

DANCE STYLE LOCATOR

Hawaiian Hula



Hula is a sacred tradition for the Hawaiian people, going back to ancient times, when chants and body movements were first used as forms of communication with the gods. Until fairly recently, the Hawaiian language was primarily oral rather than written, with history and tradition passed down through dance and chants from generation to generation. The survival of hula is an integral part of Hawaii's past and future, having kept alive much of the culture's history, including a chronology of important events, battles fought and genealogical histories of the people. Hula has also preserved details about traditions from old Hawai'i, such as that of making leis, flower gathering, and preparing vegetation for medicinal purposes. The practice of hula continues to honor certain gods, goddesses and other deities, as well as natural elements, historical figures, and other aspects of creation.

During Hawaii's missionary era in the early 1800's, most forms of native Hawaiian expression, including hula, were suppressed, and it wasn't until 70+ years later that the art form was again performed publicly. King Kalākaua, the last reigning king, once said, "Hula is the heartbeat of the

Hawaiian people." Hula continues to carry the history and tradition, and the spirit and strength of the Hawaiian people through the generations.

PELE

Legend tells us that the goddess Pele used intense fire, heat and explosive energy to create pits of churning lava that awakened the islands of Hawai'i. Escaping from the jealous sea goddess who sought to extinguish her flames, Pele journeyed through the islands of Ni'ihau, Kaua'i, O'ahu, Moloka'i, Lana'i and then to Maui – but found scarce protection from the enemy waters. She finally came to the island of Hawai'i and found the place that fulfilled her desires: the pit of Halema'uma'u along the expansive slopes of Kilauea -- far from the sea.

Pele's youngest and most beloved sister, Hi'iakaikapoliopole was the first student of hula. Therefore, many chants and dances were composed in honor of Pele, filled with her power and energy, and with imagery of the land surrounding her home. Pele remains an earth-creating force from her home on Hawai'i, where her majestic fountains of fire, rivers of molten magma and hissing jet-black fields of cooling lava still inspire the Hawaiian people today.

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(Hawaiian Hula, continued)

Here are some of the musical “implements” and instruments used in hula.

Ipu Heke or
Ipu Heke `ole:

A double gourd drum. Basic beats help keep the time and rhythm for the dancers to follow.

Pu`ili:

Split bamboo stick used to enhance and express the meaning of the song. The sounds are meant to be reflective of nature.

`Ili`ili:

River worn stones castanets. Smooth stones (2 in each hand) used to keep time and rhythm of the dance and express the natural surroundings the particular dance speaks of.

Ka`eke`eke:

Bamboo stamping pipes. 2 different sized (1 tall, 1 shorter) bamboo pipes stamped on the ground gives 2 different harmonizing pitches used to keep timing of the dance.

`Ohe Hano Ihu:

Bamboo nose flute. This flute with only 3 holes for the fingers and 1 hole for air is used with the air from the nose. It is said that the air from the ihu (nose) is most pure.

Pahu:

Shark skin drum. A hollowed coconut log attached with sennit (a rope from the coconut fruit) and stretched shark skin top. This drum was once only used for sacred religious ceremonies. Today, although still used for religious ceremonies, the pahu is also used to accompany dances outside of ceremony.

