

Graceful styling and gentle mannerisms of traditional hula to be presented by Hawaiian Dance Company May 8 at UC San Diego

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HAWAIIAN DANCE COMPANY MAY 8 AT UC SAN DIEGO

"Hips, arms and legs move in seamless isolation from one another in a flow of increasing rhythmic detail and staccato push," writes the New York Times in describing a performance by Hawaiian dancers of the hula a dance "said to have been inspired by the flowing of lava and ocean waves."

Those Hawaiian dancers, members of Halau Hula Ka No eau, an award-winning dance academy and performing company from the big island of Hawaii, will perform at 8 p.m. May 8 in the Price Center Ballroom at the University of California, San Diego.

Halau Hula Ka No eau is dedicated to preserving and performing the traditional hula, a dance style called hula kus i associated with the late hula master Maiki Aiu Lake, known as the Martha Graham of the hula. Lake's styling reflects the gentle mannerisms and courtly dances of the Hawaiian Monarchy during the late 1800s.

The company's hula, according to the University of Hawaii's Barbara Furstenberg, is a far cry from the hip-swaying hula popularized and stereotyped decades ago for Hollywood movies and in songs to lure and entertain tourists.

"True hula," says Furstenberg, is the "quintessential expression of Hawaiian cultural values," deeply rooted in tradition and legend. It is "said to be the lecture room, concert hall, library, opera, and theater of the Hawaiian people."

A Dance Magazine writer adds: "For Hawaiians, studying and performing hula is a lifelong undertaking, requiring concentration, discipline, and constant practice."

Michael Pili Pang is founder and artistic director of Halau Hula ka No eau. He studied under hula master Lake and master chanter Paulani Kanakaole Kanahale. His goal with Halau Hula is to take the folklore of the Hawaiian Islands and through traditional hula, styling, music and chant present emotional and stirring performances.

"When I choreograph, I try to do the same styling," says Pang. "If my dances look like my teacher's, then I've succeeded in retaining and passing down a style. Anyone can teach the dance. But to pass down the styling is quite difficult."

William Feltz, coordinator of a Honolulu arts program says, "Pang approaches Hawaiian dance as an artistic, creative and educational endeavor, not simply as entertainment ... The members of the ensemble take their work very seriously, and their public performances are varied, polished and exciting."

Pang says the reason the company tours is to share Hawaii's "true culture. We're trying to bring as much of Hawaii to the mainland as possible and not make it so commercialized, but instead as traditional as possible. Because hula is a tradition for us."

The company has won top honors at hula and chant competitions throughout Hawaii and has performed in New York City, British Columbia, Minnesota, Arizona and for a number of professional dance companies and universities. In 1997 it performed in collaboration with the modern dance company of Pittsburgh, Dance Alloy.

"The company members' love for the art form and their warmth permeated throughout the performance so genuinely and (so) inviting," says St. Cloud State University arts advisor Toshiko Schwerdtfeger of a Halau Hula performance in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

Tickets for Halau Hula Ka No eau are \$15 general admission, \$13 for faculty, staff and senior citizens, and \$12 for students. Tickets are available at the UCSD Box Office, 534-8497, and at Ticketmaster outlets at 220-8497. The performance is sponsored by the UCSD University Events Office. For information on the entire season of events sponsored by the University Events Office, visit the website, <http://ueo.ucsd.edu>, or call the UCSD University Events Office at 534-4090.

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