

KATHOLO'ANA

Māui: Hawai'i's Ancient Mariner

- by Constance Hale

Ask most people what *Māui* refers to, and unless they flunked geography, they'll tell you it's an island in the Hawaiian archipelago. Ask those who have visited that island's storied volcano, and they may tell you that Māui was the Hawaiian deity who lassoed the sun, slowing its movement across the sky.

Ask those who read this newsletter, and they may remember that Māui stood on the shore of Kaua'i and cast his powerful hook into the westernmost tip of O'ahu to unite the two islands. He managed only to loosen a huge boulder, which fell and remains to this day in the waters off Ka'ena Point.

Ask Kumu Patrick Makuakāne about the term, and you will get another answer: "Māui is the ancestral navigator who represents an entire clan of mariners. They crossed the vast Pacific thousands of years ago, mapping the islands of Polynesia using the constellations as their guide."

In a new piece of choreography, "Māui: Turning Back the Sky," Makuakāne tells the story of *this* Māui and calls attention to the esoteric Hawaiian art of navigation, or *wayfinding*. Commissioned for the 2008 Ethnic Dance Festival (see "The Sky's the Limit," page 5), the piece will open *The Hula Show 2008*.

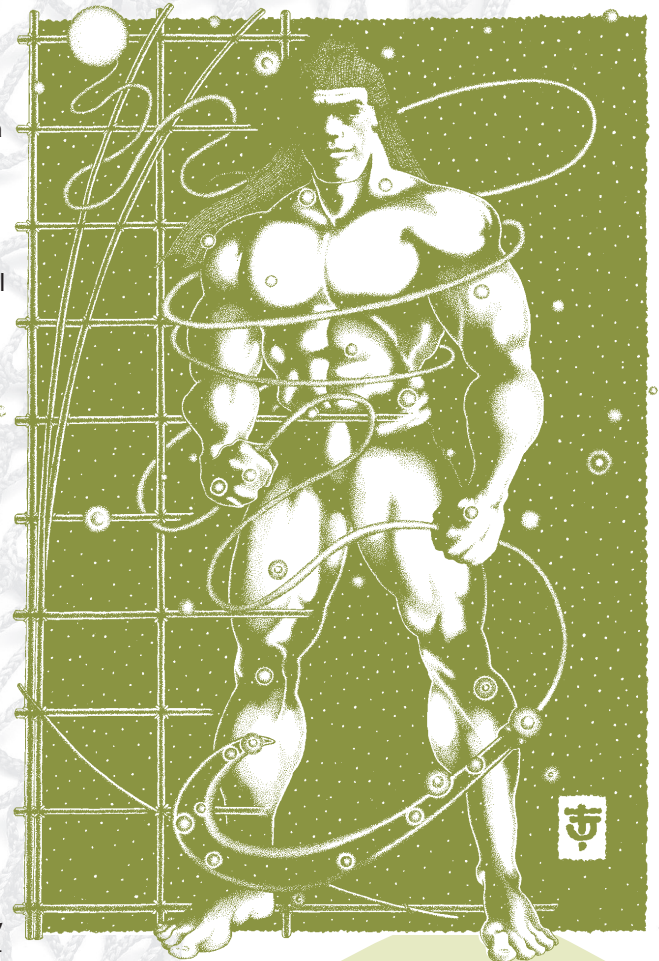
"Ancient Hawaiians possessed a sophisticated understanding of astronomy," Makuakāne notes, "and they passed on this knowledge by spinning tales about the hunters, warriors, and animals who live in the night sky and guide Hawaiian mariners." The tradition of wayfinding has been reinvigorated in recent years, helped by the voyages of outrigger canoes like the Hōkūle'a and by figures like Nainoa Thompson, the fifty-five-year-old navigator and director of the Polynesian Voyaging Society.

Makuakāne found inspiration for his new piece in such modern-day mariners, but also from the twelve challenges of Māui as told in the *Kumulipo* (Hawai'i's creation myth in the form of an epic chant) and from recent research by scholar Lucia Tarallo Jensen (to be published as the book *Māui Dialogues*).

According to these sources, Māui may have been a historical figure (or figures) from a family of navigators called the Māui. While their European counterparts were still hugging the coastlines, these ancient Polynesians were sailing the open seas with nothing to guide them but their intense knowledge of the stars' paths, winds, currents, clouds, and seabirds.

A system of folktales also evolved about a more figurative Māui. Stories about this mythological mariner tell of the challenges he faced and overcame (such as roping the sun and stealing fire from the mud hens). These allegorical tales, some of them recounted below, are intended to impart information for generations of future navigators about the heavens, time, and even mathematics.

continued on page 4



The storied navigator as imagined by graphic artist Frank Jensen in Māui Dialogues.

KAPA MUA: HAWAIIAN QUILTS WITH A MODERN, MASCULINE TWIST

The stunning Hawaiian quilts that graced the Palace of Fine Arts lobby at Nā Lei Hulu's gala event in October 2007 were presented by Kapa Mua, which is the brainchild of Michael Pechinski, the manager of a San Francisco textile and home furnishings showroom and a student in Nā Lei Hulu's Wednesday 6:30 p.m. class. Kumu Hula Patrick Makuakāne interviewed his *haumana* (student) about this unusual business venture.

Kumu Patrick Makuakāne: How did you come up with the idea to start Kapa Mua?

Michael Pechinski: I wanted to create quilts inspired by those I'd seen on trips to Tahiti and the Pacific islands, but with a modern sensibility. The floral, almost Victorian look of the "snowflake" patterns might not appeal to everyone—I didn't want a pink-and-white floral appliqué on my bed!—so I was going for something more masculine and graphic.

Kumu: What are your inspirations?

MP: The flora and fauna of the islands as well as icons of Hawaiiana. I've researched things like Hawaiian hula dancers depicted in Captain Cook's journals with their *pā'ū* skirts, floral adornments, and primitive tattoo designs. I also look for inspiration in the seashells, sand dollars, and sea urchins I find when beachcombing.

Kumu: How are the quilts executed and crafted?

MP: Each is custom-made, and with hand-appliqué and quilting takes months to complete.

Kumu: Has your study of hula influenced your work in any way?

MP: Definitely! First, as an extension of my hula studies I've researched the primitive nature of Polynesian arts and crafts. And hula has taught me patience and discipline, which are required to sew thousands of stitches into these handmade pieces of art. ♡

Contact Kapa Mua at 415-531-1313, or visit the Web site, www.kapamua.com.



HUAKA'I 2008

On April 26, the Wednesday 6:30 p.m. class flew to O'ahu for its *huaka'i*, a weeklong immersion in Hawaiian culture.



The intermediate and advanced classes competed in a friendly contest last February.



1st Place Kāne: Michael Pechinski



1st Place Wahine: Karen Gehrman



1st Place Hāhā: Miss Kimi and the Hula Honeys

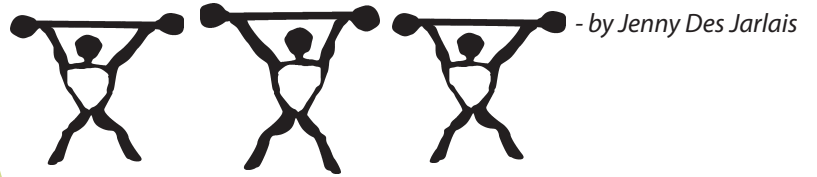


2nd Place Hula Hāhā: Hālau Hahaha



Waikīkī Chickadees

Ready, Set, **Sweat!** Inside the Hula Fitness Challenge



- by Jenny Des Jarlais

When Kumu Patrick Makuakāne was invited to attend a rehearsal of Mark Ho’omalū’s Oakland hālau last spring to critique the dancing, he couldn’t guess what he was about to witness. He hadn’t even left the parking lot when he spotted the dancers outside, running laps. He followed them indoors and spent the next hour watching them do intensive calisthenics: jumping jacks, abdominal crunches, leg lifts, running in place. The workout went on for what seemed like forever. The men and women were chanting, screaming, grunting, and dripping sweat as they exerted themselves.

“Then—*then*—they started hula practice,” says Makuakāne. “I knew their hālau was different from ours, but, really, *that* different? I was blown away. I knew then and there we had to do something similar. We needed to incorporate a fitness ethic into our routine as dancers.”

But that wasn’t the only impetus for the fitness program that Makuakāne kicked off last summer.

He recalls being dissatisfied with Nā Lei Hulu’s male dancers in the previous fall’s performance of *Daughters of Haumea*. “The men were shirtless a lot in that show, and I wasn’t always happy with how they looked. I don’t need them to look like The Rock, but I want them to be athletic and fit. People are paying good money to see half-naked bodies—they don’t want to see rolls going over the waistbands!”

Even though his initial focus was on the men, Makuakāne says he realized his vision should apply to the women, too.

So one day in May 2007, Makuakāne gathered his dancers and told them about the “Hula Fitness Challenge” that was about to begin. The group was divided into teams that would get points for exercising individ-

ually, exercising together, eating well, and losing weight. The finish line was in August, when the group was set to perform in New York City. And just in case anyone needed extra motivation, he dangled cash prizes.

The race was on, and by August the thirty-two dancers had lost a combined total of 274 pounds. Some had a hard time shedding pounds, while others dropped a lot. Many dove into the challenge, while others waded in only tentatively. Some focused on losing weight, while others emphasized getting into a regular fitness routine. But as a whole, the group had embraced a healthier lifestyle, and the dancers were feeling good.

“We were uberjuiced on our trip to New York,” says dancer Janet Auwae-McCoy. “We had more energy; we felt good about how we looked. We were on an exercise and weight-loss high.”

Still, the fitness challenge raised questions in many people’s minds. Not the least of which were: Doesn’t hula champion the view that a dancer’s beauty comes more from his or her presence, grace, strength, and expression than from a silhouette? Did body size matter to ancient dancers? Does a focus on physique reflect the values of our modern culture more than it reflects the spiritual and cultural tradition of hula?

“I felt conflicted about that,” says dancer Makani da Silva Santos. “I was always told that anyone can dance hula and be beautiful, and then you hear, ‘Well, you’d really look a lot better if . . .’ I know we want to be on par with the ballet and professional dance companies that have a certain standard for physical appearance, and I’m a strong advocate for fitness. But I’m also a Hawaiian woman and a hula dancer, and I want to be valued the way I am.”

continued on page 6

Māui: Hawai'i's Ancient Mariner

from page 1

Māui the revered ancestor

The Story: Accounts of Māui's parentage differ. The *Kumulipo* suggests that a navigator named Kalana (the buoyant one) was his father, and the goddess Hina-a-ke-ahi was his mother. While picking seaweed on the beach, Hina (a direct descendent of Wākea, or sky father) finds Kalana's *malo* (loincloth) and falls asleep. She becomes pregnant with Māui. Depending on the text, Māui had at least three, but as many as eight brothers.

In the traditional Polynesian tales, Māui is credited with creating islands, slowing the sun, and bringing immortality to humans. He is able to change form and work magic, using his many talents in often mischievous ways.

The Stars: Māui is immortalized as a constellation—part of what Westerners know as Hercules. This characterization is apropos since, as a fisherman, he would have used the stars to guide him.

Māui who pushes up the sky

The Story: At the beginning of time, says Hawaiian legend, a dark, gray sky pressed oppressively low over the earth—tall creatures were painfully hunched over, and the leaves of plants were flattened. (In different accounts, the heavens had fallen down or had not yet been separated from the Earth.)

Going about his affairs as hunched over as everyone else, Māui encountered a woman carrying dripping gourds of fresh, luscious cold water. He asked for a sip, saying that in return he would happily push up the sky so that all could walk upright. The woman gave him a drink. Refreshed, Māui crawled up Kau'iki (the hill on the Hana coast that some stories call Māui's home). Leaning on his great staff with his back to the sky, he slowly pushed up and managed to get to his knees. Gasping for breath, he pushed up again, into a crouch. Shoulders heaving, he placed his staff under the sky and with one mighty thrust stood and shoved the sky upward.

The Stars: Polynesians believed that the sky enclosed each of their islands like a dome, with Hawaiians comparing it to an upside-down calabash. Māui's exploit helps to explain this concept of the heavens.

Māui who draws up the islands

The Story: Although his brothers were said to be better fishermen than he, none could match Māui's most stunning catch. Māui took a magic hook and baited it with one of his mother's sacred birds, 'Alae-nui-a-Hina (mud-hen-belonging-to-Hina). The 'alae, able to turn into a beautiful woman, made an effective bait for the great fish Pīmoē, a giant *ulua* found deep in the sea.

The 'alae swam many fathoms deep to reach the ancient fish. Enticing him to open his mouth, she thrust Māui's magic hook deep into his jaw. Feeling tension on the line, Māui

*The struggle between
Māui and Moemoe
is a metaphor for the
struggle between the
dark of night and the
light of day.*

reeled in the elusive fish. Māui commanded his brothers to paddle away and not look back. As fear and curiosity got the better of them, they peeked and witnessed the islands coming up one after the other, hooked onto the craggy back of the giant old fish. This blunder broke the spell: the hook slipped away from the *ulua*'s jaw, and the islands slid apart into the positions they now enjoy.

The Stars: These Hawaiian images describe figures in Western astronomy: the canoe is the belt of Orion, Maui's hook is the tail of Scorpius, the fishing line is cast through the dust of the Milky Way, 'Alae-mud-hen-belonging-to-Hina is one of the bird configurations in Aquila, and the *ulua* is in Cassiopeia.

Māui who ensnares the sun

The Story: Māui felt sorry for his mother, Hina, and her retinue, who faced an unfortunate plight: The sun hurried across the sky too quickly to dry their freshly made *kapa* (bark cloth). The beautiful *kapa* became moldy in the dark.

Hina gave her son strands of her hair to use as rope to lasso the sun and told him to visit his blind grandmother on Haleakalā (House of the Sun). Along the way, he encountered Moemoe, who remarked, "You will never catch the sun, for you are an insignificant person."

"When I have caught the wayward sun," Māui replied, "I shall return to kill you."

When he arrived at Haleakalā's summit, Māui's grandmother gave him cooked bananas—a favorite food of the sun—and and told him to wait by a wiliwili tree. As the sun rose, Māui used rope to snare the sun's sixteen legs, one at a time. He held the rope and kept the sun from setting, beating it with a magic axe. The sun begged for its life and agreed to slow its journey for half of the year so the days would lengthen in the summer and quicken in the winter.

On the way home, Māui searched for Moemoe. When he encountered him, Moemoe tried to get away by zigzagging up and down the hillside. Māui finally leaped down on Moemoe, killing him and transforming him into a rock.

The Stars: This story explains the sun's motion in two portions of the year. The constellation Hercules (Māui) is in the night sky with Scorpius between April and July. Between August and March, Māui/Hercules and Scorpius are in the daylight. *Moemoe* is commonly translated as "sleep," and also means "to lurk, to lie in ambush." The





The Sky's the Limit

It's not every day that a kumu hula is commissioned to choreograph a work. That's why Patrick Makuakāne is so thrilled to have the opportunity to create "Māui: Turning Back the Sky" with the support of two Bay Area arts organizations.

World Arts West, the nonprofit that puts on San Francisco's annual Ethnic Dance Festival, approached Makuakāne in 2007 and commissioned the work as part of its thirtieth-anniversary celebration. The Creative Work Fund, which makes grants to Bay Area artists, funded it.

Jenny Des Jarlais, a dancer in the hālau, sat down with Makuakāne to ask about the process of bringing the piece to life.

struggle between Moemoe and Māui is analogous to the eternal struggle between the dark of night and the light of day.

Māui: man or myth?

According to Jensen, Māui "encompasses the genius of all navigators and mariners." They broke the horizon, Jensen writes, by going "into the great, dark ocean, traversing time and space to discover and settle the islands."

Just as importantly, the stories of Māui remind us of the way that the celestial and the terrestrial are linked in the Hawaiian consciousness. Ancient Hawaiians saw themselves as "the star children." Their history is written in the heavens. And they believed that all aspects of their life cycle were influenced by the movement of the stars.

Even Jensen is ambivalent about whether Māui represents a real-life mariner who lived long ago or a figurative one who was created out of centuries of oral history. "What I would like to believe," she says wistfully in an interview, "is that Māui was a real man, the prototypical navigator, and that his story became eternal in the sky."

Melanie Walas and Jason Laskey helped research this article. Sources of information include Hawaiian Mythology, by Martha Beckwith, Legends of Māui, by W. D. Westervelt, and Māui Dialogues, by Lucia Tarallo Jensen.

Q: *How did you come up with the Māui theme?*

A: World Arts West executive director Julie Mushet told me about an inspiring art installation she saw at Herbst Pavilion that used hundreds of LED lights to simulate a starry sky. That nighttime palette reminded me of Māui the navigator, which I'd just been reading about. It fell into place from there.

Q: *What part of the piece are you most excited about, creatively?*

A: I've always wanted to do a piece that represents women's traditional task of pounding kapa, or making bark cloth. I thought it would be beautiful with the pounding, gesturing, and chanting. There's a Māui story involving kapa making, so I knew right away that story was perfect. It's one of those times when I've had an idea forever, and finally the right situation came along.

Q: *If I could spy on you choreographing, what would I see?*

A: You'd see me in my studio at home. There's a mirror-paneled wall on one side and my computer and reference books and sound equipment on the other. Sometimes I'm really schizophrenic—I choreograph a little, then stop and do something else, then go back to it again. Sometimes I jump from one dance to another. I pause to write things down, record myself, picked up clumps of hair I've pulled out. [Laughs.] Before I start, I have to clean the room. I need order. If I go to get a drink and the kitchen is messy, I have to clean it up. Sometimes I find myself straightening the bedroom. Suddenly I go, "What am I doing?"

Q: *How long will it take to create this piece, from start to finish?*

A: It'll probably take about thirty to forty hours of choreographing time, and that doesn't count all the other stuff, like teaching and costuming. The idea first came about in January of last year, and we're performing the piece in June, so that's a seventeen-month gestation. The piece itself will last about fifteen minutes.

Q: *Is it different to choreograph something that's been commissioned?*

A: Yes, there's a different level of pressure. You're obligated to come through for someone else. I feel a special connection to World Arts West because they helped us break out of our Pacific Islander shell and introduce us to a wider audience, so I want to make sure we do them proud and represent ourselves well.

Q: *In your wildest dreams, who would you most want to have approach you to commission a work?*

A: The Edith Kanaka'ole Foundation! [Laughs.] I'm half joking because I know that foundation is very particular in what it thinks represents hula. I guess maybe a Hawaiian cultural group or an esteemed, mainstream organization. Like Lincoln Center—I was really thrilled when they invited us to dance. Or the White House. Hey, Barack Obama: some of my dancers went to Punahou, too, you know. And it's less expensive to fly us out than a group from Hawai'i!

Ready, Set, Sweat!

continued from page 3

Makuakāne wasn't oblivious to this concern. Yes, he says, hula is a unique dance form and values the emotional aspect of performance. But you need a solid physical foundation to express the emotional part effectively. "It's very Hawaiian to care about both the physical and emotional—Hawaiian society was all about balance," says Makuakāne. "Hawaiians took good care of their *kino*, or body. They didn't eat the rubbish and sugar we put in our bodies today."

From this perspective, eating better and exercising more wasn't just good for Makuakāne's dancers' bodies, it was true to the cultural roots of hula. But weight loss was an explicit part of the fitness challenge—a goal, not just a possible side effect of healthier living. Was that compatible with hula and Hawaiian tradition?

Yes, says Honolulu-based nutritionist and public health researcher Claire Ku'uleilani Hughes. "To perpetuate the idea that Hawaiians thought fat was beautiful is wrong," says Hughes. "I'm seventy-two years old and half Hawaiian, and until I was a teenager, there were almost no fat Hawaiians. In the days before Western contact, there were no overweight people, period."

That's because their lives required such a high level of physical output—to provide food, make clothes, create shelter, and so on—and because their diet was so much healthier than ours is today, says Hughes. "People today want to believe that as a Hawaiian or a hula dancer you shouldn't have to stress about being thin. But having a healthy body weight will help you dance better."

This doesn't mean that Makuakāne wanted everyone to be thin. He knows the hālau exists in a society torn over body image issues, and he wanted to be sensitive to that—especially for the women. (Not so with the men.

"I actually wanted to be harder on them!" he says.) He made sure to have everyone set their own weight-loss goals. "One of the compliments I always hear is that our group is filled with different shapes and sizes but still moves wonderfully together, and I appreciate that. I don't want everyone to be a skinny minnie."

The men weren't immune, though, to the ego-bruising potential of the fitness challenge. "It was kind of rough," says dancer Jason Laskey. "In being asked to lose weight, our biggest insecurity was being held up for everyone to see."

Still, Laskey sees value in the process—not just in terms of improved fitness and dancing ability but in doing what you're supposed to do as a hula dancer. "When your kumu asks you to do something, you trust him, and you jump to it."

There's no denying that Makuakāne—who has an undergraduate degree in physical education

and spent twelve years as a certified professional trainer—was a big motivating force in getting everyone to ride the fitness wave. It wasn't just the dancers in the performing group who participated but a handful of others from the hālau community—like Aunty Bobbie Mendes, whose new workout routine helped her lose thirty pounds (and delighted Makuakāne, who says he couldn't get over the thrill of seeing her at the gym doing biceps curls and lat pulls).

After the challenge ended, many participants saw their efforts sputter. The trick will be continuing the momentum even when Makuakāne doesn't have a program in place. Maybe hālau members won't have to go it alone. "Doing it together is such a good way to keep the energy up," Makuakāne says. "My next project is to make this an entire hālau thing." 🌿

"I don't need dancers to look like The Rock, but I want them to be athletic and fit."
—Patrick Makuakāne



Julie Mau, center, with Stacie Ma'a and Tom Layton of the Gerbode Foundation

A GERBODE FOR OUR GIRL FRIDAY

In May, Nā Lei Hulu learned that General Manager Julie Mau had won a prestigious Gerbode Fellowship. Honoring non-profit leaders who perform outstanding work in the community, the fellowship is bestowed by the Regents of the University of California in partnership with the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation.

Originally from Mākaha on the island of O'ahu, Mau is a San Francisco firefighter and avid surfer and golfer. She has danced with the hālau for eighteen years and acts as its administrator, budget planner, marketing and publicity director, tour coordinator, photographer, and van driver extraordinaire. Mau plans to apply the \$10,000 award to further her studies in Hawaiian culture. And she's going to buy herself—finally!—a new surfboard. 🌿

KAHOLO'ANA STAFF

Editor: Constance Hale
Designers: Chris Uesugi-Lauer
Linda Zane
Deputy Editor: Jenny Des Jarlais
Copy Editor: Mike Mollett
Photographers: Nā Lei Hulu haumana

Patrick Makuakāne & Nā Lei Hulu | Ka Wēkiu Present

THE HULA SHOW

2008

*Māui conquers the sun,
a flower factory superfest,
and Krishna Hula returns!*

Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, San Francisco
Sat Oct 11, 8 p.m. • Sun Oct 12, 4 p.m.
Fri Oct 17, 8 p.m. • Sat Oct 18, 8 p.m.
Sun Oct 19, 12 noon One-hour Hula for Families
Sun Oct 19, 3 p.m. \$10 general admission

Tickets: \$35/\$40 reserved
City Box Office 415-392-4400 or 800-407-1400
10% discount for groups of 10 or more
CityBoxOffice.com • Tickets.com

New Opening Night Champagne Reception

Sat Oct 11, following the show

VIP seats and reception \$85

Gala Benefit

Sat Oct 18, 5:30 p.m.

Lū'au party and VIP seats \$150

Reserved table of 10 \$1,500

For more information: 415-647-3040
www.naleihulu.org a nonprofit organization



*Starry Starry Night
Gala Benefit*

Saturday, October 18, 2008
5:30 p.m.

Join us for our fabulous gala,
featuring an exciting and exclusive
Silent Auction

and food from some of San Francisco's
finest restaurants!

Lū'au party & VIP seats \$150
Reserved table for 10 \$1,500
City Box Office: 415-392-4400

FÊTE FOR A KING

—by Kit Wynkoop

Those lucky enough to have garnered a ticket for Nā Lei Hulu's 2007 gala last October found a Palace of Fine Arts Theatre transformed into a formal Hawaiian wonderland.

Arriving guests were presented with leis by Nā Lei Hulu's dancers and greeted by Director Patrick Makuakāne. The group's theatrical flair could be seen in every detail—the dramatic lighting, the white-linen tablecloths, and the extravagant floral arrangements by Gessildo Silva and Ken Pacada.

Guests were regaled with live music, hula, cocktails from John Colins, and champagne and wine from Barefoot Wineries. A sumptuous buffet included Hawaiian fare from the Zane `Ohana and signature dishes from Le Cheval, Oola, Roy's, Shanghai 1930, Sushi Groove, Testa Fiore, and Tommy Toy's.

Ringed the room were tables featuring tempting items donated for the night's silent auction: weekend getaways, dinners at Roy's and Shanghai 1930, baubles from Ritz

Jewelers, Hawaiian quilts, Coach accessories, blown glass from the U'i Collection, and featherwork items handmade by dancers in the troupe.

The annual gala is intended to honor annual donors (two of whom were David Eckles and Allene Wong, pictured below with Makuakāne). But it also helps to raise awareness of Nā Lei Hulu's mission: perpetuating the Hawaiian culture through story and dance.

