

KATHLEEN MALAMA LELEO

When I think of traditional Hula, I think of Lokalia Montgomery and George Naope. There would have to be limitations on creativity if one is to go strictly traditional. The old style of traditional hula is vanishing and most of our kupunas that practiced it are gone. The hula of today is exciting. There's not enough people alive today to show us or teach us what ancient hula was really like. It's difficult to say what it is and what it is not.

I ^{became} ~~was~~ interested in hula at a very late age. My children were grown and all in school and there was nothing else for me to do. I became a member of the Kalihi-Palama Hawaiian Civic Club, of which my late brother founded, ~~and was~~ ^{I became} very interested in Hawaiiana. At this time, George Naope began his hula classes in Kalihi and the members of our club were encouraged to join. This was my start in hula. I studied with Uncle George for 5 years and I was trained in ~~the~~ Hula Kahiko, Hula Auwana and Chanting. We were never told what the chant was about, so we ^{was} did research on our own time. At the end of the fifth year, I graduated as Kumu Hula.

I was also trained under Sam Kamuela Naeole. Kamuela cared about his dancers and how well each one did. ^{we} He helped me to better myself in the Hula Auwana. I remember when I went out to perform, Kamuela would charge a quarter for every mistake we made. Kamuela trained 5 of his students to become a Kumu Hula. I was very fortunate to be one of those students. * He started with ~~chants~~, focusing on memorizing the chant, proper pronunciation, translation, expression and significance of the chant or dance. Kamuela gave us the resources and we did the research. We would also create the dance and perform before him for approval and corrections. At the end of each chant or dance, we were given a written test. * (Kamuela stressed the importance of the mekona(-), and 'okina (').)

When I ^{at} ~~was~~ learning to dance, teaching looked easy. ^{But I found the great} The difficulty ~~when teaching for the first time, was~~ communication. How do you communicate ^{to} with a large group of restless and often times uninterested children? There were times when Sam would call at the last minute, to take over his classes. Unknowingly to me, he would hide outdoors and watch how I worked with the class. I guess he wanted to see if I was able to handle the classes without him. After the death of Sam Naeole in 1981, I began to teach hula.

I try to train my students the way Uncle George and Uncle Sam trained me. I consider myself between traditional and contemporary, staying close to traditional. The history of hula is so clouded, for example, there has always been a controversy of what the correct uwehi step is. No one knows where the foot movements originated ^{from} or where the hula originated ^{from}.

KATHLEEN LELEO



I think if you are going to go with the Lokalia Montgomery, George Naope idea of traditional hula, there has to be limitations on creativity. But if you think about it, most of the people that practice the old style of traditional hula are gone. The hula of today is exciting but there are not enough people alive to show us what is really ancient hula. There are not enough people left who know so it's difficult to say what is ancient hula and what is not.

I started hula at a very late age. I was in my thirties and my children were all grown up and so I had nothing else to do. I was a member of the Kalihi-Palama Hawaiian Civic Club and George Naope had been hired to teach all the members. I stayed with George for five years and he trained us in hula kahiko and chanting. We were never told what the chant was about so it was up to us to do any background research.

I went on to Sam (Kamuela) Naeole in Kalihi and I found him to be someone who really cared about you and how you did. Sam taught me mostly modern hula and he would charge us a quarter for every mistake we made.

Sam trained five of us to become kumu hula. He started us off with kahiko and auwana chants and we would have to come up with our own interpretations. He would give us resources and we would have to look up the mana'o of the chant and research the background. In the end we would have to write out the chant and the translation out of memory complete with the proper markings.

I began to teach full-time in 1981 after the death of Sam Naeole. I had taught under Sam and he would leave me with classes at the last minute and hide in the back out of my sight. I guess he wanted to learn if I could handle it.

When I was on the outside everything looked easy but I found that I had to communicate an entire dance to a group of restless and often times uninterested children. Concepts like training in front of a mirror are difficult for children and you wonder sometimes if they'll ever learn.

I try to train my students the way Uncle George and Uncle Sam trained me. I consider myself in between the traditional and contemporary. I try to stay close to the traditions but the history of the hula is so clouded. For example there has always been a controversy about what is the correct uehe step. No one knows where the foot motions originated from. No one knows where the hula came from.

Kathleen Leleo

Kathleen Leleo was alakai to the late Samuel Naeole of Waimanalo.

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(KAMUELA)

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When I was on the outside everything looked easy but I found that I had to communicate an entire dance to a group of restless and oftentimes uninterested children. Concepts like training in front of a mirror are difficult for children and you wonder sometimes if they'll ever learn.

~~I try to train my students the way Uncle George and Sam trained me. ~~What I consider myself in between the traditional and contemporary. I try to stay as close to traditions as I can but nobody can say without a doubt what are the correct kahiko steps. Ancient hula is the hula of the past but the past of the hula is so clouded. No one knows where~~~~

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I started hula at a very late age in my thirties. I became interested in it when I joined the Kalihi-Palama Hawaiian Civic Club. Our president wanted all the members to go learn the hula. George Naope was hired to teach hula so all of the members went. That's when I really got interested in it. My children were all grown so I had nothing else to do. I expected hula to be very strict with a very strenuous training. Maybe it was the age of the students in the class because we were all older but I didn't see the strictness in the class. But as I worked with him I noticed that with the teenagers and the keikis it was a little different. There would be basics before they danced and he would correct them but with the adults it was different.

But later George trained some of the adults and some of the teenagers and I saw that it was strenuous and there were rules that you had to follow. The big influence George had on my was in the kahiko and the chanting style. The proper things to use in chanting. You can't use a pahu drum with a certain kind of chant. He never told us what the chant was all about. It was up to us to do the research. I stayed with George about five years.

I went to another kumu after George left for kumu but I returned to Kalihi Palma. They had hired Sam Naieole who had been my first hula instructor when I was eighteen.. My sister had convinced me to go with her and I stayed with Sam at that time for less than a year. But at that period of my life I wasn't interested in hula and it was only later that I regret not staying with Sam at 18.

Sam was really warm towards the hula and was willing to share. He really cared about you and how you did. I guess being an adult at first he would criticize me by criticizing the group as a whole. It was only after I told him that it was alright to single me out did he start to criticize me in class. I loved the kahiko dancing where you didn't have to be graceful or smile. I took modern with George I couldn't bring my feelings out but with Sam he taught me how to bring my feelings out. So it was George with the kahiko and Sam with the modern.

The greatest joy I had was when Uncle George gave me the keikis to teach. It looked easy when I was on the outside but once I was teaching I found that you had to know the entire dance and you had to communicate it to children who were restless. Concepts like training in front of a mirror are difficult for them and sometime you think when will these kids start to learn. It takes about a month for them to learn one dance.

I worked with Uncle George for awhile and then Wendell gave me the opportunity to work with a few kids at Mayor Wright Housing. It was hard at the beginning without Uncle George and I felt lost. But after awhile I got used to the fact that they weren't going to be there and I had to just get up there and try my best. I'm a pre-school teacher so I wasn't really excited about opening a halau because I would be with kids full-time. What spurred me on was the death of Sam Naeole. Wherever we went he introduced me as the person who would take his place which I didn't like. He told me he wasn't going to be here forever and that I had to carry on.

He would leave me with classes at the last minute and then he would come and watch me teach without me knowing it. He wanted to learn if I could handle it. He opened a class for kumu hula that five of us took. He gave us chants and some auwanas to study and we were to come up with our own interpretation of the chant and dance. Then he would ask us to write the whole chant plus the translation. He would check it for spelling and for the correct blottos etc. We had to look up the manao of the chant and research the background. and he would give us resources to go to. With Uncle George it was different, he left it up to us.

I consider myself in between the traditional and the contemporary. I try to stay as close to the traditional ~~as I can~~ I would say that ancient hula is the hula of the past but ~~the history of the hula is so clouded~~ the history of the hula is so clouded. No one knows where the hula came from. No one knows where the foot motions originated from. There has always been a controversy about the uehe step for example. There is a great controversy about what is the correct uehe step. But I would have to go with the older people like my kumu and Lokalia Montgomery.

I think if you are going to go with the Lokalia Montgomery, George Naope idea of traditional hula there has to be limitations on creativity. But when you think about it most of the people that practice the old style of traditional hula are gone. The hula of today is exciting but ~~nothing~~ there are not enough people alive to show us what is really ancient hula . There are not enough people left who know about ancient hula so it's difficult to say ~~infinitum~~ what is ancient hula and what is not.

What makes a dancer good to me is her attitude, her personality, her charm, the way she moves. You can see the feeling and it really touches you. I was brought up by an aunt in Kauai.

Sam would charge us a quarter for every mistake we made.