

Pattye Wright

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my dancers
I arrived in Hawaii in 1968 from the Midwest and my first ^{hula} experience was to see Beverly Noa dance. I was so moved by that experience that I decided I wanted to learn hula. I studied informally with Carolyn Miller but it was only an introduction to the dance for newcomers and I soon realized my interests were much deeper and more compelling. At that point I saw Bella Richards's hula studio perform at a Kailua Madrigals concert and I called her the next day to ask if she would take me into her class. She said she never accepted adults because "they don't practice, they didn't remember, and they didn't have stamina." She preferred young people because they didn't have distractions and they had bodies that could be molded. But I kept pleading and begging her and she said to come to the next practice class. ^{don't} ^{can't} ^{so many} ^{in their lives as adults do,} ^{have} ^{Finally consented to my coming}

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I think the greatest accomplishment of my career was surviving my first few months with Bella. When I arrived that first day she put me in the front row and we practiced from nine a.m. to three p.m. without a break. When I got home I was literally on my hands and knees. I was so ignorant and I made so many gaffes and errors of protocol that appeared intentional because they seemed so obvious to everyone else. There were things that a kumu and a haumana know by osmosis that I had to actually study and learn.

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I studied with Bella as a formal student until 1975, and then at a hula workshop I was approached by Auntie Edith Kanakaole who advised me to learn the language if I had a sincere desire to truly understand the hula. I spent ^{three} years at the University of Hawaii studying ^{the} Hawaiian ^{language} and it was like a light had been turned on in a dark room for me. It clarified so many ambiguous, gray areas that had been in the back of my mind and it taught me the importance of the ancient hula in a dancer's education. Bella had taught very little kahiko with the emphasis being on auwana and I felt like a house without a foundation. I wanted the structure that the kahiko could give me so I went to Bella for her consent. I was led to Lani Kalama who I ^{am privileged} ^{was fortunate} to train under and it was she that gave me my foundation in the kahiko. ^{Privileged}

In 1973 Bella permitted me to teach under her guidance and in 1975 I opened a studio of my own. ^{I've tried} to pass on to my haumana what my kumu passed down to me. The hula is a living form and so you must share a little bit of your emotions and your past to make it live. Many dancers don't know the language so they dance very mechanically and they kill the life of the song and the hula. When Auntie Iolani (Luahine) danced, the whole mele seemed to be acted out inside of her and projected out of her imagination and heart into the audience. I rarely see that kind of emotion in kahiko today.

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My advice to the people of the Hawaiian community is ~~not to~~ take your culture and heritage for granted. Maybe because I was brought up in another culture I can look at the situation with detachment. People today take it for granted that cultural resources like Bella will always be around to be appreciated and drawn from and they are mistaken.

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I arrived in 1968 to live. My first experience was seeing Noa dance. I was so moved by that ~~xx~~ experience that I decided I wanted to learn. I began looking for a teacher. My first kumu was a lady I met through the new comers club named Carolyn Miller, whose approach was directed only to give student an exposure to the hula. One year I outlasted five classes. She didn't know what to do with me.

R I soon realized my interests were much more compelling and deeper. About that time I saw Bella Richards at a Kailua Madrigals concert. I called her the next day and told her that her girls danced the way I wanted to dance and would she take me as a student. She told me she never taught adults. I pleaded with her but she told me adults don't practice, don't remember, and don't have stamina.. She preferred young people because they don't have distractions and they have bodies that can be molded. I kept begging her. She told me to come to the next practice. When I arrived she put me in the front row and we practiced from 9 AM to 3 PM without a break. When I got home, I was literally on my hands and knees. She continued to test me because I was new and a mainland haole. I studied with Bella from ~~1968~~ 1969 to 1975.

Te In 1973 I opened my own studio but as a teacher I was still under Bella's supervision. In 1975 I started totally on my own. I got a tremendous amount of attention from Bella because being haole she knew how vulnerable I would be to criticism ~~Whxxxx~~ When you come in, there are things that kumu and haumana know by osmosis, that I had to actually learn.

Omit B Bella was my greatest influence because she took me from zero. Her style epitomizes how ~~xxxx~~ I would like to dance. It is a very low, aiha'a, very soft, fluid in the body movements. The highest compliment for me is for someone to come up to me after a performance and say I know who your kumu is.

Tr Bella taught very little kahiko, auwana was what she taught. But after I ~~xxxx~~ had been teaching I felt I needed the foundation that kahiko could give me. You cannot teach hula without knowing the language so I took a year of Hawaiian language at UH- Manoa and it was like turning on a light. in a dark room. Then I went to Bella Richards for her permission to study kahiko. I then studied with Lani Kalama/ I remember Edith Kanakaole coming up to me at a workshop she was giving and telling me I must learn the language, I must learn the mother tongue. My husband told me to go to UH- Manoa the next semester and I went.

Te In 1973 my first marriage had dissolved so I needed a way to survive. I had taught kindergarten and piano and had always enjoyed teaching and enjoyed hula. I knew this was what I wanted to do. I went to Bella for her blessing and advice asking her ~~xx~~ whether ~~xx~~ a haole can make it in the hula field. She said if the kumu is well-trained and you are.

Tr The greatest ~~xxxxxx~~ hardship was ~~xxx~~ surviving Bella. Everything has been easy since then. I was so ignorant and so I made gaffes or errors that seemed so obvious ~~xx~~ they looked like they were intentional. I did not know what the proper role of the haumana was. I have had to do nothing; I would consider a sacrifice to dance and teach the hula. I have had to work very hard but I would not consider that a sacrifice but an adventure and a challenge.

I get the most joy when I can show Bella how far she has brought me in the hula.

Defining hula kahiko is a very hard job. I've listened to both sides of the argument, I don't know whether it has to be old or whether it can just be done in the old-style. I don't know. Anything that has musical accompaniment, a melody line is auwana. The hula kahiko mele that moves me the most is The play between Pele and Hiiaka makes it a fascinating story for me! I also enjoy "Hole Waimea, " because of the turn of mood from militant to gentleness and love.

My enjoyment of hula auwana does not center with one song. To the haumana, don't take your culture and your heritage for granted. They tend to take it for granted that cultural resources like Bella will always be around. Hula has to be danced from the inside out. Many might not know the language so they dance very mechanically and they kill the song and the hula. The hula is a living form and so you must share a little bit of your emotions, your past to make it live. Iolani Luahine dances as if there is a movie going on within her head which she projects out to the audience with her eyes. I ~~xxxxxx~~ rarely see that kind of emotion in kahiko today. A good dancer is a good actress. Every part of her ~~k~~ body and her heart acts out the story. Beverly Noa, Iolani, Leinaala Heine, Bella. When Lei dances I don't think there is anybody in the audience who doesn't believe that she is not dancing specifically to and for them with a change of her ~~k~~ eyes she changes the mood that she is giving

There are other styles that move one very much ~~k~~ but the aiha'a to me is the most beautiful. I felt like a house without a foundation without kahiko training. It would be like graduating from college and not knowing how to read.

Tr All these things would come down on me and I didn't know what was the reason for

the upbraidings and here I was a grown-up woman.

Ir [I was with 16 year old girls but it never entered my mind about the age difference because I knew what I was there for. I was just happy to be there. The stamina and the ease in which they did it was the thing.