

John Lake

I was born on Oct 11 1937 on Maui. I began my hula training under my grandmother ^{+ grandaunt} at the age of six. She was a dancer. I started with kahuks and the auwana came much later when I was in college.

I was at the University of Hawaii for two years starting in 1954 and then I left for California in 1956 and became a teacher.

My family is a musical family and I like music and I like dance. I would watch my cousins and neighbors dance. I grew up in Lahaina and we lived right across the street from the Gardens.

Hawaiian was always my love because I was teaching the culture on the mainland even though there were very few Hawaiian kids up there at the University of San Francisco. I got my grad. degree in teaching and then I returned and took hula for a year under Maiki. I still consider myself a student under her.

The kahuks during my school years was non-existent. Everything was on the auwana. When I returned from San Francisco that's when I really went into the kahuks deeply.

My first kumu in ^{the formal} training sense had to be Aunt Maiki Aiu. ~~She~~ ^{Grand aunt} was very strict. No talking, hands had to be just right. No unnecessary movement, your eyes had to be on the kumu all the time. She taught me karika. I studied with her for two years until I was ten years old and then she passed away. This training was not that long or formalized. The formal training really came from Maiki.

I found Maiki to be very gracious and steeped with knowledge. When I joined the hula in the early sixties there were only two men studying under her, that was George Maile and Milton I. The unika under Maiki was what I consider the very traditional. There was the chanting of the genealogy, the ailolo. Beyond the formal training she gave me a sense of what hula does for a person, what hula is. The ~~essence~~ ^{beauty} of hula is to come to terms with the essence of one's self. Hawaiians called it the manao and it is carried throughout the different parts of the body. The manao creates the dance through the use of your body.

She always used the term hā rather than the term hula.

hāa is the original term for the dance. We find the use of the term aihāa aihāa meaning a bombastic style of dancing but if we look to the first chants of Pele we find the term kēhāa and this term meant to dance. It's also the root of the word hāhāa which mean to humble one self. Through humility much is given to you. This is a central theme that runs through Amity's hāa.

I began to teach at St. Louis in 1962. In 1965 some of the students on the football team asked me if I would be interested Hawaiian music. 45 boys & 45 girls turned out and that was the 1st Haw'n Glee Club at St. Louis. The kids wanted to sing Hawai' songs and it just grew from there. We grew to the point where I had 325 in class.

The greatest change in the hula has been the creativity of the new styles and interpretations. ~~I'm not~~ There is a tremendous clash today. The question today is what is considered traditional, kahiko.

To me kahiko means keeping within the styles and steps, as basic as they are, that have been passed down through the generations. There has to be a humility of humbling of oneself to the dance.

There is no dance without the lyric.
There is no dance without the
chanting. What is happening is
that you have a lot of creative
dances today that exist for the
sake of rhythm rather than the
sake of language. Rhythm gives
way to movement, movement gives
way to theatrics as opposed to
authenticity. People of today
want to see a vigorous manly
style of dance and so we even
see modern women having dancing
very strongly and masculine.
They don't know the language so
they are appealed to what they
see. ~~What is lost is~~
It is alright for the young learner
to take the traditional styles to
their full extension and zenith
but they can't forget basic questions
like what am I dancing about,
who am I dancing for, and
why am I dancing? The changes
that have come about are fine
but are we sacrificing the discipline
& definitions of kalidera with these
changes?

The key to all of the maners of unwritten
literature passed down through the
chants is a ^{creative} discipline by the
kumu of each generation. There
has been creativity in ~~so~~ every
generation but the original
thought and theme of the chants
remained the same.

What we have today are people who are choreographing kalileo chants and putting in a movement or motion based only on the look of it. The motion has no connection to the meaning of the chant.

I would consider an unchoreographed chant with no known steps kalileo if a kumu did the research and choreographed the chant with steps that are traditional.

Maikei always told us to create our own styles in the kalileo but what you have to remember is that what you have created 100 years from now will be considered kalileo. Each kumu has a responsibility to not sacrifice the beauty of the theme of a chant passed down through generations for the sake of rhythm or audience appeal. Don't let the motions overwhelm the meaning, lose the meaning of what the dance is all about.