

Leslie Howell.
Mapuana de Silva

Honolulu

Jan 29, 1949

I was taught hula by my mother. I used to do hulas at parties with her when I was child. When I went to college on the mainland, I worked at the school hulas because I was the only one who knew any Hawaiian at all. I would set up a program with ^{created} dances but I had no real formal training. It was after I graduated from college and returned to Hawaii that I began taking hula.

I remembered the name of Auntie Maiki Aia. A friend of mine from the mainland came to visit & we went to go see a friend of hers who happened to dance for Auntie Maiki. I ended up signing up to study w/ Maiki because I felt she was the kumu who I wanted to learn the hula from. I started training in Jan. 1972. So much of it happened by chance.

Maiki is a wonderful teacher. She loves the hula so much and she expresses this love and makes you want to understand & feel the dance & not just copy her movements. She explains the words, the stories and gets you excited about dances you really didn't care for. She's very open w/ her teaching & knowledge. She has given me groundwork basics and I respect & keep that foundation but she doesn't restrict us & gives us the freedom to go out and create new chants & dances which not all kumu hula do.

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In 1975 we went through ~~as~~ uniki.

I began teaching in 1976 through the encouragement of my mother & my aunties.

Juanita Wong Howell

In 1975 my husband & I had enrolled in ^{adult evening} Hawaiian language classes at Kalaheo H.S. under Lokomai kai Statenburg.

I had started w/ hula auwana the 1st year under Maili & then I started training in Ikatika when she opened a new class. So much of my career was chance. Being in the right place at the right time. I certainly didn't plan it all out.

My uniki w/ Maili was very special because she made the graduation process so demanding. We were going through 5-hour practices, ~~sometimes~~ she wanted us to have good values and strong beliefs. She wanted us to find out for ourselves if we really wanted to become kumu hula. She said at the grad. ceremony we would know whether we were teachers or not and that she would take away anyone of us out of the graduation at anytime if she felt we were not capable of being kumu. I felt I earned it at the end & that I would do anything to make her proud.

Hula is the only thing you can study in Hawaiian culture where you will learn all the aspects of Hawaiian life: history, religion, arts, language. Hula encompasses everything about the Hawaiian culture. There is a spiritual strength to it that must be experienced because it cannot be described.

Hula Kahiko ~~can~~ cannot be easily defined & compartmentalized. It is like the color blue can have many shades to it. Because it's an art form, I don't believe there can be a black & white, right & wrong definition for it. It is an art form & art is subjective.

"Kaulilua", "Aukoholalan", "Aiaia" - These 3 dances are the foundation of my hula, my training & these 3 I will never change in any aspect from the way I was taught them. These are the oldest dances that have been shared w/me. They have been passed down relatively from gen. to gen. . . No matter how hard you try you can't make something exactly the same way it has been passed to you because you are teaching it and putting yourself into it the same way you learn did. You cannot stand back & pass on like a museum piece because then there will be no life or feeling to it.

The greatest change that has come upon the hula has been creativity in dance style, chanting, costuming, presentation. The youth have so much creative energy and the old masters are afraid the old values will be lost. We have to show the older generation that we can preserve the old values and be creative as well. And I do feel they are trying to be open & accepting for the most part. To the dancers who are pointing toward competitions, hulae, you have to commit yourself, &

you have to give 100%. Really believe in yourself & what you're doing.
Every human has something to share, something to offer.

I don't believe there are any boundaries to creativity but there are
different degrees to creativity. It all depends on the chant. Where
is the chant from? Was it taken from a book? Was it created by yourself
or a friend? Whether it was a gift? Who & what ~~was~~ the chant
written for? How are the phrases put together? The creativity has to have
a logic & a meaning to it. You have to know why you are creating in
such a manner.