

Ku'uleialoha Beckman

1 I think the greatest hardship I had as a dancer was believing that at one time I would appreciate the knowledge that was being given to me. I started to train in the hula at pre-school age and it wasn't until I became the teacher at the age of 19 that I realized and appreciated all of what was taught to me.

3 I'm very grateful to have had three Kumu Hula who took precious time and effort in teaching me. My grandmother, Emily Keko'olani, my aunt, Myra "Kolani" Chartrand, and my foremost Kumu Hula, my mother, Katherine Kahanohano Keko'olani Dambly.

6 I try to instill in my students to have a good attitude, to work hard and diligently, to be humble in heart and mind. I stress for them to not worry about being the best- but, for them to do their very best!

I feel that it is essential for a teacher to be patient, honest, and fair. I'm sharing with my children and students something that is very dear to me, my love for the hula. When I teach with this special feeling inside, it leaves me wide open to be used and hurt. I've been told by other Kumu hula that I should maintain a higher plateau away from my students, to go and teach and never mind the closeness and caring with my haumana, because we get hurt. I'm sure that all Kumu Hula have been disappointed and hurt by some ungrateful students, but I cannot allow any hurt to hinder me from doing what I love to do and in the manner that I chose to do it!

As my students learn from me, I too, learn from them! We as teachers should always continue to learn, to remain students ourselves because if we think that we know it all, our learning will come to a halt - and conceit, greed, and bitterness will be our "ho'oilina" that we leave to future generations.

Kuulei Beckman

I think the greatest hardship I had as a dancer was believing that at one time I would appreciate the knowledge that was being given to me. I started to train at a young age and I know no other life. But my advice to young dancers is to be faithful and loyal to what has been taught to them. Be grateful that someone opened up and shared the knowledge with you. It's only when you grow older do you appreciate the beauty of your own culture.

4 My first kumu was my grandmother, Emily Kekoolani and I studied under her for two years. My grandmother had trained under Pua Haaheo, and Iolani Luahine so my classes were really in the style of the old school. Everything was very strict and very disciplined and I wasn't allowed to speak my mind. My mother Katherine Dambly took over my training after my grandmother and I found her to be much more precise. My mother was taught by my grandmother so I was consistently trained to be attentive to the precise motions of my hands. The result is that the dancer looks like she knows and loves what she's dancing about, and the audience is drawn into the hula.

5 I began to teach at seventeen with my mother as my mentor, and at nineteen I went out on my own. I wanted to teach because I felt I had been given so much knowledge and I wanted to pass on the knowledge to my own children before I began to lose it. I teach my students with less intensity than I believe my grandmother was trained because today's students don't reside with their kumu. But I feel the best part of teaching is still and will always be helping students overcome their personal handicaps and limitations.

omit The hula kahiko of today has gotten away from the simplicity of a beautiful dance and into the stylings of a musical production. This is what the younger generation wants and maybe this is progress but we must come to some understanding soon about the boundaries of creativity in kahiko or we will end up with traditional hula that resembles Broadway shows.

omit The best thing I remember about my career happened in 1969 at a dinner that my grandmother, my mother, and I attended. We were asked to dance a hapa-haole song called "Lehua" and I remember thinking while we performed on stage that here together for a little while were three generations of our family that were able to participate in something they had in common, and that touched them in some way.

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