

Hawai'i's "Local" Theatre

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The stereotypical image of Hawai'i as a "paradise" and its baleful connection with Hawaiian commercial *lūaus*, hula, and other tourist entertainments was examined by Jane Desmond in *TDR* in "Invoking 'The Native': Body Politics in Contemporary Hawaiian Tourist Shows" (1997:83–109). Probing as this article was, it left an impression that hula and commercial entertainment comprise the only significant theatre produced in Hawai'i. To complement this view, I would like to focus here on another side of Hawai'i performance—the "local" theatre. This theatre is specifically for residents rather than tourists, written mostly by residents, usually set in Hawai'i, frequently employing pidgin and some Hawaiian language, and often exploring different resident ethnic groups' traditions and their adaptation to Hawai'i. This "local" theatre began quite early in the century, but has thrived in recent decades with audiences increasing in number since about 1971. We even have a theatre company—Kumu Kahua (Original Stage)—which for nearly 30 years has presented "local" plays on a regular basis to O'ahu and neighbor island audiences.¹

In her article, Desmond offered a broad definition of what residents of the islands mean by "local" (with quotation marks retained):

It indicates someone of non-Caucasian descent and may refer to any combination of mixed genealogical inheritances. Sometimes the term "local haole" is used to refer to a Caucasian (*haole*) from the islands, usually with several generations of family ties there. The category "local" is used in opposition not only to haole, but also in contradistinction to outsiders and to *malihini*, or newcomers, a term that may indicate a tourist or someone whose family has not lived in the islands for a long time. (1997:106)

According to Jonathan Okamura, being "local" also implies "an appreciation of and a commitment to the islands and their peoples, cultures and ways of life," and an awareness that such cultures and ways of life are "threatened by external forces of development and change, e.g. tourist and foreign investment" (1994:174). As I write, Hawai'i's economy is undergoing a severe recession, in no small part because of the effect on overdeveloped tourism of a precipitous decline in the Asian tourist markets since the economic crisis in several Asian countries in late 1997. Residents see the economic and sociological destiny of Hawai'i as dominated by multinational corporations and market forces over which the people of the islands really have no control.

In some contexts, residents perceive "local" and "Hawaiian indigenous"

1. In Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl's epic pageant January 1893 (1993), kahuna meet near the Burial Mound on the Palace grounds in a ceremony of propitiation of the gods Pele and Hi'iaka. Sabra Kauka (right) as Kamaka, a kahuna from Kauai'i, joins in singing the anthem "Hawai'i Pono'i." (Photo by Gregory Yamamoto; courtesy of the Honolulu Advertiser)



identities as discrete. The Hawaiian culture and the original Hawaiian language were here at first “contact” in the late 18th century; so-called local culture and pidgin evolved from the time of the first waves of plantation immigration in the late 19th century. Such a line of distinction, as we shall see, is sometimes a fine one, especially when we move into contemporary times. The rise of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement exacerbates the division between two groups within local theatre, which might be called, for the purposes of this essay, “local Asian American” and “local Hawaiian.” Though there is disagreement over the defining factors of what constitutes “Native Hawaiian” identity,² the sovereignty movement has implications for local identity insofar as it has undoubtedly:

influenced many Native Hawaiians to view themselves as Na Kanaka Maoli, the indigenous people of Hawai'i. As the indigenous people, Hawaiians have native rights to own and control land, to worship, to fish, hunt, and gather natural resources, and other ancestral rights that distinguish them from other local groups. It is not clear what proportion of the Native Hawaiian population considers themselves more as indigenous than local, but they can claim both identities without contradiction. Asserting their collective identity as the native peoples of Hawai'i may create divisions between Native Hawaiians and other local groups, but these divisions are not necessarily absolute cleavages. (Okamura 1994:171)

This loose distinction, without “absolute cleavages,” does tend to characterize the two most popular and frequently staged groups of “local” plays written in Hawai'i primarily for resident audiences. In what follows, I will focus on a pair of playwrights in each group.³

The group I will deal with first are plays that reflect the emergent values of the “local,” predominantly Asian American residents. These people, aggregating from the successive waves of immigrants to Hawai'i—mostly from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico—were first brought to work on the plantations when the Hawaiian population was decimated through haole-brought disease in the mid-19th century. These plays are positive in the sense that they deal primarily with gain and aggregation—the challenges to

immigrant groups of finding a place to call home and evolving through various adaptations a transformed sense of their culture and an identity in consonance. Because of the playwrights' preoccupations, the plays tend to be set in more recent times, and a major authenticating feature of such plays is the pidgin that these newcomers themselves helped to evolve. This group of plays is exemplified here by the work of Edward Sakamoto and Darrell H.Y. Lum.

Secondly, there are the "local Hawaiian" plays, often with a historical setting and laced with surreal stylization. These deal with Hawaiian culture and the world of the emergent missionary and commercial-American class that suborned it. These are exemplified especially by the work of Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl and recently Alani Apio, in plays dominated by a painful sense of cultural loss and dispossession. They sometimes make considerable use of the Hawaiian language, including sections of chant and hula, though those set in contemporary times use much pidgin as well.

A salient characteristic of all these local plays is the predominance of realism over any other strongly experimental or presentational form—especially the realism of story-driven dramas that foreground characters with whom "local" audiences can empathize. No Western nonnarrative, avantgarde tradition of performance art has ever developed in Hawai'i, though from time to time such experiments have been made, mostly within an academic theatre framework. No performing "ensemble" ever lasted, mainly because of the large turnover in the resident acting pool, whether students or community members. In early Kumu Kahua seasons in the 1970s, a number of experimental productions were offered, but none caught on with audiences. On the other hand, the popularity of the "local" playwrights to be examined here has gradually grown since that time. It seems, therefore, that "transparency" of form has been a quality that "local" audiences have appreciated, since it makes it possible for them to recognize and celebrate the uniqueness and flavor of the island locale that they call their home.

Before focusing in on specific plays, the images and cultural references they present of "local" life, and their reception, it is necessary to identify the theatre organizations that stage these plays, the audience demographics that might apply, and possible models of spectatorship that seem to operate in local theatre when "local" plays are offered. Writers such as Elizabeth Burns and more recently Susan Bennett have offered useful theories of production and reception of theatre based on what Bennett has called the "emancipated spectator." A central assumption is that reception of any play does not necessarily line up with monolithic critical notions of "quality" and theatrical "effectiveness" of mainstream drama (Bennett 1997:212–13). Therefore, it is pertinent here to stress some of the "framing" factors of the presentation of "local" plays. As we shall see, though many plays are presented in small theatres, some significant recent "local" theatre has been staged outdoors on special occasions for huge audiences.

For Kumu Kahua Theatre—the only Hawai'i theatre with a stated mission to stage locally written, locally set plays—Alan Read's explication of what he calls the "geography of theatre" is especially relevant to reception (1993:157–62). The intimate, 130-seat theatre is located on the ground floor of the Kamehameha V Post Office building, a national historic landmark built in 1872—before the fall of the monarchy—and restored during 1992 to 1994. The building lies at a fascinating intersection of several areas in downtown Honolulu, in a not yet "touristy"

2. *The downtown Kamehameha V Post Office, at 46 Merchant Street, Honolulu, was built in 1872. Now it houses the Kumu Kahua Theatre and the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. (Photo by Jo Scheder)*



district. “Locals” coming to the theatre might, depending on the way they travel, approach the performance through one of several diverse areas: to the east lies the downtown business district; to the northwest lies the seedy “red light” hotel street area; one block to the west lies the beginning of Chinatown; to the south lies the bustle of the Honolulu waterfront and the newly renovated Aloha Tower complex. Both “historical” and quotidian associations, then, abound, with a very specific sense of what is unique in Honolulu; associations with the theatre’s environs are especially rich for “local Hawaiian” plays, but the near neighborhood provides enclaves especially relevant for certain “Local Asian American” plays as well.

Kumu Kahua stages on an average four “local” plays and only one imported “Asian American” play in a five-play annual season—but the other community theatres do occasionally stage “local” work. By far the most important theatre in this respect is Honolulu Theatre for Youth (HTY), Hawai‘i’s only fully professional theatre. These plays are offered to the public but are primarily for youth audiences in kindergarten through 12th grades and are also offered in special daytime performances for schools. Generally, out of an average of nine yearly productions, two plays are written and set locally. For example, in the 1997/98 season, three out of nine productions were locally set and written. The theatre as well stages an annual program of “local” drama written by high school students called Theatre-Fest (HTY 1997).

Diamond Head Theatre—the old Honolulu Community Theatre, founded in 1915—for the past three years has put much needed money in its coffers by producing summer seasons of Lisa Matsumoto’s adaptations of fairy tales into a Hawaiian setting using pidgin. This enormously popular “family theatre” first developed at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s Kennedy Theatre.⁴ But Kennedy Theatre, Diamond Head Theatre, and Manoa Valley Theatre, the other three major Honolulu theatre groups, along with neighbor island community theatre groups such as Māui Community Theatre and Kaua‘i Community Players, stage, on average, one locally written play every two years or so.

The question of audience demographics—which ethnic groups predominate at which local productions—is more problematic. Kumu Kahua has never done a demographic study of its audiences, but the evidence of box office returns over the years suggests that the Japanese American “local” plays tend to be the most popular, followed by “Local Hawaiian” and Chinese American, with Filipino American plays further down the list. It is also true that, of “local” plays, the Japanese American ones are the most frequently staged (Kumu Kahua Theatre Archives 1971–1997). However, it seems that, with Kumu Kahua at least, the audience tends to be much more “local” in its composition than the audiences of Manoa Valley Theatre and Diamond Head Theatre, which predominantly stage mainstream American theatre. Also significant is that, with Kumu Kahua, the “visitor” component of the audience is miniscule. As part of a recent grant from the Hawai‘i Visitors’ Bureau (HVB) to encourage “cultural tourism,” Kumu Kahua set out to actively promote its offerings in Waikiki, and had to identify the percentage of visitors at its productions. In spite of a vigorous campaign in Waikiki hotels, including concessions to concierges for promotional help, the recorded percentage of tourists at Kumu Kahua productions was only 5 percent in a season where the theatre was otherwise at 80 percent capacity. The HVB grant was not renewed (Shofner 1998).⁵

The models of spectatorship that operate with “local” audiences seem to have some similarities to those of the Asian American audiences at Asian American plays described by Josephine Lee in her recent study *Performing Asian America: Race and Ethnicity on the Contemporary Stage* (1997). Lee questions the validity, when applied to the nonwhite spectator, of the heavily white, gendered, and voyeuristic paradigms of spectatorship alleged by critics

such as Jill Dolan and James Moy, as well as their critique of realism as a dramatic form on the grounds that it exacerbates such paradigms. Lee argues:

The positioning of imagined "ethnic" spectators, as suggested by certain plays of Asian Americans, complicates these binary viewing paradigms. The rigid model of the exotic Asian object, constructed for the pleasure and consumption of white spectators, affords only limited possibilities beyond simple recognition or refusal of racial and ethnic difference. Realism might in fact work another way, by self-consciously countering stereotypical portraits of Asians and teaching an audience how to see "real" Asian Americans. Moreover, the ways in which ethnic identification works in realistic plays are more complex than either Dolan's or Moy's paradigms allow. (1997:27)



3. Kumu Kahua board members Keith Kashiwada (left), Jan Itamura (center), and Margaret Jones meet as part of the Play Development Committee (1994). (Photo by Jo Scheder)

Of course, the situation is more complicated than this, especially in Hawai'i. Dolan herself seems to recognize the rigidity of the reception model she castigates by stating that "the process of reception and the entire hermeneutical endeavor will—and should—be different for different spectators" (1988:121). Also, the term "Asian American," though used in this article as a way of marking a certain kind of "local" play, is itself very rarely used in Hawai'i. The history of the struggle of "minorities" for representation in Hawai'i has proceeded quite differently than on the mainland U.S.A. For one thing, Asian Americans are not a minority in Hawai'i, whereas on the mainland they are (Okamura 1994:161–64). And many Asian American plays that connect powerfully to mainland Asian American audiences do not do so in Hawai'i. Some well-staged and critically well-received "local" productions of imported Asian American plays of stature have done surprisingly poorly at the Kumu Kahua box office, despite their success at theatres such as Los Angeles's East-West Players or New York's Pan Asian Repertory (Shofner 1998).

Despite these caveats, Lee's remarks quoted above about spectatorship at "realistic" plays are surprisingly relevant to the local situation. Also, while many "local" plays are realistic, almost as many more are stylized in some way. Stylization in varying degrees is popular and easily assimilated by a "local" audience often familiar with the direct-address of Waikiki showroom entertainment and cabaret of the kind pioneered by the Booga Booga group in the 1970s, as well as possibly knowledgeable about the finer points of Hawaiian hula performance.

The most frequently produced "local" plays are those plays in pidgin that deal with contemporary concerns of local Asian Americans. (Of course, many "local Hawaiian" plays set in contemporary times also employ pidgin, and both groups of plays may utilize patterns of Hawaiian chant and the Hawaiian language.) Since the 1950s, "local" Asian Americans have had much of the political influence in the state and embrace not only the specifically Japanese American or Chinese American demographic figures but also a portion of the 31 percent "mixed ethnicity" figure.

Hawaiian pidgin coalesced from about 1877 from a series of nationally based dialects and then developed into a cross-cultural English-based creole language. The present pidgin is a further development still, a regional and social variety of English very different from mainland dialects in both linguistic and social history (Carroll and Carroll 1976:57–58). Pidgin is now designated by linguists as a distinct language, Hawaiian Creole English (HCE) (Odo

1995:x). HCE is understood and spoken by most born and raised here, though it has no standard, set orthography; all locals, regardless of ethnic, economic, and educational background move somewhere along a language mastery continuum between the heaviest pidgin variants and the neutral American standard. Pidgin has become a badge of ethnicity and localism associated with, particularly, Japanese American, Chinese American, Filipino, and mixed “locals” in theatre since World War II. In terms of both quantity and quality, the plays of Edward Sakamoto and Darrell H.Y. Lum best exemplify the qualities of this kind of “local” play.

In 1966, after the success of his one-act play *In the Alley* and his graduation from the University of Hawai‘i, Edward Sakamoto relocated to Los Angeles, where for several decades he was employed as a copy editor for the *Los Angeles Times*. With the encouragement of the prominent Asian American actor, Mako, and Los Angeles’s East–West Players, he began to write plays again. He picked up awards, grants (two Rockefeller and an NEA), and productions and, amazingly, found that his gift for writing pidgin was largely unimpaired by his relocation. Sakamoto frequently returns to Hawai‘i. He has now written 13 full-length plays, of which the eight set in Hawai‘i formed the backbone of Kumu Kahua’s repertory for several years. In addition to the trilogy *Hawai‘i No Ka Oi*, the Hawai‘i plays comprise *A‘ala Park* (1982), *Stew Rice* (1987), *Aloha Las Vegas* (1991), *Our Hearts Were Touched with Fire* (1994), and *Lava* (1997). Especially significant is the epic, large-cast *Our Hearts Were Touched with Fire*, Sakamoto’s historical saga of the Hawaiian AJA (Americans of Japanese Ancestry) Battalions (442d and 100th) and their participation in World War II—an event which transformed the social position of Japanese Americans in island life and inaugurated their predominant political power in Hawai‘i from the mid-1950s until the 1980s. In 1998, Sakamoto was awarded the Hawai‘i Award for Literature, the highest literary award in the state, which Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl had won four years previously.

Sakamoto’s major themes in his Hawai‘i plays cluster around the emotional and material consequences of moving from one place to another—an experience deeply ingrained into so many local Asian American families, and perhaps a key to the appeal of these plays to a more general audience as well.⁶ The essence of Sakamoto’s investigation is the definition of “home”: Do you carry it with you when you leave, and how do you adapt and reformulate loyalties to a new location and context, which will inevitably bring some kind of cultural transformation? This theme of movement in time and space, and what it means to the characters (and the audience), is sometimes reflected formally in a “memory play” device. A narrator who has left the islands and moved on recalls the old place and experiences in the light of the new location. The

plays are realistic in form, well made rather than epic, and Chekhov is a powerful (and admitted) influence evident in many of the plays. But the audience is not simplistically encouraged to endorse any one position; the predominant realism of the plays does not promote simple uncritical empathy of the audience with the characters.

This is well illustrated by Sakamoto’s most important achievement to date—the trilogy *Hawai‘i No Ka Oi* (Hawai‘i Is the Best), completed in 1993 but with the three plays not written in chronological order and not initially planned as a trilogy. *Mānoa Valley*, the second part, was first staged as a one-act play by the Los Angeles East–West Players in 1981. *The Life of the Land*, the concluding part, was staged by them the

4. Mikame Kamiya (Karen Yamamoto Hackler) cuts her husband Kazuo’s (Dann Seki) hair as he worries about his son’s commitment to their farm in Edward Sakamoto’s *The Taste of Kona Coffee* (1994). (Photo by Jo Scheder)



same year, only reaching Hawai'i in the Kumu Kahua production of 1985. *The Taste of Kona Coffee*, chronologically the first play but the last to be written, was commissioned by Kumu Kahua and premiered in September 1993. To inaugurate its new downtown theatre, Kumu Kahua staged all three plays in sequence in a six-and-a-half-hour integral performance in February 1994.

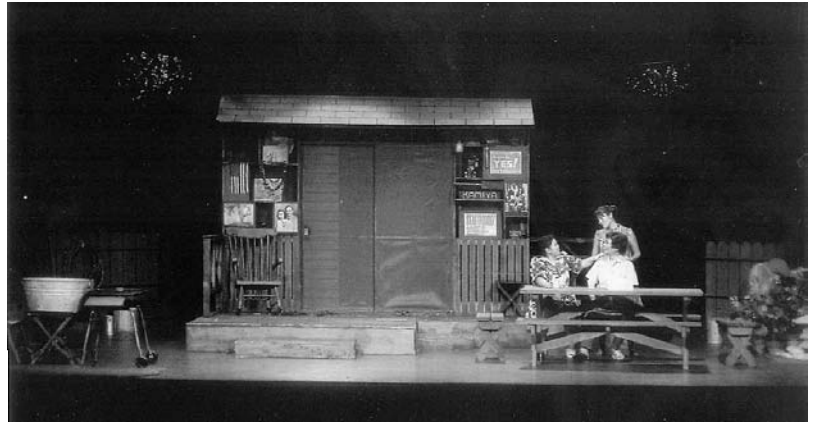
The trilogy chronicles the migrations, displacements, dreams, shifting loyalties, and rise in status of the Kamiya family, set against the development of Hawai'i from territory to state from 1929 to 1980. As Franklin Odo remarks in his foreword to the published plays, however, the quite complex sociological history of the rise of Japanese Americans in Hawai'i to power and affluence, and the leveling off of this power and affluence in the 1980s, is assumed rather than explicated in the trilogy, and "some of the historical developments we cannot infer" from Sakamoto's plays alone (Odo 1995:xii-xiii). However, while this might limit the plays' theatrical appeal for a mainland audience, it is another aspect of the play that connects for a "local" audience, which by and large is familiar with this background.

In *The Taste of Kona Coffee*, set in the then-rural district of Kona on the Big Island, the patriarch Kazuo, a first-generation immigrant (*issei*), is old and crippled. The action centers on his sons Aki and Tosh and their plan to sell the family coffee farm and move permanently to Honolulu. This city is seen as a symbol of upward mobility and urban challenge by the brothers. Aki has to defy his father and transcend the cultural obligations of filial obeisance and duty as *chōnan* (eldest son). *Mānoa Valley* takes place in 1959, at the time of the celebration of statehood, and reprises the father-son conflict in a different context and tone. Tosh's family is now prosperous and can afford a nice home in the upper-middle-class suburb of the title at a time of economic boom. However, his son Spencer doesn't want to take over the family construction business but instead to carve his own career in aerospace engineering, for which he must go to the University of Southern California. Tosh acquiesces without the excoriating conflict that marked the earlier generation. In *The Life of the Land*, the centrifugal movement of the family is reversed. It is now 1980: the economic boom in Hawai'i has leveled out. Spencer, on a visit and disillusioned after serving the military in his chosen profession for 20 years, reunites with the family at a beach picnic and decides to come back. In the interim his father has died and his sister Laura, who has borne the brunt of taking over and finally losing the construction business, bitterly resents him.

These conflicts put a damper on Spencer's return. They problematize the final stage direction, which seems to read very positively: "*The effect of the glow and the darkness onstage is one of serenity. A native son has returned home.*" Closer to the mark is Spencer's actual line seconds earlier: "Kinda scary. But I gotta take the chance" (1995:37). Also, in the same play, the young grandson of the family, Danny, is reluctantly headed in the completely opposite direction from Spencer, to study philosophy at Yale. Debbie, the third-generation daughter, comments on the migratory movement of the family: "Our grandparents came from Kumamoto, Japan, to Kona, Hawai'i. Our parents left Kona for Honolulu. Spencer went from Honolulu to Los Angeles. Danny, the fourth generation, is off to Connecticut. Who knows, maybe Danny's grandchildren will want to live in a colony on Mars" (1995:127).

Sakamoto seems to suggest that ultimately, there is no necessary loss or gain in this migratory movement either to or away from Hawai'i. All that seems certain is that for individuals in 1980—Spencer, who has chosen to return, and Danny, who is leaving—the choice is easier. And for them it is easier to renegotiate if a move doesn't work out—privileges achieved by the groundwork of the two previous generations. Local audiences respond to the issue of migration ambiguously, feeling somewhat provoked; the plays do not encourage them to eas-

5. Tomi (Jan Kanaeholo, left), Laura (Marya Takamori, standing), and Fumiko (Nyla Fujii) sit downstage of the “memory wall” in Mānoa Valley (1993), the second play in Edward Sakamoto’s Hawai‘i No Ka Oi trilogy. (Photo by Joseph D. Dodd)



6. Clyde Yasuhara as Spencer (left) and Gary Nomura as Aki in the Hawai‘i premiere of Mānoa Valley (1982). (Photo by Malcolm S. Mearu)



ily endorse the sentiments of the trilogy’s deceptively chauvinistic title: “Hawai‘i Is the Best.” Once again, Lee’s remarks about realism and the kind of spectatorship it promotes among Asian Americans seems applicable to this work.

In terms of style, the trilogy in theatrical sequence develops from a heightened realism, moving towards a more casual, pidgin-based naturalism. This is clearly reflected in the dialogue. In *The Taste of Kona Coffee*, the issei generation of Kazuo and his wife, and also the issei and second-generation *nisei*, talk to one another in plain nondialectal English which clearly indicates that the actual language being used is Japanese. However, when the *nisei* interact with each other or with the locals, pidgin is used. The contrast between these basic speech modes therefore indicates the cultural and generational chasm between the younger and older characters. In the later plays, however, the new generations, though at loggerheads about other things, share pidgin—and this becomes a sign of their cultural re-positioning as “locals” of the state of Hawai‘i.

Sakamoto’s handling of *mise-en-scène*, and the way that it was realized in the production of the trilogy by set designer Joseph Dodd and costume designer Linda Yara, also emphasize the cultural repositioning of the Kamiyas,

for better or worse, as "locals" of Hawai'i. In the first play, space is more fragmented, and both the design of the farm homestead in the isolated Kona coast and the costumes worn by (especially) the older generation, evoke the picturesque, remote quality of the Japanese plantation life of the old country, lifted with virtually no changes to the new location in Kona. The Kamiya family for special occasions wore formal dress clothes, but even everyday workwear had vestiges of the parent culture and created a hieratic, historicized effect. In the second play, since the occasion is a family party celebrating statehood, the family mostly wear aloha attire and casual but slightly dressy wear, which indicates their desire to display their assimilation to island styles and their pride as new citizens of the new 50th state. In *The Life of the Land*, however, the costumes are simply beach wear, indicating an unselfconscious, casual oneness with the natural landscape of Hawai'i and the social fabric—a true belonging now, no longer tied to any insignia of culture or social or business status. In each play, Joseph Dodd made differing use of a prominent scenic icon, the "memory walls": free-standing bookcases/shelves offset from the realistic part of the setting and filled with different family artifacts symbolizing the changing cultural definition of the Kamiyas throughout the different periods.

Darrell H.Y. Lum's plays also deal with epic themes of immigration, conflict between the generations, and cultural assimilation. But while Sakamoto's plays proceed chronologically and realistically over a big arc of time and space, Lum's are poetic, compacted, and make use of surreal techniques in blurring the lines between present and the reified past. The (mostly) Chinese American protagonists of the plays afford the audience no simplistic affirmation or clear simulacrum of an identity to promote easy empathy. In fact, more than with Sakamoto, negative aspects of Chinese American characters, especially of the older generation, are bared for scrutiny. This critical stance, as we shall see, is balanced by the use of theatrical symbols of considerable cultural significance to Chinese Americans that do tend to promote a positive sense of spectatorship among these members of the audience. But the symbols also have a less specialized but still Hawai'i-specific significance for non-Chinese American "locals."

Lum has been a less productive playwright than Sakamoto, probably because he is also a prolific short fiction writer as well as founder and editor of the important local literary journal *Bamboo Ridge*. In addition, he is a counselor in the Special Services department of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. But his comparatively slender output of plays is given heft by both its quality and theatrical significance. His first play, the short *Oranges Are Lucky*, was originally coproduced in 1976 by Kumu Kahua and Leeward Community College and has been revived twice by Kumu Kahua. Kumu Kahua premiered Lum's first full-length play, *My Home Is Down the Street*, in 1986. His third play, *A Little Bit Like You*, was commissioned by HTY with the help of a Rockefeller Grant, and was coproduced by them and Kumu Kahua in 1991. Most recently, the short *Fighting Fire* was commissioned by Kumu Kahua and first staged by them in 1996.

Lum's plays are somewhat unusual in that they all focus on elderly characters as protagonists. *Oranges Are Lucky* centers around the birthday celebrations of the 81-year-old matriarch Ah Po in a Chinese restaurant, with two generations of her family around her. *My Home Is Down the Street* concerns an elderly Chinese American man in an old people's home and his problematic relationship with his son. *A Little Bit Like You* focuses on an elderly "Japanese American" couple who must come to terms with the fact that the woman is part-Chinese—she gradually acknowledges that she is the result of an affair between her mother and a Chinese *manapua* (pork-bun) vendor. *Fighting Fire* focuses on an elderly pair of Chinese American buddies who are involved in an illegal fireworks import scheme.

Lum's theatrical strategies take us deeply into the subjective consciousness of his main characters. For spectators, the device is sometimes challenging, more so than simple realism would be, and comprises a spiral into the cultural and geographic sensibility and memory of these first or second-generation Chinese Americans who still have a sharp awareness of the older culture. In *Oranges Are Lucky*, the device through which this is achieved is monologue: While the "present" of the restaurant party is frozen, Ah Po's senile pidgin suddenly becomes standard English as she is picked up in a strong spotlight and recounts her saga of emigration from China and subsequent class demotion and cultural limbo. In *My Home Is Down the Street*, the least effective of Lum's plays, the protagonist reminisces and ponders out loud at (too-great) length. Sometimes in the two most recent plays, full flashbacks are staged with doubling actors, but, much more poetically, the "ghosts" of members of older generations appear simultaneously upstage or onstage with the characters. They comment on their progeny's behavior, sometimes re-enact scenes from their own lives, and consult with some of the most sensitive or prescient characters of the younger generation.

In all the plays the thematic through-line is the characters' reconciliation to a cultural repositioning in Hawai'i that involves repudiation of any one ethnocentric tradition—especially that of mainstream America. For many, this process involves confronting their own racial prejudices—especially against the Japanese Americans and facing the more negative aspects of being *pa-ke*, in which thrift is taken to the point of stinginess.⁷ Lum usually presents both these negative characteristics honestly, but in a comic way. In his notes to the play, Lum states that such feelings of prejudice against other ethnic groups tend to be shared among any given group of first-generation emigrants in Hawai'i: "Inter-marriage between ethnic groups is common in Hawaii but the older generation often disapproves of marrying outside one's ethnic group" (1992:48).

By the end of *A Little Bit Like You*, the Grandfather (now actually dead of a stroke) and Grandmother accept the truth about her true ancestry. The final image has them dancing together onstage, the living and the dead, in reconciliation, affirming the whole truth of who they are and where they came from.

7. In a flashback, Kay (Leigh-Ann Oshiro) becomes her great-grandmother, Kiyoko, as she tries out her first step-dance with Jiro (Ron Encarnacion) in the premiere of Darrell H.Y. Lum's *A Little Bit Like You* (1991). (Photo by Bradley Goda)



In all the plays, a simple desire to conform to mainstream American values is seen as negative. For example, in *Oranges Are Lucky*, the grandson Ricky, who drunkenly sneers at Mandarin, at the old emigrant Chinese culture, and at the Chinese traditions of honoring the dead as "waste of time," is the least sympathetic character (1982:80). In *A Little Bit Like You*, the pallidly bourgeois and overtly American-conformist mother Emmi is the most two-dimensional and least sympathetic character—and the only one who cannot hear the ancestral voices of the "ghosts." In *Fighting Fire*, the main character resents his father for, among other things, pressuring him to play baseball, a more mainstream American sport than his chosen basketball.

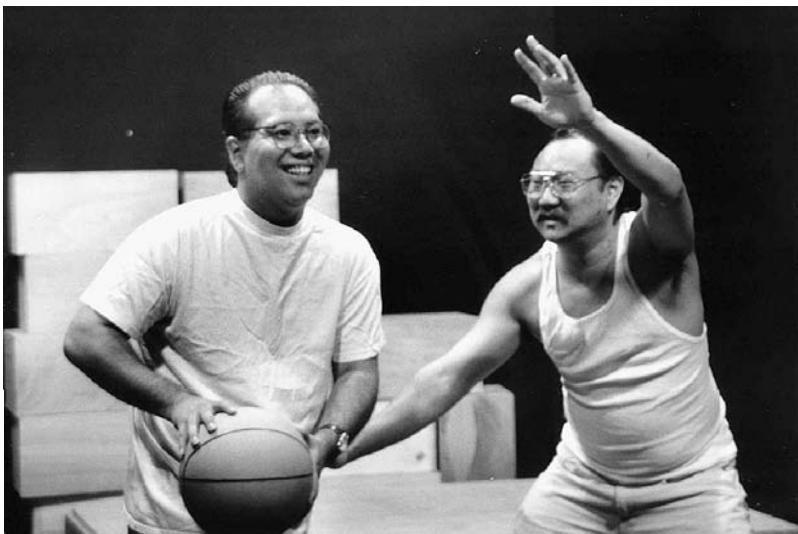
In all the Lum plays, a prop serves as a tangible cultural artifact that provides a grounding for the characters and acts as a catalyst for their cultural repositioning. In each case, the significance of this prop for Chinese American audiences is more culture-specific than, even if similar to, the broader significance it has for a "local" or visitor audience. In *Oranges Are Lucky*, it is the citrus fruit of the title:

"The Chinese celebrate around citrus fruits. They are lucky fruit. To fruit is to have children and to be abundant" (1982:78). In *A Little Bit Like You*, it is the manapua, physically passed from the "ghosts" to Kay and her friend Bunny, that acts as the tangible cultural prop that aids grounding and repositioning. This is the culture-specific Chinese pork-filled bun, but today also familiar as a lunch snack to all "locals" and sold even in vending machines. In *Fighting Fire*, fireworks that form function similarly as the central image.

Of Lum's plays, his most recent, *Fighting Fire*, presents all of these thematic and theatrical strategies the most concisely and imaginatively. In five fluid scenes, the play focuses on the friendship of two elderly Chinese American "locals," Cowboy and Gunner—the mainstream-American nicknames are an ironic comment on their days on a basketball team. We first meet them in a mortuary, looking at coffins for themselves, to save their families the trouble and expense later. Cowboy has invested \$2,000 in a scheme to bring a load of illegal New Year's fireworks to Honolulu through Gunner's store. In surreal scenes of reminiscence, two sea voyages—one, the immigration of Ah Ba, Cowboy's father, from the old country, and the other, Cowboy's honeymoon cruise to San Francisco—are juxtaposed and compared. Cowboy imagines his own funeral, with first himself and then Gunner in the coffin. Then in the bittersweet final scene, the whole shipment of illegal fireworks has blown up on the two of them—perhaps because Gunner lit a cigar carelessly in his own warehouse.

In this play the central image of the fireworks functions similarly to the oranges and manapua of the earlier plays in forging bonds among the Chinese Americans in the audience, as well as among "local" spectators of other ethnicities. Fireworks have a strong Chinese American cultural significance for at least two reasons: first, they are a crucial component of Chinese funeral rites; and, second, they are used in celebrating the New Year (both standard-calendar and Chinese) in Hawai'i. Though most fireworks are currently (1999) legal, for years in Honolulu the more sophisticated types of fireworks could only be bought with a special permit from fire departments, and, in limited quantity, in clandestine outlets in Honolulu's Chinatown area. In spite of that, fireworks on New Year's Eve are, and have always been, an important aspect of "local" pan-ethnic celebration in Honolulu.

In *Fighting Fire*, Cowboy equates the lack of fireworks with his father's pake stinginess and failure to accept him and his needs. But later, Ah Ba gives his



8. In their memories, old friends "Gunner" Loo (Rodney Kwock, left) and "Cowboy" Lee (Keith Kashiwada) engage in some one-on-one in Lum's *Fighting Fire* (1996). (Photo by John H. Y. Wat)

own perspective: When he came to America, he would earn extra by laboring in the hold of the ship loading boxes of firecrackers as cargo. He realized that the firecrackers were “no magic, just lots of pa-ke hands. Made on the backs of so many pa-kes” (1996:12). The imagery reaches its paradoxical, double-edged apogee in the two final scenes. Cowboy urges Gunner to burn the firecrackers at his father’s funeral: “Burn um so I can feel um, so our bones they vibrate like the mah jong tiles...like the bones of my father...I wanna feel his fear...” And then he orders Jenner to “Throw it in his coffin so he can dance the way he made me dance under those fly balls. Chasing after his dreams” (1996:15). He anticipates being able to light firecrackers for the dead Gunner until he can feel his dead bones “vibrate,” and regrets that he had not the chance to do this for his own father. The play ends with the surreal lights and sounds of the fireworks’ conflagration. But one box has been saved, so that at least the ritual of the dead, and the settling of final accounts between the two friends, can be carried out—no matter which one actually dies first.

Just as pidgin is an important marker for “Asian American local” plays, so is the insertion of *mele* (poetry and chant) and hula in “local Hawaiian” plays. The history of the repression of both under Christian influence in the 19th century, and their recent resurgence in the wake of exploitation in commercial entertainment, has ensured that they are used in “local” theatre productions with great care, almost always under the supervision of a *kumu hula* (master teacher of hula) or qualified Hawaiian resource person.⁸ Certain kinds of *mele* and hula were sacred, and hula originated in ceremonies to Laka, patron god/goddess⁹ of hula (Topolinski 1979:146–47).

Mele has been called “the single most important cultural expression belonging to Hawaiians” (Tatar 1979:53), and embodies the spiritual union between humankind and natural forces. It falls into various genres and categories, for example, *mele pule* (prayer chants) and *mele kanikau* (memorial chants). These are subsumed under the two broad subdivisions of *mele oli*, chant performed by an unaccompanied soloist; and *mele hula*, chant performed by a soloist or a group, accompanied with dance movements and musical instruments (54). There are also many techniques for the correct and expressive oral delivery of chant, which Elizabeth Tatar categorizes as “modes” and “voice qualities” (57–62).

When used in “local” theatre, chant and/or hula transform otherwise realistic scenes into stylized episodes that transcend realism, and in which the *kaona* (hidden meanings) may add metaphorical significance to the play. Examples in works to be discussed here include the *mele kanikau* chanted by Ka’ahumanu in memory of her father when seriously ill herself in Kneubuhl’s *The Conversion of Ka’ahumanu* (Kneubuhl 1997:207). Another example is when Queen Lili’uokalani, in the co-authored *Ka’iulani*, performs a *mele hula* excerpted from the legend of Pele in which Hi’iaka crosses the central mountains of O’ahu in the face of driving rain—in the play symbolizing the forces directed against the queen on her accession. A more extended example of the use of *mele* and hula in “local” theatre comprises the then ground-breaking staging of the opening section from the sacred genealogy chant *Kumulipo*, combining *mele*, hula, and music, and in both English and Hawaiian, in Paul Cravath’s 1994 production of *For ‘Eva*.

Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl is of part-Hawaiian, Samoan, and haole ancestry. Her uncle, John Kneubuhl, was a key figure in the pioneer development of local drama in Hawai’i in the late 1940s and early 1950s and himself became a respected playwright and screenwriter. By 1998, Victoria Kneubuhl had had nine full-length plays produced by Kumu Kahua and by the Honolulu Theatre for Youth. In 1995, she received the Hawai’i Award for Literature.

The majority of Kneubuhl’s plays are historical, exploring the roots of cultural dispossession and loss: *Emmalehua* (1986, revised 1996), set in the 1950s;

The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu (1988); the co-authored *Ka'iulani: A Cantata for the Theatre* (1987); *January 1893* (1992); and *The Trial of Lili'uokalani* (1994). Others, especially *'Ola Nā Iwi* (The Bones Live) (1994), and *Ka Wai Ola* (The Living Water) (1998) are set in the present and deal with contemporary issues sprung from the history of depredation and exploitation.

Among the more realistic plays, *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* is paradigmatic in its strategies. It has some of its sources in the writings of two missionary wives, Lucy Thurston and Sybil Bingham. The story of the momentous cultural interface that characterized the early 19th century in Hawai'i is told through a chamber-play apparatus on an intimate, spare, open stage, employing monologues and direct address, and just six female characters. They include the two missionary women, the half-caste mistress of the local American ambassador, and a young Hawaiian girl who is a courtier of the queen and secretly belongs to the despised *kauwā* (outcast) class.

But the most commanding character is the chiefess Ka'ahumanu (1777–1832), consort of the unifier of the Hawaiian islands, King Kamehameha. She is today admired or reviled by different groups of Hawaiians and representatives of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. In the early years of the 19th century, aware of the beginnings of haole dominance in the islands, she took the fateful steps of first breaking the old religion, including the power of the priests and the *kapu* (taboo) on the sexes eating together, and then accepting Christianity.

Kneubuhl's attitude toward the controversial figure of Ka'ahumanu is complex and even-handed. This is most evident in the central issue of religious belief—or, rather, the transmogrification of religion into political and cultural strategy. Kneubuhl does not fall into the trap of demonizing Ka'ahumanu, as demanded by some quarters of today's Hawaiian activist movement, but neither does she sentimentalize or idolize her. Ka'ahumanu's acceptance of Christianity is portrayed neither as an act of cultural betrayal nor as naked self-interest. Kneubuhl suggests that it was largely a preemptive move—right or wrong, she must somehow “steer the canoe” of her people to stay afloat in an era of change and avoid the sharks: “I do not look to the past with contempt, but seek to preserve the ways that were good, uniting them with what is good of this new world, that comes to us, *now*” (1997:225).

At the outset, Ka'ahumanu agonizes over the vacuum created by her abrogation of the old religion, the breaking of the *kapu*, and the slaughter of those who rebelled against her as a result. She realizes that the proffered Christianity in many ways is merely a cloak for the acquisitiveness of haoles and the male perpetrators and organizers of the commercial and cultural haole structure. Also, she sees the joylessness of this kind of Christianity, and its possible stunting effects, depicted in the character of the sensually repressed and self-abnegating Sybil. Its circumscriptions on the expression of sexuality outside marriage lead also to its rejection by Hannah, the fun-loving mistress who at first wishes to be baptized but then has second thoughts. On the other hand, the strength that this new religion can give the faithful is movingly demonstrated, both for Ka'ahumanu and the audience, in cancer-stricken Lucy's harrowing account of her mastectomy, performed without anaesthetic and without the patient revealing her agonizing pain to the doctor.

9. Leonelle Anderson
Akana as Ka'ahumanu in
the 1990 tour of *Victoria
Nalani Kneubuhl's The
Conversion of
Ka'ahumanu*. (Photo by
James Giles)



10. *The missionary wives and courtiers minister to Ka'ahumanu during a near fatal fever in The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu (1988). From left to right: Kehaunani Koenig as Hannah, Katherine Lepani as Sybil, Leonelle Anderson Akana as Ka'ahumanu, Jana Lindan-Ihrie as Lucy, and Nark as Pali. (Photo by Wendell Maruyama)*



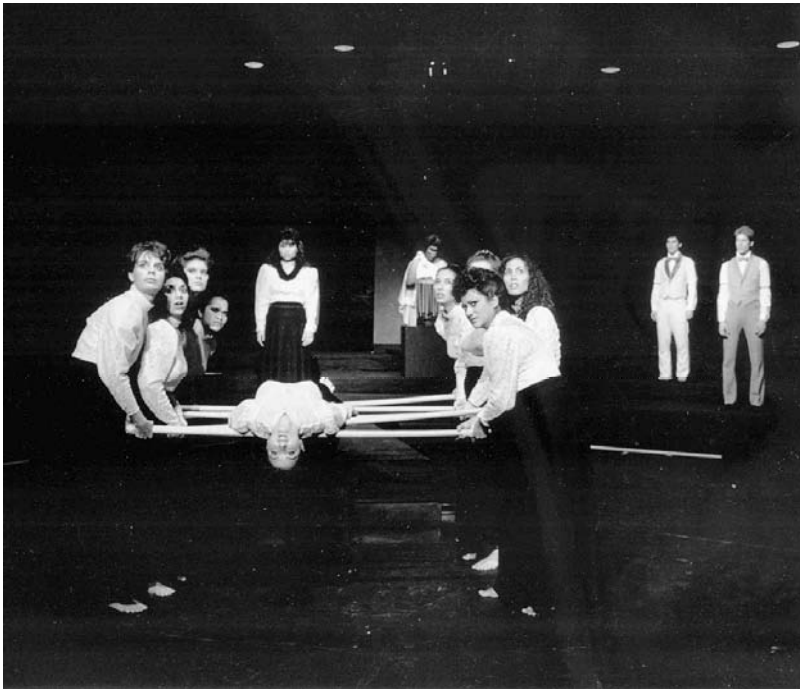
But Kneubuhl also confronts the obsolescence and the rigidified class structure of the old Hawaiian social order—through the personal pique exhibited in some of Ka'ahumanu's uses of her power and protocol, and through Ka'ahumanu's harsh treatment of Pali when her status as a *kauwā* is discovered. Pali, in contradistinction to Hannah, embraces the new religion as a deliverance from her outcast status in the old order.

The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu is predominantly realistic in style yet avoids the simple empathy and identification that often goes with that form. A more stylistically adventurous theatrical exercise is *Ka'iulani: A Cantata for the Theatre*, also taken with *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu* on the Kumu Kahua International Tour of 1990. Written by a team comprised of Kneubuhl, Robert Nelson (also of Hawaiian ancestry), and two haole residents, Ryan Page and myself, *Ka'iulani* centers on the tragic life and dashed hopes of the young *hapa haole*¹⁰ princess of the kingdom of Hawai'i. The princess was next in line to the throne, but died of pneumonia at 23 in 1899, less than a year after Hawai'i's annexation to the U.S. following the 1893 overthrow and deposition of Queen Lili'uokalani.

Again, no easy interpretation of Ka'iulani's life is offered, but rather a multiplicity of perspectives is unveiled in the depiction of her career and her untimely death. Images of fluidity, refraction, and duplication dominate performance text and mise-en-scène. The latter is largely created by different configurations of the 10 identical wooden poles that the women of the ensemble hold and manipulate against a black ramp and background. The poles suggest at various times waves, a gazebo, a cage, a cinema screen, hanging vines, weapons, a stretcher, and so on. The central role of Ka'iulani is divided among four women who represent her at different stages of her life, and, during her European education, at her most culturally divided. All of the 10 women of differing ethnicities who make up the major ensemble are identically garbed in Ka'iulani's favorite colors of yellow and black. The refraction idea is further emphasized at different points by three abrupt "flash-out" monologues offered by a modern Hawaiian activist, a cynical student, and a fervent eyewitness to Ka'iulani's funeral, each of whom sees Ka'iulani in a different way, none of which is definitive.

But this refraction and duplication also becomes a dialectical procedure, further problematizing identification with a fixed and consistent Ka'iulani. The fact that the princess was half-Scots and half-Hawaiian, therefore hapa haole, provided the foundation for a stylistic dialectic: choral ensembles and solos suggested by the church cantatas of Bach, or Sullivan-pastiches of late 19th-century poetry (including the famous poem about Ka'iulani by Robert Louis Stevenson), set against Hawaiian chant accompanied by the Hawaiian *pahu* (ceremonial drum); passages of *kahiko* (ancient hula) set against 19th-century salon dance forms; movement derived from Tahitian and Polynesian dance forms set against stiff parodies of haolified formal movement from 19th-century social ceremonies; the stream-of-consciousness free-verse narrative monologues of Ka'iulani and Lili'uokalani set against the inexorable, Brechtian chronological narration of two haole newspaper reporters. Finally, at the climactic moment of death and mourning, a montage of slides of the real Ka'iulani at various points of her life appear on the screen as a valediction, set against the "Ka'iulanis" of the theatrical enactment.

"Local" audiences were presented with a stylized and split image of the beloved princess in which the meaning of her life was refracted into many alternative images; still, they turned out to see the three separate productions—1987, 1988, 1990—in large numbers, despite initially negative reviews. The company's most unforgettable performance was at the remote Māui town of Hana, which rarely sees live theatre. The irony was that the performance was sponsored by the luxury Hana-Māui Hotel resort as entertainment for their "local"—in large part "local Hawaiian"—work force. In spite of primitive lighting and a less-than-ideal venue, the performance in this context ironed out the ambivalence of the text and created a frisson unparalleled by any other showing. At the end, many in the audience and in the cast were in tears as Ka'iulani's story was played out in a spectatorial context that maximized the dominant motif of loss and dis-possession that her life embodied.



11. *The death of Princess Miriam Likelike in Ka'iulani: A Cantata for the Theatre (1987)*. The ensemble includes (from left to right): Katherine Lepani, Karen Kaulana, Lisa Kahn, Tina Malia Keko'olani, Dawn Lavarias, Elroy "Makia" Malo, Jude Wang, Leonelle Anderson Akana, Jillian Sakamoto, Bond Cambridge, and Kerry Elliot. (Photo by Wendell Maruyama)

By way of contrast, Alani Apio's plays *Kāmau* (Bear the Burden, 1994) and *Kāmau A'e* (Continuing On, 1997), the first two plays of a projected trilogy, deal with the here-and-now. They constitute a sustained attempt to dramatically examine the politicized options available to Hawaiians in a contemporary Hawai'i in which their claims to a culture, to land restitution, and to a possible sovereignty either within or parallel to that of the larger U.S.A. are fraught with divisiveness. Apio grew up in the Ewa Beach (Pu'uloa) area and is a graduate of Kamehameha Schools and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. He has considerable local experience as a stage and television actor. Apart from the two plays of the trilogy, both produced by Kumu Kahua, he wrote a youth theatre play, *Nā Keiki 'O ka 'Āina* (Child of the Land, 1988) which was produced by the Māui Youth Theatre.

Kāmau and *Kāmau A'e* can each stand alone but deal with the same extended Hawaiian family's reaction to a hotel conglomerate's purchase of a beach front property that the family has leased from a local Chinese family for 20 years. In *Kāmau*, the focal character is Alika, a high school graduate and a trusted tour guide and employee of the hotel concern that has bought the beach. Distraught when he hears the news, he is fearful of the reactions of his cousin Michael who depends for his entire livelihood on fishing at the property. At the play's climax, Michael knifes a security guard and is sentenced to 10 years in prison. Then Alika, counseled by the spirit of his "Mama," shoulders the burden of caring for Lisa, girlfriend of his suicided cousin, Georgie, and her daughter. Lisa tells him: "It's your love, it's your aloha that's special! That's why the world keeps coming in on you!" (1994:58). But this means a heartbreaking compromise: he must remain an employee of the hotel chain that has evicted his family.

Kāmau was popular with "local" audiences of many different ethnicities and enjoyed packed houses throughout its Honolulu run. This popularity may be attributed in part to what was perceived as a nondogmatic presentation of Hawaiian restitution issues. Some sections of the audience especially liked the scene with the visiting southern redneck miner, Clements, who takes issue with Alika's angry denunciation of the overthrow, which he has newly injected into his tour-guide speech. Clements gives the perspective of a dying, working-class miner who has saved all his life for a final vacation in paradise and expects it to be pleasant and apolitical.

The empathy many spectators might be assumed to feel in support of restitution for Hawaiians is never merely simplistically milked by the playwright. The ending, too, in which Alika takes up his burden, has a feel-good positive quality for many "local" spectators. Nevertheless, many Hawaiians and sympathizers of radical Hawaiian causes felt that this ending was "defeatist [...] more like *Waiting for Godot* than *Waiting for Lefty*" (Rampell 1997:17).

In *Kāmau A'e*, set nine years later, the focal character is Michael, released after nine years in prison and now a committed Hawaiian nationalist and activist. This time the chief spiritual ancestor advisor is Michael's *Tūtū Kā ne* (here, grand uncle). Michael's worldly advisors are a Hawaiian sovereignty group, 'Ai Pōhaku (Eat Stones), who wish to make a test case for Hawaiian "gathering rights" when they and Michael reoccupy the beach property—now the site of a luxury hotel called the Four Winds Riviera Resort. Alika, still working for the conglomerate in a managerial position, refuses his support; but Lisa, now Alika's wife, is sympathetic. The occupation takes place, but then Alika becomes the hotel's spokesman in offering the activists a parcel of North Shore land in exchange for peacefully vacating the hotel property. The offer splits the group, Michael is expelled, and the offer is withdrawn. Lisa and Alika separate in opposite directions. Finally, "*MICHAEL prepares to cast his net. In mid-release his arms are pulled back and he is handcuffed and led off stage*" (1997:70).

Once again, Apio refused to supply the positive ending that certain sections of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement might have expected. The ending of *Kāmau A'e* can again be seen as "defeatist," but in a different way. Certainly Apio "purposely avoided making *Kāmau A'e* a feel-good experience for supporters of any cause" (*Honolulu Star Bulletin* 1997a:D1) and it is true that he "chides professional radicals, local racists, sexist men, air-headed local television reporters and selective culturalism" (*Honolulu Star Bulletin* 1997b:B1). But it could be argued that Apio this time more clearly celebrates the heroism of activism even in its defeat. The life-enhancing act of Hawaiian identity in *Kāmau A'e* is casting a fishing net—Alika is the learner and Michael the expert; at the end of the play, Michael's act of throwing the net is cruelly aborted just as it is begun. But Michael is seen as admirable even in failure, and especially in his noncompromising stance over the hotel offer. Director Harry Wong III remarked that Michael's stance, and his defeat here, alienates the issues of sovereignty in a more compelling way than the earlier play: "People who see Hawaiian issues like sovereignty as gray will see on what side of the line they fall. People who are certain about what is right and wrong will begin to see gray again" (*Honolulu Star Bulletin* 1997a:D3).

Even more than in *Kāmau*, the second play utilizes the poetic, surreal world of the central character's imaginative apprehension of his heritage, and of a guiding ancestor—Alika has Mama, Michael in *Kāmau A'e* has Tūtū Kāne, the dead granduncle who appears in many more scenes as a silent witness as well as talking directly to Michael. In both plays, these surreal communings also segue into flashbacks in which each character recalls childhood days. For the audience, it invites a special participation in the culturally encoded memory of the protagonist, as in Lum's plays, but here the memory-participation process suggests memory of something lost, rather than something gained or discovered. *Kāmau A'e* makes far more use of Hawaiian chant, some of it taught to Michael in his childhood by Tūtū Kāne, and recalled with new urgency and import when he first begins to learn the Hawaiian language systematically during his prison isolation. Also, the members of the movement talk to Michael and chant in Hawaiian, and an important ceremony forming part of the structure of *Kāmau A'e* is the cleansing ceremony of *hi'uwai*, done by immersing the naked body in the ocean. The last *hi'uwai* ceremony is subverted by Alika, who has come to negotiate and refuses to participate. In both plays, the sounds and movement of the ocean and the wide shoreline are important scenic icons.

However, spectatorship in the plays is marked and manipulated by one very important convention—audience "inclusion" as, by implication, primarily "visitors" to Hawai'i and not "locals." This device is much more peripheral in the first play, and figures only intermittently in its structuring and emotional impact. In *Kāmau A'e*, it is seminal. When the group emerges from their cave to occupy the beach land, they address the audience in the theatre as their "audience" and conduct a "freeing the kapu" ceremony before planting the Hawaiian flag on their *lo'i* (farming plot)¹¹ upside down, as a sign of disturbance and unjust disorientation. Michael invites the audience to share Hawaiian songs and entertainment and partake in a *pā'ina* (invited dinner party) in which they are offered food and which lasts throughout the actual intermission in the theatre. Even though their "in-

12. Alika (Charles Kupahu Timtim) receives a lesson from his mother (Nyla L. Fujii) in *Alani Apio's Kāmau* (1994). (Photo by Ku'ulani Malia Littlejohn)



clusion” is emphasized by the prayer at the beginning, and songs, the audience is also made aware that there is not much food available to go around.

This “inclusion” does problematize audience reception. To Hawaiian activists or to those with strong “local” identity, it was an odd, disorienting feeling to be treated as “visitors,” even if asked to share donated food at a pā’ina. Other “locals” found it charming and strangely refreshing, since it puts them in the position of being, for a time, malihini in their own locale. However, Harry Wong III, the director, did say that the cast varied the invitation and the way of “including” each audience according to the night’s previous “signals” and the apparent ethnic composition of each house—and there was much improvised give-and-take with each house during the lengthy intermission (Wong III:1998).

However, *Kāmau A’e* was not as popular a box-office draw as the first play, and this could have been because of the “downbeat” ending. Many among “local” audiences, however, are eager to see what kind of stance Apio will take in the final part of his trilogy.

I have left until last what has probably been to date the most significant recent local-Hawaiian theatre event to dramatize the loss felt in the present by the “crimes” of the past. This was Victoria Kneubuhl’s five-act “living history pageant” *January 1893*, dealing with the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy at that time by WASP merchant interests, who declared a provisional government in a coup d’état. *January 1893* was presented as part of a larger encompassing vigil carried out over four days in January 1993. The events of the overthrow have been treated in other plays—the aforementioned *Ka’iulani*, the play *Lili’uokalani* by Aldyth Morris (presented by Manoa Valley Theatre in 1992), and other works. But *January 1893* was unique for several reasons: its function in the centennial observance, its site-specific presentation, the extraordinary size of the audience with a special sense of spectatorship engendered, and the pre- and post-show framing of the event.

Activist and sovereignty groups had been preparing a long time in advance for the four-day centennial of 14–17 January 1993, which was to center in downtown Honolulu where the coup d’état actually took place: ‘Iolani Palace and the Coronation Stand, and Old Burial Mound on the Palace grounds, the Government Building (Ali‘iōlani Hale) and the old Post Office, all within three city blocks. In fall of 1991, the Hawaiian organization Hui Na‘auao approached Victoria to script a play that would be performed as part of the centennial.

Hui Na‘auao represents a coalition of more than 45 Hawaiian organizations and has the support of many non-Hawaiian organizations. Its primary purpose is to educate the community on historical and current issues that concern Hawaiian sovereignty and to keep the public informed through lectures, workshops, printed materials, and events. (Kneubuhl and Strazar 1994:12)

The producer was Charles Ka‘ai‘ai, who originally had the objective to do “guerilla theatre and provoke people on the streets” (*Honolulu Sunday Star-Bulletin and Advertiser* 1992:G1). But this concept was modified, because, on further discussion, Kneubuhl, Ka‘ai‘ai, and director Dallas Vogeler wanted the widest spectrum of “locals,” haoles, and visitors in Hawai‘i to realize that the Hawaiian sovereignty movement

is important contemporary history in the making. It is focused on an issue that has entered the mainstream; an issue considered, discussed and supported by Hawaiians (and a growing number of non-Hawaiians) of every social and economic background. (Kneubuhl and Strazar 1994:13)

Accordingly, the form that evolved during the next year was one which Kneubuhl finally—and perhaps somewhat inadequately—described as a “pageant” (*Honolulu Sunday Star-Bulletin and Advertiser* 1992:G1). Pageants have a long pedigree in Hawai‘i. They were introduced in the late 19th century, regularly performed from 1913 on, and were staples up to 1947 (Carroll 1983:ix–xiii). However, *January 1893* was far less visual and more verbal than the pageants of the past. Kneubuhl had worked at the Mission Houses Museum as interpreter, coordinator of educational programs, and curator of education from 1986 to 1990, and knew the power of living history pieces as an entertaining format for “locals” and visitors alike. She saw the work basically as an “educational performance project” (Kneubuhl and Strazar 1994:12). State Senator Eloise Tungpalan, who was one of several state officials involved, added: “We need a closure to this wound that has been gaping open for so long” (*Honolulu Sunday Star-Bulletin and Advertiser* 1992:G2). Research and writing took Kneubuhl a year; the 5-act, 19-scene play, with 42 speaking parts and a 15-hour running time, was ready in October 1992.

The framing event, the centennial observance ‘Onipa‘a (Steadfast), was a crucial element in the spectatorship paradigm for *January 1893*. ‘Onipa‘a was sponsored by the Hawai‘i State Legislature and OHA (The Office of Hawaiian Affairs). The following are some of the events that were part of this larger centennial celebration framing the play: On Thursday 14 January, *ho‘ikupu*, (ceremonial gifts in the form of flowers wrapped in ti-leaf packages¹²), were laid at the statue of Queen Lili‘uokalani by dignitaries including then-governor John Waihe‘e. Leonelle Anderson Akana (who was to portray Lili‘uokalani in *January 1893*, and had earlier done so in both *Ka‘iulani* and Morris’s *Lili‘uokalani*) performed a reenactment of the monarch’s last address to the legislature in the building where it occurred, Ali‘i‘lani Hale, now the State Territorial Building.

13. *Kū ka lau lama* (Many Torches Stand), the ‘Onipa‘a torchlight march of protest from Kawaiahao Church to ‘Iolani Palace (17 January 1993) was a tribute to the uniting of the Hawaiian nation. In ancient times, many lighted fires were a sign of victory. (Photo by Gregory Yamamoto; courtesy of the Honolulu Advertiser)



Hawai'i Plays

A Representative List

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- Apio, Alani
1994 *Kāmau*. Honolulu: Palila Books.*
1999 *Kāmau A'e*. Honolulu: Palila Books.*
- Aw, Arthur
1983 *All Brand New Classical Chinese Theatre*. In *Kumu Kahua Plays*, 83–122.
- Benton, James G.
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- Kneubuhl, John
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1993 *Lili'uokalani*. University of Hawai'i Press
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1998 *Mā uiakamalo: ka ho'okala kupua o ka moku* (Māuiokamalo: The Great Ancestor of Chiefs). In Hawaiian.
- Balfantz, Gary
1991 *Mā ui the Demigod*. Adapted from the novel of the same title by Steven S. Goldsberry. Kumu Kahua Archives (hereafter KKA).
- Charlot, Peter
1988 *O'o: Hawai'i*. KKA.
- Clark, B. Burgess
1984 *Purple Hearts*. KKA.
1984 *String of Pearls*. KKA.
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Addresses

The asterisk* denotes that requests for copies of the plays and/or details of performance rights should be addressed to the playwright concerned: Alan Apio, c/o Palila Books, 1038 Queen St., Honolulu, HI, 96814. Tammy H. Baker, 46-078 'Emepela Pl., #B-206, Kaneohe, HI 96744. Victoria N. Kneubuhl, 4905 Mana Pl., Honolulu, HI 96816. Lisa Matsumoto, Lehua Inc., 931 University Avenue #305, Honolulu, HI 96826.

Plays marked KKA are archived at the Archives of Kumu Kahua Theatre, 46 Merchant St., Honolulu, HI 96813, and copies can be obtained from the archive.

In addition, there are large collections of unpublished, produced and unproduced, "local" plays at the Hawaiian and Pacific Collection, Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2550 The Mall, Honolulu, HI 96822. These collections are now under four titles: *College Plays, 1938-1954*, edited by Willard Wilson; *University of Hawaii Plays, 1958-*, edited by Edward A. Langhans (to 1970) and Dennis Carroll (from 1970 to date); *Theatre Group Plays, 1946-1981*, edited by Edward A. Langhans (to 1970) and Dennis Carroll (from 1970-1981) and *Kumu Kahua Contest Plays, 1982-*, edited by Dennis Carroll. The plays in the first two volumes are plays written for classes at the university; those in the second two volumes are entries in the Annual Play Competition sponsored since 1946 by the Theatre and Dance Department of UHM and cosponsored by Kumu Kahua Theatre since 1982.

The Royal standard of the Kalākaua dynasty was raised over ʻIolani Palace for the first time in 100 years, and all American flags over state government buildings in the Capitol District came down for the weekend at Waiheʻe’s orders—an edict that was protested and picketed by two soldiers from Schofield Barracks, a U.S. army base.

On the following day, pro-sovereignty Hawaiians marched to Kawaiahaʻo Church with an upside-down Hawaiian flag, an international sign of distress—a sign also used in Apio’s *Kāmau A ʻe*. On Saturday, the second day of the play, there was a light drizzle, a sign of a Hawaiian blessing. The Royal Hawaiian Band gave a concert, and a torchlight vigil took place at the end of the day. Crowds now swelled to 10,000. On the final day, various Hawaiian sovereignty groups made strong, inflammatory presentations. One of the largest, the grassroots Ka Lahui Hawaiʻi, proposed the taking control of Hawaiian Home Lands,¹³ former government and crown lands, all U.S. military bases, and “certain properties owned by missionary families and sugar companies” (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1993c:A1). Thousands took part in protest marches. “Conch shells moaned, and in a throwback to the anti-war protests of the 1960s, they chanted ‘What do we want?’ ‘Sovereignty’ ‘When do we want it?’ ‘Now!’” But, after the last scene of the play in which Queen Liliʻuokalani resigns her authority, the torchlight march approached from Kawaiahaʻo Church and “people waited, eerily silent, seemingly lost in thought,” and finally, “they broke into clumps, embracing, saying words of farewell, and drifted away” (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1993e:C1).

In *January 1893* Kneubuhl leaves no doubt about her point of view. Some documentary material is used—notably Queen Liliʻuokalani’s speech of abdication, which was the climax of the play. However, even when events are “embellished,” they are arguably true to the nature of what happened in those three momentous days. As Charles Kaʻaiʻai correctly remarked, “it was really a coup d’etat rather than an overthrow. Liliʻuokalani misjudged the conspirators” (*Honolulu Sunday Star-Bulletin and Advertiser* 1992:G2). The historical events were set in motion when Liliʻuokalani, supported by a huge mandate of two-thirds of registered voters, attempted to promulgate a new constitution to the Legislature to replace the so-called Bayonet Constitution of 1887 foisted on her predecessor King Kalākaua.

Brief consideration of some nodal points can illustrate the dialectic between documentary veracity and dramatic “embellishment.” (Indeed, in some scenes documentary veracity—particularly lengthy quotations from printed sources—is almost too prominent for its own good.) *January 1893* begins with reactions to the imminent promulgation of a new constitution from a fictional royalist Hawaiian family based on a real character, the German judge Weidemann, who had married a Hawaiian woman with Chinese Hawaiian relatives. But it also introduces a fictional Greek character, a royalist sympathizer named Alexis—who represents the European immigrants who were *persona non grata* to the WASP American East-Coast merchant power-base. In the scene introducing the conspirators, Kneubuhl makes clear that Lorrin Thurston, the prime mover of the coup d’etat, was partly motivated by a genuine abhorrence of monarchy, which had earlier marked the 1776 American Revolution. But Kneubuhl also shows how Thurston used to his advantage an ambiguous phrase in Liliʻuokalani’s announcement of a delay in promulgating the new constitution. Thurston translates *ʻua keia mau la* as “in a few days” rather than the more generalized “in the future,” thus justifying extreme action on the part of the annexationists to prevent possible immediate, unilateral enforcement of the new constitution by the monarch. The play text includes the famous and oft-quoted text of Liliʻuokalani’s abdication, in which she takes care to relinquish authority to the “United States of America” rather than the Pro-

visional Government of the Republic of Hawai'i. But a stirring follow-up statement, in which she urges her supporters to "stand fast" and "never give up—to seek through peaceful, political means to unite as one people [...] and one day regain our rightful heritage and rightful government" (Kneubuhl 1993:103)—is a dramatic embellishment.

Some of the most touching scenes also fall into the category of "historical embellishment." One is a ceremony of appeasement enacted by *kahunas* (priests) of the Hawaiian gods Pele and Hi'iaka. While this ceremony did not take place, it is true that representatives and *kahunas* had visited the Queen to advise her that her dilemma was a result of the forsaking of the old gods of Hawai'i and urged her to make a pilgrimage around all the islands to reinstate her *mana* (spiritual power) among her subjects. Other fictional episodes also embellish known facts: for example, when Thurston lets it be known that he will take the job if Sanford Dole refuses, the vacillating Dole finally accepts the presidency of the provisional government because he regards himself as the lesser of two evils; and a powerful scene in which Dole's Hawaiian *hānai* (adopted) daughter Lizzie berates him for his disloyalty to the Queen. Also, a local storyteller and expert on Hawaiiana of the period, Glen Grant, was incorporated into the play between scenes as an openly royalist-sympathizing commentator (*Honolulu Sunday Star-Bulletin and Advertiser* 1993:A6).

The script utilizes a prologue and epilogue connecting the drama of the overthrow with the larger stream of Hawaiian history and myth—a device that also serves to underline the noninflammatory nature of the play as a whole. A character called Kupunawahine (female ancestor) begins and ends the event by providing a historical narration outlining the coming of the foreigners, their rapaciousness, the Hawaiians' loss of land in the mid-19th century, and the "pride of nationhood" that ended with the fall of the monarchy, a "story of loss, a story of greed, a story of grave injustice we can never forget" (1993:3).

The production was strongly predicated on Bennett's idea of "emancipated spectators." The crowd for 'Onipa'a as a whole was between 10,000 and 20,000, with the greatest numbers in attendance on the final days—and it consisted of a wide spectrum of the "local" and visitor population. The various 19 scenes and sites were merged over a three-day period. The spectators moved in a liminal area often traversed in everyday life, with the familiar downtown sites sealed off to normal traffic, "ritualized" for four days as a huge stage set for a ceremonial drama, and often with no clear boundaries between audience and performance areas. Again, Read's "geography of theatre," and the special images arising from the interaction of the quotidian knowledge of the space and its special use in this instance, are significant in reception. Also, there were many kinds of spectators: those who happened on the performance or individual scenes by chance; those who saw isolated scenes on one or two days as part of their participation in the larger ceremony; those who wanted to see specific scenes only; and those dedicated to seeing the entire performance over the three days. They comprised a large spectrum: Hawaiian activists; "locals" of various political persuasions; curious visitors, including Canadian tourists who were able to make comparisons with the fate of native peoples in their own country; the two soldiers picketing Waihe'e's flag decision who were then invited to see the play by the leader of one of the Hawaiian sovereignty movements. One spectator said: "I think one of the things I like is that a lot of people here who are Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians are talking together between acts" (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1993b:A1). Unfortunately, there were interventions of chance that made seeing the entire play difficult: on the final day, two scenes had to be moved from their originally announced sites because of unforeseen conflicts with other centennial observances, and the moves were not properly announced over the sound system (*Honolulu Adver-*

14. In Kneubuhl's pageant, January 1893, Queen Lili'uokalani (Leonelle Anderson Akana) is driven by horse-drawn carriage from Ali'iōlani Hale to 'Iolani Palace. (Photo by T. Imeda; courtesy of the Honolulu Advertiser)



tiser 1993d:A5). So, for most, *January 1893* was experienced as a distinctly “compartmented” structure with gaps, and hence as something incomplete/not-yet-played-out in the context of the ongoing history of Hawai‘i—not an inappropriate experiential mode.

On the opening day—in which Acts I and II were performed, a total of 8 scenes—the action began at dawn (5:00 A.M.) at the Burial Mound with an audience of 100, which by 10:00 A.M. (Act I Sc. 3, ‘Iolani Palace steps) had swollen to 500. The dawn scene introduced Kupunawahine, played by 87-year-old Elizabeth Nalani Ellis, wrapped in a Hawaiian quilt for warmth. The noon scene, in which Lili‘uokalani is brought to Ali‘iōlani Hale in a horse-drawn carriage and then makes an announcement that the implementation of the constitution has been delayed, was seen by 1,000 people. However, for the final scene of the day—in which minister Stevens plots with Thurston and the annexationists—this had reduced to about 500, “predominantly Hawaiian” people (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1993b:A2). By this time scenes had taken place at all locations. There were problems with the sound system, but people were tolerant. On the second day, the 6 scenes of Act III were presented between 9:50 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. These led to the climax of the fictive ritual ceremony at the Burial Mound in homage to Pele and Hi‘iaka. The scene of marching marines, originally to include 162 young haole men, had to be modified for lack of volunteers, and was represented by sound effects and a drilling group of 15 “marines” who surrounded the entrance of the building. On the final day, the action encompassed the five final scenes, from 3:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M.

The final scene of Lili‘uokalani’s abdication was emotionally charged, and for this climactic scene the audience was one of the largest. Some who had missed earlier scenes had a chance to experience a compensatory sense of emotional/aesthetic fulfillment and completion. Before the famous speech, a University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Hawaiian language class sang *Mele ‘Ai Pōhaku*, the protest song written after the overthrow. The famous abdication speech itself was received in silence: “A sea of people carpeted the palace lawn to King Street. They made no sound” (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1993d:A5). After this, and the speech of comfort in which Lili‘uokalani urges her people to stand fast and trust in future restitution, the lights in ‘Iolani Palace were extinguished, except

for a single light in the "prison room" where the Queen was held under house arrest in 1895 (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1993a:A6).

Significant, too, were the long-term effects of the play and the 'Onipa'a centennial. In the few months that followed, an exceptional number of bills relating to Hawaiian issues and Hawaiian sovereignty were introduced to the Legislature, including one for a sovereignty referendum and another for 250 tuition waivers for students of Hawaiian ancestry attending the University of Hawai'i. One state senator reported that she thought that "the introduction of these bills came in response to the overwhelming interest in the centennial activities and, in particular, the historical events that were portrayed during the course of the pageant" (Kneubuhl and Strazar 1994:14).

One of the important developments in "local" theatre during the past three years has been the foregrounding of the verbal languages of "local" theatre. On the one hand, this has been manifested in the growing frequency and popularity of "reader's theatre format" adaptations of some best-seller fiction by Hawai'i's increasingly touted fiction authors, with prominent use of pidgin. The most outstanding and popular of these was a version by John Wat and Keith Kashiwada of Lois Ann Yamanaka's *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (1996), a novel about the coming of age of a disadvantaged local Japanese American teenage girl in Hilo. These adaptations have used several performers to preserve much of the prose narrative and dialogue exchanges of the original novels. As such, they have transmogrified into the medium of theatre some local voices who are not yet playwrights but whose writing resonates with "local" rhythm and references.

Perhaps more significant still has been the production of the first two plays totally in the Hawaiian language, by Tammy Haili'ōpua Baker. *Kaluaiko'olau: ke kā 'e'a'e'a o nā pali kalalau* (*Kaluaiko'olau: The Hero of the Cliffs of Kalalau*), written and produced in 1995, deals with Ko'olau, the leper fugitive on Kaua'i in the 1890s. The second play, *Māuiakamalo: ka ho'okala kupua o ka moku* (*Māuiakamalo: The Great Ancestor of Chiefs*), deals with the legendary exploits of Māui, the trickster and demigod, and was staged in May 1998. Large audiences turned out for both productions, which toured the state. In a decade in which Hawaiian has reemerged as a living language for thousands of the population, this is a most significant development.



15. Cast members rehearse a hula sequence for the first full-length Hawaiian-language play, Tammy Haili'ōpua Baker's *Kaluaiko'olau: ke kā 'e'a'e'a o nā pali kalalau*. In front: Kalama Cabigon (left) and Malia Nobrega. In rear: Kawika McGuire (left), Malia Kuahiwinui (center), and Trisha Gibson. (Photo by Tammy Haili'ōpua Baker)

Finally, since 1993 there has been a tendency for qualified kumu hula and Hawaiian resource people to relax their guarded insistence on “authenticity” of chant and hula as used in theatre for residents. This may be because the survival of these precious forms now seems assured. In any case there have been some recent landmark theatrical presentations of mele and hula from within the Hawaiian community staged in theatrical venues and combined in series not strictly sanctioned by traditional usage. One such production was *Holo Mai Pele* (The Coming of Pele) as staged for an interisland tour and performances at Blaisdell Concert Hall by a Big Island hālau under the supervision of the sisters Pua Kanahahele and Nalani Kanaka’ole. It combined several separate mele together to form a continuous Pele narrative, with hula choreographic forms passed down from kumu hula Edith Kanaka’ole. This production made an indelible impact in 1994. Similar productions have so far been rare, but a more recent one is kumu hula John Kaha’i Topolinski’s anti-annexation production *La Ho’oilo* (Day of Destruction), performed on the centenary of annexation.¹⁴ Staged at the Hawai’i Theatre in August 1998, eight hālau contributed performances of mele and hula depicting the fall of the monarchy, and the mele were both newly composed and selected from historical sources. Also of significance is the site-specific ceremonial work involving hula and chant of kumu hula John Keolamaka’āinanakalāhuioakalani Lake. This presentation, *Ho’oku’ikahi* (Unification to Make Amends for Past Ills) was given at the Kawaihae *heiau* (temple) on 14–16 August 1998, and was the result of careful archival study of the ceremonial and religious context of mele, which Lake had learned by rote from childhood (Lake 1998). Productions and work like this could be the harbinger of new creative freedom in the theatrical treatment of kahiko and chant, and could lead to exciting and unique site-specific forms of a more presentational “local” theatre.

Because of the renaissance of Hawaiian consciousness and the controversy surrounding the sovereignty movement, and also because of the new-found militancy of some other “local” groups, the questions of not only “what is said” in “local” theatre, but also “who may speak” are newly pressing issues. Mention has been made of the theatre groups doing “local” work, and giving major opportunities to “local” performers.¹⁵ All of them except Kumu Kahua are run by “local” or other haoles, and this can be a sore point in a community newly sensitive to the past cultural history of post-contact Hawai’i, first wrested from the Hawaiians and controlled by patriarchal white colonialist oligarchies, eventually in turn largely replaced by oligarchies of other kinds, with different but at times equally exclusivist agendas. Allied to these inquiries are the questions of which theatre forms are most suitable to reflect the unique “local” cultural variants; what is the place of hula and chant within play-presentations; and how is quality defined and evaluated. Who has the proper credentials to define the ethnic and cultural traits of any given group, and who has the right to present and represent them in theatre? Which should have priority in considerations for choosing plays, directors, actors: theatrical credentials gained in standard mainstream conservatories, or those of raw talent and an instinctive feel for “local” rhythms of action, speech, and body-language, inscribed in many performers born and raised in Hawai’i? These are questions that are becoming increasingly politicized, but many of the transitional problems will be solved when “local” theatre is fully in the hands of “locals.” That day may not be long in coming.

Notes

1. There are instances in this essay where Hawaiian diacritical marks are not applied: with certain proper names, at the behest of the person concerned; and in direct quotations from older sources in which they were not used.
2. Desmond in her article outlines deftly the major schism between those who favor a

- "blood quantum" definition and those who prefer one based on cultural factors, and surveys the differences between the major sovereignty groups (1997:97–100).
3. In the 1990s, the largest population group is the one of "mixed ethnicity" at 31 percent, with a majority of this group having some Hawaiian blood; the next are the Japanese Americans, 22 percent; and Caucasians, also 22 percent. Next come Filipinos at 12 percent, and Chinese Americans at 5 percent (Bendure and Friary 1995:45).
 4. Educational theatre has provided valuable development opportunities for Hawai'i's "local" theatre. Kumu Kahua itself was incubated within the Department of Theatre and Dance, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, from 1971 to 1980; Dr. Tamara Hunt's Youth Theatre program at that department has nurtured Lisa Matsumoto's work and other "local" plays for youth audiences. At the Leeward Community College of UHM, Dr. Paul Cravath has developed a program known as "Hawaiian-style theatre," which has developed a series of seven student-scripted plays, each set in an area of the islands with content inspired by the specific locale of the title. The structure of each has been a collage of mythical, historical, and contemporary episodes, the contemporary usually depicting a "local family" struggling with the deracinations of an environment which treats them as second-class citizens. The most successful productions have included the so-called "Leeward" trilogy set at sites on the leeward side of O'ahu: *Wai'anae* (1991), *For 'Eva* (1993–1994) and *Nā nā kuli* (1997–1998). Lastly, the drama program at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo campus, on the Big Island, under Jackie Pualani Johnson, has focused especially on Hawai'i and Pacific island plays, notably those of John Kneubuhl.
 5. Gene Shofner (Managing Director of Kumu Kahua) qualified his statement by admitting that the method of noting "visitor" identification, voluntarily on the phone and through a printed instruction at the box office window, might have meant that several "visitors" were not recorded. To date, Kumu Kahua's biggest success with an equivalent of "visitor audiences" was in 1990, when it took two productions abroad on its first international tour to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, to Washington, DC, and to the Los Angeles Festival of the Arts. Even in this case the picture is complicated by the fact that in Washington and Los Angeles, many ex-residents of Hawai'i attended the productions.
 6. Sakamoto's *Aloha Las Vegas* (1991) and *The Taste of Kona Coffee* (1993) are still Kumu Kahua's all-time box office hits (Kumu Kahua Archives) and *Our Hearts Were Touched with Fire* was seen by over 5,000 in an eight-day performance run at UHM's Kennedy Theatre in 1994. It was revived in July 1998 in an even larger venue, Blaisdell Concert Hall in Honolulu, with equal success.
 7. The term *pa-ke*, as Lum explains, is of uncertain origin. It is generic in that it refers to a person of Chinese origin, but also "might be used to insult someone who is frugal or 'tight' because of the stereotype that Chinese are pennypinchers" (1992:48).
 8. Qualifying as a *kumu hula* involves a long apprenticeship and graduation process (*ū'niki*) comprising study of, first, hula; then, chant; and, lastly, training in ceremonial protocol, musical accompaniment, and the choice of attire and adornment for hula and chant (Takamine 1998).
 9. Various legends recount somewhat conflicting origins of the hula and the nature of Laka, who could have been two gods, male and female, both named Laka; or a male god who taught hula to Hi'iaka, sister of Pele; or indeed a god with a dual nature (see Topolinski 1979:146–47).
 10. Defined as "part-white person; of part-white blood; part-white and part Hawaiian" (Pukui and Elbert 1986:58).
 11. This is more properly and literally an irrigated, terraced taro patch, but is sometimes used in a broader, more general sense.
 12. The ti-plant is a woody plant of the lily family non-indigenous to Hawai'i. The leaves were put to many uses by the Hawaiians, including those of thatching and food-wrapping (Pukui and Elbert 1986:145).
 13. Hawaiian Homelands consist of a land trust of originally about 200,000 acres set aside for leasehold homesteading by persons of 50 percent or more Hawaiian blood. This was by an Act of Congress in 1921. But the land did not include that already given over to sugar production, or land already leased, so it was the least productive land in the state. Also, opponents of Hawaiian Homes insisted that the program be self-supporting without federal assistance, with the result that most of the land has just sat there ever since (Keppeler 1992:198–99).

14. The annexation centennial, in August of 1998, is not notable for the same unanimity of observance as was that for the overthrow in 1993. But Victoria Kneubuhl offered an hour-long “living history” play concerning the annexation at the Bishop Museum on 31 August, and there were protest marches, symposia, and demonstrations throughout the state.
15. A recent sign of the increasing prestige of “local” plays in Hawai‘i has been the participation of “name” stars, for very nominal fees, in certain productions. For example, Jason Scott Lee, a Hollywood star who was born and raised in Hawai‘i, played in Kumu Kahua’s production of Sakamoto’s *Stew Rice* in 1995.

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