



# ASIA PACIFIC DANCE FESTIVAL

## *Stories*

### **LIVING THE ART OF HULA**

THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2015 • 7:30PM

John F. Kennedy Theatre, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### **LOCAL MOTION!**

SUNDAY, JULY 19, 2015 • 2:00PM

John F. Kennedy Theatre, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### **CHURASA – OKINAWAN DRUM & DANCE**

THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2015 • 7:30PM

John F. Kennedy Theatre, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### **WELCOMING CEREMONY**

FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2015 • 6:00PM

East-West Center Friendship Circle

### **STORIES I**

SATURDAY, JULY 25, 2015 • 7:30PM

John F. Kennedy Theatre, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### **STORIES II**

SUNDAY, JULY 26, 2015 • 2:00PM

John F. Kennedy Theatre, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### **HUMANITIES FORUM**

SUNDAY, JULY 26, 2015 • 4:45PM

East-West Center Imin Center, Jefferson Hall



*A co-production of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Outreach College and East-West Center Arts Program  
with the support of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Department of Theatre and Dance.*



# 2015 ASIA PACIFIC DANCE FESTIVAL

## ASIA PACIFIC DANCE FESTIVAL

### Director

Tim Slaughter

### Associate Director

Eric Chang

### Organizing Committee

William Feltz

Kara Miller

Michael Pili Pang

Amy Lynn Schiffner

Yukie Shiroma

Judy Van Zile

### Staff

Margret Arakaki, Assistant to Director; Kay Linen, Grant Writer

### Production Staff

M Richard, Production Coordinator; Camille Monson and Anna Reynolds, Festival Assistants; Justin Fragiao, Site Manager; Vince Liem, Lighting Designer; Todd Bodden, Sound Engineer; Samuel Bukoski and Maggie Songer, Production Crew; Stephanie Jones, Costume Crew; Margret Arakaki, Box Office Supervisor; Dennis Nishihara, Production Photographer; 'Ōlelo Community Media, Video Production; Housing: EWC Housing, Facilities, & Imin Conference Center staff; Festival Volunteers: Mary Arizumi, Ellen Cho, Marsha Hee, Urie Laysen, Carys Mol, Lily Reiser, Kisore Sherreitt, and Sheenru Yong

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## GUEST ARTISTS: ARTISTIC & EXECUTIVE STAFF

### Ballet Philippines

Paul Alexander Morales, Artistic Director; Alden Luginasin, Resident Choreographer; Rosalie Equia, Company Manager; Jenny Bonto, Executive Director; Beatriz Antonia Carabeo, PR & Marketing Associate

### Churasa – Okinawan Drum & Dance

Chikashi Tamashiro, Artistic Director

### Hālau I Ka Wēkiu

Michael Lanakila Casupang and Carl Veto Baker, Co-Kumu Hula

### Living the Art of Hula

Michael Pili Pang, Director

### Local Motion!

See Program List for artistic staff

### Oceania Dance Theatre

Peter Rockford Espiritu, Artistic Director

2015



## About the Festival

Our lives are filled with stories. Stories we tell about ourselves, about our friends, about our families. Stories of important events, of where we live, of places we've traveled to. Sometimes we write these stories down; sometimes they reside only in our memories; sometimes we share them with others.

Often we think of stories as spoken words or words written on a page. But dance tells stories in its own ways. Whether literally or metaphorically, the human body tells stories through movement – and sometimes stillness.

Some dances begin with stories. Hula's constant companion is chanted or sung poetry. Its movements interpret, in various ways, a poetic text. Without the stories embedded in the poetry and interpreted through movement, there would be no hula. Often, in order to understand the meaning of the stories hula tells, we must understand Hawaiian culture and its history.

Some dances depict stories of love and fairytale princes and princesses through pantomime, as in ballet, with dancers wearing elaborate costumes that include tights and soft slippers or *pointe* shoes that originated during the days of the royal courts in Europe. Dancers in the Philippines borrowed the traditional footwear of ballet and

in one dance donned the loincloths and tightly-wrapped and embroidered fabric bodices of their own people. They then merged ballet movements with those of dances done by people in their mountain regions. This dance told a story of cultural change by choreographically blending imported and indigenous elements.

Sometimes dances simply tell the story of what the human body can do – and of how a particular society or individual chooses to make use of the movement capabilities of this extraordinary common “instrument.”

There are also stories of dancers. The training they put their bodies through to dance the way they do. The journeys they took as they devoted themselves to an art form about which they became passionate.

There are stories behind dances and dancers, but there are also stories behind audience members. When these stories confront and interact with each other as they do in performances, they lead to deeper understandings of ourselves and of others.

We invite you to see and experience stories of dance in the 2015 Asia Pacific Dance Festival.

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*Join us in the upstairs lobby at John F. Kennedy Theatre for a pre-show chat with Thai dance critic Pawit Mahasarinand at 6:45pm on Saturday, July 25, and with New York-based dance critic Elizabeth Zimmer at 1:15pm on Sunday, July 26.*

*At 4:45pm on Sunday, July 26 (following the performance), in the Garden Dining Rooms of the East-West Center's Imin Center, Pacific Islands scholar Vilsoni Hereniko will lead a lively discussion about this year's Festival with our dance critics and representatives from Ballet Philippines, Hālau I Ka Wēkiu, and Oceania Dance Theatre.*

*All Festival events are in John F. Kennedy Theatre on the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa campus unless otherwise noted.*

2015



## Festival Events

### THURSDAY • JULY 16, 2015

#### Living the Art of Hula

7:30pm • Performance

Meet four women solo hula dancers, each of whom has made hula a part of her career, as they tell stories of their lives and ancestry.

With well-known performers Robert Cazimero and Marlene Sai, the stories are told through words, dance, and music, as Michael Pili Pang guides us through a lively discussion and performances.

#### Featured hula performers:



**Kanoë Miller**, former Miss Hawai'i, has been the featured dancer at the Halekulani Hotel since 1977. She studied hula with Maiki Aiu Lake and in 1973 won the Miss Hawai'i America title, and traveled the world representing Hawai'i's aloha spirit. For most of her professional life Kanoë has balanced two careers: modeling and hula dancing. She has produced fashion shows and corporate image workshops and is the co-owner of Tropical Baby Productions L.L.C. She is co-publisher of *HulaStudio* magazine, Hawai'i's first interactive digital tablet magazine about hula.



**Debbie Nakanelua Richards** is the 1984 Miss Hawai'i title holder. She has shared Hawai'i's culture and values through her service on the board of directors of numerous native Hawaiian and community organizations and was honored by the Hawaiian Civic Club of Honolulu for her contributions to the native Hawaiian community. Debbie began hula studies at the age of 6 with *kumu hula* Auntie Maiki Aiu Lake, graduating through formal *'uniki* ceremonies with Lake in 1975. A long-time hula performer at the Halekulani Hotel, she now describes hula as "as much a part of my life as eating or breathing."



**Pi'ilaniwahine Smith**, former Miss Aloha Hula and youngest child of *kumu hula* Alicia K. Keawekane Smith, of Haleiwa, O'ahu, was raised in the rigors of hula under traditional protocols and training. She is the 5<sup>th</sup> generation *'ohana kumu hula*. Pi'ilaniwahine earned a BA from UH Mānoa, and has spent 20 years working in the non-profit sector, dedicated to areas of cultural enrichment, political empowerment, health policy and regulation, and federal consultation. She continues to do hula through study, personal practice, performance, and teaching.



**Nani Dudoit**, Waikīkī showroom hula performer and *olapa hula* (expert hula dancer) brings elegance, beauty, and *mana* (power or spirit) to performances of the multi-award winning music group, Ho'okena. She is a lifelong member of Hālau Nā Pualei o Likolehua, under the direction of *kumu hula* Leina'ala Kalama Heine, and was one of the original dancers in the early 1980s for the Brothers Cazimero show at the Monarch Room in Waikīkī's Royal Hawaiian Hotel. By day, she is employed with Kamehameha Schools as a Senior Executive Coordinator for the Literacy Instruction and Support Division.

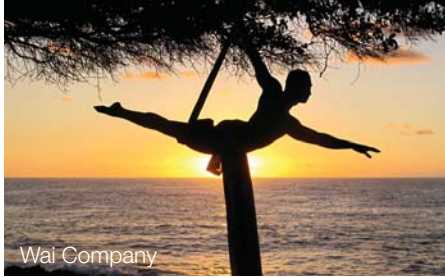
***Living the Art of Hula is made possible, in part, by support from Mu'olaulani and Hālau Hula Ka No'eau.***

## SUNDAY • JULY 19, 2015

### Local Motion!

2pm • Performance

A showcase for some of the finest dancers, dance companies, and choreographers in the Hawaiian Islands, exemplifying the diverse cultures and kinds of dance found in our community.



### PART I

#### ***Uchinaa nu Chimugukuru (Okinawan Spirit)*** (1996)

Choreographed as a solo for Ms. Shiroma's teacher, Cheryl Yoshie Nakasone, master instructor of Jimpu Kai USA Kin Ryosho Ryukyu Geino Kenkyusho, this contemporary dance synthesizes a thirty-year dedication to Okinawan classical dance and a lifetime fascination with choreography. Movement vocabulary is drawn from both male and female Okinawan classical dances, music is contemporary Tuvan throat singing from southern Siberia, masks and costumes are modern interpretations of classical Okinawan dance makeup and dress. Now a sextet, it remains a tribute to the strength and exuberance of the Okinawan spirit.

Choreography..... Yukie Shiroma

Music..... *Prayer I*, composed by Mikhail Alperin, performed by Tuvan throat singers with the Bulgarian Women's Choir; and *Yenisei-Punk*, composed by Albert Kuvezin and Yat-Kah, performed by the band known as Yat-kah.

Costumes..... Evette Tanouye and Gary Fujimoto

Masks..... Michael Harada

Rehearsal Assistant..... Grace Carmichael

Dancers..... Phillip Kaponu Aiwohi-Kim (understudy), Kathy Carranza, Faith S. Im, Jenny Mair, Dimitrios S. Nicholas, Christiana C. Oshiro, Kanani Rose

#### ***Topeng Keras***

Commonly performed as part of temple ceremonies in Bali, Indonesia, *topeng* are masked dances that depict stock character types from semi-historical Balinese chronicles of the kings. *Topeng Keras* depicts the bold and energetic prime minister to the king.

Choreography..... Traditional

Music..... Institute Seni Indonesia, Denpasar, Bali

Dancer..... I Madé Widana

#### ***Sifting*** (2015)

Choreography..... Amy Lynn Schiffner

Poetry..... written and performed by Jenna Robinson

Music..... Mike Monday, Alexkid, Pepe Deluxé

Costume Design..... Kimberly Shire

Set Design..... DeAnne Kennedy, conceived by Amy Lynn Schiffner

Lighting Design..... Chikako Omoso

Sound Design..... Brian Shevelenko

Dancers..... Ali Burkhardt, Dayna Chun, Lexi Hughes, Faith S. Im, Jessica Pereira, Kent Shinomae, Wailana Simcock, Erica Wong

### ***Legong Bapang Saba***

A refined, stately, and elegant female dance style of Bali, Indonesia, *legong* requires the dancer, who symbolizes a divine celestial being, to perform a range of character qualities from refined to strong. The basic character emphasized in *Legong Bapang Saba*, a dance from the village of Saba, is strong, but within the nature of a refined female.

Choreography..... Traditional  
Music..... Sanggar Saba Sari, Saba, Bali  
Dancer..... Anna Reynolds

### ***These Islands*** (2012)

*These Islands* is a song that exemplifies the love of the Hawaiian Islands and its people.

Choreography..... Marie Takazawa  
Music and Lyrics..... *These Islands*, composed by Danny Couch, from the CD *Almost Paradise*  
Dancers..... Ballet Hawaii: Conner Chew, Gabrielle Chock, Courtney Hiraoka,  
Allison Johnston, Jenna Loventhal, Moana Kuba, Jacob Ly, Raven Matsushita,  
Megan Miyasaki, Christiana Oshiro, Taylor Oshiro, Noelle Tarumoto, Anli Valdez

..... INTERMISSION .....

## **PART II**

### ***Absent Space Present*** (2015)

Created by Sami L.A. Akuna, Kara Miller, and Samuel Skeist, in collaboration with the dancers.

Choreography..... Sami L.A. Akuna and Kara Miller  
Poetry..... Written and performed by Samuel Skeist  
Music..... Music Mix (David Heller)  
Set Design..... DeAnne Kennedy  
Costume Design..... Stephanie Jones  
Video Projection..... Cocoa Chandelier, Kara Miller, Brian S. Shevelenko  
Live Video Camera..... Melanee Terry  
Dancers..... Lorenzo Acosta, Phillip Kapono Aiwohi-Kim, Sami L.A. Akuna,  
Sequoia Carr Brown, Tomomi Jane Hara, Lexi Hughes, Faith S. Im,  
Kaylyn Kumashiro, Asako Kurosawa, Jenny Mair, Misha Matsumoto,  
Camille Monson, Kanani Rose, Izabella Ruiz-Cruz, Terry Slaughter,  
Theo Steinman, Blythe C. Stephens  
Duet Dancers..... Erica Wong and Wailana Simcock

### ***Topeng Tua***

Commonly performed as part of temple ceremonies in Bali, Indonesia, *topeng* are masked dances that depict stock character types from semi-historical Balinese chronicles of the kings. *Topeng Tua* presents an old man who reflects on his past when he was young, strong, and heroic.

Choreography..... Traditional  
Music..... Institut Seni Indonesia, Denpasar, Bali  
Dancer..... I Madé Widana

### ***Pas de Deux from The Flames of Paris*** (c. 1932)

Choreography..... Vasili Vainonen, adapted for Ballet Hawaii by Pam Taylor Tongg  
Music..... Boris Asafiev, based on songs of the French Revolution  
Dancers..... Ballet Hawaii: Gabrielle Chock and Jacob Ly

**Gojyo Bashi (The Fifth Bridge in Kyoto)** (c. 1946)

This *nihon buyō*, or classical Japanese dance, portrays an encounter between 12<sup>th</sup> century legendary warrior Ushiwaka Maru (aka Minamoto Yoshitsune) and the warrior-priest Musashibo Benkei. As Benkei loses the battle to capture Ushiwaka's sword, he relents and becomes Ushiwaka's trusted and devoted retainer. The dance is performed in *suodori* style – wearing formal *kimono* rather than full costume.

Choreography..... Onoe Kikunjo I

Music..... *Gojyo Bashi*, composed by Kineya Rokuzaemon XIII;

lead singer – Kineya Sasaburo; lead shamisen – Nakayama Kojuro

Stage assistant (*Koken*) .... Jordan Ragasa

Dancers..... Howard Asao (Onoe Kikunobukazu) as Ushiwaka Maru,

Brandon Kiyoshi Goda (Onoe Kikunobutomi) as Musashibo Benkei

**Kunjan Sabakui** (originally choreographed in 2000 and modified in 2015)

A dance based on a traditional Okinawan song sung by lumber workers during the construction of Shuri Castle in Okinawa.

Choreography..... Original choreography by Yukie Shiroma, with modifications inspired by the current dancers

Music..... Traditional, performed by Nenes

Mask..... Nyoman Setiawan

Props..... Michael Harada

Rehearsal Assistant..... Grace Carmichael

Dancers..... Phillip Kaponu Aiwohi-Kim (understudy), Kathy Carranza, Faith S. Im,

Dimitrios S. Nicholas, Christiana C. Oshiro, Kanani Rose

**Flicker** (2015)

A piece that bridges the arts of contemporary dance and magic.

Choreography..... Kent Shinomae

Music..... *Intro*, composed and performed by The xx; and *Near Light*, composed and performed by Ólafur Arnalds

Dancer..... Kent Shinomae

**Papa a Wākea** (2012)

The dance tells the story of the creation of the Hawaiian Islands by Papahānaumoku and Wākea.

Choreography..... Wailana Simcock

Music..... *Papa a Wākea*: violin music composed and performed by David Sause;

*oli* composed by Wailana Simcock and performed by Ka'enaaloha Hopkins

Master Rigger..... Baer Long

Pulley Operators..... Philip Kaponu Aiwohi and Sequoia Carr Brown

Dancers..... Wai Company: Wailana Simcock and Ka'enaaloha Hopkins

**THURSDAY • JULY 23, 2015**  
**Churasa-Okinawan Drum & Dance**  
7:30pm • Performance

**Performers:** Mai Hatoma, Wataru Kamizato, Chika Kinjo, Mako Miyagi, Sakura Simotori, Chikashi Tamashiro, Yukito Tamashiro, Manami Uechi, Mahiro Uehara, Akitomo Uezu

**Founder & Director:** Chikashi Tamashiro

Churasa was created in 1999 in Tomigusuku, Okinawa by Chikashi Tamashiro, a full-time teacher of vocational training for the mentally challenged. The group's name, *churasa*, meaning beautiful in the Okinawan language, was chosen for its description of the beauty the group projects through its spirit, facial expressions, costumes, and dance.

The group consists of some 50 active members ranging in age from 5 to 38 years old, most being of school age. Ten of the best dancers were chosen to represent the group in this year's Asia Pacific Dance Festival.



Churasa infuses a lively contemporary style into the traditional Okinawan arts of *eisa*, *shisa* (lion dance), and *Ryukyu kobudo* (martial arts weaponry). Traditionally, Eisa is a mix of drumming and dance choreography set to Okinawan folk songs, used only at summertime Obon festivals to honor the departed. Over time, however, the style of dancing vigorously with drums has become a performance art of its own, outside the context of Obon. Often a performer carries a large drum over the shoulder, using one stick to strike the drum while doing dance and martial arts movements, accompanied by Okinawan folk or contemporary music. Other drums include the small handheld *paranku*, and the rope-lashed *shimedaiko*.

Dramatic and powerful dance movements based on the traditional Okinawan martial arts include high kicks, leaps, spinning movements, and Churasa's own signature one-handed cartwheels. In contrast, using International Sign Language, the group also performs a version of the ballad *Hana*, composed by Okinawan politician and rock musician Shoukichi Kina.



Churasa has won numerous awards, including the 2014 Worldwide Eisa Contest - Junior Division. They have performed throughout Japan, and internationally in China, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore. In 2011, they gave their first Hawai'i performance as part of the Honolulu Festival.



## PART I

**Tinsagu nu Hana** - One of Okinawa's most famous folk songs, imparting the importance of seeking guidance from one's parents and elders

**Amazing Grace** - A prayer

**Dance of Chondara** - Featuring a clown-like character integral to Eisa Obon drum dancing

**Eisa Bushi** - Traditional village Obon choreography showing the power and strength of drumming

**Churasa-style Children's Dance**

**Kunjansabakui** - A dance depicting the labor of transporting huge logs from the forests to build the royal castle

**Kuichi** - Traditional participatory dance from the southern islands of Miyako

**Hana** - A dance incorporating sign language, set to one of Okinawa's most famous tunes

**Hanagusuku** - Original drum choreography

..... INTERMISSION .....

## PART II

**Sukiyaki** - A dance using *paranku* drums, set to the world-famous Japanese melody "Ue wo muite Arukou," a.k.a. "Sukiyaki"

**Asadoya Yunta** - A famous folk song accompanied by the *sanshin*, a three-stringed instrument iconic to Okinawan music

**Shisa** - Okinawan Lion Dance

**Feshi** - Audience participation featuring Okinawan shouts of encouragement

**Karate and Kobudo** - Traditional Okinawan martial arts using bare hands and weaponry

**Omoi Shongane** - A drum dance set to a famous Okinawan love song

**Jimpu Orionbiru** - Original drum choreography

**Tsukikagami** - A song that calls for peace through the recollections of an old woman who lost the love of her life during World War II

(9) **Shichigatsu Bushi / Jinjin / Hounen Ondo** - Original drum choreography set to a medley of famous Okinawan songs

*This performance is made possible in part by support from: Selina Higa, Myron Akana, Tomigusuku Sonjinkai, Nakama Taiko, Norman Kaneshiro, Ukwanshin Kabudan, Chinagu Eisa, Young Okinawans of Hawai'i, John Itamura, Hawai'i Okinawa Creative Arts, Taiko Center of the Pacific, the UH Mānoa Center for Okinawan Studies, the Ethnomusicology Instrument Collection of the UH Mānoa Music Department, and the Hawai'i United Okinawan Association.*

**FRIDAY • JULY 29, 2015**  
**Festival Welcoming Ceremony**  
6pm • Ceremony  
East-West Center Friendship Circle

We begin our weekend of Stories performances with a welcoming ceremony that integrates traditional practices of Hawai'i, Fiji, and the Philippines. Join us as members of Ballet Philippines, Hālau I Ka Wēkiu, and Oceania Dance Theatre invoke formal ways in which dance, music, and verbal commentary are used to meet and greet visitors and guests.



1. Pū (blowing of the conch shell) – In former times in Hawai'i, the sound of the conch shell served as an announcement of an important event.
2. Welcoming chant – *kumu hula* Michael Pili Pang
3. Welcoming remarks – Festival associate director Eric Chang
4. Hālau I Ka Wēkiu
5. University welcoming – President David Lassner
6. Ballet Philippines
7. East-West Center welcoming
8. Oceania Dance Theatre
9. Hula Performance – Hālau Hula Ka No'eau, *kumu hula* Michael Pili Pang
10. Closing comments – Festival director Tim Slaughter
11. Encore – Churasa: Okinawan Eisa

Representatives of visiting companies are presented with *lei* – a Hawaiian gift for many occasions – and a specially crafted wood *poi* pounder. The making of *poi*, a long-time staple of the Hawaiian diet, involves the pounding of *taro* and the mixing of it with water to achieve the desired consistency. For our Festival, the *poi* pounder serves as a symbol of the bringing together, and mixing, of performers, scholars, and dance critics from across Asia and the Pacific, and the importance of the performing arts in sustaining meaningful lives.

Most typically made of stone, our symbolic *poi* pounders are original artworks made for us by Dr. Craig Mason. O'ahu wood turner Mason moved to the islands from his home in Iowa in 1977. He established a dental practice and, in 1989, took up woodturning as a hobby, inspired by the beauty of Hawai'i's varied native woods and the Hawaiian calabash form. Over the years, working exclusively with trees salvaged from the waste stream, he developed skills in woodturning, carving, and musical instrument building. The *poi* pounder, with its beautiful flowing curves, is steeped in Hawaiian culture and tradition and is also a perfect form to showcase the wood of the native Milo tree.



**SATURDAY • JULY 25, 2015**

**Stories I**

7:30pm • Performance

**Featuring dancers of:**

**Ballet Philippines**

Sarah Anne Alejandrino, Earl John Arisola, Timothy Paul Cabrera, Gillianne Therese Gequinto, Victor Maguad, Denise Parungao, Lester John Reguindin, Jemima Sanielle Reyes, Erl Emmanuel Sorilla, Rita Angela Winder

**Hālau I Ka Wēkiu:**

*Wahine* (women): Renko Arakawa, Brenda Asuncion, Krystin Carillo, Hōkū Chong, Ku'umeali'i Crowley, Kirsha Durante, Pualani Fernandez, Michelle Fujii, Sasha Hall, Sarie Haraguchi, Keala Hartley, Tomomi Hibikiya, Ka'enaaloha Hopkins, Jena Inouye, Kim Iona, Kim Jinbo, Tricia Jinbo, Yume Kitamura, Robyn Lee, Vicky Lo, Kasey Loo, Jaymie Nakama, Keisha Nakamura, Sumi Omatsu, Mallory Oshiro, Pualena Pakele & Cabot, Moani Pomroy, Michelle Radovan, Anri Rogers, Shenaniah Romias, Pi'ilani Schneider-Furuya, Chihiro Shimbo, Taryn Solis, Lauren Taga, Yuki Tomei, Celeste VanTreese-Osaki, Kanoe Vierra, Natalia Villegas, Monica Wong, Risako Yamagishi, Crishelle Young

*Kāne* (men): Braden Abe, Ronnie Castro, Kalani Coelho, Joseph Hudoba, Kalamakoa Johnson, Pūnāwai Jinbo, Marc Malate, Toshi Nakasone, Gavin Ono, Shaun Ono, Tylor Mariano, Chad Palmer, 'Aukai Reynolds, Lon Shiroma, Keven Whalen

Musicians: Karl Veto Baker, Michael Lanakila Casupang, Horace K. Dudoit III, Chris Kamaka

**Oceania Dance Theatre**

Nisimere Bola, Glenville Chong, Sorpapelu Fatiaki, Katalina Fotofili, Isimeli Gadrevi, Salaseini Gadrevi, Ilaitia Naulivou, Ratu Qeleveliwaki, Kim Rova, Moirototo Samisoni, Drue Slatter, Ratulevu Sorondkadavu, Ratu Tagivakatini, Carmen Vosalevu



Ballet Philippines



Hālau I Ka Wēkiu:



Hālau I Ka Wēkiu:



Oceania Dance Theatre

## PART I

### ***La'ahia Ka Lani Ākea Iā Kū* (2004) • Hālau I Ka Wēkiu**

A chant honoring the many forms of the god Kū, consecrated in the heavens, the sacred lands, the upland forests, and the many ocean waves, and most well known as the god of war.

Choreography..... Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang

Music..... Chant composed and performed by Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang

### **Dance of Kiribati • Oceania Dance Theatre**

A dance depicting deep sea fishing techniques of the people of Kiribati, an island nation in the Central Pacific Ocean. The dance honors the ancestral knowledge and livelihood of a people now facing serious climate change issues.

Choreography..... Traditional

Music..... Traditional

### ***Tangaroa Whakamautai* (2014) • Oceania Dance Theatre**

In a dance based on Māori dances of Aoteaora/New Zealand, visions of water forms and ocean occupants, such as stingrays and whales, contribute to the flow of life given by the god Tangaroa.

Choreography..... Peter Rockford Espiritu

Music..... *Tangaroa Whakamautai*, composed and performed by Maisey Rika

### **Pele and Poli'ahu, Goddesses of Fire and Snow • Hālau I Ka Wēkiu**

#### **1. *Aia Lā 'O Pele***

Honoring the fire goddess Pele, whose lava dances as she flows, destroying and creating land at the same time.

Choreography..... Aunty Maiki Aiu Lake

Music..... Traditional chant, performed by Hōkū Chong, Ku'umeali'i Crowley, Ka'enaaloha Hopkins, and Taryn Solis

#### **2. *Nā Akua Hau Kea (Snow Goddesses)* (2008)**

On the summits of Mauna Kea dwelt the famed snow goddess Poli'ahu and her sisters Lilinoe, Waiau, and Kahopoukane.

Choreography..... Michael Lanakila Casupang

Music..... Chant composed by E. Kaiponohea Hale, performed by Michael Lanakila Casupang

#### **3. *Ke Ahi A Ka Hau* (2008)**

Between the fire goddess Pele and the snow goddess Poli'ahu there exists a tense and conflicting relationship. This chant depicts the battle between fire and ice, Pele and Poli'ahu.

Choreography..... Michael Lanakila Casupang

Music..... Chant composed by Frank Palani Kahala, performed by Michael Lanakila Casupang

### ***Rain* (2012) • Oceania Dance Theatre**

The rain of Suva is as constant and beautiful as the *ka ua kani lehua* rain in Hilo, Hawai'i Island. The connection between Hawai'i and Fiji is unmistakable, and inspired the movement in this dance.

Choreography..... Peter Rockford Espiritu

Music..... *Have You Ever Seen the Rain*, composed and sung by Amy Hānaiali'i Gilliom

### ***Moriones* (1991) • Ballet Philippines**

Inspired by the Moriones annual Holy Week Festival of Marinduque, an island province in the Philippines. The Festival is a reenactment of the Moriones' (Roman soldiers) search for Longinus, the man Jesus indirectly healed with his blood during the crucifixion. The piece was choreographed for the participation of Ballet Philippines 2 at Rencontres Festival Du Danse, La Baule, France, and was a study for movement in the Guardias Civil dance for Locsin's full-length neoethnic *Encantada*.

Choreography..... Agnes Locsin

Music..... *Sera Pelada*, composed by Philip Glass, performed by The Centurions

**Bollywood Tribute • Oceania Dance Theatre**

Choreography..... Allan Alo, J. Naga, S. Naulumatua, and A. Ravuvu

Music..... *Aila re Aila, Desi Beats*

..... INTERMISSION .....

**PART II**

**Duha (2014) • Ballet Philippines**

Choreographed in a neoethnic style, the piece reflects a contemporary Filipino dance style.

Choreography..... Alden Lugnasin

Music..... Jessie Lucas

**Fijian Meke • Oceania Dance Theatre**

Choreography..... Traditional, as taught by Master Lai Veikoso

Music..... Traditional

**Nā Hulu (Featherwork of Hawai'i) • Hālau I Ka Wēkiu**

**1. Mele Kāhili (2015)**

A song to honor Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang's featherwork teacher, Aunty Paulette Kahalepuna, and her legacy and lifetime of featherwork that lives on in those who continue this art.

Choreography..... Karl Veto Baker, Michael Lanakila Casupang, Ka'enaaloha Hopkins

Music..... Chant composed by Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang,  
performed by the dancers

**2. Uluwehi O Nā Pua Punahale (1996)**

Composed to honor Casupang's favorite flower, *kou*, the song honors the flower, the *lei* fashioned from these flowers, feather *lei*, and a favored *kāhili* (a feather standard) that represents the flower. In the end, the favorite flowers are the students, who continually "adorn" our lives as teachers.

Choreography..... Michael Lanakila Casupang and Robert Uluwehi Cazimero

Music..... Chant composed and performed by Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang

**Patepate (1999) • Oceania Dance Theatre**

Literally meaning "to clap hands" in the language of Tokelau, a series of coral atolls that are part of Aotearoa/ New Zealand, *Patepate* is based on a traditional dance and represents the connection Pacific Islanders have between each other, their love of life, and the joy they feel for each other.

Choreography..... Allan Alo

Music..... Traditional

**Halik (2010) • Ballet Philippines**

An excerpt from Ballet Philippines' *Crisostomo Ibarra*, a dance retelling the story in the seminal novel *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch Me Not) authored by Philippine national hero, Dr. José Rizal. Managing to escape prison, Crisostomo Ibarra visits Maria Clara to tell him the truth about her real father, sharing letters she exchanged for his freedom and asking Ibarra for his forgiveness.

Choreography..... Paul Alexander Morales

Music..... *Halik*, composed and performed by Jed Balsamo

**Manu 'Ō'Ō (1978) • Hālau I Ka Wēkiu**

The dance and chant acknowledge the bird catchers in Hawai'i, whose mission was to entrap the *manu 'ō'ō* on the branches they frequented. The 'ulu, or breadfruit sap, is heated and used to snare the birds, then the

catchers pluck their yellow feathers and set the birds free. The rare and special feathers are gathered so they can be fashioned into adornments for the *ali'i*, or chiefs.

Choreography..... Robert Uluwehi Cazimero

Music..... Chant composed by Johnny Lum Ho; performed by Michael Lanakila Casupang, Kaimana Domingo, and Karl Veto Baker

**Beat Lab (2013) • Oceania Dance Theatre**

Choreography..... Members of Oceania Dance Theatre

**After Whom (2005) • Ballet Philippines**

Created by Damian, in a neoclassical style, after his long stint of dancing in Europe. The piece distills influences from noted choreographers, such as Maurice Béjart, whom he performed with.

Choreography..... Augustus "Bam" Damian

Music..... *After Whom*, composed by Jerroid Taroq

**Dance of Tokelau • Oceania Dance Theatre**

Choreography..... Traditional

Music..... Traditional

**Waipi'o Pāka'alana/Ho'okupu (1978/2014) • Hālau I Ka Wēkiu**

Ha'inakolo, a woman from Hawai'i, marries a man from Tahiti and moves in order to be with him. After some time, he deserts her and she longs for her homeland. She swims back to Hawai'i, arriving at Waipi'o Valley on Hawai'i Island. She is famished after her long journey and climbs the cliffs searching for food. She finds *'ulei* berries, but fails to offer them first to the gods. Because of this she is made to roam the valley in a mental and deranged state. When her husband returns, he doesn't recognize her and makes an offering to the gods to appease them for her wrongdoing.

Choreography..... Karl Veto Baker, Robert Uluwehi Cazimero, Michael Lanakila Casupang, and Patrick Makuakāne

Music..... Traditional chant and *Bless This Mess*, performed by the dancers



**SUNDAY • JULY 26, 2015**

**STORIES II**

2:30pm • Performance

**Featuring performances by:**

**Ballet Philippines**

Sarah Anne Alejandrino, Earl John Arisola, Timothy Paul Cabrera, Gillianne Therese Gequinto, Victor Maguad, Denise Parungao, Lester John Reguindin, Jemima Sanielle Reyes, Erl Emmanuel Sorilla, Rita Angela Winder

**Hālau I Ka Wēkiu:**

*Wahine* (women): Renko Arakawa, Brenda Asuncion, Krystin Carillo, Ho'ku Chong, Ku'umeali'i Crowley, Kirsha Durante, Pualani Fernandez, Michelle Fujii, Sasha Hall, Sarie Haraguchi, Keala Hartley, Tomomi Hibikiya, Ka'enaaloha Hopkins, Jena Inouye, Jena Inouye, Kim Iona, Kim Jinbo, Tricia Jinbo, Yume Kitamura, Robyn Lee, Vicky Lo, Kasey Loo, Jaymie Nakama, Keisha Nakamura, Sumi Omatsu, Mallory Oshiro, Pualena Pakele & Cabot, Moani Pomroy, Michelle Radovan, Anri Rogers, Shenaniah Romias, Pi'ilani Schneider-Furuya, Chihiro Shimbo, Taryn Solis, Lauren Taga, Yuki Tomei, Celeste VanTreese-Osaki, Kanoe Vierra, Natalia Villegas, Monica Wong, Risako Yamagishi, Crishelle Young

*Kāne* (men): Braden Abe, Ronnie Castro, Kalani Coelho, Joseph Hudoba, Kalamakoa Johnson, Pu'na'wai Jinbo, Marc Malate, Toshi Nakasone, Gavin Ono, Shaun Ono, Tylor Mariano, Chad Palmer, 'Aukai Reynolds, Lon Shiroma, Keven Whalen

Musicians: Karl Veto Baker, Michael Lanakila Casupang, Horace K. Dudoit III, Chris Kamaka

**Oceania Dance Theatre**

Nisimere Bola, Glenville Chong, Sorpapelu Fatiaki, Katalina Fotofili, Isimeli Gadrevi, Salaseini Gadrevi, Ilaitia Naulivou, Ratu Qeleveiwaki, Kim Rova, Moiroto Samisoni, Drue Slatter, Ratulevu Sorondkadavu, Ratu Tagivakatini, Carmen Vosalevu



## PART I

### **Bungkos Suite** (1971) • **Ballet Philippines**

Based on a collection of traditional and popular folk songs reflecting various moods, but especially highlighting the playfulness, amorousness, and sense of humor of the Filipino.

Choreography..... Alice Reyes, National Artist for Dance

Music..... *Dahil Sa Iyo*, composed by Mike Valarde Jr. and Fabian Obispo; *Chitchiritchit*, folk song arranged by Lucrecia Kasilag; *Dandansoy*, composed by Augurio Abeto and arranged by Lucrecia Kasilag and Velasco; *Manang Biday*, folk song arranged by Rey Paguio; and *Telebong*, composed by Yoyoy Villame and arranged by P.C. Obispo. Performed by Philippine Madrigal Singers.

### **Bollywood Suite** • **Oceania Dance Theatre**

#### **A Moloka'i Tribute Hālau I Ka Wēkiu**

##### **1. Kaulana Waiialua A'o Moloka'i** (2013)

A love song for the Waiialua area of Moloka'i, with its famed kukui groves, honoring the mother of Moloka'i who was born of the goddess Hina.

Choreography..... Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang

Music..... Composed by Amy Hānaiali'i, performed by Karl Veto Baker, Michael Lanakila Casupang, Horace K. Dudoit III, Chris Kamaka

##### **2. He Aloha Moloka'i** (2000)

Documenting a student trip to the island of Moloka'i in 2000, this is a travelogue of students' experiences.

Choreography..... Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang

Music..... Composed and performed by Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang

### **Lahat ng Araw** (2005) • **Ballet Philippines**

Inspired by China, the dance represents the innate balance of all things in the universe, the *yin* and *yang* of masculinity and femininity intertwined as a visual reminder that absolutes are complementary forces that support and consume each other in the continuing miracle of life.

Choreography..... Alden Lugnasin

Music..... *Lahat ng Araw*, composed by Mike Velarde, arranged and orchestrated by Ryan Cayabyab, performed by San Miguel Orchestra

### **Tevovo** • **Oceania Dance Theatre**

#### **Ha'awina He'e Nalu** (2004) • **Hālau I Ka Wēkiu**

Based on a surfing lesson taught by experienced surfers when one hula brother wanted to learn how to surf, the dance won first place in the 2004 Merrie Monarch Festival in the *kāne 'auana* (male modern hula) category.

Choreography..... Karl Veto Baker, Michael Lanakila Casupang, Pūnāwai Jinbo, 'Aukai Reynolds, and Matthew Williams-Solomon

Music..... Composed and performed by Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang

..... INTERMISSION .....

## PART II

### **Moslem** (1990) • **Ballet Philippines**

A neoethnic ballet inspired by the *singkil*, *pangalay*, and *kzadoratan* dances of the Southern Philippines that is part of Agnes Locsin's neoethnic choreography, combining modern dance techniques and traditional Filipino dances.



Choreography..... Agnes Locsin

Music..... Traditional; collage arranged by Agnes Locsin, performed by Bayanihan Dance Company

***Tsunami Bird* (2010) • Oceania Dance Theatre**

In former times the hovering of frigate birds close to the horizon signified an impending *tsunami*, warning of coming disasters.

Choreography..... Allan Alo, J. Naga, S. Naulumatua, and A. Ravuvu

**The Beauty of Paliuli • Hālau I Ka Wēkiu**

**1. *Lā'ieikawai* (2015)**

The goddess Lā'ieikawai, the most beautiful woman of all the land, was taken away from her birth mother and raised in secrecy in Paliuli, where she was attended to by birds who guarded her day and night.

Choreography..... Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang

Music..... Composed by Frank Kawaikapuokalani Hewett, performed by Karl Veto Baker, Michael Lanakila Casupang, Horace K. Dudoit III, Chris Kamaka

**2. *Ka Pilina* (2009)**

Continuing the story of Lā'ieikawai, this song speaks of all the birds, their songs, and the time of day and night when they would sing beautifully. The *elepaio*, the *'apapane*, and the *'i'iwi polena* are all spoken of in the song.

Choreography..... Michael Lanakila Casupang

Music..... Composed by Frank Kawaikapuokalani Hewett, performed by Karl Veto Baker, Michael Lanakila Casupang, Horace K. Dudoit III, Chris Kamaka

**Samoaan *Tauluga* • Oceania Dance Theatre**

*Tauluga* is a type of dance usually performed in Samoa at the conclusion of an evening of entertainment or at the conclusion of a wedding or other social function. It is traditionally performed by the virgin daughter of the chief.

Choreography..... Traditional

Music..... Traditional

***'i'iwi Leo Kolonaha* (2003) • Hālau I Ka Wēkiu**

A modern composition about one's search to find the most perfect *lehua* blossom, alluding to a potential lover and companion.

Choreography..... Michael Lanakila Casupang

Music..... Composed and performed by Kaumaka'iwa Kanaka'ole

***Minoi* (2004) • Oceania Dance Theatre**

Although focusing on the contemporary side of life in Samoa, the dance references the traditional *siva* genre of Samoan dances.

Choreography..... Allan Alo

***Hawai'i '78* (2008) • Hālau I Ka Wēkiu**

The song contains a message about the struggle in the mid-1970s to find balance between progress and maintaining traditions. Although written at the time of the Hawaiian renaissance, the song has such power and history that even today its lyrics hold true. It will continue to be an anthem of the struggles that all indigenous peoples face with outside influences and pressures.

Choreography..... Karl Veto Baker and Michael Lanakila Casupang

Music..... Composed by Micky Ioane, Kawika Crowley, and Abe Keala; performed by Karl Veto Baker, Michael Lanakila Casupang, Horace K. Dudoit III, Chris Kamaka

**Dance of Tuvalu • Oceania Dance Theatre**

The nation of Tuvalu is a group of coral atolls in the western Pacific Ocean formerly known as the Ellice Islands.

Choreography..... Traditional

Music..... Traditional

***Tambol at Padyak* (2001) • Ballet Philippines**

Set to local rhythms, global tunes, and heartbeats, and using the local *bakya* (wooden slippers) to amplify its rhythms, the piece mirrors the Filipinos' joy of living.

Choreography..... Tony Fabella

Music..... *Mandamira*; composed by Samuel Asuncion, Carol Bello, and Kalayo-Pinikpan;  
performed by Kalayo-Pinikpan



Ballet Philippines - Tambol at Padyak

## **SUNDAY • JULY 26, 2015**

### **Humanities Forum**

4:45pm • Forum

East-West Center's Hawai'i Imin International Conference Center to Jefferson Hall

Inherent in the diverse ways our theme of stories is embodied in the performances of the 2015 Festival are complex issues confronted by choreographers, dancers, dance critics, scholars, students, and teachers of dance, as well as viewers of dance.

Expanding on the performative aspects of the Festival, we now embark on a conversation about the many ways stories are revealed in dance, and the issues involved in placing dance in cross-cultural contexts.

Join us as Stories company directors and internationally known dance critics engage in the telling of stories, discussing how and why they do what they do. We invite you to participate in the discussion with your own questions and comments.

#### **Dance critics**

**Forum moderator**  
Vilsoni Hereniko



Pawit Mahasarinand (Thailand) and  
Elizabeth Zimmer (New York)



#### **Company Representatives**

Michael Lanakila Casupang  
Hālau | Ka Wēkiu



Peter Rockford Espiritu  
Oceania Dance Theatre



Paul Alexander Morales  
Ballet Philippines





## Biographies: Choreographers, Critics, Scholars, and Festival Guest Faculty

A graduate of University of the Philippines, Diliman, **Patrick Alcedo** performed internationally with the Filipiniana Dance Group before earning his PhD in Dance History and Theory from University of California, Riverside. His research on Philippine dance embraces such topics as the folklorization of religion, the performance of gender and indigeneity, and the making of documentary films, and has appeared in print publications and in films he has produced. Currently Associate Professor of Dance at York University, Canada, Patrick has been recognized with a Dean's Teaching Award, a Young Professional Award from the Filipino Centre of Toronto, an Early Researcher Award from the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Research and Innovation, the Most Outstanding Aklanon Award from the Governor's Office of his home province of Aklan in central Philippines, and Fulbright Association's Selma Jeanne Cohen Award for International Dance Scholarship.

Having contributed choreography, costuming, and artistic direction to productions there, **Sami L.A. Akuna** is currently an Artist-in-Residence at Leeward Community College. He has performed with numerous local theatre and dance companies, including Iona Dance Theatre, and recently performed in and served as assistant director for UH Mānoa's Hawaiian-language production, *La'eikawai*. Sami holds degrees in theatre and dance from UH Mānoa, where he is currently pursuing an MFA in Directing, and plans to earn a PhD in Performance Studies. Cocoa Chandelier, Sami's alter ego, developed the curriculum for and taught the UH Mānoa course The Art of The Drag Performer, and travels continuously as an advocate and spokesperson for HIV/AIDS. In a recent competition produced by Lekia Williams, Akemi Productions, and Imua Lounge, Cocoa was crowned Hawai'i's Top Entertainer of the Year.

Born and raised in Samoa, **Allan Alo** spent most of his young years in New Zealand. While earning a Bachelor's degree in Expressive Arts and Literature and a Post Graduate Diploma in Dramatic Literature, he founded Oceania Dance Theatre at University of the South Pacific, Fiji. Working in modern,

contemporary, jazz, and funk styles, he has directed and choreographed original Pacific productions that took him to such places as China, South Africa, Singapore, Japan, Cuba, South and Central America, and regions in the Pacific. Allan sees his work as an instrument to help inspire and empower young people to remember their rich Pacific cultures, given the social pressures brought on by globalization, new technology, and modernization.

Hālau I Ka Wēkiu co-*kumu hula* **Karl "Veto" Baker** was one of six original members of Hālau Nā Kamalei O Līlīlehua, under the direction of Robert Cazimero. Veto joined the *hālau* in 1975 when he was first introduced to hula at Kamehameha Schools, and in 1995 graduated through formal '*uniki* ceremonies under Cazimero. Throughout his dance career, Veto performed nationally and internationally as a member of the Royal Dance Company with The Brothers Cazimero. While a member of the Concert Glee Club at Kamehameha Schools, Veto's singing talent was encouraged. He released his first solo CD, *Legacy of Love*, in 1991, and then teamed with Michael Lanakila Casupang to form the group KumZ, recording five projects that earned nominations from the Hawai'i Academy of Recording Arts and winning Group of the Year in 2010. Together with Casupang he has led Hālau I Ka Wēkiu to Overall Festival Winner awards in 2007 and 2012 at the highly acclaimed Merrie Monarch Hula Festival.

**Michael Lanakila Casupang** began his study of hula in 1983 as a member of Hālau Nā Kamalei O Līlīlehua, under the tutelage of *kumu hula* Robert Cazimero. In 1986, he began dancing in Cazimero's Royal Dance Company, performing continuously with them for six years at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. In 1995, Michael graduated as a *kumu hula* through formal '*uniki* ceremonies under Cazimero. Michael's high school teaching career began in 1987 when he taught music at Mid-Pacific Institute. One year later, he started his 28-year career as *kumu hula* at the Institute, where he continues to inspire the young by providing a foundation of life-lessons through hula. Along with Karl Veto Baker, co-*kumu hula* and co-founder of the musical group KumZ, and through Hālau I Ka Wēkiu and KumZ, Michael strives to write

songs, create dances, and record stories of the past and experiences of modern-day Hawai'i, thereby creating a window into life for future generations through Hawaiian music and hula.

**Robert Uluwehi Cazimero** is founder and *kumu hula* of Hālau Nā Kamalei O Līlīehua, and is a widely acclaimed composer and musician. Known in the music world with his brother Roland as The Brothers Cazimero, his musical career has garnered recognition with an award from the Hawai'i Academy of Recording Artists, a Grammy Award nomination, and induction into the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame. Robert's *hālau* has performed at the acclaimed Merrie Monarch Hula Festival, taking the overall title in 2005 and again in 2015. Robert has taught *hula* on the mainland and in Japan, and he and his *hālau* were featured performers in our 2013 Festival.

Coming from a family of dancers, **Augustus "Bam" Damian** took his first ballet class under his aunt, Bella Damian. His early dance career took him through diverse companies in Manila, such as Eric V. Cruz's Dance Concert Company, University of the Philippines' Filipiniana Dance Company under Cora Iñigo, Douglas Nieras's Hot Legs jazz troupe, and Ballet Philippines. At age 19, he was invited to be the principal male dancer at Kieler State Theater in Germany. Twenty years and six ballet companies later, Bam was chosen Best Dancer by the public of the United States Theaters of Monchengladbach and Krefeld. He has performed at the Paris Opera Garnier, the Deutsch Oper Berlin, and the Het National in Amsterdam; worked with dancers Lynne Charles, Sylvie Guillem, Michael Dennard, and Jorge Donne; and with choreographers Maurice Béjart, Hans van Mannen, and Christopher Bruce.

Hawai'i's own **Peter Rockford Espiritu**, director and primary choreographer of Tau Dance Theatre in Honolulu, assumed the position of Artistic Director of Oceania Dance Theatre at University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus in 2011. Since beginning his tenure there he has implemented a dance technique and applied dance curriculum, teaching classes in classical ballet, modern/contemporary dance, and hula. Peter studied hula with John Ka'imikaua, George Holokai, Ceci Akim, and Mel Lantaka; modern dance with Simeon Den, Marie Takazawa, and Betty Jones; and ballet at the American School of Ballet. His choreographic works focus on the mixing of cultures, cultural awakening, identity seeking, relationship building, native spirituality, responsible evolution, and global village awareness. Using traditional elements as a base to

help anchor his work, he strives to stay connected to his cultural identity in the face of increasing western influences, and to bridge the past and present while speaking to the future.

**Tony Fabella** began his study of dance with folk dancing under Laucrecia Reyes Urtula and Libertad Fajardo. He continued with modern dance under Alice Reyes, Norman Walker, Pauline Koner, and Takako Asakawa. He danced professionally with Dance Theater Philippines and was a charter member, manager, and resident choreographer of Alice Reyes and Modern Dance Company, which became the Cultural Center of the Philippines Dance Company, and later, Ballet Philippines. A prolific choreographer, he has created major works for Folk Arts Theater, Dance Theater Philippines, Manila Metropolis Ballet, Ballet Philippines, Philippine Ballet Theater, and Ballet Manila. He has received a Patnubay ng Sining at Kalinangan Award from the City of Manila, a National Commission on Culture and Arts' Alab ng Haraya Award, and the Gawad Alab ng Haraya Best Choreography Award from the Philippine National Commission for Culture and the Arts in 2001 for his piece, *Tambal at Padyak*.

Born in Rotuma, **Vilsoni Hereniko** is a Fiji Islander playwright, film director, and academic. He was the writer and director of Fiji's first feature film, *The Land Has Eyes*, which was presented at the Sundance Film Festival. The film received the Best Dramatic Feature award at the 2004 Toronto ImagineNative Film & Media Arts Festival and the Best Overall Entry in the 2005 Wairoa Maori Film Festival. He has served as director of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's School of Pacific Island Studies; Director of the Oceania Center for Arts, Culture, and Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji; editor of the award-winning journal *The Contemporary Pacific*; and is currently on the faculty of UH Mānoa's Academy for Creative Media. He has been recognized with Hawai'i's prestigious Elliott Cades Award for a "significant body of work of exceptional quality."

**Agnes Locsin**, former Artistic Director of Ballet Philippines, is considered by many to be a pioneer in "neoethnic dance" and what dance scholar Sally Ness describes as the "Filipinization of ballet." She began her dance studies at the studio of her mother, and subsequently became director of the Locsin Dance Ensemble and served as Artistic Director of Ballet Philippines 2. Her works focus on Philippine beliefs and rituals, and ethnic and urban life. Originally choreographed in the 1990s, her often re-

staged piece *La Revolucion Filipina* won the Gawad Buháy award for Best Choreography in 2008, and for Best Original Dance Production in 2008 and 2014.

**Alden Lugnasin** is Resident Choreographer of Ballet Philippines and Artistic Director of Ballet Philippines 2. Among his accolades are the dancer Georgette Sanchez's receiving a silver medal for her performance in his piece *Aku* at the Concours International de Danse de France, a silver medal at the Tokyo International Choreography Competition Dance and the Prince Takamado Award, a Philstage citation for Outstanding Original Choreography in 2008 and 2010, and the Gawad Buháy Award for Outstanding Original Choreography in a Musical or Play in 2013. He has choreographed works for local and international companies; was a guest choreographer-in-residence for the International Dance Festival at Connecticut College; represented the Philippines at workshops and in residencies in Bali, Poland, Cambodia, and China; and collaborated with visual artist Anne Rochette in France.

**Pawit Mahasarinand** is a lecturer in the Dramatic Arts Department at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, and is a dance and theatre critic for *The Nation*, Thailand's English-language newspaper. A former Fulbright scholar and Asian Cultural Council fellow, he studied at the University of Michigan in the US and is a prolific playwright, director, and translator. He has translated numerous European and American plays for professional and university productions in Thailand, and has authored entries on Thai theatre for *The Encyclopedia of Asian Theatre* (Greenwood Press). In 2014, he was awarded the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters) by the Ministry of Culture and Communication of France for his contributions to the arts and literature.

Dr. **Kara Miller** is Assistant Professor of Dance at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa where she teaches field research methods, performance studies, and digital technology for dancers. Previously she served on the faculties of University of California Irvine, California State University San Marcos, and Mira Costa College. She has done professional work in broadcast television and film. Her research and creative work, which includes experimental dance performances, installations, and films, has been presented at venues in Asia, the Americas, and Europe, and she is recipient of a Hawai'i Po'okela Award for Choreography. Kara enjoys collaborating with artists and is particularly interested in the

vibration of silence, forms that heighten awareness to being present in the moment, and acts of listening.

Artistic Director of Ballet Philippines since 2009, **Paul Alexander Morales** trained with Ballet Philippines while pursuing a theatre directing degree at University of the Philippines. With support from the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the British Council, he continued studies at the Laban Center, London, where he performed and toured with Transitions Dance Company. He returned to the Philippines in 1994, becoming Artistic Director of Dulaang Talyer from 1994 to 2002, and of Airdance Contemporary Dance Company from 2002 to 2009. He has been chair of the Choreographers' Network of the World Dance Alliance-Philippines, and was one of the founders of Contemporary Dance Network Philippines. As Artistic Director of Ballet Philippines he has choreographed *Tales of the Manuvu* and *Crisostomo Ibarra*, the latter winning the 2010 Gawad Buháy award for Outstanding Modern Dance Production.

**Onoe Kikunojo I** (1909-1964) was the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation headmaster (*iemoto*) of the Japanese Onoe school (*ryu*). Renowned kabuki actor Onoe Kikugoro VI (1885-1949) had established the Onoe School of Dance in 1946 as its 1<sup>st</sup> generation headmaster. In 1948, Onoe Kotojiro, a member of his acting company, was appointed to succeed him as the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation headmaster with his name changed to Onoe Kikunojo I. His son succeeded him in 1964 as Onoe Kikunojo II (3<sup>rd</sup> generation headmaster), and in 2011 Onoe Kikunojo II appointed his son as Onoe Kikunojo III (4<sup>th</sup> generation headmaster).

**Michael Pili Pang** is a protégé of hula masters Maiki Aiu Lake and Mae Kamamalu Klein, and founder and *kumu* of Hālau Hula Ka No'eau. Originally based in Waimea on the Island of Hawai'i, since 2002 the *hālau* has made Honolulu its home. Michael focuses on *hula ku'i*, a style and philosophy associated with his two *kumu* and inspirational mentors, and believes that the best foundation for creating something new is a thorough understanding of the past. Michael and his *hālau* have performed in more than 40 cities throughout the US and abroad, embodying hula as a means of expression and documentation of the political, social, cultural, and economic context in which Hawai'i exists today.

A former Professor in the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, **Gay Garland Reed** has also taught in China,

Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and American Samoa. Her research and publications focus on the intersection of cultural values and education in China, Korea, Hawai'i, and Bhutan, and she has published about 40 journal articles and book chapters on moral education, Confucianism, multicultural education, identity construction, and globalization. In recent years she has combined creative writing with her academic research.

**Alice Reyes**, founder, in 1969, of Ballet Philippines, was mentored by American choreographers Hanya Holm, Bessie Schoenberg, Alwin Nikolais, Murray Louis, and Merce Cunningham. Her works have focused on historical events; the celebration of national culture; and political issues, including women's emancipation and the 19<sup>th</sup> century Filipino uprising against Spanish oppression. Her works are described as blending modern dance and traditional Filipino dance, and as contributing to the definition of Philippine contemporary dance. In 2014 she was named a National Artist of the Philippines for Dance.

A violinist with a background in Western music, **Anna Reynolds** first began performing Balinese *gamelan* in San Francisco in 2001. She studied traditional performing arts at the Indonesian Arts Institute in Denpasar, Bali in 2004-5, and has since periodically returned to Bali to pursue intensive study of Balinese music and dance. She has studied *gender wayang*, music for traditional shadow theatre and various rituals, performing accompaniment for various puppeteers as part of many local ceremonial performances and in new collaborative projects with Balinese artists. In 2009, Anna assisted in reestablishing the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Balinese Gamelan Ensemble, and is now its Assistant Director. She is currently an Asian Theatre doctoral candidate and lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Dance at UH Mānoa.

A 1959 graduate of Kamehameha Schools, **Marlene Sai** is a recording artist, record company executive, producer, actress, and business woman who has been recognized with a Na Hoku Hanohano award for Female Vocalist of the Year, Hawai'i Academy of Recording Arts Lifetime Achievement Award, and Po'okela Award from the Hawai'i State Theatre Council for her solo performance portraying Queen Lili'uokalani in *Hear Me Oh My People*. Marlene has been inducted into the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame, co-produced and starred in the highly acclaimed PBS-distributed docudrama *Betrayal* about the illegal overthrow of Hawai'i's monarchy, and performed

the role of Bloody Mary in *South Pacific* for Hawai'i Opera Theatre. She has toured throughout Europe, Asia, and North America, and continues to perform in Hawai'i, Japan, and the Continental US.

**Amy Lynn Schiffner** is Associate Professor of Dance at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa where she teaches pedagogy, theory and criticism, and dance technique. A strong arts education advocate who supports local community outreach programs and serves leadership roles in many professional arts organizations, her research in arts curriculum, instruction, and assessment has been published and presented nationally. In addition to her arts education work she engages in creative projects that include choreographing contemporary dance pieces and theatre for young audience productions. In 2012, she received a Hawai'i State Theatre Council Po'okela Award for her choreography in Kennedy Theatre's production of *Ocean's Motion*.

**Kent Shinomae** started dancing at the age of 12. Beginning with jazz, he slowly expanded to ballet, contemporary, modern, ballroom, and hip-hop. He attended high school at Mid-Pacific Institute, where he graduated with a School of the Arts Certificate in Dance. In the fall of 2014, he graduated from UH Mānoa with a BFA in dance and a BBA in accounting, having spent a semester abroad at London Contemporary Dance School. He teaches hip-hop and jazz at Honolulu Dance Studio. Kent has won awards for choreography from competitions including the World of Dance, JUMP Dance Convention, Sharp International, and Spotlight Dance Cup. A scuba diving instructor and magician, Kent recently started his own dance company, Studio K Beats.

Upon completing her MFA in dance at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 1987, **Yukie Shiroma** founded the dance program at Mid-Pacific Institute and served as its director until 2006. As co-founder of the performing company Monkey Waterfall she directs productions and teaches mask movement workshops. For over thirty years she has studied Okinawan classical dance and theatre with master instructor Cheryl Yoshie Nakasone, director of Jimpu Kai USA Kin Ryosho Ryukyu Geino Kenkyusho, and in 2006 received a teaching certificate in Okinawan dance from Nakasone. Also in 2006, Yukie received an Individual Artist Fellowship Award from the Hawai'i State Foundation on Cultural and the Arts. She currently teaches Okinawan dance at UH Mānoa's Department of Theatre and Dance.

Founder and Director of Wai Company, **Brian Alsola “Wailana” Simcock** was born in the Philippines to a *pinay* (Filipino) mother and a New Zealand father and raised in O‘ahu since the age of 5. His professional career as a modern dancer began in 1996 in San Francisco with cultural activist and choreographer Pearl Ubungen. He danced with several companies while in San Francisco and studied with choreographers including Joe Goode, Kathleen Hermesdorf, and Terry Sendgraff. Upon returning to Hawai‘i in 2000, he joined Iona Dance Theater, Tau Dance Theater, Gingko Maraschino, and Samadhi Hawai‘i, and performed with productions of *‘Ualena* (Maui) and *Waikīkī Nei* (O‘ahu). He is presently pursuing an MFA in Dance at UH Mānoa. His choreography is influenced by cultural practices and the history of colonialism in the places in which he was born and raised, impelling him to create works that question ideas of beauty, cultural identity, and power.

**Samuel Skeist** was born and raised in Chicago, but has called Hawai‘i his home since 2010. He began doing spoken word performances in 2000, and has performed and competed in bars, cafes, and other venues across the US. In 2014 and 2015, he was a member of the Hawai‘i National Slam Poetry Team. From 2003 to 2009, he lived and taught English in China, while giving spoken word performances in various venues in Beijing, Shanghai, and Wuhan. His involvement with words has turned him into a Scrabble and Boggle warrior, and he will complete a master’s degree in Second Language Studies from University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa the end of this year.

Founder and *kumu hula* of Pua Ali‘i ‘Ilima, **Vicky Holt Takamine** began studying hula at the age of 12, in 1975 graduated through the *‘ūniki* rituals of hula from Maiki Aiu Lake, and earned her BA and MA in Dance Ethnology from UH Mānoa. She is currently Director of the Pa‘i Foundation and a lecturer in the UH Mānoa Music Department, where she teaches hula. Her persistent efforts in advocacy for the protection and preservation of the cultural and natural resources of Hawai‘i are manifest in many ways in the local community, where she has been acknowledged with numerous awards. This year the Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce honored her with an ‘O‘o Award for lifelong devotion to improving the health and well-being of Native Hawaiians, and she was recipient of a Native Hawaiian Artist Fellowship from the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation to develop new works in honor of Queen Lili‘uokalani, Hawai‘i’s last queen.

**Marie Takazawa** began her dance training in Hawai‘i where she studied and performed at UH Mānoa, with Dances We Dance Company, and with Hawai‘i Dance Theatre. She subsequently moved to New York where she performed on Broadway with the Uncompany as lead dancer in the Yul Brynner production of *The King and I*, and in a tour of *The King and I* starring Rudolph Nureyev. Upon returning to Hawai‘i she co-directed Danceworks, Honolulu, which was selected as the 1994 People’s Choice Awards for Best Dance Company. She is presently a freelance choreographer; teaches jazz, ballet, and modern dance for the Honolulu Club and Ballet Hawaii; and teaches aerial silk tissue classes at Samadhi Hawaii.

**Vasili Vainonen** (1901-1964) graduated from the Petrograd College of Choreography. He danced with the Kirov Theatre of Opera and Ballet, later choreographing for both the Kirov and the Bolshoi Theatre. He originally choreographed *Flames of Paris* in 1932 for the Kirov Theatre, and subsequently revised and revived it several times. He based the choreography on dances from different regions of France at the time of the French Revolution, and the piece is said to have been one of the first times in the history of Russian ballet that the people, *en masse*, were given a leading role on stage. Among other ballets he choreographed are *Raymonda*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Harlequinade*.

A professional musician, dancer, and composer, **I Madé Widana** earned a BA in Balinese Traditional Music at Indonesian Arts Institute, Denpasar, Bali. As a founding member and musician in the Bali-based performing arts ensemble Çudamani, he has participated in tours to the US, Japan, and Europe. He has been in residence in Hawai‘i since 2009, and currently teaches the UH Mānoa Balinese Gamelan Ensemble, is a lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Dance, and participates in community outreach programs under the auspices of the East-West Center Arts Program, the Mayor’s Office of Culture and the Arts, and UH Mānoa Outreach College Statewide Cultural Extension Program. When in Bali he teaches traditional *gamelan* music in various villages and at a number of formal music and dance studios. Widana’s expertise in traditional Balinese music and dance is coupled with extensive experience in innovative and collaborative music and dance projects.

**Elizabeth Zimmer** writes about dance, theater, and books for *Dance Studio Life* and other publications,



and teaches writing at Hollins University. She served as dance editor of *The Village Voice* from 1992 until 2006, and reviewed ballet for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* from 1997 through 2005. She earned a BA in Literature from Bennington College and an MA in English from SUNY Stony Brook and has also studied many forms of dance, especially contact improvisation with its founders. She edited *Body Against Body: The Dance and other Collaborations of Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane* (Station Hill Press) and *Envisioning Dance for Film and Video* (Routledge). Her one-woman show, *North Wing*, played at two off-off-Broadway theaters, and she has appeared in the work of Christopher Williams, Aaron Landsman, and Kriota Willberg.



## Dance Stories

*"Where do you live?"*

*"I live in my story."*

*"Is that a place?"*

*"Well, not exactly. It's sort of an idea."*

*"How can you live in an idea?"*

*"We all do."*

*"Well, whose idea is it?"*

*"It's sort of everyone's and mine at the same time."*

*"Isn't that dangerous?"*

*"How so?"*

*"Well, if it's a story then we're making it up. How can it be real? I mean a place has boundaries – a center and outskirts – it's REAL. But a story, an idea . . . well it just doesn't seem solid enough to live in. It can't keep out the wind and the cold."*

*"I don't agree. My story does keep out the wind and the cold or I couldn't survive. And after all, the boundaries that we think are solid are really just imaginary anyway."*

Gay Garland Reed, January 2014

## Dancing Fiji: Old Dances, New Choreographies, Dancing Free

By Vilsoni Hereniko

The most distinguishing feature of the Oceania Dance Theatre is its eclectic and free-ranging repertoire of dance styles and techniques that seamlessly integrate Oceania's past with its present. Its members are as adept at performing traditional dances from such places in the Pacific as Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Tokelau, and Tuvalu as they are at performing new dances that incorporate styles and techniques from non-Pacific traditions. Free of cultural constraints, these dancers fuse the past and the present into a graceful, wondrous, and exhilarating experience, demonstrating eloquently what can happen when the human impulse to create anew is allowed, even encouraged, to roam freely without fear of criticism or censorship. Theirs is a creative dance of freedom.

This description of the Oceania Dance Theatre suggests the story of not only one contemporary performing group but, in fact, much of the history of dance in Fiji, a country with a complex multicultural history that brought dance of many kinds to its islands.

Originating from Taiwan and South China, Austronesian ancestors arrived in Fiji about 3,000 years ago. A country of about 330 islands, Fiji has close cultural and political ties to Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia. Explorers, whalers, traders, and beachcombers have been colorful presences in Fiji's past, and the arrival of missionaries in 1830 paved the way for British colonization. The old religion and its associated rituals, ceremonies,

and certain dances were eradicated and Fijian chiefs desired British rule, partly to stop tribal warfare and partly because Fiji wanted the military protection of a superpower. Britain annexed Fiji in 1874. Despite becoming independent in 1970, however, British influence and the legacy of colonialism are still evident today – in Fiji’s educational and political systems as well as in the presence of a large Indian population.

To propel Fiji into the market economy, in 1879 the British brought indentured laborers from India to work in the sugar plantations. The Fijians did not see the need to toil so hard in the hot sun when food resources were ample and land was readily available.



Oceania Dance Theatre performers in *Kava*. Photo courtesy of Vilsoni Hereniko.

They welcomed Indian labor, even though the British deliberately kept the Indians and the Fijians apart. Thus when Fiji gained independence from Britain in 1970, the Fijians and the Indians became aware that in order to live peacefully, they needed to learn about and accept each other’s religions, values, and world views.

A new Fiji seems to have emerged out of what is euphemistically referred to as a “coup culture,” defined by four military coups in less than three decades. In 2014, after a protracted period of military rule and uncertainty, Fiji held democratic elections. FijiFirst, the military-backed political party, won by a big margin. By all appearances, Fiji is returning to its former goals of political stability and economic progress.

Dances performed today in Fiji reflect traditional practices of the diverse peoples of Oceania and elsewhere who have settled in the country as well as the cultural changes brought on by the country’s sociopolitical history and neighboring influences. There is continuity with the past, but there are also evidences of cultural adaptation.

Many broad patterns in dance techniques and styles seen today in Fiji are shared by various cultures in Oceania. For example, although costumes for traditional dances are made from things found in the natural environment (such as *pandanus* or coconut leaves, feathers, bark cloth, shells, and seeds), the manner in which these are woven or tied together and where they are placed on the head, arms,

or legs may be unique to an island or a culture. The same applies to body movements: generally speaking, men’s movements tend to be vigorous and expansive while those of women are more circumscribed and closer to the body. But there are exceptions to this general rule, especially in Kiribati, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, and French Polynesia.

Most dances are performed standing. When this is the case, there is often considerable mobility and flexibility in movement, especially if compared to those performed sitting down. Sometimes the dance may begin with the performers seated (as in a men’s Fijian *meke*), but the dancers eventually stand in order to jump up and down and move around as the dance builds to a rousing climax. In the Samoan dance called the *taualuga* (a similar version exists in Tongan culture) the aesthetic appears to be based on juxtaposing order and disorder, such as graceful female movements close to the body in contrast to male movements that are more expansive and vigorous. The dance is therefore reflective of idealized complementarity between male and female roles and expectations in Samoan society. This symbolic reflection of cultural values and norms is generally true whenever men and women perform in the same dance.



Men’s Meke. Photo by KT Photography.

Beyond these shared dance features there are elements unique to each culture. For example, in Kiribati, the frigate bird was very important in traditional society and this is evident in its best-known dances, many of which are symbolic representations of this revered bird. The head, hand, and body adornments as well as the movements are suggestive of this bird, still and in motion, with the sudden head tilt a defining characteristic. There are modern versions of this ancient dance, especially among the Banabans of Fiji, that reflect creative adaptation in a new land.

The Oceania Dance Theatre will perform some traditional dances originating in various places in the Pacific in this year's Festival, providing audiences with glimpses into Oceania's past: its aesthetics, dance movements and styles, body adornment and ornaments, costumes, and cultural values that inform these dances. It is likewise fitting that they include such things as Bollywood dancing in their repertoire as a nod not only to the original homeland of the present-day Indian population in Fiji, but also to Fiji's recent shift to calling all its citizens "Fijians" regardless of ethnicity or race. This is because of the present government's desire to build a unified nation, one in which Indians and Fijians live in harmony.

In addition to embracing influences from its multicultural past and present, Fiji's young people, particularly its artists, are at the forefront of a movement that craves to transcend the confines of island life and to find freedom in travel to new places, new experiences, and new inspirations. These young men and women are attracted to the contemporary and the new. A number of them join dance groups, either traditional or modern. The interest in dance might originate from participation in traditional dance performances in villages, but this love of dance doesn't stop there. Many are interested in creative dance that transcends any particular dance tradition.



Oceania Dance Theatre performer in *Tsunami Bird*. Photo courtesy of Vilsoni Hereniko.

For these young people, no art form more embodies their desire to be free – to create, to imagine, to dream – than the medium of contemporary dance, a kind of dance also showcased in ODT's performance at this year's Festival.

To fully understand why ODT's repertoire is constituted as it is, it is important to understand the group's origin and development, and its base at the University of the South Pacific. One of the most dynamic and exciting sites of creativity in the

Pacific can be found at the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture, and Pacific Studies (OCACPS), located at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva, Fiji. USP is a regional institution owned by twelve Pacific island countries: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon



Allan Alo, first Artistic Director of Oceania Dance Theatre. Photo courtesy Vilsoni Hereniko.

Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Established in 1968, USP is one of two regional universities in the world (the other being the University of the West Indies). As such, part of its mission is to instill, develop, and promote a Pacific consciousness among its students. Although located in Fiji and although Fiji is its largest financial donor, it is a Pacific university first and foremost. Finding the right balance between Fiji's huge influence on university affairs and interests of the other member states is a constant challenge.

OCACPS was established in 1997 to further the university's mission of promoting a Pacific consciousness through culture and the arts. Charismatic, philosophical, wise, and visionary, the Center's founding Director, Epeli Hau'ofa, was largely responsible for transforming the cultural and artistic landscape at USP. Under his leadership, Allan Alo of Samoa formed the Oceania Dance Theatre and became its first artistic director. The choice of Allan was an inspired one; Allan succeeded in translating Epeli's philosophy on culture and the arts into a new dance, one that fused the old and the new.

Epeli believed that in order for the arts, including dance, to remain relevant and vibrant, the arts must evolve and change with the times. He encouraged Oceanians (his preferred term for Pacific Islanders), to draw from their pasts but not to be stuck in them. He encouraged the creation of new dances and new choreographies. And because the Oceania Centre is located in a multicultural setting, Epeli encouraged the cross-fertilization of dances and dance techniques and styles. He told the dancers to draw their inspiration from everywhere, but especially from within Oceania.

Epeli's view of culture was controversial then, and still is today. On the one hand cultural purists feel threatened by Epeli's vision of a new Oceania, which builds on ideas written about in Albert Wendt's influential essay "Towards a New Oceania"; on the other hand, contemporary artists feel liberated by

Epeli's advocacy of the artist's freedom to create and to dance a new dance, one the world has never seen before.

This is where the present artistic director, Peter Espiritu, comes in. Peter was the founder as well as Executive and Artistic Director of Tau Dance Theater; a professional modern dance company located in Hawai'i. USP hired Peter in 2011 to replace Allan Alo who was returning to Samoa, Allan's homeland. Soon after, USP hired another talented and dynamic artist, Igelese Ete, who has extensive conducting and composing experience and was the choirmaster for Peter Jackson's acclaimed film *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. These two gifted artists elevated the Oceania Centre's performing arts program to an international level and are largely responsible for ODT's international visibility today.

Peter's international reputation as well as his considerable talents as a dancer and choreographer, not to mention his charisma and outgoing personality, reinvigorated the dance program at the Oceania Centre. Like Allan, Peter continued the tradition of building on the past but looking to the future. His vision is supported by Igelese Ete's musical talents as well as by the Vice Chancellor and his management team.

Peter's tenure since 2011 has been a period of unprecedented productivity and visibility. This high profile has come about mainly through the mounting of three large musical productions that were also filmed, allowing for wide dissemination. The live productions held in a spacious performance venue built by the Japanese Government on the USP campus made it possible to stage big musicals and other productions with casts of up to a hundred or more performers. From its humble beginnings in one concrete block with a small stage, the Oceania Centre's facilities expanded to about five times their original size. From the seed Epeli planted a whole forest grew.

Today, the Oceania Centre has become a focal point of art and cultural activity in the capital of Suva, but especially at USP. It has even been referred to as the "heartbeat" of the university, and USP uses ODT to promote its image of a multicultural academic institution located in the South Pacific. In 2012, for example, the Oceania Dance Theatre represented the university for the first time under its own banner at the prestigious Festival of Pacific Arts, held in the Solomon Islands.

One aspect of ODT's contribution to academia is its use of grand-scale musical productions to disseminate research findings and to speak to issues of interest and concern in contemporary society. Since 2011 Oceania Dance Theatre has created three elaborate productions that combine poetry, dance, music, drama, and storytelling to address important research information, particularly information on double-hulled canoe culture. As an arts and culture program within an academic institution, this intervention in academic notions of the term "publishing" ensures that research and traditional elements of culture remain vital and relevant.

Known as a trilogy, *Vaka: The Birth of a Seer*, *Drua: The Wave of Fire*, and *Moana: The Rising of the Sea*, the three musical productions tell stories about the creation of huge double-hulled canoes that freely



Oceania Dance Theatre performers in *Moana: The Rising of the Sea*. Photo courtesy of Oceania Dance Theatre.

traversed the Pacific Ocean before Europeans first arrived. *Moana*, originally sponsored by the European Union, is the best-known of the three, in large part because it is rare to have Pacific Islanders use their oral and arts traditions, especially the performing arts, to address an issue of global concern. In this third installment of the trilogy, the double-hulled canoe becomes a symbol of hope for Islanders who abandon their submerged islands in search of new lands.

In May and June of this year, just before their trip to Hawai'i, ODT's production of *Moana* toured Bergen, Brussels, Edinburgh, London, and Paris, where it raised awareness about the impact of climate change on the low-lying islands of Oceania. Some of the traditional dances performed by ODT at this year's Asia Pacific Dance Festival are part of the *Moana* production, but in *Moana* they are deployed as an integral part of a moving story about sea-level rise in

Oceania and serve as plot points in a larger narrative rather than being stand-alone traditional dances.

If dance should be reflective of the community in which it exists, then Oceania Dance Theatre exemplifies this maxim exceptionally well. Its diverse and expansive repertoire is representative of the multicultural milieu in which it exists – the community of Fiji as well as the community of the University of the South Pacific. More importantly, it promotes and perpetuates a philosophical view of culture and

the arts inspired by Epeli Hau'ofa, founder and first Director of the Oceania Centre. Rooted in Oceanian culture but encouraged to create freely without fear, ODT is an ambassador for the Pacific, using its soft power to spread goodwill and appreciation of Oceania's rich cultural traditions and influences. Indeed, dance in Fiji has been reinvigorated and given a new boost by ODT's creative and innovative dance techniques and styles that are rooted in Oceanian traditional dances but are free of their cultural constraints.

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### Layered Stories of Hula

By Vicky Holt Takamine

*I ka 'ōlelo nō ke ola, i ka 'ōlelo nō ka make*  
In the word there is life, in the word there is death

This Hawaiian proverb, cited and translated by Mary Kawena Puku'i, illustrates the importance of the word, or text, in Hawaiian culture. Because the Hawaiians of former times did not have a written language, the stories, genealogies, and historical accounts of their people were perpetuated through oral traditions. One of these oral traditions was *mele*, sung or chanted poetry, which became the basis of hula. *Mele* is such an important component of the dance of the Hawaiian people that without it there is no hula. The stories and chants provide each generation of hula practitioners with knowledge of the past and with rich material that inspires the creation of new and original choreography.

Because of the importance of text, hula has been instrumental in preserving and perpetuating Native Hawaiian language, art, and cultural practices. Hula is the visual expression of the poetry, telling, through movement, the stories of the people's love for their gods, people, and lands. Hawaiians were skillful poets, weaving several layers of meanings into the texts they created. Hula choreographers could choose to depict any of these layers of meaning and often chose to represent the *kaona*, the meaning that was only alluded to. For example, stories about love rarely mention the name of the person for whom the song is composed. Instead the author might use a particular flower to refer to a woman and a bird to refer to a man. The names of the different kinds of wind and rain may hint at the island or district where a person resides. For example, *Hana Waimea*

*I Ka 'Upena* is a name chant for the warriors of Kamehameha who were known as *kīpu'upu'u*. The chant tells the story of the *kīpu'upu'u* wind and rain, which is a way to describe the Waimea district on the island of Hawai'i as well as to refer to the warriors, but without actually naming them.

Several stories related to the goddesses Pele and Hi'iaka are embedded in chants that are used today in the protocols of hula. One such story traces Pele's travels from her ancestral homeland in far off Kahiki to Hawai'i. She begins in the northernmost islands and works her way down the island chain until she makes her home in Kīlauea crater on the island of Hawai'i. As she travels through the islands Pele's constant digging into each of them forms craters and mountains that create the physical characteristics of each island. Her lava flows destroy forests and establish new lands. Hi'iakaikapoliopole, the youngest sister of the goddess Pele, is the healer of the Pele clan. Hi'iaka and her companions Pa'uopalai (skirt of *palai* ferns) and Wahine'ōma'o (woman of green) travel back over these lands, healing them with new vegetation of ferns, flowers, and trees. At each stop they ask for permission to enter with a greeting chant. These chants continue to be used in *hālau hula*, or schools of Hawaiian dance, today. They are known as *oli kāhea*, a chant asking for permission to enter the *hālau*, or *oli komo*, the response from the *kumu hula*, or hula master, allowing one to enter the *hālau* to begin learning the hula.

The sung or chanted poetry, the *mele*, can be divided into two major categories – *mele oli* and *mele hula*. *Oli* are chanted text with no musical or dance accompaniment, and they include prayers, genealogies, stories of creation and birth, and lamentations. *Mele hula* are chanted or sung texts used for dance, or hula. There are many different vocal techniques and styles of chanting but it is *olioli* that most often accompanies the hula. This technique includes the use of ‘*i*’, or vibrato, and *ha’i*, or vocal breaks. The power of the chanted text, the voice, and the intricate vocal techniques are believed by many to conjure up the forces of nature. Hawaiians believe that a skilled chanter can communicate with the gods, calling the winds, the rains, the ocean waves, and the deities of the forest. That power, when used to accompany hula, can motivate the dancers, and together the chant

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“Stories have been an  
essential driver of change  
throughout human history.”

Shane Snow

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and dance create what we call a “chicken skin” performance. It is the *mana*, the efficacious power of the chant and dance in a hula performance, that can move audiences. For some hula practitioners the embodied experience of *mana* spiritually connects them to their ancestors and the world around them.

Hawaiian scholar Mary Kawena Puku‘i recalls that the hula “was much practiced by chiefs and commoners, by old and young . . . standing dances for those whose limbs were young and spry and sitting dances for those . . . like the aged and over-plump.” In ancient times the formal training of hula was conducted under strict *kapu*, or prohibitions, in a *hālau hula*. The term *hālau hula* refers to both the hula troupe and the hall or location where hula is learned. Within the *hālau hula* an altar dedicated to Laka, the goddess of hula was erected in the eastern corner. On the altar, Laka was represented by a block of ebony wood wrapped in barkcloth dyed yellow with turmeric. The altar was decorated with ferns and greenery representing other gods associated with the hula. Some of the plants were placed on the altar for their believed potency in bringing about important

aspects of hula – *pili* grass so knowledge would cling to the students, *ulu* for growth and inspiration, *kukui* for knowledge. These plants are the preferred ferns and flowers used to make *lei* to adorn the dancer. Proper adornments include *lei* to encircle the neck and the crown of the head, and wristlets and anklets. When fully adorned, the dancer also becomes an altar for the gods of the hula.

*Mele hula* can be divided into two major categories – *hula kahiko*, or ancient-style Hawaiian dance, and *hula ‘auana*, or modern-style Hawaiian dance. Although often referred to in English simply as “ancient dance,” while the text and choreography for *hula kahiko* may be passed on through generations of hula practitioners, they may also be created in recent times. It is the style in which they are performed that differentiates them from *hula ‘auana*, and details of this style are sometimes debated by hula masters. Both *hula kahiko* and *hula ‘auana* can be performed standing or in a kneeling position. All hula are accompanied by drummers/chanters for *hula kahiko*, or instrumentalists/vocalists for *hula ‘auana*. Often the dancers use hand-held instruments to accompany themselves in the hula, which may also be manipulated in decorative ways to become an integral part of the dance movements. When performing in a kneeling position the dancers sometimes chant for themselves.

*Hula kahiko* is accompanied by chanting and traditional Hawaiian percussion instruments. The chanter/drummer chants and drums in a seated position on the floor usually behind the dancers in order to observe the dancers while they perform. Named lower body movement motifs keep time to the rhythms of the drumming in *hula kahiko* or of the music in *hula ‘auana*. The lower body motifs are used in the same way in both *hula kahiko* and *hula ‘auana*, although they may be performed in a different style. Lower body motifs generally alternate from right to left, creating a kind of symmetry in the appearance of the movement. They change more frequently in a *hula ‘auana* than in a *hula kahiko*. In *hula kahiko* a single lower body motif may be used throughout the chanted text of an entire dance, with another motif used as a dividing motif during the brief rhythmic or musical interlude separating verses. In *hula ‘auana*, it is not unusual for the lower body motifs to change every one or two beats with each hand gesture.

Hula is performed in a relatively small area. Some footwork is performed in place, with the feet never lifting very high off the ground and only extending

a small distance away from the body's center line. Traditionally at least one foot maintains contact with the floor – except for occasional very brief moments when there is a slight lifting of the center of weight, dancers do not leap or jump. Because of the story-telling nature of the dance the dancer generally maintains a frontal orientation, but traveling steps can move in any direction and take the dancer across the performing space. In the basic traveling movement motif, the *kāhōlo*, only three steps are taken in a single direction at one time. The hips sway primarily as a result of the lower body movement motifs but this action is sometimes exaggerated. While the hips move and sway to the rhythm, the upper torso is held generally erect and steady, occasionally bending or extending to augment the reach of the arms or emphasize the gestures, exemplifying the proverb: *Pali ke kua, mahina ke alo* – Back straight as a cliff, face as bright as the moon.

Hand and arm gestures may closely interpret the text of the song or chant in a literal manner, allude to the text or *kaona*, be abstract, or enhance lower body movements. They are used in the same ways in both *hula kahiko* and *hula 'auana*, but tend to be more literal in *hula 'auana*. Arm gestures may be symmetrical or asymmetrical. Asymmetrical gestures are often repeated from one side to the other side, creating a kind of movement symmetry much like that of the lower body motifs. Gestures depicting things in the sky or space above are performed in a high level, while gestures depicting things on land or in the sea are performed at a middle or low level. Gestures in *hula 'auana* tend to be more fluid in movement than those of *hula kahiko*, with the arms bending and extending and hands and fingers undulating and curling gracefully. Contemporary choreographers often illustrate more of the text by using more gestures in *hula 'auana* than in *hula kahiko*, while in *hula kahiko* more abstract gestures are used than in *hula 'auana*. This is possibly a reflection of the choreographers, performers, and audience members who in ancient times were fluent in the Hawaiian language. Today, the majority of choreographers, performers, and audience members are not fluent in the Hawaiian language and choreographers may feel the need or desire to interpret more of the text in movement in order to communicate the meaning more accurately.

Facial expressions reflect the feelings and emotions of the text, but are not used in the highly exaggerated way in which they are in dances from some other cultures. Because of the importance of the hand and

arm gestures in telling the story, facial expression often directs the viewer toward them: *Kuhi no ka lima, hele no ka maka* – Where the hands move, there let the eyes follow is a general rule in hula. Although the role of the dancer is primarily that of a storyteller, on some occasions, as in animal dances, the dancer will perform as an actor, “becoming,” for example, a dog or a lizard.

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**“The truest expression of a  
people is in its dance and music.  
Bodies never lie.”**

Agnes de Mille

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The dancer communicates with the chanters and musicians through the *kāhea*, or call. Similar to a call and response, one or more dancers call out the title of the chant or song at the beginning of each dance. The first few words of each verse of the text are called out by one or more dancers, and the chanter or musicians then respond with the appropriate verses and the dancers move accordingly. One or more dancers then call out again at the end of the dance to indicate the individual to whom the dance has been dedicated.

Traditionally, *mele oli* and all *hula kahiko* prior to 1820 were composed and performed in a through-composed manner, that is, from the first line until the end with no verses or breaks and no repetition. This changed with the introduction of Christianity to the islands and fluctuating support for hula. In the early 1800's, Christian missionaries followed Captain Cook to the “Sandwich Islands” to convert the Polynesian people. After the death of King Kamehameha in 1819, his wife, Queen Ka'ahumanu, converted to Christianity in 1825. By 1830 Christian missionaries had convinced Ka'ahumanu, who had been appointed Kuhina Nui, or Regent, to outlaw the hula. But *mele* continued to be composed and performed in secret and later rulers, such as Prince Lot (Kamehameha V) supported and engaged in the practice of the hula. In 1856 Prince Lot invited *hālau hula* to perform at the wedding reception of his younger brother, Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma, for which he was chastised in the newspapers by both Christian converts and the missionaries. Today, the Prince Lot Hula Festival is held annually on the



grounds of Moanalua Gardens on the third Saturday of July to celebrate this event and the contributions that Prince Lot made to the preservation and perpetuation of hula.

Influenced by the first formal group of missionaries who taught the Hawaiians how to sing choral music in 1820, *mele hula* and contemporary songs are primarily composed in the strophic style, that is, verses or two line couplets. In addition, the missionaries introduced singing with a wider variety of pitches. These new influences naturally influenced the dance movements which led to a new category of dance called *hula ku'i*, dances that string together (*ku'i*) the old and the new. In 1883, King David Kalākaua declared that the “hula is the language of the heart, and therefore the heartbeat of the Hawaiian people,” and invited troupes of dancers to celebrate his coronation on the grounds of ‘Iolani Palace. Named for King David Kalākaua, known as the Merrie Monarch, the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival is the most prestigious and largest hula festival today. Like his coronation in 1883, it is celebrated annually over a three day period in Hilo, Hawai‘i the weekend after Easter Sunday.

The introduction of western musical instruments, jazz, big band music, and Hollywood heavily influenced Hawaiian music and dance. In 1879, Portuguese immigrants brought the *braguinha*, a four-string instrument. Manuel Nunes is credited for re-shaping the *braguinha* and inventing the ukulele. Both the guitar and the ukulele are the foundation of modern Hawaiian music used to accompany *hula*

*‘auana*. Songs were being written in English about Hawai‘i for Hollywood movies and Broadway shows. These songs are known as *hapa haole* songs, *hapa* meaning part or half and *haole*, foreign or Caucasian. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century musicians and hula dancers began to travel to the Continental US to perform at world fairs and hotels where, from 1920 to 1959, *hapa haole hula* became very popular both here and abroad.

Today, Hawaiian songs and chants continue to be written and performed about the world around us by contemporary poets and dancers. They are composed for all genres of hula – *kahiko*, *‘auana*, *ku'i*, and *hapa haole*. The formal training of hula takes place on all islands in *hālau hula* under the tutelage of *kumu hula*. Many *kumu hula* have branches of their schools in the Continental United States, Japan, and other countries. Workshops and classes are also taught throughout Hawai‘i at universities and colleges, public, private and charter schools, community centers, and some hotels. Performances of hula may be found year round throughout Hawai‘i at community events, hula festivals and competitions, conventions and conferences, in hotels, on the beach at Waikīkī, at commercial *lū‘au* (Hawaiian feasts), and at family gatherings.

*Kumu hula* Maiki Aiu Lake said, “The hula is the art of expressing everything we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and feel.” Hula continues as it was in the past, but has also changed in ways relevant to contemporary times. It is still the heartbeat of the Hawaiian people.

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## Philippine Culture Through Its Dance Traditions

By Patrick Alcedo

Any Philippine dance repertoire, such as the one Ballet Philippines brings to Hawai‘i for this year’s Festival, should be viewed through the lenses of the plurality of Philippine culture and the porosity of the country’s borders. These characteristics have consistently propelled Filipinos to maintain distinctiveness in a wide array of artistic and public expressions while also striving to be fluid in their identities.

By looking briefly at Philippine dances, street festivals, and music played at these performances, we can see the complexity and richness of the cultural identities of Filipinos and their responses to issues of nationalism and postcoloniality that are inextricably linked with the country’s deep colonial ties with Europe, Latin America, and the United States. Although these cultural characteristics and their attendant historical pasts can be divided into three parts, these parts are not mutually exclusive.

Rather, the bands between them are elastic enough to make them actively interact with each other.

During the United States Colonial Period of 1898 to 1946, US volunteer teachers were sent to the Philippines to establish a public education system and to train Filipinos to become future teachers. On board the ship *SS Thomas* that sailed from San Francisco in 1901, these 600 pioneer teachers, 170 of who were women, became known as the Thomasites. They taught English, mathematics,



The author, Patrick Alcedo, street dancing with Cecile Motus and her family. Taken in January 2009. Photo by Nana Buxani.

geography, and practical arts, but also included in their instruction folk dances, dances that had been brought to the US by immigrants from Europe and performed by US students in the early part of the twentieth century before migrating to the Philippines. These foreign dances, such as those that became known as the *Ba-Ingles* (English Dance) from Ilocos in the northern region of the Philippines, became part and parcel of the Philippines' physical education programs that linked dance and music with the enhancement of the physical and character development of Filipinos – ultimately strengthening the colonial government's policy on benevolent assimilation.

As a reaction to learning Anglo-European dances, and in an effort to preserve a part of Philippine culture “untouched” by colonialism, Francisca Reyes Aquino, the first Philippine National Artist for Dance, in the 1920s began conducting research and documenting Philippine folk and indigenous dances and music. With support from Jorge Bocobo, President of the University of the Philippines, which was founded by the US in 1908 and is the country's premiere state university, Aquino scoured the islands of the Philippines for communities and individuals still practicing performance traditions that embodied what for her was authentic Filipino-ness.

These newly documented traditional dances and their music, which for mass instruction were notated for piano, were then reconstructed in Manila to instruct would-be physical education teachers. Aquino, who was awarded a fellowship to pursue graduate studies at Boston University's Sargent College of Physical Education, soon founded the University of the Philippines Folk Song and Dance Group, which in the 1940s provided cultural shows for US service men. By the time the country gained its independence in 1946, Philippine dances and music had already become core units in the country's physical education curriculum.

A decade later Philippine dance companies began showcasing Philippine folk dances partnered with their indigenous musical instruments to phenomenal success on international and national stages, representing before foreign publics and Filipinos alike the need to preserve one's culture and to announce the country's independence. The world renowned dance company Bayanihan, a Tagalog word meaning “helping one another in times of need,” and other companies such as the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Dance Group, the Baranggay Dance Group, and the Filipiniana Dance Group, have since gone on international tours, serving as the country's ambassadors of goodwill.

Bayanihan, the country's national dance company, first gained international prominence in the 1958 Brussels World's Fair and soon after on Broadway and the then highly influential US television program, *The Ed Sullivan Show*. To date they have gone on 15 world tours, showcasing before international audiences the rich and diverse dance heritage of the Philippines.

To showcase the heterogeneity but at the same time the singularity of Philippine culture, the staging of Philippine folk dances has usually been organized into suites. According to the late Ramon Obusan, one of the country's National Artists for Dance, the structuring of Philippine dance in the present-day suite format was the brainchild of Jose Lardizabal, Bayanihan's artistic director, who received training in drama and theatre arts in Europe. Through Lardizabal's direction, Bayanihan put on stage the suite organization when the company started touring in the 1950's, a sequencing so successful that it has been adopted as well by most Philippine dance groups across the globe.

A Philippine folk dance concert typically opens with the Cordillera Suite, a grouping of dances from

the Cordillera Mountain Range in the Northern Philippines. Percussive sounds of cut bamboo instruments and brass gongs called the *gangsa* dictate the tempo of the dances and ritual practices of ethnic groups like the Ifugao. In this suite, men in loincloths and women in skirts and blouses, who balance clay water pots on their heads and carry baskets to indicate their occupational roles in their community, take pride in the fact that the Spanish and later the Americans were unsuccessful in colonizing the Filipinos in this hard-to-reach region. However, any project of colonization will always leave an imprint on a culture being colonized, no matter how hard the resistance is. Thus, a close inspection of the dances of the Cordillera reveals influences of the West on this region's expressive culture.

What follows is a foil to this suite called the Spanish Suite, in which women wearing formal gowns and men outfitted in embroidered long-sleeved shirts made of pineapple fiber, called *barong tagalog*, dance to the string ensemble of the *rondalla*. Filipinos have adapted and Filipinized dances like the *jota* and *mazurka*, which were introduced during the Spanish Colonial Period mostly on the northern island of Luzon and central islands of the Visayas. For instance they use carved bamboos as castanets and *abaniko* (fans) as props for women to convey shyness or dislike of their male suitors.

The middle section of the concert is the Muslim Suite, the dances from the southern island of Mindanao. The most recognizable of the dances in this suite, theatricalized by the Bayanihan National Dance Company, is the dance of royalty known as the *singkil* from the Maranao ethnic group, "People of Lake Lanao." The grandiosity of *singkil* – a lost princess going in and out of a field of clashing bamboo poles that symbolize a forest, followed by her female entourage, and her eventual rescue by a prince, a multi-layered choreography that is all put in motion by the deep and resonating sounds of brass kettle gongs of the *kulintang* – has secured *singkil's* place as one of the highlights of a Philippine folk dance concert.

Traditional dances of the indigenous and animistic communities of Mindanao and the Palawan Island, collectively called the Tribal Suite, are then presented. Dances of mimicry like the ones imitating the flight of eagles of the T'boli people, and the ritual practices that bless farms and agricultural produce and that seek help and forgiveness from gods and deities in the dances of the Talaandig and Tagbanua people differentiate this suite from others.

As always the finale is the Rural Suite that strings together dances of harvest, courtship, and prayer of the lowland Christian Filipinos. Christianity was first introduced in 1521 when the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan landed on the island of Homonhon in the central Philippines. When he circumnavigated the world under the auspices of the Spanish Crown to search for spices, he brought with him the image of the Santo Niño (Holy Child Jesus) and a Cross. By way of these images and ensuing proselytization that started in earnest in 1565 during the leadership of the Spanish explorer Miguel López de Legazpi, Roman Catholicism took deep roots in the Philippines.

At first only the sounds of bamboo castanets and a lone drum accompany dancers in the dance of *subli* as they worship the Holy Cross in the middle of the stage. But the air is soon filled again with lilting tunes coming from the plucked string instruments of the *rondalla* as dancers perform *pandanggo sa ilaw*, from the Spanish *fanfango*, which in the Philippines means "dance of lights." The concert ends with *tinikling*, the familiar show-stopper in which dancers combine grace, agility, and speed to avoid having their feet caught in bamboo poles that are clapped faster and faster as the music rises in a steady crescendo.



A "tribal" group wearing costumes like those worn by New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians. Taken in January 2009. Photo by Nana Buxani.

Similar to Aquino's research objective, preserving Philippine folk or traditional dances and transforming them today into modern theatrical pieces are manifestations of Filipinos' aspiration for cultural nationalism and for establishing their place in the world that colonialism and sojourning have kept in flux.

This goal of embodying what is "essential" and "pure" in Philippine culture as a way of retaining their sense of being Filipinos is also present in religious festivals. Nowadays throughout the Philippines there is an

upsurge of regional festivals provincial governments organize to promote the tourism industry and traditions of their locales. While these festivals are staged as “authentic,” upon careful examination, they are events that have been hybridized to negotiate the cultural and religious influences coming from outside the Philippine borders. A powerful instance is the Ati-atihan festival, celebrated in my home province of Aklan and by Filipino immigrants in the United States and Canada, as well as in other countries where they have settled in search of a better future.

Ati-atihan, from the national language Tagalog or Filipino, and which means, “to appear like the indigenous Atis or Negritos,” is a way of expressing devotion and gratitude to the Santo Niño, or the Holy Child Jesus, and also to honor the original inhabitants of Panay Island, the Atis. Bringing these two threads together has produced a national event that weaves into its fabric a folklorized version of Roman Catholicism and a pre-colonial culture those gestures towards the Filipinos’ putative ancestors, the Atis.



Holy Mass at the Kalibo plaza (town square) attended by thousands of Santo Niño devotees and Ati-atihan festival participants. Taken in January 2009. Photo by Nana Buxani.

For three days in the second week of January the town of Kalibo explodes in a tumult of music and dancing. The event draws thousands of visitors and Santo Niño devotees from all over the Philippines and abroad. The residents of Aklan, the Aklanons, claim that Ati-atihan is based on an ancient tradition that the Atis and the Bornean settlers in Aklan were already observing before the arrival of the Spaniards in the early part of the sixteenth century and the Americans at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Participants are convinced the Santo Niño, who is represented by a miniature image first brought by Magellan, will come down and rejoice with them in their festivities. Their petitions will be granted if they dance energetically enough, play their music loud

enough, and transform themselves spectacularly enough via their costumes. And so they incessantly beat their drums, cymbals, xylophones, and



Santo Niño inside the St. John the Baptist Cathedral of Kalibo, Aklan. Taken in January 2009. Photo by Nana Buxani.

whatever percussive instruments they can find to produce tunes such as the theme song from the television police series *Hawai'i Five-O* that became a hit in the Philippines in the 1970s, and a fast rendition of “Happy Days Are

Here Again,” a Great Depression song US soldiers brought to the Philippines after World War II. By the thousands, they gather in the streets with friends, relatives, or complete strangers to dance and ask the Santo Niño to shower them with blessings. They cast off their everyday clothes and costume themselves as characters from origin myths, local and foreign festivals, and television programs and films. Some even blacken their faces and bodies to mimic the Atis, harking back to the origins of the festival.

Honoring the invitation of the Mayor of Kalibo in 1975, the former first lady of the Philippines, Imelda Marcos, and her husband, Ferdinand Marcos, flew to Kalibo to signal the start of Ati-atihan’s grand procession. Imelda was so taken by the spectacle and drama of the Ati-atihan that she instructed navy tugboats to transport close to 300 Ati-atihan dancers and musicians to Manila, some 200 miles away. She presented the Ati-atihan before national leaders and foreign dignitaries as an embodiment of the authentic culture of Filipinos at her newly built Cultural Center of the Philippines, where the Ballet Philippines, since its founding in 1969, has been in residence.

Philippine dance scholar Reynaldo Alejandro tells us that with US Colonization came the beginnings of ballet in the Philippines. From the Imperial Russian Ballet, Vaslav Nijinsky performed in Manila as early as 1915. The iconic Russian Anna Pavlova danced in 1922 at the old Manila Grand Opera House. Four years later, in the country’s cultural capital, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn of the American Denishawn company, also performed. In 1927, Polish-born Luva Adameit founded a ballet school in Manila that produced some of the country’s dance luminaries.

While foreigners shaped the beginnings of ballet in the Philippines, it was the Filipinos themselves who did that for modern dance. Foremost Philippine

dance scholar Basilio Esteban Villaruz narrates that in the 1950's Manolo Rosaldo together with Rosalia Merino Santo, a student of Adameit's, formed a modern experimental group that opened novel ways of combining modern dance with movements from Philippine dance. However, it would take two more decades for the country to experience the heyday of modern dance. This high point in the history of Philippine dance was due to the works of Eddie Elejar and particularly of the recently proclaimed National Artist for Dance, Alice Reyes, who received training in Philippine folk dance as a former member of Bayanihan and in modern dance and dance composition at Sarah Lawrence College in New York.



Santo Niño carried to the Kalibo's plaza (town square) for the Holy Mass that began the Ati-atihan festival procession. Taken in January 2009. Photo by Nana Buxani.

The founding of the Cultural Center of the Philippines Dance Workshop and Company, the Alice Reyes Dance Company, and Ballet Philippines contributed to the Philippine dance that we know today: a rich amalgamation of elements taken from outside the Philippine archipelago, culled within dance practices of various Filipino ethno-linguistic groups, and inspired by social, economic, and political realities of the contemporary Philippines. For this year's Asia Pacific Dance Festival, Ballet Philippines has selected dances that represent precisely that amalgamation.

As one of the Philippines' leading dance companies, Ballet Philippines has not only been known for its successful restagings of classical ballet pieces and famous modern dance choreographies but also for its neoclassical and neoethnic ballet. These fascinating kinds of dances, which their repertoire for this festival embodies, draw from the incredibly vast movement vocabulary of Philippine folk dances and such other performance traditions as public street dancing festivals. The dances they will perform in Hawai'i are at once mirrors of the everyday life of Filipinos and windows into their coming to terms with their historical past and with their hopes for the future. Through dancing select pieces from their company's more than 400 choreographic works they continue to enliven Philippine culture, define who today's Filipinos are, and showcase the importance of Philippine dances on the world's performing arts stages.

In times of disaster and political upheavals, and in the midst of the overwhelming effects of colonialism, Filipinos have always bonded together and sought help and meaning from one another in order to fill the sails of their culture. I would like to believe that their dances, music, and other performance traditions have been constant partners as they navigate the world's ever-expanding frontiers. As such, these traditions are critical for understanding Filipino resilience, distinctiveness, and self-identity, and therefore critical for effective cultural diplomacy.



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