

Island Beat

June 2016

CREDITS:

Editor
David Bock

Writers
John Burnett
Katie Young Yamanaka

Photography
Hollyn Johnson

Design
Bonnie L. Rogers



**Katie Young
YAMANAKA**

Big Island Vibe

Festival celebrates Hawaiian language

"In the Hawaiian culture, it's never just a single thread — not just a story. It's music and dance, too, because that's how Hawaiians relate to the world."

Thus, Keaka: The Hawaiian Language Theatre Festival was born and will premiere at the UH-Hilo Performing Arts Center this weekend. Performances and workshops entirely in the Hawaiian language will be featured Saturday and Sunday at the festival.

"When you are trying to bring a language back, it's important to have depth, not just surface learning," Johnson says. "In the Hawaiian culture, it's never just a single thread — not just a story. It's music and dance, too, because that's how Hawaiians relate to the world."

The first festival workshop is from 9-11 a.m. Saturday titled "Ho'oulu." The session will focus on the relationship between mele (song) and meakanu (plants). Featuring students of Ke Kula

Jackie Johnson
UH-Hilo performing arts professor

University of Hawaii at Hilo performing arts professor Jackie Johnson had a dream — one that she wanted to see to fruition before she retires next spring. "For years, I've been wanting to do a theater festival in the Hawaiian language," Johnson says. "Two of my children went through Hawaiian immersion schools, and the language is very important to our family. Not only that, but our island is really the locus of the revitalization of the language. We have lots of young people who speak the language, but that doesn't mean they have supplemental activities to further those skills."

See FESTIVAL Page 4

4 Thursday, June 2, 2016

FESTIVAL

From page 2

'O Nawahiokalani'ōpu'u, the Hawaiian language immersion school in Keaau, and led by Ha'amauliola Aiona and Pa'ani Kelson, participants will enjoy hands-on activities, oratory and hula presentations.

Then, from 1:30-3:30 p.m. Saturday, go behind the scenes of the first Hawaiian language play, "La'iikawai," by the new Hawaiian Theatre Program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

The workshop, conducted by Kaliko Baker, Snowbird Bento and Keawe Lopes, takes a look at the research and development process of bringing this legend to life.

In the evening, Kamehameha Schools-Hawaii campus presents "Ha'upu," an opera based on the legend of

Hina and her son, Kana, starting at 7:30 p.m.

Sung entirely in Hawaiian, the show is the third 'olelo Hawaii opera in the Hoike series at Kamehameha Schools-Hawaii.

This particular opera details the story of Hina, an alii from Hilo, who is kidnapped by Kapepe'ekauiila, a rogue alii from Molokai. Hina's two sons plan a rescue, but as this is happening, Hina unexpectedly begins to fall in love with her captor.

Created by Eric Stack (playwright) and Herb Mahelona (composer), "Ha'upu" also will premiere in Edinburgh, Scotland, at the annual Festival Fringe in August.

"Every year, Kamehameha Schools outdoes itself," says Justina Mattos, UH-Hilo English, communications and performing arts department lecturer. "It's spectacular. If you didn't get to go to the Hoike performance, this is a great chance to see a shortened version of what they will showcase in Scotland this summer."

The Keaka festival closes Sunday with a theater performance, "Kakahiaka," intended for young audiences that debuts at 3 p.m. Presented by UH-Hilo, the musical is written and co-directed by Mattos with music by Jace Saplan.

Mattos directed "Go Dogs, Go!" at UH-Hilo a few years back and recalls that the experience showed her you didn't need a lot of dialogue to make a performance exciting for kids.

Hawaii Tribune Herald

**More news, more savings,
more often.**

935-6619
hawaiitribune-herald.com



Courtesy photo

Played by Kaitaro Tamashiro, 'Elelu, a character from the original musical "Kakahiaka," prepares to take a big bite out of a cookie.

"One of my interests in doing a Hawaiian language play was making the language more accessible to everybody," Mattos explains. "My goal was to use simple dialogue and teach the audience a few words in Hawaiian. I'm hoping it will be engaging for members of the Hawaiian-speaking community and for people who don't know much of the language."

Colorful characters in the show include 'Elelu the cockroach, Popoki the cat, 'Ilio the dog and Manu, an elusive bird.

These creatures help Mama find her lei as the sun rises on a beautiful Hawaii morning.

The artistic team includes Ka'iulani Lum Ho, Jenn Eng and Kenny Davis. Actors are Kimo

Apaka, 'Anela Hoke, Lilineo Kauahikaua, Betty Jo Lewis, Kaniuloa Ohia, Trey Saunders, Kaitaro Tamashiro, Kumele Tiogango and Kaiulu Tiogango.

"Kakahiaka" is the first non-English play Mattos has written, but what she expected to be her greatest challenge with the production turned out not to be an issue at all.

"I needed actors who could sing, dance, act and 'olelo Hawaii. That was a tall order," Mattos says. "I worried I wouldn't get enough actors to fill the roles. The surprising thing was that we were able to find people who could do all four of those things and several of them are young kids."

She adds that part

of the challenge in the resurgence of the Hawaiian language is to get it out of the classroom and see it more widely used in the community. The festival is part of that effort.

"There is a diverse offering at Keaka," Mattos says. "It's a lot to offer this early in the efforts to create Hawaiian language theater: an academic panel presentation, a hands-on workshop, a Hawaiian language opera and a Western-style children's musical offered in Hawaiian. It's pretty exciting."

Johnson is laying the groundwork, hoping that the festival can continue for years to come.

"This is another layer to the movement," she says. "People are noticing and realizing the

importance of something like this. We want the Hawaiian language to come back but not just for those who are Hawaiian language majors. We want it everywhere. That's when we know a language has truly come back: when it's not just in the classroom."

Keaka: The Hawaiian Language Theatre Festival is sponsored by the UH-Hilo Performing Arts Department and underwritten by the Kipuka Native Hawaiian Student Center. All events are free and open to the public. No reservations are required.

For more information, call Johnson at 937-6600 or email keakafestival@gmail.com.

Email Katie Young Yamanaka at BIVHawaii@gmail.com.