

Performance of “Recalling Hawai`i” in Hilo, Hawai`i, 2013

The rain of Hilo makes a rumbling sound like the treading of feet.” `Ōlelo No`eau # 436, Pukui

Our journey to Hilo in February of 2013 began months before the day we left our various homelands. The cast of “Recalling Hawai`i” began preparation for the Hilo performance just after presenting the program on Maui in June of 2012. Planning for the Maui show began after the Kaua`i show in May of 2011, and plans for Kaua`i began when we returned from Europe in the summer of 2010 after three performances in Germany and Switzerland.

The cast is a group of ordinary people who have a passion for Hawaii’s hula, music, culture and history who are from different backgrounds and ethnicities. The youngest is 7 and the oldest over 70. We live and study hula in Maui, Kaua`i, O`ahu, California, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Samoa in the hula style of Roselle Keli`ihonipua Bailey and her daughters Sharon Ioana Balidoy and Pohākalani Mauga. We are members of Ka `Imi Na`auao o Hawai`i Nei, founded in 1977 as a non-profit educational organization. Creation and presentation of “Recalling Hawai`i” manifests the long-time vision of founder and hula teacher, Mrs. Bailey to educate the populace through hula and restore the dignity of the Hawaiian legacy. During this hour and a half Hawaiian music and dance program, Hawaii’s story is told from the time of pō when there were no people here, through the time of ao, Hawai`i in the present.

Many of the children and some of the adult performers are affiliated with Queen Lili`uokalani Children’s Center on Maui. The boundless energy and quick cleverness of the kamali`i and `ōpio enrich the performance and motivate the adults to try to be good examples for them. “*Eia ka iki nowelo a ka miki`oi*. Here is the clever and dainty little one...who may be small, but watch out!” (Pukui # 303). They chant with strong voices, dance with vigor and excitement, and soak up new experiences with joyous anticipation, and are loved by the audience!

In the weeks before the Hilo trip, we practiced the program dances, chants and songs in our separate homelands, with the help of video recordings sent by email, which helped direct transitions between dances and songs. Our goal was to fit the program together smoothly, without delays while moving different groups off and on stage. This can be quite challenging when there are only 2 days when we are all together before performing the show. Another challenge is adjusting the program to different theaters. In Hilo, we learned about fitting 50+ performers on a small stage, entering and exiting the stage from only one side, and not being able to go to the other side of the stage through a back way. The Palace is a fine “old lady” of a theater, created in the 1920’s for movies, and not live performances with many performers needing multiple stage entrances. We were fortunate to have two days of in-theater rehearsal before the show. Keep in mind that we are not professional performers.

We chose Arnott’s Lodge in Keaukaha for our lodging, which worked very well. It was close to the theater, had facilities to prepare food, and apartments and rooms which allowed groups of children, youth, dancers, musicians, teachers and crew members to room together. We used the outdoor covered courtyard every evening for informal rehearsals. After dinner, the musicians practiced program songs, while dancers joined in. The other guests at the lodge were treated to

authentic Hawaiian music and dance and were grateful. On Thursday and Friday evenings, we laughed, sang, danced, made lei, ironed costumes, told stories of previous shows and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves as we prepared for the show. As time passed, we felt more confident and less nervous about performing.

On Friday afternoon, the group did a special program about native birds at the `Imiloa Astronomy Center, at the University of Hawai`i, Hilo campus. We danced “Ke Kanikau nā Kiamanu o Moloka`i” a lament for the bird-catchers of Moloka`i because of extinction of the `ō`ō nuku`u mū due to use of guns rather than traditional feather-gathering methods. Then followed an original mele and dance for puaiohi, the small Kaua`i thrush, a critically endangered bird from Alaka`i wilderness in Kōke`e, composed to honor the release of captive-raised puaiohi into the forest and encouragement for them to mate with Alaka`i natives and flourish. The Maui cast members did a lovely `auana dance to “Manu Mele”, composed by Hawai`i kama`āina Diane Aki, which celebrates the koa`e, palila and `ōma`o birds with a love story. The kamali`i were not scheduled to dance, but were so excited to be there that they asked if they could dance too. They finished the program with Aia Hāmākua i ke Kai, which is a hula ma`i dedicated to Chief Kau`ikeaouli. Imiloa’s native garden was flush with lehua mamo and `ula`ula because of the blessing of Hilo’s ua kani lehua. “Ua ka ua, ola ka nohona o ka `āina kula. The rain pours, life comes to the plains.” Pukui, #2802

Saturday was the big night of the Palace Theater performance with all the preparations for the stage and performers completed. Thanks to Hilo plant nursery owner, Kenneth Lee, we had a native forest right on stage. It was the first time we ever built an ahu to Laka on top of a sound system! But, such was the limit of the stage and the necessity for space for performers.

The performance was exciting, funny, serious, sad, thought provoking, beautiful and well received by the 200 audience members. The kamali`i were show-stealers with their pig dance “Nemonemo ka Pua`a” and hula ma`i for Kau`ikeaouli. The kahiko dancers brightened up the pō section of the program with their colorful costumes and lively performances of Pele dances and hula kāla`au “He Motu Ta`ula, Nīhoa me Ni`ihau”. The `ōpio skillfully portrayed movement and sound of heavy rains along the mountain ridges with “A Ko`olau Au” and “Ka Nani o Kaua`i”. The huina (so called because they are a group of `auana dancers from many different places) joined the other groups for “Mo`olele” which signaled the arrival of people in canoes to Hawai`i. The pō section finale brought all performers on stage for the traditional rendition of “Kaulilua i ke Anu Wai`ale`ale”.

The ao section of the program tells the story of the Hawaiian monarchy with songs composed by and for the ali`i, performed in sequence from the time of Kamehameha until today, with special focus on Queen Lili`uokalani. The beauty of this section was the interaction with the audience near the end when dancing “This is Hawai`i” in the aisles. It was memorable to see their smiling faces as we danced the finale.

With the show over, and feelings of accomplishment, we toured Volcano on Sunday. It was cold, windy and rainy as we made our offerings to Pele and honored her with oli. It was the first trip to Volcano for most of the kamali`i, and they were impressed with the displays at the visitor

center and observatory. They were especially enthused by the visit to Nāmakanipaio Park where there were fireplaces in the pavilion, around which they all huddled after helping to build a fire. With warm hands and hearts, some of us continued to visit more Hawai`i Island wahi pana while others returned to Hilo for the flights home.

You sought and searched for wisdom, and the solid cliffs were seen. (From a chant for King Kalākaua)

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