

Nana I na Loea Hula
Kumu Hula: Pohaku Nishimitsu
Interviewer: Lovina Le Pendu
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Full give name Peter K. Nishimitsu, (FOR THE BOOK?) Peter Pohaku K. Nishimitsu.
(YOU TEACH?) Yes! In Kapa'a, Kauai, I teach out of my house and also at Anahole School on the east side of Kauai, I basically have two groups, I have older wahine that I had with me for a long time, it is a real small group, so they meet with me at home and the new groups which is larger meets with me at the school; we need more space. (AGE?) They range from 14 and up, my wahine group is 30 and up.

(HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING?) Since 1980 under my halau name but since about 1979 I guess I was flying back and forth and teaching. (NAME OF THE HALAU?) "Halau Kani Ka Pahu o Lohiau". (MEANING?) The name is a traditional name that comes from Kauai at it is a part of the Pele- hiiaka cycle and ethical chants. It was given to me by one of my kumu olelo Hawaii and kumu mo'olelo and that's Rubelete Johnson.. I got the name in February 1980 and then I moved back to Kauai in May and that's when I formally started. (PRIOR TO THAT YOU WERE AT SCHOOL?) I was flying home working with a bunch of wahine but we did not have a "inoa" at that time and when I moved back in May we continued and we had a name for our halau. (DO YOU TEACH BOTH KAHIKO AND AUANA?) Ae.. (TEACH OLI?) Ae, the haumana learn both hula and oli as part of the whole process...

(WHEN DID YOU FIRST START HULA?) I started late, I must had been a sophomore in highschool, so about 15-16 years old.. (WHERE?) On Kaua'i, your first teacher, Kuulei Punua, she was teaching in Lihue at a hall and also out of her house, basically, I did kahiko with her, but I was exposed to auana working with her, my interest was and still is really kahiko. (HOW LONG WERE YOU THERE?) A couple of years... (CAN YOU EXPLAIN HER METHODS?) Well, she

trained under a number of old time kumu hula, Kent Jhirad and also trained under Aunty lolani Luahine so people who would know that the two kumu that I am talking about are really diverse one being in modern era and one emmused in the old but both were very strict and rigid in terms of what you could and what you couldn't do and I really need to say that I learn a lot from her in terms of being discipline of being aware of what you are doing when you are doing the hula you know you just can't be doing it any old kind of way. (YOU LEARN TRADITIONAL HULA?) Yes I did... I learned a number of traditional hula from her, you know your so call "stock" kahiko still done today so it was a good lay foundation for one to grow from there. I left because I was finished with high school and my schooling took me here to Oahu, so I continued with my delving into hula and any aspects in Hawaiian culture and arts, and I also majored in it at the University of Hawaii at Manoa... At the college I majored in Hawaiian studies, so I took language, history, culture, and things like that. I took hula started when I moved up with Nathan Napoka and Aunty Hoakalei Kamau'u, they were teaching at Nuuanu. (THAT IS KAHIKO, HOW LONG?) I must had stayed a good year, 1 year1/2; Kuulei had also studied under Aunty Hoakalei because of the connection of Aunty lolani and Hoakalei so I did see similarities and I did see kind of an overlaping of what's being taught, it was special to listen to Aunty Hokalei the way she chanted and her vast knowledge and that really sparked more of an interest in what I was doing. I wanted to continue my hula learning. From there I moved on, I think I went to Uncle Henry for some reason or an other I have seen Uncle Henry folks perform he was kind of the kumu hula for the king kamehameha Civic Club People and somehow or the other, I got tied up with them and so I started taking hula with Uncle Henry. I thought that was really neat, becasue he was one the oldest kumu hula still teaching, and I can remember people like Aunty Sally Woods, being there, Alicia Smith was there, Mae Lobestien was taking at the same time. We used to meet like in a school cafeteria that will be about right before I went over with Darell guys that had to be like

1976 up until maybe mid 77 to the summer of 77. Taking kahiko and he also taught auana. (HE HAD A HALAU?) Basically like I said many of those people were members of the King Kamehameha Hawaiian Civic Club and then, toward the ending of the period, I was there I know he did have a halau name. I believe it was Ka halau Pa Hula Manu. It was men and women, which was at a school like at a cafeteria. I stayed there for a year or a year and a half. I went there to be able to learn things from someone that had been doing it all their life. Uncle Henry was one of the older kumu hula who was still teaching his styling. I thought that was fabulous I thought that was great.. (HIS HAWAIIANA WERE THEY MANY?) Oh yah a good 30 or so, Pa mai ten was like his right hand man. Enoka Kaina ..Coleen and Charlene, the two sisters that dance with the Kodak hula show.

(DID YOU UNIKI FROM ANY OF THESE TEACHERS?) No! (AFTER HENRY PA?) I moved to Darell Lupenuie and Wai Mapuna, kahiko and auana, it was very different because all of sudden from being together earlier in my training I had been in combined men and women often times it was makua age and now I was in a group of all men and they were robust and able to do totally different styles of hula from what I was doing before, so it was interesting to see the transition and to learn different moves and things. (KAHIKO WAS TRADITIONAL?) He was on founded in traditional but he was also very innovative and he kind of try to melt both and make it a pleasing kind of picture so that the kupuna will not find it offensive in that melding of both. The real kahiko style and the new kahiko style...

(COMPARE TO HOAHALII HENRY PA? IS IT DIFFERENT?) Definently, we will still call it traditional you learn auana. Yes With Darell I was there a year and then I stayed with 'O Brien Esleu and Thaddeus Wilson their halau was "Na Wai iha o Puna'... I stayed there a good 2 1/2, 3 years.. (WHY THE CHANGE?) Darell who was the kumu hula for Wai Mapuna, Thaddeus who is his cousin and 'O Brein who is his kokua kumu at that time split they parted ways, they found it

necessary to go their separate ways, so a bunch of us who was with Waimapuna is back there in 78 went with 'O Brien and Thaddeus and we formed "Na Wai eha" that was in the summer of 78... was boys and girls.. A'ole Kane Wale no... I took a short kind of workshop, series of workshops with Aunty Kaua'i, she had a second session which I wasn't about to continue because by then I had moved up to Kaua'i, she did the teaching along with Noenoe at their home in Kaneohe, it was a group of us maybe a dozen, 15 of us people like Wayne Chang, Carol Silva, Cliff Paliahue, in kahiko only... It was like something like 3 months... then I moved back to Kaua'i, and I have been there ever since... Back in the 70's there used to be State Foundation Culture and Arts, they used to have hula workshops so I took a number of them from Aunty Edith and then one summer it must have been in 1979, I think it might have been earlier, Aunty Edith was already not physically well so her two daughters Nalani and Pualani came down and taught a summer session here at Chaminade as a matter of fact, 'O Brien and I both took that summer session. It was dance and chant... Aunty Edith did not come down so we trained under Nalani and there was another group that trained under Pua and then in between I had taken quite a number of work shops, things like that.

(WHICH KUMU HULA HAD THE GREATEST INFLUENCE ON YOU?) It will be really hard for me to just say one of them. I think I owe Uncle Henry Pa a whole deal of respect like wise Aunty Edith Kanake'ole the reason I pick those 2 are because when I look back on how they taught, they taught with a lot of aloha and they conveyed that not only what they say, but what they did, their actions really proved they were living what they talked about, added to that is the fact that both of them were fluent hawaiian speakers and so they had glimpse at nuances in hawaiani that we can only think about because we are not native hawaiian speakers, they both were in my veiw native hawaiian speakers so they really knew. "Na mea huna Mo'eau" they knew the things that kind of hidden away and so they were gifted. I think what has come about through them that I see

where language, olelo is such a vital part of hula that without proper olelo how can you have proper hula. So I think I owe them that . That was instilled in me. (STYLE IN YOU HULA TODAY WHO TO CREDIT?) I think I've used what ever I can remember from all my kumu and to answer your question if their is a style, I would have to say that my hula styling is highly influenced by Na Wai Eha o Puna, and by Thaddeus and 'Obrien... That's has a very song hold on what I do... Coupled by the fact that one foot has the kahiko there and kahiko people are Aunty Edith, Uncle Henry and Aunty Hoakalei they grounded me. That's how I feel.

(ANY DIFFICULTIES ALONG THE WAY?) Yes! Like when I wanted to get into hula, there was really not that many kumu hula that were teaching kahiko and in Kaua'i there was really nothing true to form if you will it is unfortunate that I came from Kauai which has its ties with hula kahiko and hula and ect.. the old time kumu hula were not teaching people like Aunty Loakalia, Montgomery unfortunately was not on Kauai already, Aunty Sarah Kailikea wasn't teaching other respected kumu hula had already retired. Has the time I took an interest in it on Kauai another thing to it, I started too late, I wish I started when I was younger.

(THE MOST JOY YOU GET IN TEACHING?) When I teach my Hawaiiana when they can see the depth of the mele a side for being able to do the hula the way it is been taught to them where they can begin to see little intricacies of what the poetry is trying to convey, and there is understanding that is happening in terms of what the poetic device is a vehicle for... (CAN YOU TELL ME HOW YOUR HALAU RUNS?) Well, before they can get into the halau they need to do their oli Kahea correctly, they need to then be able to give the oli komo back to the other haumana that are coming in.. I warm them up with a little ha'awena dealing with aspects of the language learning pronunciation, place names, learning mo'olelo, and the names that are involved and that runs about 1/2 hour or so and for the next 2 hours, we do hula so we do basic warm ups where we stretch our kino and do feet work and I will introduce maybe some new

steps if they are going to be needed this new steps in a mele that they are learning. Then we moved into the mele hula part where we begin to either learn a new mele with the correct words with the gestures and the feet work and then we basically begin to weave them all together then I might move after we had learn one or two versus of the new hula, we will then move to one that they already know from front to back, go over that. I only have two classes, my halau per say are 4 women that had been with me for an average of 10 years, and it easy for them to learn a new mele because they know basically what my feet work, when I tell them to do in several feet pattern or series it is easy for them to come out with it and they know what I want so they meet with me separately on another night. I have my new class which are my new members of my halau and many of them, like in any halau when you start a new class you have people that have some fore knowledge on hula or dance and you have others that have no knowledge in hula or dance. They don't know what an "uwehe" is as oppose to a "hela" so what I do have is have them understand what they start with me what they know from another kumu hula is fine that is their knowledge but when they come to me and if they are going to be a lala of my halau then they have to learn new terminologies, certain differences in step execution and then that is the lense for unity within the halau. (YOU TEACH IN HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE?) It is interwoven if we begin our session with olelo Hawaii, it is used throughout.

(THOUGHT OF UNIKI YOUR STUDENTS?) Possibly down the road. (WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM THEM?) I would expect that they would have a committment to wanting to perpetuate as well as research and develop hula that is culturally correct. That is based on tradition that are already established. I don't want to when I do, my teaching or if I ever have haumana who would go out on their own I would not want them to go and create new traditions or to create new new kind of things on the other hand, I think it has to be a certain amount of creativity and innovation that needs to be part of the hula other wise it will be in a vacuum, it has

to be again grounded and based on things that we know...

(YOUR ADVICE FOR NEW HULA TEACHERS?) "E a'o mai i ka olelo Hawaii our kekai ona ka mea mua, e a'o mai ka hula o kou aina" In order to be true to form again you ask me if there was any kumu hula that made a lasting impression on me and that was Uncle Henry and Aunt Edith, and my reason was they were so versed in the language in the olelo makuahine and again I think that is the key; language is the key that opens these doors, these passages that allow us to shed light on things and we will never know everything and that's the beauty maybe of the hula and the mele that we will never know everything so I need to continually push myself to up grade my skills in language and likewise I think maybe now more so than ever I am very happy to be able to watch other people do their hula and enjoy what they are trying to do and what they are trying to share.

(DO YOU SEE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LANGUAGE CONVERSATIONAL AND LANGUAGE IN HULA?) Mana'o nou, ae... There are certain terminologys in Hawaiian that are pretty standard or stock. "huli akau" is huli akau" me'e imua holo unua or hele imua is pretty much standard I think, so those kind things are like part of our everyday speech but when you look at the poetic device where you look at the oli or the mele, then I think you are beginning to look at a higher level of languaging, certain chants where they are written can be very straight forward and quite literal and easy to translate and others can be a little more thought pondering and I think what that does, it allows you to really think of the quality of the status perhaps of the haku mele and what he was trying to convey in this given piece and so I do know if this answering your question I think if you begin to get a good foundation of olelo, to me you start out as a first year student, but you ho'omau, ho'omau you begin to see more in the language. (DO YOU THINK YOU NEED THE LANGUAGE TO DANCE HULA?) Ae, Well I think as an Olapa, I think they can go in without any, but it would be very conducive to your growth if you were also taking language or

your kumu hula was upgrading his or her, skills in hawaiian I think. I will find very strange....

(DO YOU THINK HULA HAS CHANGED?) Definety! (HULA KAHIKO OF TODAY?) It ranges from what I feel to be really grounded, really following the traditional styling of a given halau, and it can also be far out in left field, it can be almost questionable in terms of what it is.

(DEFINITION OF HULA KAHIKO?) Hula Kahiko, are mele hula that are done in the kahiko styling hence forth, there are no introduced instruments or implements. The mele is being conveyed in a kahiko style chant and then the dancers when they do the performance they are doing it in such a way, that it blends and works well with the mele... (WHAT DO YOU CALL TRADITIONAL

KAHIKO?) For me, when I think of traditional hula, I am looking at hula that again a hula, a mele and a hula that has some kind of foundation, some kind of link up with the past. Let me give you an example, a mele like Kaulelua i ke anu o waialeale done in the style we most taught it or that we most identify to me that has its link to the traditional past. A mele that has its link to that traditional past a mele that is written about Jonnah Kuhio Kalaniana'ole put that in 1922 and it is done with an ipu an chanter will also be traditional and it has that link once again to a chant that is written about Pele, errupting on the volcaoes slopes of Hawaii and the erruption is the one that happen in 1977, that has been executed in a style that you can see relates back to things older is also traditional because (this is for me), if you put a label in term of traditional chant has to put what was written during the time of the monarchy up until lets say 1893, with Queen Liliuokalani then in essence you are saying that is how we are going to gauge tradition. Traditions are like an unbroken piece of thread, it connects every era and it continues and that thread is going to continue into the year 2000 and it will be linked back to us or back to who ever was before us and there by I think you know tradition is something that is continued it has some kind of grounding or basis in the past it is carried on.

(WHAT DO YOU PREFER KAHIKO OR AUANA?) Kahiko, there is a power and there is a..

just, there is mana in it and it conveys so much energy and history and feeling and that is mea mai'ka'i to me. (DO YOU HAVE A SPECIAL CHANT THAT YOU LIKE?) I have a number I love Kaulilua i he anu o Waialeale because it is about my island, many...

(WHO YOU CONSIDER A MASTER?) Aunty Edith Kanakaole, Uncle Henry Pa, Aunty Iolani Luahine, Aunty Lokalea Montgomery, Aunty Kau'i Zuttermeister... (BESIDES HULA DO YOU DO OTHER THINGS IN HAWAIIAN CULTURE?) Ae, I am a lecturer in hawaiian studies for the Kauai Community College, I also do teacher workshops in Hawaiian culture for U.H. continuing ed and adult Education on Kauai. I've been doing that from 1980 on.

(DID YOU SERVE AS A JUDGE?) Yes, for the Kauai mokihana festival.. Which is a male single and group kahiko and auana competition. I also adjudicated in Vancouver, British, Columbia at the Surrey music festival. It's a big township out side of Vancouver. They have a number of different through the whole month of like April they have different dancers. Everything from creative movement, Jazz, Ballet, tap, to a polynesian section, so the other year I went up and I was a judge in 1992...

(THINK OF WORKSHOPS IN HULA?) I think they are great it gave the kumu the opportunity to share their hula styling with their hawaiian then their own it allows kumu hula maybe that do not have a halau to come out the woodwork and again share what they know. It is great for students who are taking hula because they can be a member of halau go and take from someone and be exposed to different views of thought "a'ole pau ka ihe i ka halau ho'okahi"... So that's putting to practice what we always preach. (HOW ABOUT KUMU HULA?) Well, you know if we looked at the ancients we find that they were strong believers in ways recognizing always respecting knowledge, for them they never sat on a pedestal and thought that was it for them they always were willing to go out and learn more and share more, so if we use that example from the past then shouldn't we ourselves also be willing to get together and share and learn from

one another..

(ANYTHING SPECIAL TO PUT INTO THE BOOK?) I enjoyed being able to share what little I know of the hula and of the hawaiian culture and history with my haumana and I will always like to see hula keep on growing towards positive. (DO YOU HAVE OTHER JOBS?) I am a hawaiian studies resource teacher for the Department of Education and that is my main job... That's for the East Kauai District...