneohe.

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~~At the age of ten~~

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