

Na Makua Mahalo Ia. Mormon Influences on Hawaiian Music and Dance

by *Ishmael Stagner*

When the Na Makua Mahalo Ia awards were first envisioned, it was intended that their scope would remain limited to basically LDS people who had distinguished themselves in the performing arts. For various reasons it has not been possible to retain this earlier restricted focus of the awards. As a result, even though recipients tend to be mainly drawn from LDS ranks, church membership is not the prime criterion for selection. Rather, recipients are judged on the depth and quality of the contributions they have made to the Hawaiian Cultural Community. An examination of the two sets of recipients might better illustrate the criteria of the awards.

Na Makua Mahalo Ia, I, March 20, 1980:

Bill Aililoa Lincoln, born in Kohala, Hawaii, to a long-time Hawaiian family; falsetto singer, hula instructor, composer, and still active performer. His hula troupes helped to raise money for the building of the Honolulu Tabernacle, and performed at the dedication of the Church College of Hawaii in 1958.

Iolani Luahine: dancer, chanter, teacher and popular exponent of the ancient hula forms, although she was also a great comic hula dancer. Her family, the Makekau clan, are still very active in the Church and she remained friendly and supportive of the Church all her life. She died in November 1978.

Alvin Kaleolani Isaacs: a prolific composer of Hawaiian music, including hulas, songs, chants and comic hulas. He has also written serious music such as anthems, hymns, movie scores and cantatas. His children and grandchildren continue to carry on his musical traditions. Additionally, he has been very active as a Church member, having served in a number of church positions including his stake high council.

Edith Kanaka'ole: chanter, musician, kumu hula, author, translator, composer and dancer. Winner of the two Na Hoku Hanohano awards, the State of Hawaii Order of Distinction, the 1979 Brigham Young University - Hawaii Campus Distinguished Service Award, and the Order of Ke Alii Pauahi from the Kamehameha Schools. Traditional LDS funeral services were held for her in September, 1979.

John Kamealoha Almeida: called the "Dean of Hawaiian Composers" for his thousands of Hawaiian compositions, although he is pure Portuguese. Many of his songs are now classics, probably the most popular being "Iesu Me Ke Kekanaka Waiwai." Has been blind since the age of ten, but was very helpful in raising money for the Church through luaus and hula shows throughout the 1930's and 1940's. He is presently eight-six years old.

Alice Namakelua: Aunty is 90 years young and is remarkably spry and active. In her days she was a singer, dancer, translator, composer, lecturer, genealogist and slack-key guitar artist. She had a best-selling album when she was eighty-two years old, and still attends church functions as best as she can. She studied Hawaiian music for a period of time under the tutelage of Hawaii's last Queen, Liliuokalani.

Dr. Mary Kawena Pukui: author, historian, lexicographer, lecturer, hula and chant instructor, genealogist, lyricist, composer, and dancer. She holds two honorary doctorates, and has received numerous awards throughout the state. In 1981 she was nominated for the Nobel prize in Literature. Her two hana daughters, Pat and Pele, were great kumu hula in their own right. Kawena is presently in a Honolulu Convalescent Home. Her husband, Napoleon, was raised in Iosepa, the Hawaiian community in Utah, and she was married by Judge Abraham Fernandes, the man who baptized Liliuokalani.

The 1982 Na Makua Ia recipients were:

Alfred Apaka, Sr.: A five-term Hawaii legislator, Brother Apaka was a very long-time fixture on the Hawaiian musical scene. His baritone voice carried the Hawaiian musical message world-wide in the 1930's and 1940's. Although now in his eighties, he still sings on occasion. His late son, Alfred, Jr., was a popular and beloved musician and singer in his own right.

Solomon Bright, Sr.: Uncle Sol is still a very spry and active septuagenarian. His family have been musicians for many years, and through Uncle Sol's presidency of the Hawaii Musician's Union, a number of Mormon musicians and singing groups got their start. His composition, "Hawaiian Cowboy," and his rendition of Liliuokalani basso profundo composition, "Williwilli Wai" are considered true Hawaiian classics.

Andy Cummings: Andy Cummings can't remember a time when he hasn't been playing his ukulele and singing a song. His tenor voice has been heard world-wide particularly through his affiliation with the airlines industry. His LDS roots go back to the old Lanakila and Auwaiolimu wards. His composition, "Waikiki" is considered a Hawaiian classic.

Eleanor Hiram Hoke: She is probably the last of the temple-trained hula kapu dancers. Aunty Eleanor was trained at a hula heiau located close to where the Kullima Hotel now stands. She was taught by her two tutu's, Keakaokala Kanahela and Luika Pele, who gave up the dance after they taught the young Eleanor. Having been raised in Laie, Aunty Eleanor still has many relatives living there.

Lena Guerrero: Aunty Lena and her family have been mainstays in the Church for years and years. She still goes to the temple whenever her health permits. Her Hawaiian music and hula traditions go way, way deep and many of her former students and proteges are now major kumu hula and performers. She was recognized by the Hawaii Legislature in 1982 for her many contributions and accomplishments.

Sarah Kailikea: Aunty Sarah is a Laie girl who for many years lived on Kauai where she and her husband have been taking care of the Menehune Gardens in Nawiliwili. She is regarded highly among hula scholars for her knowledge of the Menehune dances of Kauai, which are among the oldest dances in the Hawaiian repertoire.

Theodore Kelsey: He is not a member of the Church, but this man has nonetheless had close dealings with church members and church families, particularly the Kekahuna and Paishon families of Waianae and Nanakuli. A Hawaii-born Haole, he learned Hawaiian by talking to older Hawaiian people outside his father's store in Hilo. He later spent much time with many Hawaiian chanters such as Kuluwaimaka Palea and others brought to the Lalani Village in Waikiki by George Mossman. In his nineties now, he is still translating and collecting old Hawaiian chants.

Sally Moanikeala Wood Naluai: Aunty Sally was, for fourteen years, the Hawaiian section dance instructor at the Polynesian Cultural Center. Prior to that she had a hula studio of her own for over forty years. She was raised in Kahana Valley and had as her instructors, Lucy Logan Munson, Pua Ha'aheo, Lokalia Montgomery, Keakaokala Kanahela, and

Kawena Pukui. A strict disciplinarian and articulate speaker of the Hawaiian language, her style of hula is the more traditional, slow, stately and dignified form with understated body motion and movement. She and her husband, George, are now on an LDS mission in San Diego, California.

Harriet Ne: Also not a member of the Church, Aunty Harriet nevertheless has had a very close kinship with the church and its members. When people talk about the island of Molokai, the three kupuna most often mentioned are the late Aunty Mary Lee, Aunty Clara Ku, both LDS, and Aunty Harriet. Aunty Harriet was raised in the Pelekunu valley of Moloka'i where, among other things, she was taught the hula by the great hula master, Ka'oo. The dances of Molokai are known for their great mysticism and metaphysical power and Aunty Harriet, through her students, has tried to retain those forms and traditions.

Sarah Pule: A long-time very active member of the Church, Aunty Sarah has been known for her poet's gift and musician's ear. Her husband, Akoni, for many years, represented his district in the state legislature even though his community calling was that of a park custodian. Her home area of Kohala has had an influence on other famous daughters and sons, such as Kamehameha, Edith Kanaka'ole, Bill Lincoln and now Aunty Sarah. While she has written many Hawaiian songs, only a small number of them are known chiefly through the popularity of the singing of the Lim Family who are her ohana.

Emma Kapiolani Farden Sharpe: Aunty Emma is also not a member of the LDS Church, but has performed for and in behalf of the Church and its functions for years on the island of Maui. A public school teacher, for many years, and a member of the famous Farden family of Maui singers, dancers and composers, Aunty Emma learned her hula from the kumu hula, Kuhai Likua, who came out of retirement in his seventies to teach her. She also studied with Joseph Hala'ole and Kawena Pukui.

Kau'i Zuttermeister: Aunty Kau'i learned her hula from her uncle, Sam Pua Ha'aheo, who was a policeman, LDS branch president, and kumu hula. Pua Ha'aheo taught hula in his later life and only to three full-time students of which Kau'i was one. Through the years, Aunty Kau'i has

attempted to retain the traditions, form and style of her uncle while adding her own nuances, interpretations and touches. As a result, her dances are characterized by a smoothy flowing grace and rhythm that tends to understate the physical demands of her hula form. She has also composed a classic mele hula, "Na Pua Ka Ilima," which is included in the repertoire of all serious hula dancers. Through her daughter, Noenoe, and her granddaughter, Hauoli, her traditions continue to be perpetuated.

Thus, this review, cursory though it has been, hopefully gives further emphasis to the claim for Laie, and the Church, as being an important influence on the creation and development of Hawaiian music. We have left a number of people out, Napua Stevens Paire, Vicki I'i Rodrigues and Genoa Keawe, for example. But then, there will be other times, and other awards. Perhaps it might be well to remember these words of Kamehameha I. "E Oni Wale Nō 'Oukou I Kuu Pono 'A'ole E Pau," (Move forward with my unfinished vision.")