

## VICTORIA HANAKA'ULANI-O-KAMAMALU HOLT TAKAMINE

Kumu hula of her halau, "Pua Ali'i Ilima", Vicky Takamine also teaches Hawaiian chant, dance and culture classes at the University of Hawai'i and the Leeward Community College.

My halau started in the backyard of Aunty Verna Wilson. She got a group of students together and I gave my first lesson in her patio in <sup>641-a</sup> ~~Aiea~~. The halau grew and I moved to my own home for a little while until it just got too big. We ended up working out of a dance studio in the Waimalu area until that closed down. We are presently rehearsing in the Kalakaua Recreation Center in Kalihi.

I started dancing at a very young age by watching television and watching my mother dance. She used to dance with the Alama sisters. I took formal lessons with Aunty Ma'iki Aiu at about the age of fifteen when she was located at Ke'eaumoku Street. I studied with her until I graduated from high school in 1965. She then put me in a lu'au show at the Queen Surf with Ka'upena Wong who was the emcee at the time. I also used to work with Aunty Ma'iki at the Moana Hotel where she was the featured solo dancer. During that time, I was going back to hula off and on and I also went to Japan to dance for a while. Aunty Ma'iki opened her hula classes for kumu hula in 1970 and a year later I started with her again.

The first thing we learned with Aunty Ma'iki was basic hands and feet. She had a special song that she had created just for us and she taught us the basic hand gestures and the feet movements, foot patterns that went with the song. We would start learning to speak and understand the language from the first day we walked into class. We always had a test at the end of the month. So if we were in the Friday class, the last Friday of the month was set aside for words and translation for whatever mele or song we had learned that month. And she would pull things out of the hat that we learned several months before. You had to really keep on your toes. We were expected to learn the words to the song and the translation. We wrote all of the movements down, the basic gestures, and we all had to keep a little folder where we also did research on all of the songs that we learned and the places that we studied. It was quite intensive.

I didn't know that I was going to be a teacher when I started dancing with Aunty Ma'iki. I just had this love for the hula and the Hawaiian culture. But when she opened her class for kumu hula and I

was invited to come back to study with her, I knew that's what I wanted to do. In fact, I was dancing with Zulu at the time and when he wouldn't give me the Friday nights off, I told him I would quit. He ended up giving me the Friday nights off so I could study with Aunty Ma'iki. And in 1975, I graduated as olapa, ho'opa'a and kumu hula from Aunty Ma'iki.

Because Aunty Ma'iki was my only teacher, I don't think that I could get away from her style of dance. That is always going to be with me. Of course when you leave you develop your own ways, but the basic foundation that she's laid for me will always be there. I think I pretty much carry on her style of dancing.

When students come to me, the first thing I tell them is that I might not be the right teacher for them. So if they don't care for the way I'm teaching or if they're not getting anything out of my classes, I don't feel badly if they want to move on. If they come and they want to adapt to my style, then the first thing we do is train in kahiko first. And I also teach them the text of a song because the important thing about the dance is not just the movements, it's the text. Just teaching feet and hands have no meaning. It is not Hawaiian. I teach them a song right away to get them moving and to get them involved. I want them to feel that they can accomplish a chant or a song in a short period of time. I want to start getting them to feel very confident in their own ability.

The joy I get from teaching hula is being able to share different experiences with my students. To see somebody get involved and watch them develop as a dancer, develop self-confidence in themselves and to develop grace. It's satisfying to nurture somebody who will want more of the Hawaiian culture and the language instead of just the movements to the dance.

Hula kahiko is not the same that it was fifty years ago or even twenty years ago for that matter. We as a people have evolved and have changed and therefore our likes and our dislikes have changed. We tend to keep things that we like and to shut aside things that we didn't like. So if we learned something that we didn't really care for, we don't carry that on to the next generation. And those things have a tendency to be lost.