

# KAHOLO'ANA

## Moving Through the Facets of Hula

Patrick Makuakāne stretches boundaries in *The Hula Show 2012*, finding ever-new ways to explore his signature style

—Constance Kiakahi Hale



As a young Oahuan in the 1970s, I associated the word *mua* with the Kamehameha Schools. The all-cap “IMUA” anchored the schools’ oval logo, and it screamed in white letters on navy T-shirts. It also launched the school’s rallying cry, sung at football games: *I mua Kamehameha ē, a lanakila ‘oe* (“Forward, Kamehameha, until you have gained the victory”). And even our side used “I mua!” as a fierce cheer, encouraging runningbacks to advance.

Years later, in San Francisco, I started dancing hula and came to know the phrase in an entirely new way. Kumu Hula Patrick Makuakāne would repeat it many times in class. “I mua,” he would call out gently, beckoning us to move forward in our dance rows. The word etched itself so deeply into my hula soul that I almost forgot the echoes of high school football.

By the late 1990s, *mua* began appearing in dance reviews to name the unusual style Makuakāne was bringing to stages in San Francisco, New Orleans, New York, and—eventually—Honolulu. Such articles translated *hula mua* as “progressive hula” or “hula that evolves,” and they described a dance pairing Hawaiian movements with opera, pop, or club music.

But Makuakāne’s hula innovations defy easy shorthands. He starts by taking fragments of the Hawaiian experience—the tragic history of missionaries and monarchs, the sexual exuberance of native islanders, or the athleticism of ancient warriors. He layers these with elements from the modern world—the cellophane skirts of Hollywood, the dancehall drive of electronic music, or modern scourges like AIDS. He dresses his performers in costumes ranging from the near-naked to the very Victorian, and adds props that run from feather staffs to feather boas, from rattan bars to ratty Hawaiian shirts.

To this mad mix of tradition and “street,” Makuakāne brings lights that ooze from blue to red as well as shifting multimedia backdrops. The experience for the viewer is dizzying, and deep. The dances make the imagination fire in unexpected ways, working more like poetry than traditional narrative.

This October, Makuakāne continues his exploration with *The Hula Show 2012*. Playing at the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, it will offer hula aficionados many facets of this made-in-San Francisco style of dance. “Many of the pieces will be new,” Makuakāne promises, “and most of them will have some hula mua component, even if very subtle.”

### The accidental hula style

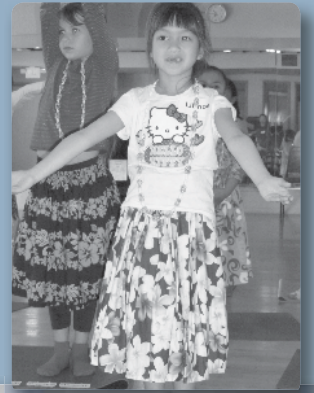
“The word *mua* itself is interesting,” Makuakāne explains. “It can refer to the past or the future. *Ma mua aku nei* means ‘some time ago.’ *Kēia mua a‘e* is ‘the distant future.’ *Holo mua* is ‘to move forward.’ For me, *hula mua* means ‘taking from the past and bringing to the future.’ It’s broad enough to allow me to do what I want to do.”

The first thing Makuakāne wanted to do was simple: combine hula movements with his favorite music. About sixteen years ago, when he was listening to the Terence Trent D’Arby song “Sign Your Name,” he recalls thinking, “I can do hula to this. It’s got tempo. It’s got cadence. It’s like doing hula *‘auana!*” I put it into a segment on Ka’ahumanu and Kamehameha. And it worked.”

But even that first hula *mua* was the result of creative processes long in the making. Makuakāne grew up in Honolulu, attending Catholic schools and “discovering” native culture in high school. During his sophomore year, he joined Robert Cazimero’s *hālau*, or traditional school of hula, and was soon dancing in the Brothers Cazimero show at the Monarch Room.

*continued on page 6*

# kāwelu kāholo i luno ueh



# e mākaukau hela 'ōniu mele



## Small steps

Nā Lei Hulu's keiki class extends the reach of hula

—Julie Mushet

Early on a Sunday morning outside the Potrero Hill World Gym, twelve magnificent palm trees sway in the breeze over cheerful blue rooftops. They are visible through the windows of the gym's upstairs dance studio, but 23 young dancers are too busy concentrating on the rhythms of an *ipu heke* (double gourd drum) to notice.

The *keiki* (children) move their bodies together, carefully spying each other from the corners of their eyes, tentatively stepping first to the right, then to the left. This basic movement, the *kāhola*, is the first step they have learned from their teachers, Julie Mau and Makani da Silva Santos.

Mau and da Silva Santos—along with Debbie Tong on *ipu heke*—are all longtime students of Kumu Hula Patrick Makuakāne, and they have been entrusted by him to teach *keiki* since the summer of 2009, bolstering the possibility that the great strides being made nationally in the revival of hula will be passed on to future generations.

For Makuakāne, these *keiki* classes offer hope and inspiration. For 19 years, Nā Lei Hulu classes were limited to adults (and a few special teenagers), but Makuakāne had been thinking about the importance of teaching

*keiki* for a long time. When he led his first group of students through *'ūniki* (graduation from formal hula training) in 2006, the moment dawned.

"When Julie and Makani graduated as *'ōlapa* and *ho'opa'a* (accomplished dancers and chanters), I felt confident that they could conduct the classes," Makuakāne explains. "They had acquired the necessary skills, and they both love to work with kids. It was fortuitous."

According to da Silva Santos, starting hula training at a young age gives *keiki* the benefit of getting Hawaiian culture and aloha "into their bones." She says, "I hope to give them tools and values that they can carry with them wherever they go."

Adult students learn these *hālau* sensibilities as well. Among the most important, da Silva Santos stresses, are "how to take care of a classmate who's having a hard time; how to listen to constructive criticism with an open mind and heart; and how to keep trying even when things get hard."

*New keiki class sessions are announced throughout the year at [naleihulu.org/classes](http://naleihulu.org/classes).* ♡



# Hula Within

## *Dancers Reflect on Their*

Dancers have a relationship to each hula they learn. They meet it and get a first impression; they learn its motions, lyrics, and idiosyncrasies; they discover how they feel about it; they have memorable experiences with it.



### *Pua 'Āhihi*

Name: **Myrissa Lai**  
Occupation: Pianist  
City: Petaluma  
Years in hālau: 10

Long before I learned the dance to “Pua ‘Āhihi,” I was in love with the music. In 2004, a Swiss cellist and I did a concert at Le Petit Trianon in San Jose, performing Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms—then, at the end, Keola Beamer’s arrangement of “Pua ‘Āhihi.” It was a treat, like diving into the ocean.

I was hoping Kumu would teach us the dance. I was waiting and waiting; it was a supreme act of faith and patience. Finally one night he started to teach it, and I felt like I was going to pop out of my skin!

When I dance “Pua ‘Āhihi,” I go straight inside. It’s an instant portal to aloha. There’s so much love in the movements—I get to be beauty.



### *Oli Aloha No Ka 'Īpuka Kula*

Name: **Francisco Gonzalez**  
Occupation: Psychoanalyst  
City: Oakland  
Years in hālau: 3

What’s so special about “Oli Aloha No Ka ‘Īpuka Kula” (“Love Chant for the Golden Gate”) is that it was written particularly for Nā Lei Hulu by a *haku mele* (songwriter) from Hawai‘i.

This *oli* (chant) for me is about getting transported into a kind of transparency, where there are moments I can melt into, where I can just become what’s happening.

The oli has a lot of fantastic sounds in it. I love words. I love language. My first language was Spanish, then I learned English, and later German. I love the way that words feel in your mouth. So I dove into this oli and worked on the words; they’re like windows I can see through.



### *Mi Nei*

Name: **Joel Miller**  
Occupation: Hairdresser and high school health ed teacher  
City: San Francisco (Potrero Hill)  
Years in hālau: 14

Initially I thought I’d pick one of our *kahiko* (traditional hula). I like their earthiness. The ‘*auana* (contemporary hula) are more airy and soft.

But I picked an ‘*auana* after all: “Mi Nei.” I especially like the imagery in this dance—the places, oceans, and body parts. A back straight like a cliff, a face round like the moon.

When I’m dancing it, I like how I feel. It’s a love song about many angles of love—unrequited, satisfied, sexual, and just love in general. It’s also about being able to look around yourself and love what you see—where you are, the people around you, the universe that has plunked you here at this moment in time. It’s grounding. And it’s a gift to have a song that touches that place, and a dance that expresses that.



### *Waikaloa*

Name: **Ben Wengrofsky**  
Occupation: Retired moving company owner  
City: Berkeley  
Years in hālau: 8

I learned “Waikaloa” in the first hālau I danced with. Sometime in the late ‘90s, Aunty Genoa Keawe was performing at Ala Moana. I’d gotten to know her because my daughter was going to college on O‘ahu and we’d go listen to her play all the time. Aunty spotted me and called me up on stage. I danced “Waikaloa” while she sang.

Years later, after I’d joined Nā Lei Hulu, Kumu taught us his choreography. When I dance “Waikaloa” now, I feel connected to so many of the hula experiences I’ve had. I grew up in Brooklyn, and it still boggles my mind that my wife and I dance hula. It’s become so much a part of our lives. Our friends in New York can’t understand.





# Favorite Hula

—Jenny Des Jarlais

Asking dancers to pick a favorite hula is like asking them to pick a favorite friend. But we did it anyway. Here's what nine Nā Lei Hulu students had to say about the dance they love most.



## Aia Lā 'O Pele

Name: **Joy Durighello**  
Occupation: Teacher of English as a second language  
City: San Francisco (Glen Park)  
Years in hālau: 10

The Big Island is the most authentic of the Hawaiian islands. It has this very powerful physical icon in Kilauea, an active volcano. The island seems to pulsate. Lava comes up from below and bursts out of the water, and life clings to it. It's the creation myth in process.

"Aia Lā 'O Pele" is about the goddess Pele, who resides in Kilauea crater. It's a high-energy dance—lifting the *ipu*, doing a lot of turning, moving quickly. The song has the energy because Pele has the energy.

I visited the volcano around 2006, and lava was flowing right by the trail. It was dusk, and I could see these glowing embers a few yards away, beautiful and dangerous.



## Pūpū O Nī'ihau

Name: **Carrie Kakehashi**  
Occupation: Infection control specialist  
City: San Francisco (Hayes Valley)  
Years in hālau: 8

For now, "Pūpū O Nī'ihau" wins as my favorite. I love the melody, which is luscious and lilting. I'm a singer, and I play music, and Hawaiian music gets under my skin and gets me going.

I also love that Kumu choreographed this dance to commemorate his relationship with us, his *haumana* (students). He chose it in honor of the 25-strand Nī'ihau shell lei we gave him as a gift for the hālau's 25-year anniversary. He's teaching it to all his classes, so it's a unifying song for the hālau. It represents the two reasons why people dance with Nā Lei Hulu: Kumu (he's like a one-man show) and community (I'm constantly meeting cool, great people).



## 'Ike I Ke One Kani A'o Nohili

Name: **Daniel Sternbergh**  
Occupation: Director of engineering, software company  
City: Palo Alto  
Years in hālau: 6

I love *hula noho* (seated hula). I love the constraint on the amount and types of motion: It makes the dance look distinct and feel intense.

"'Ike I Ke One Kani A'o Nohili" is a hula noho about a number of places in south and southwest Kaua'i. I first visited that area in 1996 and have probably been back about 25 times since then. On one of my recent visits to Kaua'i, while we were learning the dance, I tried to see all the places named in the song. Now, when I do the dance, I picture the sheer drop of the cliffs down into the beautiful, broad plains.



## He Inoa No Likelike

Name: **Kevin Callahan**  
Occupation: Math professor  
City: Oakland  
Years in hālau: 3

What caught my attention with "He Inoa No Likelike" was the variety of footwork: *hela*, *'uehe*, *lele 'uehe*, *'ami*, *kāwelu*. The choreography rolls from one movement to the next, and the hand motions flow—it's challenging, but beautiful.

With "He Inoa No Likelike" I had my first moment of focusing inward, instead of watching people around me to see if my hands and feet were in the right place. I just sensed whether my hands and feet were where they should be.



## Ke Welina Mai Nei

Name: **Dawn Mokuau**  
Occupation: Business school academic and career advisor  
City: San Francisco (Inner Richmond)  
Years in hālau: 6

"Ke Welina Mai Nei" is one of the oldest dances we've been taught. The chant talks about Kāne, the god of plants and animals and nature. I have a fond appreciation for plants, animals, and the ocean, so I like praising this particular god.

Sometimes I practice the dance in my hoodie footie pajamas. They're white and have colorful hearts on them. I put them on because it's so cold in the Inner Richmond! I look in the mirror while I'm practicing, and it's all I can do to stay serious about the song. It's a definite break from hula tradition.



"I Am Stretched on Your Grave"

"Hula mua—or at least the germ of it—was nurtured when I was with Robert," Makuakāne says. "He was young, talented, brash, controversial. He was integrating other music into his repertoire. He was really pushing the boundaries."

After founding his own hālau in San Francisco, Makuakāne began to flex the muscles that had been nurtured by Robert Cazimero. Makuakāne insists, though, that he's not pushing boundaries as much as inhabiting the ones his mentor set.

## The dark side

When asked what words he associates with hula mua, Makuakāne rattles them off: "freedom, creation, excitement, passion, integrity, tradition." But don't those exuberant nouns attach to the *'auana* and *kahiko* styles of hula, too? What does this style allow that traditional dance doesn't?

"In hula mua, I go toward the darker, turbulent places," he replies, slowly. "Certain music brings that out—like Dead Can Dance's 'I Am Stretched on Your Grave.'" (The Irish dirge was featured in the show *Daughters of Haumea*, accompanied by women wailing over a corpse while others danced sinuously in the background.)

Another example is "Salva Mea," by the British band Faithless. Its relentless rhythms inspired an award-winning 1997 piece that is now a standard in the Nā Lei Hulu repertoire. The song begins with the punishing words of Rev. Hiram Bingham—reverberating, godlike, in an all-dark theater. "The appearance of destitution,

*degradation and barbarism among the chattering and almost naked savages was appalling.*" Women in voluminous crimson and gold skirts and spiky headdresses kneel on stage, bent over at the waist. They lift their torsos, the red and blue lights revealing that they are naked above the waist, but for tattoos.

In the half-light, men creep across the stage. The powerful, percussive rhythms of an *ipu*, or gourd drum, are soon complemented by chanting and the slapping of palms, the stamping of feet, and the clacking of anklets. The music shifts, the lights brighten, the women return. A syncretic montage follows as dancers in formal black and white attire huddle together, sweep into formations, or slap themselves in self-punishment. Images of reverence mix with those of torment, grace, and melancholy.

This is not sweet stuff. It is dark, with traces of the bitter.

"There is a poem by Stephen Crane that I've loved since college," Makuakāne says, searching for ways to explain what hula mua gives him access to. He recites it:

In the desert  
I saw a creature, naked, bestial,  
Who, squatting upon the ground,  
Held his heart in his hands,  
And ate of it.  
I said, "Is it good, friend?"  
"It is bitter—bitter," he answered;  
"But I like it  
"Because it is bitter,  
"And because it is my heart."

## Jubilant movements

Unlike the poem "In the Desert," hula is usually considered a joyful expression. But Makuakāne draws inspiration from sources in the Hawaiian tradition that he says are "raw and turbulent"—like *kanikau* (dirges) and creation chants.

For the upcoming October show, Makuakāne is planning several acts, or "movements," with his usual range. One features love chants from the historic Helen Roberts collection—but modernized to play with melody, tempo, and cadence.

The "little black dress" hula section is, as Makuakāne describes it, "Lena Machado-meets-Ella Fitzgerald," with a sultry rendition of an R&B tune. "Crazy English Summer" features a remix of "Salva Mea" and all-new choreography—more hip-hop than missionary.

But the "Kalākaua Jubilee" may offer the greatest insight into how Makuakāne thinks about hula mua today. It pays homage to King David Kalākaua, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hawaiian ruler who was inspired by Western ideals, collected European artifacts, and resuscitated traditional arts banned by missionaries.

"On the surface it just looks like standard kahiko," Makuakāne says, "but the whole piece is infused with a hula mua sensibility, especially the melody and the moves." Makuakāne sees it as a celebration of Kalākaua's avant-gardism, his "penchant for embracing the non-Hawaiian and making it Hawaiian."

Sound familiar? 

## KAHOLO'ANA STAFF

Editor:	Constance Kiakahi Hale
Designers:	Chris Uesugi Lauer Linda Zane
Deputy Editor:	Jenny Des Jarlais
Copy Editor:	Julie Holland
Writers:	Nā Lei Hulu haumana
Photographers:	Nā Lei Hulu haumana

Patrick Makuakāne & Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu present

# the Hula Show 2012

Palace of Fine Arts Theatre  
San Francisco

**SAT Oct 20, 8pm**

**SUN Oct 21, 3pm**

**FRI Oct 26, 8pm**

**SAT Oct 27, 8pm**

**SUN Oct 28, 3pm**

Tickets \$35/\$45 reserved

**CityBoxOffice.com • 415.392.4400**

10% discount for 10+ tickets, by phone only

**Opening Night Champagne Reception - SAT Oct 20**

VIP seats for 8pm show, followed by reception \$90

**Gala Benefit - SAT Oct 27, 5:30pm**

Lū'au party and VIP seats for 8pm show \$150

Reserved table of 10 \$1500

**Hula for Families - SUN Oct 28, 12pm**

A child-friendly, one-hour show

\$15 general admission

For more information and parking tips:

**naleihulu.org • 415.647.3040**

A nonprofit organization



## Gala Benefit

Saturday, October 27, 2012

5:30 pm

Join us for a fabulous event!

You'll enjoy:

- food from favorite San Francisco restaurants
- live Hawaiian music
- an exclusive silent auction featuring handcrafted Hawaiian art, getaways, and other luxury items
- VIP seating for our 8 pm show

*Seating is limited, so act fast!*

**Lū'au party and VIP seats for 8 pm show \$150**

**Reserved table for 10 \$1,500**

**Call City Box Office at 415.392.4400**

## BEHIND THE SCREENS

—Kai Moran

Have you noticed anything different about your experience at a recent Nā Lei Hulu show? For the past five years, the change hasn't been so much in the dancing, but what's literally behind it: Vibrant photographs, scrolling text, and moving images cast on a giant screen at the rear of the stage. Introduced in the 2007 show *O'ahu: Confessions of an Island*, these projections have become part of Nā Lei Hulu's signature style for its productions at the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre.

"I'm trying to create a more multidimensional presence by adding images, to really bring people into the story," explains Kumu Hula Patrick Makuakāne. He adds that the images help create a context for audience members.

For example, a dance about surfing may have images of giant waves projected behind it, or a high-energy piece set to electronic music might be paired with a colorful, quickly shifting display.



In planning the projections, Makuakāne is as judicious in his selection of images and video as he is in deciding which dances to include. As he choreographs, he keeps in mind what he'd like to see on stage: "They intertwine in a symbiotic relationship," he explains, "and work with each other so the images become part of the dances."

About a week before a show, Makuakāne sits down with technical director Marty McGee to plan each number, with McGee using software called Watchout to pull all the elements

together. More elaborate projections means a change in how lighting designer Patty-Ann Farrell approaches her work. Her goal is to find balance for the eye, so she works closely with McGee to achieve the right levels of brightness in the lights and the screen.

Jason Laskey, an 11-year hālau member who has performed both with and without the projections, appreciates them. "It's hard to think about going back the other way," he says. "It would be like dancing without lights. You take away lights, you take away the atmosphere of the theater."