

# KATHOLO'ANA



## *Walking Through Hula Memories*

**A new version of *Hula Guyz* brings the legwork and legacy of two contemporary kumu to San Francisco** by Constance Kiakahi Hale

In May 2017, in a performance in Southern California, Kumu Patrick Makuakāne joined his teacher Robert Cazimero for “Kalalea,” a chant and dance honoring Queen Emma. This was only the second time that San Francisco choreographer Makuakāne had performed a *hula kahiko*, or ancient dance, with Cazimero—a famed singer, songwriter, musician, and kumu hula.

“It’s a rarity for a student to dance kahiko with his kumu,” Makuakāne says. It had certainly never happened when Makuakāne was a member of Cazimero’s Hālau Nā Kamalei o Lilīlehua. “Kumu Robert is always trying to find a unique inroad, something new. I thought to myself, ‘I am putting “Kalalea” into my next show.’”

That next show will be performed at San Francisco’s Palace of Fine Arts Theatre on October 21 and 22. It is an all-new version of *Hula Guyz*, a collaboration between Cazimero and Makuakāne that has become quite the crowd-pleaser.

The original show debuted in 2014 in

Honolulu. It brought generations of Cazimero’s students together and, through dancing and singing, loosely told the history of Nā Kamalei. Makuakāne then hosted a version of *Hula Guyz* in San Francisco, incorporating his own male dancers.

Makuakāne had always had the dream of doing a men’s show in San Francisco but never had enough male dancers to pull it off. Yet he wanted to give expression to an aspect of hula that is especially resonant for men. “Doing hula is a cultural thing rather than a *dance* thing for many of us,” Makuakāne explains. “It allows us to express our native identity.”

The show, and that expression of native identity, has continued to evolve. Which is fitting, given that both kumu subscribe to the theory that a rolling *pohaku* gathers no moss.

Cazimero’s story of innovation began early. Born in 1949, the tenth of twelve children, he performed in family Polynesian shows

and mastered the piano and the acoustic bass. At 18, he and a jam-session buddy, the guitar-ukulele-banjo wizard, Peter Moon, conscripted Robert’s brother, Roland Cazimero, for a new band named The Sunday Mānoa. Their first album, *Guava Jam*, helped spark the Hawaiian Cultural Renaissance.

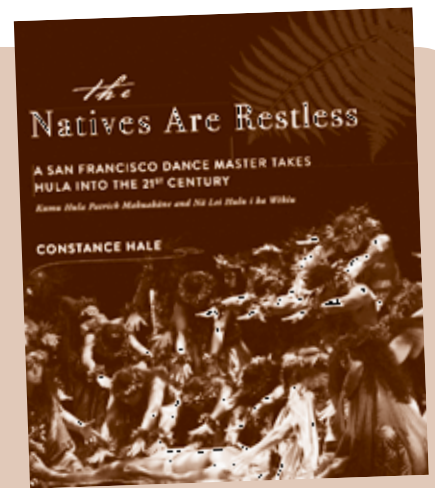
Meanwhile, Cazimero was influencing the evolution of Hawaiian dance. His serious study of the hula had begun at Kamehameha Schools with Nona Beamer, an author, composer, and champion of authentic Hawaiian culture.

“The type of movement, the hips, the feeling—it’s Beamer style,” Cazimero says, describing how his own style was influenced by “Aunty Nona” and her cousin Mahi. “The first time I saw Mahi Beamer dance, I saw that a male hula dancer could be comfortable, empowered. *Waiho ka hilahila mai ka hale e hula*—‘Leave the shame at home and dance!’”

*continued on page 2*

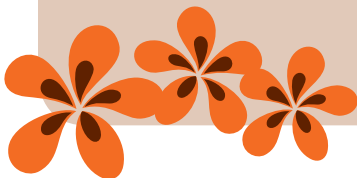
## Honolulu magazine's Don Wallace reviews our new book about the work of Kumu Patrick Makuakāne

"I am not the kind of person who talks to dead people," begins Constance Hale in this lavishly photographed book about (and in collaboration with) hula's most avant-garde and provocative kumu hula, Patrick Makuakāne. "Yet every Wednesday evening, I throw on a T-shirt and a gathered cotton skirt, rush to an elementary school cafeteria in San Francisco, and proceed to whirl my arms, stamp my feet, and call out to figures like Pele..." Hale, a Hawai'i-born author and journalist, has the chops to convey hula. Her lifelong devotion to the form, and Hawaiian culture, gives her the insight and authority to describe traditional practices. After twenty years as a student of Makuakāne, she also can frame and explain her kumu hula's sometimes-radical choices. House music? Annie Lennox? Broadway-style lighting and plot beats? *Nā Lei Hulu i ka Wēkiu* delivers the goods, to judge from these pages. And its growth into a legendary Bay Area arts organization gives it respectability and clout. But credit Hale for airing the objections that are growing, too, as hula goes global: There are more than 500 schools in the world. As critic Amy Ku'uleialoha Stillman says, it risks capitalizing "on universalist notions of spirituality wrapped in mysticism." One look at Makuakāne's dance of Hawai'i's deep-sea origins in a volcanic vent, which opens a piece titled *The Kumulipo*, should dispel that notion—and make believers out of us all. Even Hiram Bingham.



A shortened version of this review ran in the June 2017 issue of Honolulu.

To purchase the book from Nā Lei Hulu, please visit <http://naleihulu.org/natives-book/>.



## Walking Through Hula Memories *continued from page 1*

Cazimero says he will never forget the day the revered kumu hula Maiki Aiu Lake visited Beamer's class. "I fell in love with her immediately," he says. "She sang for us, and I accompanied her on the piano. When she left, she told me to come to her if I ever wanted to learn hula."

In 1968, he did just that. "I was with Maiki for seven years," Cazimero notes, "with the last five years training as a kumu hula."

Aiu Lake believed men to be central to hula. Her hālau was the first school in years to graduate male kumu, and she harbored a dream that one of them would start an all-male hālau.

In 1975, Cazimero founded Hālau Nā Kamalei o Līlīehua with a group of six high school students and a dream of his own. "I didn't want my guys to dance like me," he says. "I dance like my kumu, who had a lovely, flowing style. I wanted them to be graceful, but manly."

He wanted to prove, he adds, that men "didn't have to just get up on stage and stomp around with a spear while hitting a paddle against a canoe."

In his shows—at the Royal Hawaiian's Monarch Room, the Waikīkī Shell, and off-island venues, from Carnegie Hall to Japan—the choreography was daring, the dancing surprising.

"I came to this honestly," Cazimero says. "Maiki was an innovator, too."

But he got pushback for shaking things up. Puakea Nogelmeier, another student of Aiu Lake's, says Cazimero was "scolded by elders for his innovation," but adds that "he is a bridge-builder."

Patrick Makuakāne was one of the dancers who walked over that bridge. His first impression of Nā Kamalei dancers was that they "were a combination of Joe Namath and Gene Kelly—powerful, stunning, athletic, subtle, and masculine." He adds that Cazimero was "really pushing the boundaries."

Makuakāne was part of Nā Kamalei from 1976 to 1985, the year he started his own hālau in San Francisco. Makuakāne also pushed boundaries, developing a style of dance, *hula mua* ("progressive hula") that pairs Hawaiian movements with non-Hawaiian music. He also became known for evening-length narratives telling myths, recounting history, and playing politics.

*Hula Guyz*, though, is not a "narrative" show. "It's a mishmash of things we feel like pulling together," Makuakāne says. A kahiko suite features dances grounded in the traditional but with a serious nod to the contemporary. It features a duet with a man and, yes, a woman. A trio of men in contemporary costumes honors Pele. And

"Kalalea" allows Cazimero and Makuakāne to dance together again, joined by yet another kumu, Kyle "Boongie" Atabay.

But kahiko is just part of the fun. Nā Kamalei has swept awards and earned affection for its 'auana, or modern hula. Nā Lei Hulu has developed a reputation for bringing the street to the hula stage. All of this will be on display. So will a Tahitian number, "Nā Pe'a" ("The Sails"), which Makuakāne remembers dancing, at the Waikīkī Shell, with more than 30 men wearing *malo* and Tahitian headdresses.

"A good part of this show is me walking through my hula memories," Makuakāne muses. "It's the experience of remembering my favorite dances and wanting to teach them to my guys." 🌺



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Patrick Makuakāne and Nā Lei Hulu i ka Wēkiu present

# HULA GUYZ



What happens when two innovative kumu, Robert Cazimero and Patrick Makuakāne, come together to break new ground—again? This collaboration between a legendary Hawaiian entertainer and one of his longtime haumana and protégés rarely happens in the world of hula. The men of Nā Kamalei O Līlīehua join the men of Nā Lei Hulu i ka Wēkiu. A few women sneak into the act. Come be amazed.

Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, San Francisco

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**Gala Benefit SAT Oct 22, 5:30pm**  
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For more information:  
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## *Kēia a me Kēlā* *This and That*

Nā Lei Hulu joined the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus for four sold-out shows in April at the Herbst Theatre. Sass, class, and gorgeous singing abounded!

*The Natives Are Restless* show returned to the Hawai'i Theatre to round out its twentieth anniversary. "The production never fails to raise eyebrows, questions, and opinions," wrote Lynn Cook in the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*. "Fans of the hālau are more likely to call it a 'blow your mind' concert."

Kumu Patrick Makuakāne joined his hula brothers and sisters in Hawai'i for a lovely brunch to celebrate the eighty-fifth birthday of his kumu, Mae Kamāmalu Klein. Hau'oli Lā Hānau, 'Anakē Mei!

Spotted in June at Jardinière in San Francisco's performing arts district: Kumu Patrick Makuakāne and modern dance phenom Mark Morris, chatting and cocktailing. Rumor has it that Morris is a Nā Lei Hulu fan—even buying copies of *Natives* on Amazon for himself and a few friends.

For the first time ever, the Ethnic Dance Festival will be at the San Francisco Opera House on July 8 and 9. Nā Lei Hulu is one of the few companies invited to perform.

Now a 20-year tradition, a Golden Gate Park *hō'ike*, or recital, is de rigeur for each beginning class. The students in the Monday 7:00 p.m. class will hold their debut performance on Sunday afternoon, August 12.

San Francisco's Hawaiian-inspired restaurant 'Āina was voted one of 2016's twelve best new restaurants in America by Thrillist. Nā Lei Hulu is the unofficial restaurant hālau, performing for its first anniversary. The food is broke da mouth 'ono. More guava malasadas, please!