A new feature from Hitting the Stage by HTS Staff Reviewer Wil Kahele, where he asks people in our theatre community ten questions to better know them and their work!

Recently I had the opportunity to talk story with actor and playwright, Kiki. Her second play, Fa’alavelave: The Interuption, premieres at UHM this month.

Wil Kahele: When did you get involved in theatre? What was your first community theatre production and what year?

Kiki: I got involved in theatre in 2003. Maybe 2002, around there, at UHM. It was called The Actors Nightmare at UHM- a directing scene is what I remember. But my first attraction and when I first saw the possibility of being involved is when I saw a production at KKT.

WK: When did you know that you wanted to pursue acting?
K: Freshman year at Waianae High School.

WK: When did you know you wanted to pursue playwriting?

K: Just yesterday. haha. After I became a playwright.

WK: Last season your first play, Puzzy was produced at Kumu Kahua. But you had the world premiere in Aotearoa and after that in Hilo. What were the differences that you noticed?

K: I think it really depends on who’s directing or who’s voice is shining through as the director.

Aotearoa had a heavier tone. Part of that weight was the familial and cultural obligations and the pain that Anapela’s direction was able to convey. This weight was the closest resemblance of the emotions I felt in my heart. I think because it came from a Samoan women’s perspective. The Honolulu production I felt was very in your face and female empowered. I felt the Honolulu production was where I am now. Hilo was a reading that I directed and I got to hear local voices. Victor Rodger is a big influence and mentor. I continue to send him what I’m working on and I use his suggestions. He’s the first playwright that helped me see all the possibilities and helped me understand the importance of telling our stories.

WK: How has that experience influenced playwriting for you?

K: It’s helped me to become more serious about playwriting. Because now I see the need for me to continue writing as part of the gay afakasi feminine voice. So many feminine voices go unheard, especially in theatre and especially pacific voices. I just watched this YouTube video by Jill Soloway, creator of the TV series Transparent and she talks about the “female gaze” and how important it is to build a space with that female perspective and female gaze to counterbalance the male perspective in storytelling.

WK: Your next play opens at the end of this month on November 29 at UHM, a follow up to Puzzy called Fa’alavelave: The Interruption. Is this the further adventures of Mele?

K: Yes sir. Consequences of family secrets

WK: As a creative, what inspires the stories you tell or the plays that you write?

K: Everything. Life. For now I think I’m at that stage where my stories are still coming from my personal life, my perspective.

WK: Do you think playwriting has changed the way you watch other plays being performed from an objective point of view?

K: Definitely. I’m hearing it separately from the actors choices and the director’s choices.

WK: What will you take away from this experience and how will it affect any future theatrical endeavors?
**K:** My takeaway is that I can’t stop. I have to keep moving. I feel an obligation to inspire others to create. The work has just begun. I feel that it’s necessary to inspire to express, whether it’s playwriting, acting, whatever. We just need to get it out. Too often we feel inadequate or unworthy and it stops us from creating.

**WK:** What’s next? Acting? Playwriting? Vacation?

**K:** Graduation. *Fa’alavelave* is my thesis. Come see it. 
*Take 10, Wil Kahele, Kiki*