CLAIMING THE COLONIAL AND DOMESTICATING THE FOREIGN
A NATIVE HAWAIIAN AESTHETIC FOR THE PIANO IN HULA KU'I MUSIC

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
IN
MUSIC
MAY 2011

By
Aaron J. Salā

Thesis Committee:
Ricardo D. Trimillos, Chairperson
April A. H. Drexel
Thomas Yee
With tremendous appreciation,
I humbly dedicate this work to my grandparents,
Richard Earl Cabral and Cecilia Ka‘ihilani Cabral.
Abstract:

This thesis explores the nature of piano performance practice in Hawaiian hula ku‘i music. As an auxiliary instrument, the piano serves as melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic decoration to what has become the core Hawaiian ensemble. Its performance is informed by an aesthetic system grounded in Hawaiian culture. The methodology by which piano performances were transcribed has led to the discovery of an analytical technique that is new to the field of ethnomusicology. In conjunction with notation software, MIDI technology provides a complex musical score which also serves as a hyper-descriptive kinetic map, allowing the examination of not only the music itself but also the kinetic behavior of the pianist at the keyboard. Finally, by negotiating a Native voice for ethnomusicology, shifting the focus from a purely ethnographic approach toward one that acknowledges the Native practitioner/scholar, this thesis argues for a common ground between Academic ontology and Native epistemology.
# Table of Contents

**List of Figures**

**List of Table**

**Chapter One  \ Pa‘a ka waha, Lohe ka pepeiao, Hana ka lima  \ 1**

- Edwin Mahi‘ai “Mahi” Beamer and Leila Hohu Kiaha ........................5
- Importance of Research ........................................................................6
- Overview of Literature .........................................................................8
- Conventions for the Thesis ...................................................................13
- Outline for the Thesis ..........................................................................14
- Author’s Note ......................................................................................16

**Chapter Two \  E ho‘i i ke kumu: The Piano in Hawai‘i  \ 17**

- A History of the Piano in Hawai‘i .........................................................18
- Music Literacy .......................................................................................23
- Conclusions ............................................................................................27

**Chapter Three  \ E hō‘ike mai i ka hua mele: The Piano in Published Hula Ku‘i Songbooks  \ 28**

- *The Latest Hawaiian Hulas* .................................................................29
- *Johnny Noble’s Collection of Ancient and Modern Hulas* ...............33
- The Piano/Vocal Score(s): the Music Itself .........................................40
- Conclusions ............................................................................................46

**Chapter Four  \ E ho‘omākauskau i ke kani leo: Creating a Space for the Piano  \ 47**

- Parameters for Transcription .................................................................49
- Challenges of MIDI Transcriptions ....................................................52
- The Pianists and Their Performances .................................................55
1. “Ke Aloha” Performance 1 ..............................166
2. “Ke Aloha” Performance 2 ..............................176
3. “Ke Aloha” Performance 3 ..............................186

D. Alika Young Performances .................................196
1. “Home Kapaka” Performance 1 .........................197
2. “Home Kapaka” Performance 2 .........................218
3. “Home Kapaka” Performance 3 .........................239

Glossary ................................................................260
References ..........................................................262
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>M. 5 from transcription performance #4, Joseph Mahoe</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2a</td>
<td>Parallel octaves as heard</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2b</td>
<td>Parallel octaves played through MIKI; Transcription #3, Alika Young</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1a</td>
<td>Vamp melody of “Nani Wenusi” as written in score</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1b</td>
<td>Basic vamp melody as performed normatively</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>The Beamer Vamp</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3a</td>
<td>Introductory vamp, “Ku‘u Hoa,” Joseph Mahoe</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3b</td>
<td>Author’s rendering of introductory vamp, “Ku‘u Hoa”</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4a</td>
<td>Introductory vamp, “Ke Aloha,” C. Lanihuli Lee</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4b</td>
<td>Author’s reduction of introductory vamp, “Ke Aloha”</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5a</td>
<td>Introductory vamp, “Home Kapaka,” Alika Young</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5b</td>
<td>Author’s reduction of introductory vamp, “Home Kapaka”</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Lead-in formula (m. 1) material in first measure followed by full vamp</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7a</td>
<td>Lead-in for vamp (1), “Ku‘u Hoa,” Joseph Mahoe</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7b</td>
<td>Lead-in for vamp (1), “Ku‘u Hoa,” Author’s Rendering</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7c</td>
<td>Lead-in for vamp (2), “Ku‘u Hoa,” Joseph Mahoe</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7d</td>
<td>Lead-in for vamp (2), “Ku‘u Hoa,” Author’s Rendering</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8a</td>
<td>Lead-in for vamp (1), “Ke Aloha,” C. Lanihuli Lee</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8b</td>
<td>Lead-in for vamp (1), “Ke Aloha,” Author’s rendering</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8c</td>
<td>Lead-in for vamp (2), “Ke Aloha,” C. Lanihuli Lee</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8d</td>
<td>Lead-in for vamp (2), “Ke Aloha,” C. Lanihuli Lee</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.9a  Lead-in for vamp (1), “Home Kapaka,” Alika Young 79
5.9b  Lead-in for vamp (1), “Home Kapaka,” Author’s rendering 79
5.9c  Lead-in for vamp (2), “Home Kapaka,” Alika Young 79
5.9d  Lead-in for vamp (2), “Home Kapaka,” Author’s rendering 79
5.10a/b  “Ku’u Hoa,” Verse 1, Joseph Mahoe 86-87
5.11a/b  “Ke Aloha,” Verse 1, C. Lanihuli Lee 88-89
5.12a-c  “Home Kapaka,” Verse 1, Alika Young 90-92

List of Table

1  Tempo markings with song titles, *Latest Hawaiian Hulas, 1917* 30
CHAPTER ONE
PA‘A KA WAHA, LOHE KA PEPEIAO, HANA KA LIMA

 ―After you practice what you are supposed to practice, Aaron Joseph.
    After you practice, then Grandma will show you.‖
—Cecilia Ka‘ihilani Cabral, my grandmother
    (on too many occasions for me to date)

Although the piano is part of the Hawaiian musical soundscape, its style and how it reflects an Hawaiian aesthetic have not been explored. In Hawaiian practice, the piano has been both domesticated and naturalized and perhaps because of this integration, it has remained largely unexamined. This domestication and naturalization are reflected in my own lived experience, with which—as a Native Hawaiian practitioner—I enter upon this ethnomusicological study. My study began years ago not as a student, but as a grandson.

I can still hear my grandmother’s response, clear as a bell. By the time she actually used my middle name, I knew that I had better just do as I was told; her patience was diminishing. I was, and still am, such a huge fan of “Gram,” as I fondly called her. She seemed to be able to do it all. And, on top of it all, she and I shared something really special: we both played the piano.

The piano in the living room of my maternal grandparents’ home in Kailua, O‘ahu was a six-foot Sargent grand and for a long time, I was the only one who played it. I remember one day, as a youngster, looking at the inscription date, which read “1938,” but I never thought it peculiar that a piano so mature would find itself in a house where no one, except I, played it. I still remember exactly how that all changed like it happened just yesterday.
A little history first. I started playing the piano around the age of five. At the time, I lived in Tafuna, a village on the island of Tutuila in American Sāmoa. We enjoyed electricity for about an hour each day and so finding activities to keep busy was a necessity. My mother enrolled my sister and me in golf, tennis, and piano lessons so by the time my mother, sister, and I moved to my grandparents’ home, I already had a few years of piano lessons in my fingers. I was musically literate and had begun working through the Suzuki Method.¹ I know now that it was just the Suzuki Method books that I was working through and not the actual method of teaching.

One day, when I was about eight years old, I attended a lū‘au² (party) with my grandparents. Upon our return home that evening, we found the house empty. I distinctly remember the smell of rain on the breeze. The three of us walked into the house and, rather than go straight to the room to change into “stay-home” clothes as Gram would normally have done, she went to the piano. I actually expected her to call me over to play something for her, but the kāhea (call) never came. After sounding a few individual notes here and there on the keyboard, she started to play. I can still hear it today and every time I think about that evening tears fill my eyes and run down my cheeks, and I am sitting there again all those years ago, awestruck.

“Kalama'ula” was the first song Gram played that night and it changed my life. Up until that evening, I had had such a great interest in the Minuets of Bach, in the

¹ The Suzuki Method, so named by its originator, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, refers to a method of teaching children to play a musical instrument. Suzuki equated a child’s ability to learn music to the child’s language acquisition process. As children learn to speak before they learn to read, so does the Method focus on aural sensitivity and encourage children to play what they hear as they hear what they play.

² Originally called ‘aha‘aina, the term lū‘au refers to a feast with a large gathering of family and friends with the purpose of celebration. Popularly, lū‘au are held on occasions such as a child’s first birthday and high school graduation.
Sonatas of Beethoven, and I always had an especial fondness for the Nocturnes of Chopin. As I think back, while I loved “Kala‘ula’s” melody, it was not so much the sound that I was so impressed by but that it was my grandmother playing it, and she played without music. When I asked her if I could read the music, assuming in my innocence that she had memorized it, she replied that there was none. Gram began talking a bit about learning by ear, something along the lines of “you hear it and then you play it.” Amazing. She agreed, after much pleading, that she would teach me—though I remember it being more like showing rather than teaching—how she played so long as I first practiced what I was expected to practice for my Western Classical lessons.

This continued for years. After my Classical piano-practice time, Gram, who was normally so shy and reserved even around close family, would teach me. The process was simple: listen and repeat. She uttered an Hawaiian phrase to me once that took me years to understand: pa‘a ka waha, lohe ka pepeiao, hana ka lima (close the mouth, listen with the ears, let the hands do the work). I did realize though, that what I was learning from Gram, was something that came so naturally to both of us. Were I to personify that piano, I know it was thinking that this was the way it wanted to be played.

I think back now and chuckle that it never occurred to me, as a Classically-trained student, to try to apply learning-by-ear to something of Beethoven. Yet, while I chuckle, there is a point of credence here. While I am very willing to admit that it must be possible to learn to play Beethoven through this method, Beethoven is not meant to be learned this way. Classical music is based upon a system of symbols whereby a composer is able to communicate his or her every intention to a performer by way of
prescriptive score. That is, a score exists before a pianist is able to play it. The performer is then allowed to interpret those symbols according to his or her own stylistic tendencies.

In the kind of Hawaiian music that my grandmother played, there were no written symbols. Interpretation was not along the lines of Walter Gieseking (1895-1956) and Ernest Ulmer (1920-) and their individual performances of a prescriptive Debussy score. Interpretation in this music was based upon a knowledge of the song---its lyrics, its melody, its harmonic progression. That knowledge was passed aurally and orally.

I continued learning from my grandmother for years in this manner. I practiced a Beethoven Bagatelle and then we would play a vamp. She would teach me the melody to a song and then leave me at the piano to figure out how to get from one vocal phrase to the next. Making dinner in the kitchen, she would call out to me: “No, Aaron. That doesn’t work. Use a different vamp because that vamp does not match that song.” “You cannot play more than the vocalist sings.” “Ooh, that was interesting. Do that again.” (A funny note: I always knew that I had done something well when Gram started cleaning the house while I was at the piano. She loved listening to good music while she cleaned the house.)

Being around Hawaiian music as a student at Kamehameha Schools’ and then majoring in music at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa helped to solidify a foundation in music. That foundation has continued to ground me even as a professional pianist/vocalist in the Hawaiian music industry today. I continued Classical piano study

---

3 Both Gieseking and Ulmer are reknown Classical pianists who are also respected for their interpretations of the works of Claude Debussy.

through my sophomore year in college, but I also sought experiences with pianists who played the same kind of music my grandmother played. With every single one of them, whether classically trained or not, musically literate or not, I found a unified way of sounding the piano so that although each pianist had a personal style, the general manner in which they played was similar.

My intent in this thesis, then, is to show that concrete notions of Hawaiian-music aesthetics inform a style of playing the piano that is grounded in a Native Hawaiian cultural value system. By examining the history of the piano as artifact in the Hawaiian islands and then its place in the history of Hawaiian music, I hope to come to a better understanding of the process of domestication that the piano has undergone, from Western musical instrument to welcomed addition to the core Hawaiian music ensemble. As a Native practitioner, I am very interested in current, normative practice in the Hawaiian music repertoire called hula ku‘i. Hula ku‘i refers to a song format whose origin is found in the 1860s. An analysis of performances by pianists who are currently active in the industry will then provide the means for substantiating my claim that an Hawaiian style of playing the piano does exist.

Edwin Mahi‘ai “Mahi” Beamer and Leila Hohu Kiaha

Together with my grandmother, Edwin Mahi‘ai “Mahi” Beamer (1928- ) and Leila Hohu Kiaha (1927-2006) have been incredible mentors to me. It is important that I acknowledge them here, in the body of this thesis, because much of what I know about

---

5 A more detailed treatment of the basic structure of a hula ku‘i song will be highlighted later in the chapter (page 13, under the heading “Conventions for the Thesis”).
how to play this music comes from them. Their teachings will guide my work throughout this process and their words will appear throughout this study.

Uncle Mahi is a member of the famed musical Beamer family. He is the grandson of the renowned Hawaiian composer, Helen Desha Beamer. I first met Uncle Mahi when I was a child. At the time, he was performing at the Bay View Golf Course. It was not until I was in high school that my relationship with Uncle Mahi as mentor developed. Much of what I know about harmony and chord progression at the keyboard comes from him. Much of what I know about respecting the lyrics and melody of a song and how the piano weaves in and out of that melody, I learned from Uncle Mahi.

Aunty Leila came from the very well-known and musical Hohu family. Both she and her mother, Martha Poeope Hohu, were organists at Kaumakapili Church in Honolulu. I met Aunty Leila as a sophomore at Kamehameha. After hearing her accompany the high school’s Concert Glee Club, I approached her and asked if she would teach me. After initially refusing, she heard me play and said something to the affect of, “I’ll teach you; you need me.” She always was so feisty. Today, I have a deep respect for the hula dancer when I am at the piano. How to respect the dancer musically was something I learned from Aunty Leila.

**Importance of Research**

Up until the present, no focussed scholarship on the piano in Hawai‘i and its role in Hawaiian music performance exists. Furthermore, neither does scholarship exist

---

6 Beamer is not my uncle by blood relation. To show respect, Hawaiian children are taught to refer to elders not a part of the family by the honorific “Aunty” or “Uncle.”

7 Likewise, Hohu is not my Aunty by blood relation. I called Hohu, Aunty, following along the same cultural guideline as the one found in the previous note.
which presents theoretical research on the adoption process of a Western-introduced musical instrument into Hawaiian music performance practice in the way that I am presenting it here. Therefore, this research is important not only in that it offers new scholarship for the record but also in that it attempts to account for a process of the indigenization of a non-Hawaiian instrument into at least one kind of Hawaiian music performance practice.

The method by which this scholarship comes to be exposes a particular advantage that I must acknowledge before any sort of presentation can take place. That advantage is made apparent by the very term *methodology* itself. *Methodology* implies that a current and pertinent system of inquiry is set and that the research is founded in a solid theoretical framework based in ethnomusicology. However, ethnomusicology has yet to provide an agreed-upon theoretical infrastructure from which a process of research can or should take place. Rather it provides for ethnomusicologists a spectrum of theoretical perspectives ranging from one that is *theoryless* through one that might be deemed *poly-theoretical*\(^8\). This, in turn, allows for researchers in the field to choose from several theoretical perspectives and to tailor them, building a framework that is relevant to each researcher’s individual needs.

One popular method of research in use by many ethnomusicologists currently, and the one that I naturally gravitated toward in my own research for this thesis, is ethnography. Even so, ethnography as a methodological paradigm offers at least two challenges to the researcher. Ethnographic scholarship expects both that the

---

researcher’s positionality be made clear at the onset of and throughout the research process and that, in the presentation of results, the researcher argue in such a way that is objective. Put another way, the researcher must prove a hypothesis by showing that this proof comes from a position at least one step removed, thereby confirming a non-biased view of the subject matter. In my own research, however, it is precisely because of my position as Native practitioner as well as my ability to draw upon a corpus of experience that spans almost my entire life that I am able to look at and synthesize the information I have found in the way that I do. Of course, I have sought to ratify my assertions by means other than my own intuition using an ethnographic documentation process but to not take advantage of my position not just of indigenous scholar but also of Native Hawaiian practitioner is to severely neglect the most important aspect of my self as researcher.

Overview of Literature

Scholarly work on improvisation, virtuosity, and aesthetics seems to be in vogue, and Western literature abounds in the discourse examined during the process of this study. To that end, this scholarship has provided a current and cutting edge understanding of these three concepts and that understanding has in turn become a catalyst for looking at Native ways of knowing how these concepts function in this particular context.

Improvisation as a field of study for its own sake is still quite new, and fairly recent interest in the implications of improvisation as a performance practice has created for discourse that is directly pertinent to this study. Gary Peters’ (2009) The
Philosophy of Improvisation offers an understanding of improvisation from a philosophical point of view. By problematizing on a theoretical level what an improvisor must first know in order to be successful at improvising, Peters offers a paradigm for the practice of improvisation that has heretofore not existed. Bruno Nettl and Melinda Russell (1998) partner as editors for In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation. With chapters on “Recognizing Improvisation” (Stephen Blum) and “Psychological Constraints on Improvisational Expertise and Communication” (Jeff Pressing), the reference attempts to shed light on improvisation as performance practice as well as theory. T. Viswanathan and Jody Cormack team to author a chapter titled “Melodic Improvisation in Karnāṭak Music: The Manifestations of Rāga,” which explores improvisation in Rāga music through a sharply defined set of rules that govern what is aesthetically sound. The chapter pertains directly to this study as my research relates to a kind of improvisatory piano playing that is melodic in practice but one also governed by a structure set within the limitations of the genre and of the culture in which it is performed.

V.A. Howard’s 2008 publication, Charm and Speed: Virtuosity in the Performing Arts, provides a succinct and wholly efficient definition of virtuosity as a performance concept and how that concept then affects, and is affected by, a performer’s personal style, talent, and technique. Howard then extends beyond the personal in order to come to an understanding of how tradition within a specific genre contributes to the performer’s understanding of virtuosity in the performance moment itself. Stepping away from the generally accepted view of what virtuosity is and how it is performed, however, Jane O’dea (2000) looks at the ability to be virtuosic with virtue in
Virtue or Virtuosity?: Explorations in the Ethics of Musical Performance. The notion of the existence of virtue in performance speaks to the very heart of understanding how Native Hawaiians might view the piano’s performance practice in the particular genre of Hawaiian music that I am studying. Anya Royce’s Anthropology of Performing Arts: Artistry, Virtuosity, and Interpretation in a Cross-Cultural Perspective (2004) provides an avenue for looking at the performing arts from an anthropological gaze. She searches for commonalities in performance while attempting to comprehend artistic interpretation, and the differences between virtuosity and artistry, aesthetics, and style. By doing so, Royce’s work will also be fruitful in the interrogation of aesthetics. In examining a diverse cross-section of artists including Fokine and the Ballets Russes, Tesa Indian dancers, and Japanese kabuki and butoh, she interestingly draws attention to a collaboration of sorts, across artistic genres, providing evidence for a movement toward the universality of aesthetics.

Of the three underlying theoretical forums for this study, aesthetics proves to be the most heterogeneous subject in that an appreciation for what holds aesthetic value is culture-centric necessitating an appreciation of each distinct culture in order to fully comprehend the culture’s perception of aesthetic content. Steven Leuthold’s Indigenous Aesthetics (1998) offers a strategy for understanding aesthetics from the view of self-representation within a larger context and how that representation becomes a performance practice informed by societal norms. In a thesis of this nature, no discussion of aesthetics would be appropriate without an acknowledgement of Adrienne Kaeppler’s intensely controversial work, “Melody, Drone and Decoration: Underlying Structures and Surface Manifestations in Tongan Art and Society” (1978) along with her
pre-existing “Aesthetics of Tongan Dance” (1971). Though dated, both articles are important in the narrative because they provide a bridge to understanding how aesthetics—along with improvisation and virtuosity—is appreciated from a Native point of view.

While these three concepts and their respective sources have undoubtedly provided a solid framework for bibliographic, as well as field, research, an inherent problem lies at the very central point of my thesis: it is the existence of *Hawaiianness* in the playing style of the piano that I am attempting to prove. In order for that to occur, then, there must be a point of departure from the initial research where the Native Hawaiian perspective is discussed. It is this research that will provide the fundamental evidence necessary to show that an Hawaiian style of playing the piano does truly exist. At this point, then, in addition to writings specifically about the Hawaiian culture and music, this study invites the Native voice to join in the discussion in order to put forward an indigenous thought process that draws not only from an epistemological perspective but also from an ontological one as well.

Though I am attempting here to selectively choose from a broad and diverse field of Native Hawaiian and other indigenous scholarship to make points that are very specific, one particular author’s work has created a roadmap especially for the exploration of hula ku‘i music. Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman’s works, including her master’s thesis, “The Hula Ku‘i: A Tradition in Hawaiian Music and Dance,” along with several of her articles—“Published Hawaiian Songbooks” (1987), “Of What Use Are Published Hawaiian Songbooks? Interpreting the Notated Presentation of Modern Hawaiian Songs” (1995), “Not All Hula Songs Are Created Equal: Reading the Historical
nature of Repertoire in Polynesia” (1995), and “Re-membering the History of the Hawaiian Hula” (2001)—will help to contextualize both the hula ku‘i and the piano’s place in its performance.

Nathaniel B. Emerson’s *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* (1909) provides a context through which the hula ku‘i emerged. Its position as one of the first scholarly works to be published specifically about Hawai‘i in general and about Hawaiian music in particular has long put it at the very top of the ladder of Hawaiian music scholarship. Emerson’s mention of the piano, though peripheral, brings light to the fact that the piano was an acknowledged instrument near to the advent of the hula ku‘i format itself.

Mary Kawena Pukui’s establishment of her own exhaustive ouevre of Native Hawaiian research provides an abundance of sources from which to glean Native Hawaiian thought processes. One of these sources especially important to this thesis is ‘Ōlelo No‘eau: *Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings* (1983). These proverbial idioms provide a glimpse of how Hawaiians perceive the world around us.

Perhaps, the most important information comes from the pianists themselves. Transcriptions of carefully selected performances and parts of performances by such reputable pianists in the genre—Joseph Mahoe, C. Lanihuli Lee, and Alika Young—will draw a connection between the very Western piano and a culturally distinct ancestral memory that is apparent in their performance styles. The analysis of these transcriptions will reveal the somewhat subconscious decision-making process a pianist undertakes while at the keyboard. Interviews with these three pianists alongside interviews with currently active musicians in the genre and in the Hawaiian music
industry for whom this type of piano performance is appealing will support these findings.

**Conventions for the Thesis**

Throughout the following pages, I have chosen to standardize certain aspects of the prose that are recurring in order to facilitate the reading and the understanding of this study. My main focus in this thesis is upon the particular format of Hawaiian song called the hula ku‘i. The hula ku‘i originated in the 1860s and refers to a song that is secular in lyric content and is primarily intended to be choreographed. The music is strophic and each verse is either two or four lyric lines of eight or sixteen music measures in length. The last verse of a hula ku‘i song begins with a formualic lyric phrase, ha‘īna ‘ia mai ana ka puana (the refrain is told).[^9] Verses are separated by a musical interlude popularly called a vamp.[^10] In this thesis, I use hula ku‘i, hula ku‘i song, and mele (song; poem) hula ku‘i interchangeably.

The State of Hawai‘i recognizes Hawaiian as one of its two official languages, so that in thesis it is not treated as a foreign language. However, to assist an English language readership, Hawaiian terms, at their first appearance, are followed immediately by their translation in parentheses, except if it is the title of a chapter or journal article in which case it will be footnoted immediately. Thereafter, translations are footnoted and included in the glossary. Where terms are used several times

[^9]: There are also variations to this lyric line. Some of those are: ha‘īna mai ka puana (tell the refrain) and puana ku‘u mele (tell my song).

throughout the chapter [such as paukū (verse) is used throughout the analysis chapter], I will give the translation as formatted above only for the first appearance of the term. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations from the Hawaiian are my own.

Moreover, in current practice, when Romanizing the Hawaiian language, it is expected that ‘okina (glottal stop) and kahakō (macron) are used. This was not the case in much of the extant literature from the 1800s. Therefore, when quoting material from that era or from literature that does not include these diacritical markings, I include neither the ‘okina nor the kahakō. Otherwise, diacritical markings will be included in the narrative.

**Outline for the Thesis**

Chapter Two, “E ho‘i i ke kumu:¹¹ The Piano in Hawai‘i,” offers historical information both on the existence of the piano, as artifact, in the islands as well as an exploration of the piano and its use in the performance of hula ku‘i. Through an exploration of missionary journals and newspaper articles, I expect to find evidence for where pianos existed in Hawai‘i and when the instrument arrived here.

Chapter Three, “E hō‘ike mai i ka hua mele:¹² The Piano in Published Hula Ku‘i Songbooks,” follows this with the examination of two songbooks published near the turn of the 19th century. Through this examination, I aim to discern how the piano may have been used in the performance of hula ku‘i songs according to prescribed scores in relation to how the piano is played in normative practice currently.

---

¹¹ “Return to the source”

¹² “Take heed of the music score”
Chapter Four, “E ho‘omākaukau i ke kani leo:” presents an innovative and complex transcription methodology that I will utilize in the process of transcribing several live piano performances of hula ku‘i songs for the purpose of analysis. I then will introduce three prominent pianists who are currently active in the Hawaiian music industry. Joseph K. Mahoe, C. Lanihuli Lee, and Alika Young represent diverse musical backgrounds. Two of these pianists are musically literate; one is not. Each pianist will choose a hula ku‘i song to perform, and the text of each respective hula ku‘i song as well as background information about it will close the chapter.

Chapter Five, “E ho‘olohe i ke kani leo:” will then focus on the analysis of the resulting performance transcriptions provided by Mahoe, Lee, and Young. Notwithstanding their varied musical upbringings nor their musical literacy or lack thereof, these three pianists collectively follow the same guidelines, mostly unbeknownst to each other, in their respective approaches to playing the piano in hula ku‘i music. I will analyze each transcription according to how the performances are stylistically similar and how those similarities are founded upon an aesthetic system informed by an Hawaiian value system.

Chapter Six, “Hea aku nō wau, E ō mai ‘oe!” Return to the Theme of Our Song,” will then attempt to synthesize the information presented in Chapters Two through Five. In this chapter, my intent is not only to offer a conclusion to this study of the piano and its performance in hula ku‘i music as a whole but also to reflect upon this process as a

---

13 “Prepare the sounding voice”
14 “Listen to the sounding voice”
15 “I call to you, and you answer!”

15
Native Hawaiian culturally trained in this practice, as well as an ethnomusicologist, trained in a Western academic institution.

**Author’s Note**

To date, this thesis has been the most difficult assignment I have ever committed myself to writing, and time and time again I have wondered to myself why that is so. After all, I am attempting here to write on a subject that is close to me; one on which I have studied, and for which I have trained, almost my entire life. Still, I have often found myself at a loss, at the very least, for words and, at the very most, for direction. The further along I am, the more increasingly important it has become to me that the reader have knowledge of my anguish throughout this journey so that when this study concludes and the re-examination of the information presented here takes place, we will both—author and reader—have come to a better understanding of where and under what conceptual scope this study began. In a sense, we will both come to humbly acknowledge the past in order to fully appreciate the present. A laila, e ho‘i ihola i kinohi. I return, now, to the beginning.
The first verse of Pālea’s ode to the piano, “Piano Ahiahi,” likens hearing the sound of the instrument to keeping good company with a friend at the midnight hour. Pālea (b. 1852) was an Hawaiian poet and chanter, and a native of Kaʻū on Hawaiʻi island. He composed the mele as a young man after hearing the sound of the piano for the very first time. By the time of his birth in 1852, evidence suggests that the piano had already been in existence in the islands for at least twenty years and by the time he had heard the piano for the first time and composed “Piano Ahiahi,” it is likely that, at least on Oʻahu, the piano had become a symbol of high society.

The success of a description of how the piano functions in hula kuʻi performance today depends upon an ability to illuminate the piano’s history as artifact in the islands, which I will present first. Part of achieving the status a home attained in owning a piano was the expectation that sheet music was a necessary supplement to that ownership. Ownership of sheet music presumed the ability to read it. Therefore, I will investigate the movement toward music literacy in Hawaiʻi, second.

---


18 Ibid.
A History of the Piano in Hawai‘i

The exact date of the piano’s first arrival in Hawai‘i is unclear. However, newspaper articles and advertisements as well as missionary letters place the piano in Hawai‘i by the early 1830s. Dr. Franz Julius Ferdinand Meyen (1804-1840) was a German physician and botanist who sailed around the world aboard the Prussian ship, *Prinzess Louise* in 1831. Arriving at Honolulu on 24 June 1831, Meyen was in the company of HRH King Kamehameha III (Kauikeaouli, r. 1824-1854) and HRH Queen Ka‘ahumanu (the queen regent, 1768-1832) and wrote extensively of his impression of these chiefs and of the islands.¹⁹ In the 1834 publication of *Reise um die Erde ausgeführt auf dem Königlich Preussischen Seehandlungs-Schiffe Prinzess Louise commandirt von Capitain W. Wendt, den jahren 1830, 1831 und 1832*,²⁰ a journal entry from 1831 states that “one finds varnished floors, the finest furniture, and beautiful pianos in the missionaries’ homes.”²¹

The first advertisement of “one superior Piano-Forte” for sale appears in the *Sandwich Island Gazette* on 10 September 1836. The piano was to be sold by Henry Paty & Company.²²

In 1846, Harvard Law graduate, William Little Lee, set sail from New York to the Oregon Territory along with his wife, Catherine, and their friend, Charles Reed Bishop,

---


²⁰ Travels Around the World aboard the Königlich Prussian Princess commandeered by Captain W. Wendt during the years 1830, 1831, and 1832.

²¹ Meyen, 1834.

²² *Sandwich Island Gazette*, September 10, 1836.
aboard the ship, *Henry*. During a stopover in Honolulu, Lee received an invitation from then Attorney General, John Ricord—and then Minister of Finance for Kamehameha III, Dr. Gerit Judd—to stay on, which he obliged. Two years later while boarding at Washington Place, the later home of Queen Liliʻuokalani, the Lees began letter-writing correspondence with Caroline Scott, a boyhood friend of William, who lived in New York. In a letter dated 28 September 1849, Catherine wrote:

> Unlike good old Sandy Hills in days of yore, Honolulu is by no means deficient in ‘stated preaching,’ and two large coral churches with a snug little Bethel are weekly filled with attentive, orderly congregations. Our stationary society is composed of missionaries, the families of a few merchants, professional gentlemen and foreign representatives, but there is seldom a tie when it is not enlivened by the presence of naval officers from different countries. This society is intelligent, social and refined, and could you drop down in the midst of one of our brilliant parties you might easily imagine it a gathering of the elite of our own land. Scarcely a house in Honolulu is destitute of a piano, and there have been no less than four fine instruments at our boarding place since I have been here.²³

Catherine Lee’s observation is important in that it implies that the presence of a piano in a Hawaiian household elevated the social status of that household. The Lees’ boarding home, Washington Place, belonged to the mother of then-Governor of Oʻahu, John Dominis. In turn, after John Dominis’ own marriage to Liliʻuokalani, Washington Place became a royal residence.

Several advertisements, articles, and announcements were published in newspapers from this time forward. One such announcement appears in the 16 December 1865 edition of the Hawaiian language newspaper called *Ka Nupepa*

---

It contained a request for monetary donations toward the purchasing of a piano for Kaumakapili Church.

“Lulu Dala no ka Piana o Kaumakapili.
Ma ka malama o Novemaba, ua lulu iho ka ekalesia o Kaumakapili i dala e kuai ai i Piana hou no lakou, e like me ka palapala ana mai a L. Kamika. O ke kumukuai o ka Piana i kauohaia mai ai e Kamika, elua haneri dala. A no keia mea, ua lulu io iho na hoahanau i keia hana.
A penei hoi ku haawi ana: No na Luna ekalesia o Kaumakapili, $41 00
  No ka Hui o Kaumakapili, 35 00
  Hui Kikihale, - - - 7 00
  Hui Peleula, - - - 5 00
  No na keiki o ke Kaona nei, - - 44 00
  Na John Ii, - - - - 10 00
Hui pau loa, $142 00 a o ke koena i koe, he $58 00. Owai la ka poe i manao e kokua mai no keia hana? A ke manao nei nae na Luna Ekalesia, e hoouna i keia mau $142 00 i Amerika, a loaa aku o L. Kamika i Northampton, kahi o ka Piana i waiho ai.
W. N. PUALEWA,
Kakauolelo. Honolulu, Dek. 12, 1865.”

Fundraiser for the piano at Kaumakapili [Church]
In the month of November, Kaumakapili Church hosted a fundraiser to purchase a new piano for themselves, according to a statement made by L. Kamika. The purpose of the fundraiser for the piano, according to Kamika, was to raise $200.00 [Hawaiian dālā currency]. And for this fundraiser, the Church community came and worked together.
The following lists what each gave:
  From the leaders of Kaumakapili Church: $41.00;
  from the Kaumakapili group: $35.00;
  from the Kikihale group: $7.00;
  from the Peleula group: $5.00;
  from the people of this community: $44.00;
  from John ‘I‘i: $10.00.
After all has been added, $142.00 with a deficit of $58.00. Who will think now to help this endeavor? The leaders of the church are thinking, however, to send this $142.00 to America, to be received by L. Kamika who is in Northampton, where the piano currently resides.
W.N. Pualewa
Journalist. Honolulu, Dec. 12, 1865.

---

24 Ka Nupepa Kuokoa (The Independent Newspaper) was a Hawaiian-language newspaper published in Honolulu from 1861-1927.

In a November issue, an editorial discussing the existence of boarding schools for young girls was printed. In it, the role of women in society and, more importantly, how they were taught to become such women at these boarding schools was considered. After several paragraphs essentially reprimanding the curriculum at such schools stating that if the teachers at these boarding schools merely teach students to become just like the teachers themselves, then “he kuhihewa ia, e ao wale ana no oia i ka haumana e hoopilimeaai,”26 (this is a mistake, the teacher is merely teaching the student to fawn).

The next paragraph in the editorial takes specific issue with the piano, and the final paragraph, reprinted below, presents the very purpose of the editorial as a whole:

“Aka, e lawa ana no paha ka ike noonoo me ka ike palapala i na kaikamahine. Aole nae oia wale ka mea e makaaukau ai lakou no ka noho ana i poe lala no ka lahui, e pomaikai ai ka aina ia lakou. Ina o ka ike palapala wale no ko ka wahine ike, ina ua makaaukau loa oia ma na mea helu, ina he puu kani kona ma na leo mele, ina he makaaukau loa kona ma ka hookani piana, a nele nae i ka ike ma kekahi mau mea e ae e pono ai ka noho ana wahine a kane, a ohana hoi, alaila he naaupo ia wahine. Ina ike ka wahine i ka himeni, aole nae ike i ka humuhumu, he pono ole ia. Ina hiki i ka wahine ke hookani i ka piana aole nae e hiki ke hana i puka pihi no ka lole wawae, ua naaupo ia. Ina ike ka wahine i ka hoalu aloha ma na papa hele o ke keena hula, aole nae ike i na alu o ka palule, heaha la ua nei ka pono o ia wahine ? He ole, ma na mea e pono ai ka noho ana kane a wahine.”27

However, maybe the girls think that it is sufficient to be able to read and to think. Nevertheless, these are not the only skills to ready the girls to live as people who are a part of the nation, or what shall make them useful to the greater population. If reading is all a woman knows, if she is completely prepared in math, if she has a sweet voice when she sings, if she is well-versed at playing the piano, and still she is lacking in the knowledge of other skills needed to live such as the duties of a wife to her husband, and indeed to her family, then this woman is ignorant. If the woman knows music but does not know how to sew, this is not right. If the woman can play the piano but cannot prepare buttonholes for slacks, she is ignorant. If the woman can gesture with aloha on the floor of the hula studio and

---

26 Editorial, Ka Nupepa Kuokoa, November 25, 1865.
27 Ibid.
yet cannot tuck in a shirt, what is it that this woman is good for? Good for nothing for the importance of the union between a man and woman.  

Both newspaper entries offer meaningful insight into how Hawaiians viewed the piano. First, I feel that the congregation’s desire to have a piano at Kaumakapili Church reinforces the Hawaiian assumption that instrumental and vocal music used together are a cultural given, both in religious and non-religious domains. As part of a Hawaiian sensibility, this viewpoint decenters such binaries as religious/secular. It continues in the present, as evidenced by hula in Christian worship services in many of the Islands’ churches.

Second, I feel that the piano’s place in Hawaiian society, as expressed in the boarding school editorial, was peripheral, as it is in the performance of hula ku’i music. That a boarding school should be concerned over teaching a woman what her role was in Hawaiian society returns the discussion to pre-missionary times, when the division of labor demanded that men and women were expected to perform distinctly separate tasks in order for society to remain at a constant state of pono (balance). Likewise, the pianist’s role in the performance of hula ku’i is first and foremost to be mindful of the entire ensemble. To use the sentiment of the editorial itself, I offer here that even if a pianist is able to play virtuosically in every key on the keyboard, if the pianist is unable or unwilling to listen to what the rest of the ensemble is doing, then he or she has failed to understand his or her own kuleana (responsibility) in the performance.

---

28 I must thank my colleague, Dannie U’ilani Bobbitt, for her assistance with this translation.
Music Literacy

The notion of music literacy is directly pertinent to the piano’s proliferation throughout the islands. Music literacy was an expected skill for Hawaiians to attain and therefore offered a natural and critical bridge for the piano’s own place in Hawaiian music. Indeed, the fact that American Protestant hymnody directly influenced Hawaiian music-making in the 19th century presents an avenue for the consideration of what kind of role the piano played in general music-making. While I would argue that it is not necessary to read music in order to play the piano with a certain amount of skill today in, at least, hula ku‘i music, it is reasonable to ascertain that the reading of music was an expectation for practitioners during the first years of the piano’s existence in the islands.

While no extant literature speaks directly to whether or not music literacy was as widespread as language literacy during the first several years after the arrival of missionaries to Hawai‘i, an examination of missionary records and the tune books that were published offers very plausible evidence indicating that Hawaiians were indeed musically literate and that music literacy was widespread.29

Led by Hiram Bingham (1789-1869) and funded by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the first delegation of missionaries arrived in the islands in 1820. Up until that time, Hawaiian was a purely oral and aural language without a Roman writing system. Within two years, not only had Bingham

29 The inspiration for addressing the issue of musical literacy in Hawai‘i came from a lecture given by Dr. Amy K. Stillman in her Music 478B class at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM). Dr. Stillman, while tenured in the American Culture program at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, served as the Dai Ho Chun Distinguished Professor at UHM during the 2010-2011 school year. She taught Music 478B—Music of Hawai‘i—during the Fall semester of that year. Much of the sentiment herein is directly connected to her lecture on hīmeni and the missionaries’ purpose in the islands. The lecture was given on 9 September 2010.
and his council romanized the language but also, in 1822, they produced the first publication of the Hawaiian alphabet.\textsuperscript{30} Five hundred copies of this first spelling book entitled, \textit{The Alphabet}, were printed and in a letter to the ABCFM dated August 9, 1822, Bingham writes

\begin{quote}
During six months past ... we have been enabled to print, \& put into [the Hawaiians’] hands, 16 pages of a spelling book, containing besides a copious list of words, several lessons in reading, exhibiting some of the leading doctrine \& precepts of the Gospels---A considerable number are already thoroughly acquainted with these pages and they are sought by others, so that we are obliged to distribute a considerable part of the edition, which amounted to 500 copies, before the remaining 16 pages can be printed.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

Actual scores of music appear for the first time in an 1834 publication titled, \textit{O ke kumu leomele no na Himeni a me na Halelu e hoolea aku ai i ke Akua}.\textsuperscript{32} Literally, the title reads “The rules of [melody] for the hymns and psalms to praise God.”\textsuperscript{33} The hymnal is comprised of two distinct sections. The first section includes fifty pages of music instruction in which notes of the scale are given correlative syllables as in solfege (\textit{La, Mi, Pa, Ko, Li, Ha, No} in place of \textit{Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti}). In addition to this, a music taxonomy is given including terms for sharps, flats, and clefs, and music theory rules and expectations are presented. The second section is comprised of 194 hymns many of which are accompanied by musical scores.


\textsuperscript{31} Forbes, 3:369-370.

\textsuperscript{32} Forbes, 2:87. Judd and Bell, 41.

\textsuperscript{33} Where Forbes and Judd/Bell opt to translate the term \textit{leomele} to \textit{music}, I have chosen to use the term \textit{melody} instead as \textit{leomele} literally means “voice of song.” In current usage, the term specifically refers to the melody of a song rather than the larger context of music.
Importantly, the 1834 publication date is somewhat misleading. There was only one printing, however that printing took place over a series of at least three years with each section of the hymnal printed and distributed at different times. In all, 10,000 copies of the work were printed and most of these were distributed in the islands.\(^{34}\)

Ten years later, another group of missionaries including Edwin O. Hall, Richard Armstrong, Artemas Bishop, Lowell Smith, and Lorenzo Lyons agreed to publish *Ka Lira Hawaii: he mau leomele no na ekalesia o Hawaii nei* (The Hawaiian Lyre: a selection of songs for the church of Hawai‘i). After a short two-page explanatory section on reading music and musical annotation, sixty-five pages of hymns with their musical scores follow. Four editions of *Ka Lira Hawaii* were published: one each in 1844, and 1848; and then two editions in 1855. 4,000 copies were printed in 1844;\(^ {35}\) 12,000 in 1848;\(^ {36}\) and 20,000 in 1855.\(^ {37}\)

Even with these numerical figures, it is difficult to surmise at this point the exact cost of printing one hymnal as my general search in missionary papers has not revealed information about who the paper suppliers to the ABCFM were, nor about the cost of ink, nor what the specific process of printing a piece of literature in and around the 1830s entailed. Given these preliminary calculations, however, two issues become readily apparent: 1) to have endeavored to publish and print hymnals in the numbers they did speaks to the conviction with which the missionaries, with funding and leadership from the ABCFM, came to the islands; and 2) the actual numbers of printed

\(^{34}\) Judd and Bell, 41.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 100.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 108.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 120-121.
hymn-tune books themselves with supplementary music theory rules and expectations speaks to the role that music literacy played in the missionaries’ work.

If the goal were to convert as many Hawaiians as possible to Christianity and the romanizing of the language and the institution of Western music were seen as vehicles to facilitate that conversion, then, based on these figures, I believe that the teaching of music literacy was a sought-after skill to be acquired in the process of that conversion. I do not think that the 1834 hymnal publication occurring just three years after F. J. F. Meyen reported seeing pianos in homes on O’ahu is any coincidence. The piano became a central figure in the acquisition of music literacy used first by missionaries to teach Hawaiians, and then by Hawaiians to teach each other, as well. Nā lani ʻēhā’s\textsuperscript{38} own accomplishments as composers of both religious and secular Hawaiian music attests to the power, and empowerment, that both the piano and music literacy afforded Hawaiians. Moreover, the existence of numerous and secular songbook publications since 1898 speaks both to the demand for music of a secular nature in the islands as well as a satisfied expectation that, if music for Hawaiian songs was published and the primary audience for those songbooks was Hawaiian, the consumers of such publications must not only have been musically literate but also, given that the songbooks include scores with piano accompaniment, capable of playing the piano as well.

\textsuperscript{38} The phrase, Nā lani ʻēhā (the heavenly four) refers to HRH King Kalākaua (r. 1874-1881) and three of his siblings: HRH Queen Liliʻuokalani (r. 1891-1893), HRH Princess Miriam Likelike (1851-1887), and HRH Prince William Pitt Leleiohoku (1854-1877). The four were composers of music in their own right and they each also led a choral group and often participated in friendly competition.
Conclusions

The piano and its history as artifact in Hawai‘i has influenced the Hawaiian culture. Its acceptance into the homes of those of high society created a space for the piano to be seen as a symbol of the elite. Indeed, Nā lani ‘ehā’s own prolific use of the instrument in their composing of Hawaiian mele corroborates the notion that the piano was a welcomed instrument in the Hawaiian music-making process. For Hawaiian society other than Nā lani ‘ehā, the ownership of a piano assumed ownership of sheet music as well. Ownership of sheet music, in turn, assumed an ability to read music. The very proliferation with which the missionaries published hymnals with music scores in them is evidence of how profuse music literacy must have been among Hawaiians.

However, not only does the piano as artifact have a history in these islands but also a rich history for the piano found in published Hawaiian songbooks that include piano scores. By the phrase, published Hawaiian songbook, I am invoking here the definition given by Amy K. Stillman: “a published Hawaiian songbook is considered to be a volume comprised mainly of secular Hawaiian songs.” Stillman’s article presents a detailed treatment of Hawaiian songbooks in general and, while a great number of these exist, I am especially interested here in two specific songbooks whose primary focus was the hula ku‘i. These will be covered in Chapter Three.

---

CHAPTER THREE
E HŌ'IKE MAI I KA HUA MELE
THE PIANO IN PUBLISHED HULA KU'I SONGBOOKS

If Hawaiian music were represented by the root of a tree, the piano’s own register in the performance of that music would sprout at two distinct places: published Hawaiian songbooks and performance practice as exhibited in both live performances and in commercial recordings. These two sites are distinct because what appears in notated form is not what is heard in normative practice. At this juncture, the chapter will shift focus from the existence of the piano in the islands toward a consideration of the songbooks featuring hula ku‘i songs that include piano accompaniment consequently solidifying a foundation upon which the analysis of current performance, which occurs in the next chapter, will stand.

Near the turn of the 19th century, two songbooks were published that focussed primarily on hula ku‘i songs. These are: The Latest Hawaiian Hulas, published by Charles E. King in 1917, and Johnny Noble’s Collection of Ancient and Modern Hulas Including Hula and How - Illustrated and Interpreted, published by Miller Music, Inc. in 1935. Together, these songbooks provide valuable data for understanding the piano’s role in the performance of hula ku‘i songs as evidenced by the full piano score that accompanies each song. With specific reference to the piano accompaniment, I have found that many of the musical characteristics are shared and accordingly, I will discuss them together. However, individual attributes between the two songbooks create an important space for examination. Therefore, I will first give an introduction to, and discuss those idiosyncratic details of, each respective publication before examining the unifying qualities among them.
The Latest Hawaiian Hulas

Charles E. King (1874-1950) continues to be considered one of the most influential composers of Hawaiian music. A member of the first graduating class of the Kamehameha School for Boys (1891), he was the godchild of HRH Queen Emma Rooke (1836-1885), Queen consort to HRH King Kamehameha IV (Liholiho, r. 1856-1863), and the music student of HRH Queen Lili‘uokalani (1838-1917). In addition to his renown as a composer of Hawaiian songs, King was also a prolific publisher whose publications spanned the years between 1916 (King’s Book of Hawaiian Melodies) and 1950 (Songs of Hawaii). In that time, King published twenty songbooks of Hawaiian music.\textsuperscript{40}

The Latest Hawaiian Hulas\textsuperscript{41} (hereafter, LHH) is King’s sole publication devoted to hula ku‘i songs. Of the seventeen songs, ten are given the tempo marking \textit{tempo di hula}. Three of the songs are given the tempo \textit{slow hula}, and one song each is listed as \textit{not too fast}, \textit{slowly}, and \textit{andante}. See table 1 below:

\textsuperscript{40} See Table 2 in Stillman, 1987. 232-233.

\textsuperscript{41} Charles E. King, \textit{The Latest Hawaiian Hulas} (Honolulu, 1917).
Table 1 - Tempo markings with song titles, *Latest Hawaiian Hulas*, 1917

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tempo di Hula</strong></th>
<th><strong>Moderato</strong></th>
<th><strong>Slow Hula</strong></th>
<th><strong>Not too fast</strong></th>
<th><strong>Andante</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pua Laniuma</td>
<td>Na pua o Hawaii</td>
<td>Iniki malie</td>
<td>Parisa</td>
<td>Kuu lei momi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halii ka moena</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kai malino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hola Paeva</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lei hulu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamoani</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinau</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuu Pua Pikake</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilipili poi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Po mahina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pua hinahina</td>
<td>Slowly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet lei ilima</td>
<td>Sweet lei lehua</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While several of the tempo markings listed above are self-explanatory, the tempo marking, *tempo di hula*, is worth some note. In examining the titles of the songs, and in knowing and having performed most of them personally, it makes sense to suggest that *tempo di hula* refers to a tempo that lies somewhere between andante and moderato (80-100 beats per minute). The term itself, a composite of the Italian *tempo di* (tempo, or time of) and the Hawaiian *hula*, in my opinion, reveals a point of naturalization in Hawaiian music used prolifically, at least, by Charles E. King, who presumably coined the term.

The tempo that lies between andante and moderato is andantino. Granted, even with tempo markings, time is fluid. However, I feel that King’s decision to domesticate the term used to mark the tempo of more than 60% of the songs published in this particular songbook rather than utilize normative Italian terms that would have served
sufficiently implies a desired ownership over how the score should be read and, consequently, how the song should be performed. That a hula should be deserving of its own distinct tempo marking speaks to King’s commitment to the hula as a uniquely Hawaiian expression. The use of non-Native means to deliver the song (i.e. a musical score for voice with piano accompaniment in this case) is irrelevant to the nature of the expression itself. The non-Native means serves as a vehicle for the delivery of the Native expression.

In addition to the tempo markings, the time signatures given for the hula songs are also peculiar. In thinking about the hula kuʻi phrase from a musical, structural, and even a textual perspective, it makes sense that the musical score would be notated in common time. Here, however, all but one of the songs in LHH are written in a 2/4 time signature. In comparing this to other songbooks published by King as well as those published by his contemporaries, I found that the songs that follow hula kuʻi structure are notated in a time based upon two beats rather than four. Most often, these songs are written in 2/4 time but, often enough to deserve note, cut time or a combination of 2/4 and cut time is used as well.

In LHH, “Na Pua o Hawaii” (p. 10) is the sole song written in 4/4 time and the possible reason for this is intriguing. Unlike the other songs in the book, “Na Pua o Hawaii” includes a section marked “chorus” scored with four-part SATB harmony. The “chorus” is actually a repeat of the verse elaborated by the scoring of the SATB parts. Though the melody remains constant, this is a departure from the standard expectation for the score of a hula kuʻi song. According to Stillman, “in the early

42 King, 10.
Hawaiian-language songbooks...the refrains of himeni-type [emphasis added] songs are frequently harmonized for four-part SATB ensemble. Choral singing enjoyed popularity in Hawaii before and after the turn of [the] century.” Stillman’s definition of a himeni-type song describes it as one that follows the same form as a hymn (alternating verse-chorus) but with a secular text. Both the verse and the chorus of a himeni-type song are sixteen measures in length and may either share or have contrasting music. Although “Na Pua o Hawaii” does not constitute a fully himeni-type song as its own verses and subsequent choruses are comprised of only eight measures, the same length of a verse in a hula ku‘i song, neither does it represent a fully hula ku‘i song because of the four-part SATB chorus; it is a hybrid of the two. Therefore, given the 4/4 time signature and the moderato, rather than the tempo di hula, tempo marking, it is my opinion that King’s intent for “Na pua o Hawaii,” though technically a hula song according to structure, was not necessarily that it was a song meant to be danced.

This is not to argue that moderato as a tempo marking was only used for songs not meant to be danced. It is to suggest that, given all of the factors that differentiate “Na pua o Hawaii” from the other songs in LHH, it is plausible that King’s objective for the song was different. In essence, “Na pua o Hawaii” is an exception that proves the rule.

King’s prolific use of tempo di hula also speaks to the target audience of his publications. He was a Hawaiian composer, arranger, and musician publishing Hawaiian music in Hawai‘i for a local demographic. A tempo marking like tempo di

---

44 Ibid.
hula would have made perfect sense here as his audience would have readily understood the meaning of the term, tempo di hula. In addition, that King was publishing for an Hawaiian audience, and that his publications were prolific and widespread corroborates the notion that Hawaiians were musically literate. Further, that piano accompaniment scores exist, both like these found in LHH as well as those of Johnny Noble’s, both of which will be discussed later in this chapter, validates a supposition that Hawaiians were readily able to play, and comfortable with playing, the piano.

**Johnny Noble’s Collection of Ancient and Modern Hulas (Including “Hula and How” --- Illustrated and Interpreted)**

John Avery Noble (1892-1944), popularly known today as Johnny Noble, is arguably one of the most important composers of the 1920s and 1930s. He composed such popular tunes as “My Little Grass Shack” (1933) and is the composer of the popular, uptempo melody for HRH Prince Leleiōhoku’s (1854-1877) original love ballad, “Kāua i ka huahuaʻi.” After Noble’s alteration, he renamed the song “Hawaiian War Chant” and it was subsequently featured in the 1942 film, *Ship Ahoy*, starring Eleanor Powell and featuring the Tommy Dorsey Band.

*Johnny Noble’s Collection of Ancient and Modern Hulas (Including “Hula and How” --- Illustrated and Interpreted),*45 (hereafter JNC), is the only publication of Johnny Noble’s that focusses primarily on the hula kuʻi song format. It was first published in 1931 and expanded to the edition I will be examining in 1935. It was subsequently titled *Hawaiian Hulas* and reprinted in 1964.

---

The first page of the book, after the Table of Contents, is a listing of major, dominant seventh, and relative minor chords in each key of the chromatic scale starting in the key of C and working up the scale through the key of B. Musical notation offers two inversions for the major triad (second inversion and root position in that order), three inversions for the dominant seventh chords (root position followed by the 6/5 inversion and then the 4/3 inversion, in that order), and two inversions for the relative minor (root and first inversion, in that order). Included in the notation are the three diminished chords. Additionally, ‘ukulele tablature is present signifying each of the major chord qualities (major, dominant seventh, relative minor, and diminished) in each key. While a Hawaiian readership should presumably have this knowledge readily, such data gives a readership unfamiliar with this performance practice the basic fundamental chord structures of hula kuʻi music.

Two pages featuring photos of dancer Winona Love follow. Six dictionary-type entries on hula motions as well as seven entries on specific hula are listed on the same page. Credit for the entries is given to a Mrs. Keliimoeili Kauwe “as told to Harold Coffin.” The photos number eleven in all and Love is photographed dancing “ʻAlekoki,” a well-known hula kuʻi song composed by HRH King Charles Lunalilo (r. 1872-1874). Each photo is representative of each textual and musical phrase for both the first and last verses of the hula kuʻi song.

The illustrated cover art of JNC has struck a particular chord in me as a practitioner of this kind of music. A young lady with tan skin, her grass skirt flowing in the breeze, dances in the foreground. She is topless and adorned with orange floral

---

46 Noble, 4.
kūpeʻe (bracelet; anklet) wrapped around her ankles and her left upper-arm. An orange flower, matching her kūpeʻe, rests in her dark, wavy hair just above her right shoulder and the same color lei (garland) rests upon her shoulder. To her left is what appears to be the leaves of a banana tree. Though the tree is standing, its stalk is left out of the scene.

In the middle ground, two gentlemen in light-colored long-sleeved shirts and matching slacks, donning lei that match both each other and the dancer for whom they play, sit upon a bench playing guitars. The gentleman on the right lays his guitar flat upon his lap, the one on the left plays his in normal fashion. These gentlemen are portrayed with curly hair, and their skin tone appears to be similar to the dancer’s.

In the background, tall palm trees grow out of deep green foliage far out into the distance. The color scheme for the entire cover includes different hues of green for the foliage, the palm trees, and for shading upon the dancer and her two musicians, and muted browns point out that the three characters are Natives. The orange hue of the hula adornments is the same color of the title of the songbook, centered at the top of the page. At the bottom right, set apart from the scene in a bordered box, is a photo of the composer, orchestra leader, pianist and person responsible for this collection of hula songs, Johnny Noble. He wears a jacket with a shirt and bow-tie and appears smiling, looking toward his right.

Thinking as a Native Hawaiian, and a Native practitioner of the music genre that these characters are portraying, several aspects of the scene are troublesome to me. First, the proper place for kūpeʻe is upon the wrist and not the upper arm as it is drawn on the dancer’s left arm. She is dancing to her left, evidenced by the grass skirt flowing
to her right, and her hand motions call for her right arm to bend at the elbow, extending her forearm above her left breast. It is her bare right wrist that is troubling to me. A hula performer would not wear three kūpeʻe if she did not have four to begin with. The expectation of proper hula adornment calls for four kūpeʻe total—one on each wrist and one on each ankle. Here though, were a kūpeʻe rendered to wrap her right wrist, her bare breast would have been covered. The appearance of her breast has taken precedence over proper hula attire.

The ʻōlelo noʻeau (Hawaiian proverb), i leʻa ka hula i ka hoʻopaʻa, popularly means that ‘hula is pleasurable because of the musician,’ where the term, hoʻopaʻa, refers to a musician. Upon first glance, the two gentlemen playing their guitars, here, apparently do not follow this same value as neither of them seems to be aware of the young lady dancing before them. One appears to be peering downward toward his instrument, while the other has his eyes closed.

In considering what the deconstruction of this songbook’s cover art presents and how it relates to my purpose in this thesis, I reflect first upon my gaze. My initial treatment of this cover is as one looking in from the outside. And from the outside, what is apparent is the image of paradise. The Natives come forward through, grow out of, the natural environment. Indeed, the only illustrated character with open eyes is the dancer and her own invitingly, seductive gaze falls upon the onlooker welcoming

---

47 The use of kūpeʻe is attributed both to the genre and the style of the hula being performed. Hula practitioners with whom I have spoken about this agree that there would be reason to use one kūpeʻe on a wrist without need for the other three. Likewise, there would be reason to use two kūpeʻe, one on each wrist or one on each ankle (not one each on a wrist and an ankle). However, it would be seen as confusing at the very least if a dancer danced with three kūpeʻe, leaving one of the limbs bare.

entrance into her world. The characters of the scene are separated: the musicians in the middle ground concerned only with their music and with each other, the dancer in the foreground concerned with the audience. Other than the presumption that the musicians as a group are playing especially for the dancer, it is not apparent that there is any interplay between the two.

Were I to place myself and my piano in this scene, however, our place together is in the middle ground, among the musicians themselves. Suddenly I am inside, peering out. Our paradise, from this perspective, is a wholly different place and my earlier judgements must be reevaluated. “I leʻa ka hula i ka hoʻopaʻa” speaks not just of the musician’s responsibility to create an enjoyable experience for the dancer and for the audience. It speaks also of the necessity for each character in a performance—musician, dancer, and audience member alike—to take responsibility for each respective role. The term, hoʻopaʻa, also means ‘to make strong or steadfast.’ So, then, a hula performance is also made pleasurable by having a depth, and a breadth, of knowledge about it. As I was learning to play the piano for hula, one of the most critical lessons my mentors taught me was to learn my way around the keyboard well so that I could pay close attention to the dancer as much as possible. Not only that: it was even more necessary that I learned to be keenly aware of what everyone else in the ensemble was doing in every single moment of the song. There was a time to be heard and there was a time to refrain. The only way for me to know when the appropriate time to be either of these, was to pay attention to everything and everyone: what was happening in the guitar? did the ‘ukulele player change the strum pattern? did the bass player anticipate that
downbeat? how did the dancer’s gesture reflect the text of the song? Only then would I know how to act and re-act during the performance of a song.

If I return to looking at the piano as a Western instrument that has undergone a process of domestication for use, mostly by Hawaiians, for our own purposes, part of that process is an acknowledgement that the piano’s place in Hawaiian music is, at least in terms of its use in hula ku‘i performance, at best in the middle ground. The responsibility of every member of a performance, however, is no less critical to the success of the performance as a whole. Though the piano is peripheral, if it is used, it must be played tastefully. “I leʻa ka hula i ka hoʻopaʻa,” from a universal perspective, then refers to the notion that, if all members of a performance know what they are expected to do, and do it at the moment they are expected to, the resulting performance will be successful.

The peculiar contents of Noble’s songbook are also notable. Five of the sixty-three songs are without piano accompaniment. Though my purposes lie in the examination of those songs with piano accompaniment, the titles and subtitles of these five songs deserve note. They are: “Alekoki: Hula Uliuli” (p. 29), “Hilo E: Bamboo Hula Dance” (p. 29), “Kalakaua: Hula Olapa” (p. 30), “Kawika: Hula Olapa” (bottom of p. 31), and “Ula No Weo: Hula Olapa” (bottom of p. 32). Additionally, “Alekoki,” “Kawika,” and “Ula No Weo,” also have ku‘i-melodied counterparts (pp. 26-27, 31, and 32, respectively), which include piano accompaniment. Lastly, Noble includes a hapa-haole song, “That Lovin’ Hula Melody” (p. 60-62) in this otherwise Hawaiian-language publication.
Noble’s own use of tempo marking, like King’s, is interesting. Where King used the *tempo di hula* marking almost exclusively, Noble uses moderato for almost all of the songs in the book. The one song given the sole *tempo di hula* marking is “Hualalai,” (p. 8). An examination of the song reveals that its lyrics and music were composed by Matilda Kauwe. The score is Bina Mossman’s (1893-1990) arrangement and therefore not Noble’s. Both women were practitioners in Hawaiian music: Kauwe was a composer of such songs as “Honolulu Hale” and “Hula o ka hui ka‘awai;” Mossman is known for forming *Bina Mossman’s Glee Club*, a group of all-Hawaiian women who received tutoring from HRH Queen Lili‘uokalani. Noble either arranged or composed each of the other songs in the book. Noble himself does use the marking *tempo di hula*, but as a subsidiary tempo in three scores---“Hame Pila” (p. 20), “Alekoki” (p. 26), and “That Lovin’ Hula Melody” (p. 60). In these scores, moderato is emboldened; *tempo di hula* is set off to the right in italics.

Although the 1931 edition of JNC, using the same plates, was published in Hawai‘i, the 1935 edition was published in New York. A possible consumer demographic for the book was an audience unaware of tempo markings like *tempo di hula* though Noble himself would have been accustomed to seeing it in use by King. I think that Noble’s acknowledgement of the *tempo di hula*, in addition to his own moderato marking, was a way of cluing a non-Hawaiian audience into the performative norms of Hawaiian music. The audience would have understood the tempo marking for “Hualalai” through context. Noble did not change the tempo marking for “Hualalai” to the more mainstream tempo marking because its arrangement did not belong to him.
Similarly to King, Noble opts for a time signature based in two rather than four. Unlike King, however, his base time signature is cut time rather than 2/4. Further, in many of the arrangements he combines the 2/2 and 2/4 time signatures, often beginning in cut time, changing to 2/4 at a certain point in the verse, and then returning to cut time by the end of the verse.

These separate and intriguing idiosyncrasies between *The Latest Hawaiian Hulas* and *Johnny Noble’s Collection of Ancient and Modern Hulas* are important for exploring theories of possible rationale for musical decisions made by each of the arrangers. Now, the focus will turn toward looking at the similarities in the actual piano accompaniment of both publications.

**The Piano/Vocal Score(s): the Music Itself**

Both the King and Noble songbooks provide valuable data for understanding the structure and practice of hula kuʻi performance and the centrality of the piano as evidenced by the full piano score. This section of the chapter examines what the piano scores themselves suggest in terms of how the piano was played in the context of the hula kuʻi performance.

Before that examination takes place, several disclaimers should be made in considering the piano’s role in the performance of hula kuʻi music. Firstly, in current practice, it is generally understood that the piano is an auxiliary instrument and part of a larger ensemble. That primary ensemble is comprised most often of an ‘ukulele, a guitar, and an upright bass. Though Noble’s scores include ‘ukulele tablature, there is no way of assessing how the ‘ukulele was meant to be played according to the score and,
therefore, no way of knowing how or if the ‘ukulele and piano are meant to interact within the performance itself. Also, because King does not include ‘ukulele tablature at all in LHH, for the sake of consistency, I will consider the piano scores as sole accompaniment for the song.

In that consideration, my interest lies in how the song is introduced, what is happening in the left hand versus what is happening in the right, what the nature of the vamps are, and then how the song is ended. The goal in examining these musical scores is two-fold: 1) to locate stylistic similarities between the two songbooks as representative of the expectations for the piano, at least in terms of the publications themselves; and 2) to locate stylistic idioms that have translated through to current practice.

Placing both songbooks side-by-side, taking into consideration that eighteen years separate their respective publication dates, I was surprised to find that the general style of the piano accompaniments found in both of the songbooks was similar. Save for Noble’s ambivalent use of the 2/2-2/4 time signatures, the style prescribed for the piano is almost identical.

I feel that the decision to present hula kuʻi music in a time signature based in two rather than in four is significant. As musicians, we generally think of a hula kuʻi song in 4/4 time with each phrase of the song equal to two measures. Both lyrically and melodically, it seems to me more natural to think of the musical phrase based in four rather than in two beats. Considering how the ipu was used as percussive accompaniment in traditional hula forms, however, reframes the perspective from musical to choreographic. The kāhela beat on the ipu is described as a gourd drumbeat
whereby “the gourd is thumped down on a pad...then raised with the left hand and...struck with two quick slaps of the fingers of the right hand.” The kāhela could arguably be considered the foundational ipu beat; each of the other beats played on the ipu is a variation on this basic pattern. The kāhela occurs over two beats. I surmise from this perspective, then, that the presentation of hula songs with a meter based in two rather than in four suggests a sensitivity to and expectation of the choreography of motions to a hula song.

Thinking further, I feel that even Noble’s combination of the 2/4 and 2/2 time signatures is a deliberate technique. From a musician’s perspective, there is no pattern for when Noble uses the 2/2, switching to the 2/4, and then returning to cut time. However, given the inclusion of the hula photos of “Alekoki” fronting the music matter in the book, it is plausible that Noble’s arrangements of these songs were based off of choreography that he had studied. Were that the case, it is plausible that particular hula motions—hand and foot—performed at particular moments in the song led Noble to utilize the time signature appropriate for the motion itself, rather than for the musical phrase. This supports the notion that the musical score itself is also a site of domestication.

In each of the published songs, the first verse is notated within the score. Each subsequent verse is listed at the bottom of the score as text without music seemingly


50 In an earlier songbook, Aloha Collection of Hawaiian Songs (1899), published by Charles A. K. Hopkins, one of the four hula songs published, “Tomi! Tomi!” is scored in common time. However, it, like “Na Pua o Hawaii” is an exception to the rule because of an acknowledged four-part SATB chorus-like phrase used throughout the verse.
without regard for how the text of each verse would be parsed. A possible reason for this is interesting. Stillman contends:

It cannot be established conclusively whether or not composers of hula ku‘i melodies in the late nineteenth century were musically literate. But the milieu in which hula ku‘i songs were composed in the late 19th century is one that mixes oral transmission and literate dissemination. In contrast to the notated scores of himeni songs, hula practitioners appear not to have used musical notation as a means to create, transmit, and disseminate hula ku‘i melodies.  

She then continues later in the same article stating:

In performance, hula ku‘i songs of the type included in published songbooks contrast with their himeni counterparts in one important respect. The melodies of hula ku‘i songs are not fixed; in fact, most singers, amateur as well as professional, will not sing every verse of a song in exactly the same way, but will usually alter or embellish certain parts of the stanza. Moreover, the melodic variation is done in conventional, almost formulaic, ways. Such melodic variability is never reflected in published songbooks, because the songbooks include but one melody. Thus the performance practice of hula ku‘i melodies involves processes of orality in generating melodic variance at the moment of performance. Put another way, melodic variation practiced by singers is a condition of oral performance, for singers do not confine themselves to a set of prescriptive directives as would be given in musical notation; yet the liberties singers can take with melodies have limits that the singers themselves understand and to which they conform.

This practice of varying and improvising upon the melody is implied in the score with the subsequent verses, after the first, or first and second verse, listed below the score rather than appearing notated within the score proper. Although hula ku‘i songs are strophic, the musical phrasing of certain lyrics is oftentimes not transparent so that one of two things occurs. Either there is a perceived allowance to improvise how the phrases are sung or the singer already knows the song.


52 Ibid. 67–68.
Stillman later implies that hula ku‘i scores published in the songbooks were more likely transcriptions of already existing performances, offering evidence that hula ku‘i melodies were recorded before they were published on two occasions: in 1928 by Brunswick and then in 1932 by Victor. On both occasions, Johnny Noble was commissioned to “record or engage other performers to record a series of Hawaiian songs.” Only eight of the twenty-one songs recorded in 1928 appear in pre-existing songbooks; the additional thirteen were published after the release of the commercial recordings. The eight songs recorded in 1932 were subsequently published in 1935 under the same circumstances—after the release of the commercial recordings.

While these points deal primarily with the vocal part of the hula ku‘i song scores, they also provide clues for how to deal with the piano accompaniment. If the vocal part of the published scores is a descriptive transcription of pre-existing recorded material, it is plausible that the piano parts are added to the songs by the publishers after the fact. Therefore, rather than serving as detailed guides for how the piano would be used in actual hula ku‘i performance, they supply a prescribed accompaniment for each song. Prescriptive scores have been in use by pianists and vocalists alike, but only as reference material. Normative practice is highly improvisatory.

Since the piano scores are so similar between the two songbooks, I will examine in detail the first song in King’s publication, “Pua Laniuma” (p. 5) as well as the first song in Noble’s, “Haleiwa Hula” (p. 6). The first ten measures of “Pua Laniuma” are a musical introduction to the song including an instrumental version of the melody, with

---

53 Ibid., 70.
54 Ibid.
harmonic embellishment, for the eight measure verse followed by a two-measure vamp. After the verse, another two measure vamp is played. This is repeated before each of the following verses. For “Haleiwa Hula” Noble opts to use only the second musical phrase of the verse as the introductory material for the song. There is no vamp after this material and before the first verse, but there is a vamp before the second verse and each subsequent verse thereafter.

Although much of what happens in the right hand material does not constitute current practice, the left hand in both scores does provide material that continues to be expected in the performance of hula ku‘i music. A pattern is scored in the left hand whereby an octave is played on each downbeat in LHH and primarily on beats 1 and 3 in JNC and a chord reflecting the octave is played on the subordinate upbeats in LHH and the recessive beats 2 and 4 in JNC. Further, the octave gesture is played so that the lower note is at least one octave lower than the location of the subsequent chord. I believe that the physical gesture this creates in the left hand is an aesthetic reminiscence of the physical nature of the kāhela beat of the ipu. The notion that the dominant beats of the measure are lower on the keyboard reflects the resonant sound made by the ipu being “thumped down on a pad.”55 Similarly, the chords filled out in between the dominant octaves are higher in pitch and are similar to the ipu being “struck with two quick slaps of the fingers.”

55 Pukui and Elbert, 111.
Conclusions

Both King’s and Noble’s hula ku‘i songbooks offer a unique opportunity to examine the published scores of piano accompaniments for hula ku‘i songs at a time in Hawaiian-music history when songbook publication was beginning to take hold. That examination has illuminated not only the beginnings of a domestication process of the piano as an instrument in hula ku‘i music but also the piano score itself as a second, and important, site of domestication. The individual nature of each songbook, including but not exclusive to cover art, has also provided information for understanding each book’s distinct target audience, LHH for a local, Hawaiian audience, and JNC for an audience unfamiliar with the playing style of hula ku‘i music.

These songbooks provide information for understanding how the piano may have been played at a certain point in Hawaiian history but I am interested here with current and normative playing within the genre of hula ku‘i music. If songbooks are used currently, they are used as reference material only. The expectations of the current era lead to a kind of playing that is highly improvisatory. Chapter Four will, therefore, provide a methodology for the creation of transcriptions based upon live performances. Then, the three pianists I approached to perform for the purposes of analysis will be introduced.
CHAPTER FOUR  
E HO'OMĀKAUKAU I KE KANI LEO  
CREATING A SPACE FOR THE PIANO

The Accompanist

I’ve always worried about you--the man or woman at the piano bench,  
night after night receiving only such applause  
as the singer allows: a warm hand please,  
for my accompanist. At concerts,  
as I watch your fingers on the keys,  
and how swiftly, how excellently  
you turn sheet music pages,  
track the singer’s notes, cover the singer’s flaws,  
I worry about whole lifetimes,  
most lifetimes  
lived in the shadows of reflected fame;  
but then the singer’s voice dies  
and there are just your last piano notes,  
not resentful at all,  
carrying us to the end, into those heartfelt cheers  
that spring up in little patches from a thrilled audience  
like sudden wildflowers bobbing in a rain  
of steady clapping. And I’m on my feet, also,  
clapping and cheering for the singer, yes,  
but, I think, partially likewise for you  
half-turned toward us, balanced on your black bench,  
modest, utterly well-rehearsed,  
still playing the part you’ve made yours.\textsuperscript{56}  
—Dick Allen

In hula ku'i music, the piano is simply that:  accompaniment. The piano serves as  
decoration to what is most important in a hula ku'i song:  the lyrics. The piano’s role  
with the singer is to do as Dick Allen describes above:  to track the singer’s notes.  
Additionally, though, the piano is able, and certainly expected to, take certain melodic,  
harmonic, and rhythmic liberties in order to create a space for itself that is both  
uniquely musical as well as uniquely Hawaiian. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to  
look at how the piano voices these features.

In this chapter, I will first describe the parameters for the transcription process as it is new to, and innovative for, the field of ethnomusicology. Second, I will discuss the inherent challenges I faced in deciding to transcribe using this method. Third, I will introduce each of the pianists as well as introduce each of the songs they chose to perform.

To ascertain a system of criteria by which certain performances were chosen over others, however, was a difficult task for me. Once I started to understand how pianists played distinctly from each other, I also began to hear how they approached certain spaces within a song in the same way, presumably with the same value system, even if they did not articulate those values along the same lines. The process of listening to how pianists played individually naturally led me to a discovery of how pianists played similarly. Essentially, I began to hear the *Hawaiianess* in most of the performances I heard—both in live performances and in commercial recordings. So, trying to set up the parameters for why certain performances were chosen and others were not was a task I wanted to avoid for fear of the appearance of bias. With that in mind, and for the purposes of this particular chapter, I put the challenge of choosing which mele the pianists played, and therefore were transcribed, on the performers themselves. Other than playing the ‘ukulele and singing along, which was both a technical tool and an expectation in this kind of Hawaiian music performance, this allowed me to determine whether I was actually hearing what I thought I was hearing from a position outside of the performance space. The three pianists willing to cooperate for these performances were Joseph K. Mahoe, C. Lanihuli Lee, and Alika Young. An introduction to each of
these pianists will follow sections on the parameters for the transcription process and the inherent challenges found therein.

**Parameters for Transcription**

In commercially recorded performances, the studio mixing of the ensemble can pose problems for the transcription process. In the recording studio, it has become possible to record single instruments and single voices at individual times and to then manipulate the volume and timbre of those tracks in order to create a sound—the standards of which are set by specific authorities in the recording process. The final mix is a representation of what the studio producer, in accordance with the executive producer and the recording artist—usually with the former retaining the most authority and the latter retaining the least—feels is a satisfactory performance according to values only they can describe. This thesis deals with a genre of Hawaiian music that privileges the voice, and so not unexpectedly—in fact, never in one whole recording of a song—the volume of the piano in these tracks was usually such that I could never hear a distinct piano track throughout one song. This challenged my ability to transcribe because, in essence, what I could not hear, I could not notate. In the scores from published songbooks, a full prescription for performance is extant but there is no existent sonic evidence to document how closely a performance followed the notated score. In current practice, I have found that even if a pianist was aware of a particular songbook’s existence, it was used only as a reference point for chord progressions or even checking melodies. The score itself did not translate into performance. This was the case with Leila Hohu Kiaha and Mahi Beamer. In my own experience with these pianists, both
used the Charles E. King songbooks as references rather than as prescriptive manuscripts to be played as written.

In terms of my own transcription process for the purposes of this thesis, a more controlled environment allowed me to look at the intricacies of each performance and decipher whether or not I really was hearing what I thought to be important approaches toward the performance of certain musical passages. All three pianists were asked to choose a mele hula ku‘i that they were each comfortable with and that they thought allowed them to best express themselves at the keyboard. Then, in order to assure that the transcription was complete, I took advantage of certain technological tools, which proved both fruitful in terms of providing a complete performance transcription without prejudice but also created for a different kind of challenge in terms of the final appearance of the resulting transcription.

First, all three pianists played on a Kawai keyboard model ES4. It belongs to me personally, bought for use in my own performances, and chosen among many because of the sonority of its piano sample. It is a full, 88-keyed keyboard, and the action of the keys is weighted simulating the weight of the keys on a piano keyboard as closely as possible. The Kawai was connected to my MacBook Pro and, via MIDI\textsuperscript{57} input, each pianist played three performances of the same respective song into a Finale 2009 file. The quantization settings for the transcriptions were as follows:

- the smallest time value allowed was 64 EDUs\textsuperscript{58} (this is the equivalent of a 128th note)

\textsuperscript{57} MIDI is an acronym for Musical Instrument Digital Interface. It is explained in further detail later in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{58} EDU is an acronym for ENIGMA Durational Units. An EDU refers to the high-resolution measurement for the duration of notes and rests within the Finale music transcription software. In Finale, 1024 EDUs is equal to one quarter note. The lower the EDU, the shorter the note possible.
mixed rhythm was allowed (i.e. if the pianist played a set of eighth note triplets followed by a sixteenth note and a dotted eighth note, the resulting transcription reflects this mix)\(^{59}\)

any duration smaller than 64 EDUs is represented by a normal notehead rather than transcribed as a grace note. (i.e. even if a note was shorter than a 128th note was played, it was converted into a 128th note in the score)

Before recording, each pianist and I agreed on a tempo that best served the feel of each of the chosen mele and, using headphones while listening to a metronomic click to maintain the tempo of the piece, I played the ‘ukulele and sang the respective song while the pianist performed it at the keyboard. The resulting transcriptions were highly complex at the very least. All of these transcriptions are appended to the thesis in the following manner: Appendix B—performances 1, 2, 3, and 4 by Joe Mahoe; Appendix C—performances 1, 2, and 3 by Lanihuli Lee; and, Appendix D—performances 1, 2, and 3 by Alika Young. Measure numbers in the score as well as elapsed time markings will enable the analysis.

My decision to play the ‘ukulele and sing each song came as a result of an understanding that in the performance of mele hula ku‘i, the piano plays an auxiliary role in relation to the primary ensemble, which in normative practice most often includes an ‘ukulele, a guitar, and an upright bass. This ensemble has been modified in certain contemporary Hawaiian musical groups who play mele hula ku‘i as part of their repertoire but most musicians would agree that the primary ensemble still continues to consist of the ‘ukulele, guitar, and upright bass. My playing of the ‘ukulele for the

\(^{59}\) The quantization settings allow for the manipulation of how MIDI understands what is played, in this case, at the keyboard. If the setting for mixed meter is allowed, then MIDI will register a pianist playing in mixed meter. If mixed meter is not allowed, then even if a pianist plays in mixed meter at the keyboard, MIDI will modify this to simple meter in the transcription.
purposes of gathering transcriptions served to substitute for the primary ensemble and, therefore, provided an opportunity for each pianist to play as he would were the full ensemble present.

For each performance, the process was the same. Each pianist chose a mele hula ku'i and we collectively decided on an appropriate tempo. I played the first vamp on the ‘ukulele alone, which served two purposes: in normative mele hula ku'i performance, it is usually the ‘ukulele that plays the first vamp, alone, and also it is the ‘ukulele that usually sets the tempo as I did here. We maintained normative hula ku'i performance format throughout the song: after the initial solo ‘ukulele vamp, the piano joined on the second vamp; each verse of the mele hula ku'i was played twice; if the pianist wished to modulate keys, then we did so at his discretion; at the end of each performance, the requisite ending material was played. Each song was performed at least three times to allow each performer the time to familiarize himself with the keyboard and to create a “less-pressure” environment. Mahoe was the only one of the three pianists who chose to perform his chosen mele a fourth time. The decision was his.

Challenges of MIDI Transcriptions

Sifting through these resulting and representative transcriptions presented a particular challenge. In essence, MIDI is an electronic messaging service. It is a protocol through which electronic musical instruments and computers are able to communicate and exchange information with each other. While certain aspects of that communication can be controlled, the result is still maintained by the ability of the computer to register incoming information. The computer can only register information
according to how the information is sent and it does so without prejudice for the unique touch of a certain pianist, the dynamic accent of a pianist’s performance at the keyboard, and the use of the sustain pedal to sustain certain chords for prolonged periods of time.

In this particular case, the transcription, then, also served as an announcement of what the kinetic nature of the performance was because the MIDI information could not account for use of the sustain pedal; it only registered what keys were played at what time and how long those keys were physically held down by each finger. As soon as the finger lifted from the keyboard, the space between that note and the next keystroke, time permitting, was noted as a respective rest in the score. With the quantization set so that time was figured down to the length of a 128th note, even the slightest lift of the finger from the keyboard would result in at least a 128th rest. An illustration of this point is found in figure 4.1 from Joe Mahoe’s fourth performance transcription.

It is readily apparent that, with the first three rests noted in the right hand (an 8th rest, followed by a 16th rest, in turn followed by a 32nd rest), MIDI has an ability to calculate notation down to the millisecond based upon a pianist’s touch and MIDI’s own registration of that touch.

Figure 4.1 - M. 5 from transcription performance #4, Joseph Mahoe

Because the information relayed to the computer is kinetic, the computer is able to express even the most minute “details” in a performance. For instance, whereas the
human ear, assisted by the mechanics of the sustain pedal, would hear parallel octaves, as in figure 4.2a, which I created in Finale, the computer would register exactly when the thumb and ring- or thumb and little-finger actually depressed the keys and its specific duration before release, as in figure 4.2b from Alika Young’s third performance.

Figure 4.2a - Parallel octaves as heard

Figure 4.2b - Parallel octaves played through MIDI; Transcription # 3, Alika Young

Collectively, the transcriptions are therefore a kind of kinetic map of each performance, and are important not only for looking at the kinetic mechanisms of the pianists at the keyboard but also for looking at the transcriptions as behavioral demonstrations in each performance as well. Of course, they will be utilized for that purpose in the analysis.

The remainder of this chapter is focused first on an introduction of each of the three pianists followed by an analysis of a representative performance from each in order to glean an understanding of normative playing style.
The Pianists and Their Performances

Joseph K. Mahoe

Joseph K. Mahoe (1944- ) grew up in the village of Ka’a’awa on the north side of O’ahu. Mahoe’s father refused to send his children to school “in the country.” Each morning, Mahoe and his siblings climbed into their Chevrolet truck and began the trek to their grandparents’ home on Rooke Street in Nu‘uanu. 60 That journey from Ka’a’awa to Nu‘uanu was accompanied by the sounds of rock and roll on the car’s radio, a soundscape which later influenced young Mahoe’s approach at the keyboard. The genre of music changed after the family’s arrival at Rooke Street at which time they changed to Mahoe’s grandfather’s car; at the appropriate hour, Mahoe’s grandfather took the children to school. Mahoe states, “after we jumped into grandpa’s car, the music took a left turn. After all that rock and roll from Ka’a’awa, suddenly it was purely Lucky Luck:61 all Hawaiian.”62 Mahoe fondly remembers listening to Lucky Luck and remarks that “those were the years with all the pianists in Hawaiian music. Sonny Waia‘u was one that I especially listened for. He played a lot with the Kalimas.”63

Mahoe does not read music and, in fact, made a conscious decision that learning to read music was not a necessity for him to be successful at the keyboard. He contends, “I am happy that I wasn’t classically trained because it can be kind of restrictive. And so...I think I preferred not to be restricted.”64 As a youngster, he was influenced by his

60 Joseph Mahoe, interview by the author, September 25, 2010, Honolulu, HI.
61 Lucky Luck (1918-1977) was a radio disc jockey and television personality in the 1960s. He sought after, and successfully built, a radio program made up exclusively of Hawaiian music.
62 Mahoe, interview.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
cousin who played a player piano in his grandmother’s home in Nu‘uanu. Upon this cousin’s departure, Mahoe, at the keyboard, attempted to play what he had just heard. During this time, he was also a student of Frank Owens, brother of the famed composer Harry Owens. Owens taught students how to play by ear. In a typical lesson, a student brought a song to Owens who assisted the student in working through melody and melodic variation as well as harmonic chord progression and embellishment.

As a high schooler at McKinley High School, Mahoe joined a musical group that was very heavily influenced by the stylings of Martin Denny (1911-2005) and Arthur Lyman (1932-2002). The music this group made together was played by ear as no charts were ever written. And, this experience set the foundation for Mahoe’s career as a pianist in Hawaiian music that is matched by few others. His resume reads like a virtual who’s who in Hawaiian music especially of, but not exclusively to, the 1980s. Each of these artists has put a certain mark on this genre of Hawaiian music.

Mahoe’s choice song was Francis Keali'i'inohopono (Pono) Beamer’s “Ku‘u Hoa.” The song was written for Pono Beamer’s wife, Louise, in 1937 while the couple was on location where Louise Beamer served as the Hawaiian culture consultant for the famed Bing Crosby film, Waikīkī Wedding. The mele hula ku‘i is comprised of four paukū (verse) of two lines each sung in two phrases over eight measures of music. The last paukū begins with the phrase, “ha‘ina mai ka puana.” The mele’s text follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
  He aloha kuʻu ipo & \quad \text{You are loved my sweetheart} \\
  Kuʻu hoa maka onaona & \quad \text{My gentle-eyed companion} \\
  noho i ke kuahiwi & \quad \text{who resides in the uplands}
\end{align*}
\]

---

65 Martin Denny and Arthur Lyman were both musicians and composers who popularized a kind of faux-Polynesian music now known as Exotica. They had much influence on a cult genre now known as Tiki Culture.

66 Mahoe, interview.
Hoʻi mai nō kāua
Me aʻu e pili
e kuʻu ʻīini a ka puʻuwai

Let us indeed return
Close to me is my
heart's desire

ʻO ka pā kōnane
A ka mahina lā
ahuwale nō ka pae ʻōpua

Brightly shining
Is the moon
indeed exposing the cloud bank

Haʻina mai ka puana
Kūʻu hoa maka onaona
noho i ke kuahiwi

Tell the refrain
My gentle-eyed companion
who resides in the uplands.

Mahoe performed in the key of C and the structure of the performance is as follows:

Introductory vamp by ʻukulele ............................ (not seen in transcription)

First vamp played by piano
with a one bar anticipation in the tonic key.............. measures 1-3

Paukū 1 ............................................................. measures 4-10
Vamp ............................................................. measures 11-12

Paukū 1 repeat ..................................................... measures 13-19
Vamp ............................................................. measures 20-21

Paukū 2 ............................................................. measures 22-28
Vamp ............................................................. measures 29-30

Paukū 2 repeat ..................................................... measures 31-37
Vamp ............................................................. measures 38-39

Paukū 3 ............................................................. measures 40-46
Vamp ............................................................. measures 47-48

Paukū 3 repeat ..................................................... measures 49-55
Vamp ............................................................. measures 56-57

Paukū 4 ............................................................. measures 58-64
Vamp ............................................................. measures 65-66

Paukū 4 repeat ..................................................... measures 67-68
Vamp with ending material .................................... measures 74-76
All four performances were rendered through MIDI and Mahoe chose the final performance as most representative of his style.

C. Lanihuli Lee

Lanihuli Lee (1957- ), like Mahoe, is from the island of O'ahu. He began piano studies while in the sixth grade in 1968 and studied privately mostly through the use of popular songbooks and with several teachers until his eleventh grade year at Saint Louis School in Honolulu. His interest in Hawaiian music grew out of a Hawaiian music class taken under noted kumu hula, John Keola Lake. While most of the class took up learning to play the ‘ukulele and the guitar, Lee naturally gravitated toward the piano because of his previous experience. He notes, though, that “the Hawaiian music was all by ear. Nothing was written. The hula style of music was all by ear.” Since John Lake’s Hawaiian music class, Lee has continued to play the piano and has today become one of the most well-known pianists performing in the genre. He is a regular pianist with the Hawaiian music trio, Māhiehie, that, in turn, is the musician group-of-choice for the award-winning Hālau Nā Mamo o Pu‘uanāhulu under kumu hula William Kahakuleilehua Haunuʻu “Sonny” Ching.

Lee is also the favorite pianist of reknowned kumu hula (hula teacher/master) and Hawaiian music authority, Kimo Alama Keaulana. Lee has been a bulwark in Keaulana’s own musical group, Lei Hulu, for several years and served as pianist on the group’s latest CD, Hula Lives, released in 2004 under the Mele Nani Music label. About Lee, Keaulana states:

67 C. Lanihuli Lee, interview by the author, May 13, 2009, Honolulu, HI.
Of course there’s my favorite, my Lovey-huli—Lanihuli Lee. We go back to like maybe the middle 70s... And what I love about Lanihuli’s approach and technique to piano is that Lani has a nice fluid way of playing. And Lani knows how to add to the music without overpowering it. Lani knows when to give and Lani knows when to receive. Lani understands the Hawaiian language. Lani also has a profound respect—I think that’s really, really important—a respect for our art and our craft. And so, Lani’s approach to piano is not outlandish. Lani plays the piano, doesn’t pound it.68

Lee chose the song, “Ke Aloha.” With lyrics written by Lei Collins, the music was composed by Madeline K. Lam. “Ke Aloha” is a mele ho’opioipo (love song) made up of four pa'ukū. Each pa'ukū is made up of two lines of text sung as four musical phrases and the last verse begins with the textual phrase “ha‘ina mai ka puana.”

Ma ku‘u poli mai ‘oe Come to my bosom
E ku‘u ipo aloha My beloved sweetheart
He ‘ala onaona kou You have a sweet fragrance about you
No ke ano ahiahi For the twilight time

Mamuli a‘o kou leo Because of your voice
Ua malu nēia kino This body is peaceful
He kino palupalu kou Your body is soft and supple
I ka hana a ke aloha For the intimacies of love

Ua la‘i nō ho‘i au I am at peace
I ka hanu o ka ipo In the breath of the sweetheart
E ho‘oipoipo nei As we make love
Nanea pū kāua And rest at ease together

Ha‘ina mai ka puana Tell the refrain
E ku‘u ipo aloha My beloved sweet heart
He ‘ala onaona kou You have a sweet fragrance about you
No ke ano ahiahi For the twilight time

The structure of the performance itself is as follows:

Introductory vamp by ‘ukulele .................................. (not seen in transcription)

First vamp played by piano
with a one bar anticipation in the tonic key............... measures 1-3

68 Kimo K. Keaulana, interview by the author, February 8, 2010, Honolulu, HI.
All three of the performances rendered through MIDI were played according to the structure above. Of the three performances, Lee chose the third performance as his best but was also quick to note that, were he playing a proper piano rather than an electric keyboard, he would have been more comfortable and his performance would have reflected this.  

Alika Young

Alika Young (1985- ) is from Pu‘uloa, Oʻahu. He is a 2003 graduate of Kamehameha Schools’ Kapālama campus, a school he entered at the beginning of his

---

69 Lee, interview.
seventh grade year (1997). He served as Song Contest\textsuperscript{70} director for his class all four of his high school years and he also sat as Student President of the Concert Glee Club.

Young credits Leila Hohu Kiaha’s piano track on the song medley, “Hanalei Bay/Ka Ua Loku” recorded by falsetto artist, Keao Costa, on his debut CD \textit{Whee Ha}!\textsuperscript{71} as the launching point for his endeavors as a pianist in this style. Young recalls,

[that recording] really was the start of me wanting to learn how to play piano because I remember myself in my house, cleaning, and the radio was going...and that song was playing. And I remember stopping what I was doing and listening to that piano solo that Aunty Leila was doing. And, I remember thinking to myself, ‘I want to do that!’\textsuperscript{72}

At the time, Young was just preparing to enter Kamehameha and had not yet had a relationship with Kiaha nor did he realize at that point that she would become a formidable figure in his life.

As a student at Kamehameha, Young arrived early on the days that it was mandatory for his class to attend \textit{Ekalesia}\textsuperscript{73} at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Chapel on campus, where Kiaha served as lead organist. Before \textit{Ekalesia} began, Young listened to Kiaha practice both on the organ and at the piano. After finally gathering together enough courage to introduce himself to her, Young found that he and Kiaha not only had

\textsuperscript{70} The Kamehameha Schools’ Song Contest is an annual singing competition where the individual classes of the high school compete in 4-part men’s, 4-part women’s, and 4-part co-ed categories. The event is currently held at the Neil Blaisdell Center each year, on the Friday before the Schools’ Spring Recess.


\textsuperscript{72} Alika Young, interview by the author, August 30, 2010, Honolulu, HI.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Ekalesia} is an integral part of the high school curriculum at the Kamehameha Schools’ Kapālama Campus. Several times throughout the school year, each class—freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior—is required to report to the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Memorial Chapel first thing in the morning for a time of religious devotion. Leila Hohu Kiaha, for a number of years, served as the organist during this meetings.
a familial connection but also that his own grandparents grew up in the same neighborhood as Kiaha had: Ma'ema'e, Nu'uanu, O'ahu.

Kiaha allowed Young to record her playing “some vamps” for him to practice. At that time, there was a piano in the household of Young’s grandparents but he was aware of no one else who would or could play it. It is important to take note here that it was Young’s desire to learn to play like Kiaha that drove him to also begin formal piano studies while at Kamehameha. And so, he was learning to play by ear and learning to read music at the same time. He studied the piano formally at a music school in Pu'uloa, for two years and discontinued at the beginning of his ninth grade year at Kamehameha owing to scheduling conflicts. He has not had a formal piano lesson since.

I did inquire of Young as to the nature of his lesson time with Kiaha and to how that time was spent. His response:

we never really had a formal lesson per se. I actually asked Aunty if she could write down how she played and really you can’t [notate this way] of playing the piano. I actually do have a piece of sheet music that she [notated] some vamps on. But she had told me that the most important thing was to just listen. Listen to her recordings. Listen to the CDs where she played with Kawai Cockett, Tony Conjugacion, Ipo Kumukahi.76

Young took this direction one step further. Knowing of Kiaha’s work with several hālau hula (hula school) including Hālau Mōhala ʻĪlima under kumu hula (hula teacher/master) Māpuana de Silva and Hālau Nā Mamo O Puʻuanāhulu under kumu hula Sonny Ching, he sought out hula competition videos of the Kamehameha Day Hula Competition and of the renowned Merrie Monarch Hula Festival converting them to

74 Young, interview.

75 Young does not remember the formal name for this school nor does he remember its director.

76 Young, interview
DVD. Setting the DVD player upon the piano, he would play each performance numerous times working especially to get Kiaha’s vamps in his fingers. This musical foundation has served advantageously for Young. He has assumed the role of Choir Director for Kamehameha Schools’ Performing Arts Academy, an after school summer enrichment program and he has also played the piano with several Hawaiian music trios including Māhiehie.

Young chose “Home Kapaka,” the lyrics of which were written by Milla Peterson and set to music by Madeline K. Lam. “Home Kapaka” is a mele pana (song of a storied place). It encompasses five paukū, the last of which begins with the phrase “puana kuʻu mele,” a variable difference from “Ke Aloha’s” “haʻina mai ka puana.” Its text follows:

- Hanohano ia home aʻo Kapaka
- E kipa aʻe e nā pua a ka lehulehu
- Magnificent is our home, Kapaka
- Visited by the multitudes

- Ka nehe o ke kai lana mālie
- Keʻala lipoa e moani nei
- The rustle of the sea drifts tranquilly
- The fragrance of the līpoa wafts about

- Aʻike i ka nani o Kaliuwaʻa
- Ka beauty aʻo Sacred Falls kaʻu i aloha
- Behold the splendor of Kaliuwaʻa
- The beauty of Sacred Falls that I aloha

- Hoʻi au i ka home a nā mākua
- Nanea e hauʻoli me nā hoaaloha
- I return to the home of my parents
- Reposed and gleeful with friends

- Puana kuʻu mele no Kapaka
- E kipa aʻe e nā pua a ka lehulehu
- My song is told for Kapaka
- Visited by the multitudes

The structure of the recording and its resulting transcription follows.

- Introductory vamp by ʻukulele ................................. (not seen in transcription)

- First vamp played by piano with a one bar anticipation in the tonic key............. measures 1-3

- Paukū 1 ............................................................................. measures 4-11
- Vamp .............................................................................. measures 12-13
All three of Young’s performances were rendered through MIDI and each was structurally the same. However, for the first performance, Young decided that he would begin playing in the key of F and modulate to the key of C only for the repeat of paukū 5. For the latter two performances he chose to modulate, in the same place, from the key of F to the key of G. Interestingly, when asked which of the three performances he felt was his best or at least his most comfortable, he stated that any one of them should do because they are all the same. For the purposes of the specific analysis, I chose his third performance because he seemed to be most at ease at the keyboard.
Conclusions

Joseph K. Mahoe, C. Lanihuli Lee, and Alika Young all represent different eras of knowledge with Mahoe doing much of his learning pre-Hawaiian Renaissance, Lee doing much of his during the era of the Renaissance, and Young’s learning taking place in the post-Renaissance period. While my study here is not intent upon looking at how the Renaissance influenced each of these pianists, because Hawaiian music changed so much during the Renaissance, it will be interesting to see if that period in Hawaiian music history had any effect on the cohesiveness of their performance practices for the piano in hula kuʻi.

The methodology used to create the transcriptions, namely the MIDI platform in conjunction with Finale software, has presented a certain challenge in terms of how the analysis will take place. Rather than producing musically legible transcriptions of performance, they have in essence compounded the transcription process in that the complexity of the kinetic-nature of the resulting transcription produces music that is illegible. The challenge of overcoming that illegibility, then, is something I will undertake in the next chapter.
This chapter focusses on the analysis of the performances and their resulting transcriptions from those parameters outlined in Chapter 4. In order to argue for a normative understanding of how the piano registers an Hawaiian aesthetic within this genre of Hawaiian music performance, I have devised a framework inspired by Mantle Hood’s *The Ethnomusicologist* whereby the analysis and its corroborating evidence is ordered by examining the music transcriptions from the most general site of music to the most specific site. Put another way, the order of analysis will begin with the site of music that is most accessible to, at least, several instruments (i.e. the vamp is a site that all instruments must play in some form) through the site that is most specific to the piano (i.e. the piano’s sonic contribution in the verse material is instrument specific in terms of looking at how the pianist behaves within that site of material). Those sites, then, in order of their analysis are as follows: the vamp sections, the preparatory setups for the vamps, and then the verse material. The particular content of the pianistic figures used at these sites include conventional ways of realizing harmonic resolution as well as idiosyncratic signatures which illustrate personal style.

**The Vamp**

The vamp is comprised of a section of music which separates each paukū. Also, in contemporary practice, at least one vamp is found at the beginning of a mele hula ku'i and at least one vamp is found in the ending material after the last verse is sung. It is

---

not a distinct space for the piano but because the vamp is not usually a space occupied by lyrics nor other vocal melodic lines, it offers a unique opportunity for pianists to stylize the space.

Generally, the vamp occupies two measures of music and, in current practice, its harmonic structure consists of two beats each of V7/V followed by V7 in the first measure, which then resolve to four beats of I in the second measure. Every single pianist whom I interviewed agreed that a normative melody for a basic vamp does exist and it is the same one found on a piece of sheet music by Madeline K. Lam. Lam, herself a pianist, was the composer responsible for setting much of the music for mele written by Hawaiian historian, Mary Kawena Pukui. The sheet music upon which this vamp is notated was in fact written by the duo: a song called “Nani Wenusi.” The vamp itself is found in figure 5.1a

Figure 5.1a - vamp melody of “Nani Wenusi” as written in score

Notably, I do not remember an occasion upon which this vamp was played as it is written above. In most mele hula kuʻi that are considered “single-strum” songs, the rhythm is complex in nature with a 12/8 triplet— “swing”—feel rather than the 4/4.

---


79 In current practice, musicians usually refer to hula kuʻi songs based upon the kind of ‘ukulele strum used in the song’s performance. A “single-strum song” is one in which the ‘ukulele is strummed so that the rhythm created is complex; contrastly, the “double-strum song” is one where the ‘ukulele is strummed so that the rhythm created is duple.
straight rhythm notated here. To that end, then, the first measure would be grouped as four sets of quarter note-eighth note triplets and played as seen in figure 5.1b.

Figure 5.1b - basic vamp melody as performed normatively

This performance practice is more often the norm. Presumably, for the purposes of ease of transcription and notation, the simplified, duple version is more often used.

The origin of this vamp melody has not revealed itself to me though it is indeed the very first exercise my own grandmother taught to me in preparation for learning “Kalama‘ula.” I was not allowed to learn anything new until I could play this vamp. To be sure, I used this voicing exclusively for some period of time before knowing, myself, that other ways of filling the vamp space were possible. Several of the pianists and musicians I interviewed agreed that this voicing could be construed as a basic vamp. I offer this not to posit a term for the record but to suggest that, though there is general agreement that the vamp is a space which offers a certain amount of musical creativity, there is a conventional understanding and expectation of its melodic attributes.

It is important here to take note that Leila Hohu Kiaha also acknowledged one other distinct type of vamp. She credited Helen Desha Beamer—a prolific composer of Hawaiian song and a pianist herself—and called it, the Beamer vamp or the backward vamp; the terms are used interchangeably. Together with Mahi‘ai and Gaye Kathleen

---

Beamer who are grandchildren of Helen Desha Beamer, Marmionett M. Ka'aihue, grand
daughter of the composer, edited a volume of Helen Desha Beamer music published in
1991 by the A. K. Kawānakoa Foundation. The songbook, *Songs of Helen Desha
Beamer*, includes songs for voice and piano and of the twenty-seven total songs in the
book, nine follow the mele hula ku'i format. The *Beamer vamp*, as Aunty Leila refers to
it, is used in seven of those nine mele. It is notated in the figure 5.2 as it is used in the
song, “Kimo Hula.”

![Figure 5.2 - the Beamer Vamp](image)

Presumably, Kiaha also called the *Beamer vamp* the *Backward vamp* because of
its tendency toward a descending motif rather than the ascending nature of that vamp
above.

Although Kiaha did not further discuss the *Beamer vamp*, nor did she qualify
what it is other than to say that it is akin to what might be called a Backward vamp, she
cites Manu Boyd as one who employs its use frequently. Indeed, he uses it on the track
“Ka lehua i mília” recorded by Kuʻuipo Kumukahi on the CD *Nā Hiwa Kupuna O Kuʻu
One Hānau* in 1993.

---

81 Marmionett M. Kaʻaihue, ed. *Songs of Helen Desha Beamer* (Honolulu: Abigail K. Kawananakoa
Eric Keawe, one of the musician sons of the famed Genoa Keawe says himself that “I really think that the Hawaiian style of piano playing has something to do with the Hawaiian vamp. The music in the the body of the song can be anything else but it’s the vamp that will give it away.”

Indeed the vamp does allow for pianists to artistically express a musical phrase in a way that could be considered idiosyncratic among individual pianists. Interestingly, however, several conventional approaches to the vamp were made apparent in the analysis of Mahoe’s, Lee’s, and Young’s performances. It is the consensus of these approaches that interest me for the purposes of this thesis.

Because of the kinetic nature of the transcription, I offer both the MIDI transcription of each section along with my own interpretive reduction of each of these vamps beside the vamp as it originally appears in the MIDI transcription. It is important to note also that MIDI calculates right-hand/left-hand beaming according to where it is told to divide the keyboard. If a pianist overlaps this point—for instance, using the right hand to play notes lower than the division on the keyboard—then MIDI will notate those notes lower than the division as having been played by the left hand.

As a performer of the Hawaiian piano style, I take full responsibility here for these reductions found as they are my interpretations of each performance. That interpretation is the result of my own assessment of the musical material and how it functioned within the specific musical phrase at a specific musical moment and, moreover, is a purposely simplified rendering in order to illustrate how each pianist performed the section.

---

82 Eric Keawe, Email communication to the author, May 22, 2009.
In both Mahoe’s and Lee’s performances, the vamp section occurs eight times—four verses, each performed twice, with a vamp separating each; in Young’s performance, the vamp section occurs ten times—five verses, each performed twice, with a vamp separating each. In each pianist’s performance, I found that their collective approach to playing the vamp section, once established in the first vamp, seemed to remain constant with very little variation. I therefore opted to present here the opening vamp—m. 2 and 3 in each performance—for the purposes of analysis. Mahoe’s opening vamp for “Ku‘u Hoa” is found in figure 5.3a with my reduction in figure 5.3b; Lee’s opening vamp for “Ke Aloha” is found in figure 5.4a with my reduction in figure 5.4b; and, Young’s opening vamp for “Home Kapaka” is found in figure 5.5a with my reduction in figure 5.5b.

Figure 5.3a - introductory vamp, “Ku‘u Hoa,” Joseph Mahoe

Figure 5.3b - author’s reduction of introductory vamp, “Ku‘u Hoa”
Figure 5.4a - introductory vamp, “Ke Aloha,” C. Lanihuli Lee

Figure 5.4b - author’s reduction of introductory vamp, “Ke Aloha”

Figure 5.5a - introductory vamp, “Home Kapaka,” Alika Young

Figure 5.5b - author’s reduction of introductory vamp, “Home Kapaka”
In terms of melody, perhaps Young’s performance (figure 5.5a/b) is most reminiscent of the melodic nature, at least, of that basic vamp notated earlier in the analysis. With a concession to the key of each vamp—the first in C and Young’s in F—the basic melody of Young’s vamp is the same though its rhythm is different. As in the basic vamp, Young employs the same appoggiatura in m. 1, beats 1 and 2 in the last note of each triplet (A4 and A5 respectively). Although Mahoe’s (figure 5.3a/b) and Lee’s (figure 5.4a/b) do not maintain this basic melody, there are several conventions that become apparent by examining their approaches to melody.

In all three performances, there is a tendency toward creating leaps in the melodic line. In Mahoe’s performance, there is a descent which spans an octave plus a perfect fifth between D5 (m. 1, pick-up to beat 4) and G3 (m. 1, beat 4). Also notable in the same performance is the octave leap between A3 and A4 (m. 1, beat 4). In Lee’s performance, one ascending leap is found in m. 2 between C#5 and A5 and then one descending leap between G#5 and E4. In Young’s performance, noticeable leaps are found in the penultimate and ultimate eighth notes resolving in m. 1, beats 2 and 4—D5 and A5 before beat 2 and C5 and G5 before beat 4.

Leaps in melody are an aesthetic characteristic found in many Hawaiian melodies. In the introduction to *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, in an essay titled “What is Hawaiian Music?” ethnomusicologist Elizabeth Tatar writes, “regarding melody, an outstanding feature is the use of large intervals. A melodic leap of anywhere from a fourth to an octave is very common.”83 The use of intervallic leaps is even expected as, in discussing the song “Adios Ke Aloha” written by Prince William Pitt

---

Leleiōhoku, George Kanahele writes that “the phrases tend to be segmental and short and there are no leaps—which is unusual for Hawaiian songs.”

Additionally, with respect to melody as it occurs in these initial vamp segments, it is interesting to note that the musical material in the second measure of each vamp is, in essence, complementary to that found in the first measure creating an antecedent-consequent relationship between the measures. In both Mahoe’s and Lee’s performances, beats 1 and 2 of m. 1 are higher than the latter two beats of the bar which start lower and then ascend into what will become the tonic chord according to the harmonic structure of the vamp. The downbeat of m. 2—where tonic should occur—is avoided before embellishing in ascending motion and finally, in the last beat, offering leading material into the next measure of music. Although Young’s approach is different, the material functions in much the same way in that the music in m. 2 is complementary to that in the first. Only, in Young’s performance, each of the motifs are ascending: the beats 1 and 2 of m. 1 ascend before leaping down and then beats 3 and 4 ascend until the bar resolves on the downbeat of m. 2 with a chord in the tonic key. The complementary material then ascends in scale-like fashion until a final leap from a G4/G5 octave to a D4/D5 octave in beat 4.

In terms of rhythm, a tendency toward a triple subdivision of the beat is clear. Mahoe uses a mix of quarter note triplets over the first two beats, a quarter note-eighth note triplet on beat 3, and eighth note triplets on the beat 4. Lee uses quarter note triplets exclusively in m. 1, then changes to eighth note triplets in m. 2, beat 1. Young maintains use of eighth note triplets throughout the two measure vamp. The use of

---

triplets is a practice that Mahi Beamer has shared with me, in conversation, on several occasions as normative for this genre. I add here, as well, that oftentimes, the right hand will use a triplet division but the left hand will remain duple.

A final notable aspect for the performance of the vamp is the downbeat of the second bar, where the vamp resolves to tonic. Each pianist plays a note or chord on that downbeat but, interestingly, Young decorates the approach to the downbeat with what are heard as grace notes (F2-C3) before reaching a tonic chord in m. 2. This decoration of the beat will be revisited but I note it here because it establishes an aesthetic toward the emphasis through decoration of beats 1 and 3 in each measure of the music throughout a song’s performance.

The “Lead-in” to the Vamp

Much like the vamp, the beats that immediately precede the vamp, which I will call “lead-in,” carry a musical expectation. In essence, the vamp itself does not stand alone and if an auxiliary, melodic instrument is added to the ensemble, the instrument is expected to provide a musical lead-in into the vamp. If the vamp were a basic vamp, as the one illustrated earlier, the minimum expectation for the lead-in would begin with an eighth note, on the second scale degree of the tonic key, on the upbeat of beat 3 descending chromatically by eighth note to the third scale degree of the V7/V to m. 1, beat 1 of the vamp itself. Figure 4.8 illustrates the lead-in material (m. 1) followed by a basic vamp.
In contemporary practice, though, that beat plus one-half has expanded to the three beats immediately preceding the vamp. In general, this section is melodically reserved for any auxiliary instruments that accompany the primary hula trio ensemble. Here, the primary ensemble usually maintains rhythmic structure of the song but the auxiliary instruments—for instance, a piano, or a lead guitar, or a steel guitar—have the capability of melodically enhancing this section of music. In essence, this melodic filler between the end of the previous verse and the succeeding vamp creates a kind of musical forward motion.

As was found in the analysis of the vamps, in each of the pianist’s performances, once the vamp lead-ins were established either in preparation for the first complete vamp—m. 1 in each transcription—the pianist played, or in anticipation of the vamp following the first time verse 1 was played—m. 11 in each transcription—they remained fairly consistent throughout the entire performance. However, because the section is comparatively short—lasting three beats at the most—I have opted to look specifically at at least two sites in each performance for the purposes of analysis. Mahoe’s performances are presented in figures 5.7a and 5.7c with my renderings in figures 5.7b and 5.7d respectively; Lee’s performances are found in figures 5.8a and 5.8c with my
renderings in figure 5.8b and figure 5.8d respectively; Young’s performances are found in figures 5.9a and 5.9c with my renderings in figure 5.9b\(^8\) and 5.9d respectively.

Figure 5.7a - Lead-in for vamp (1), “Ku’u Hoa,” Joseph Mahoe

Figure 5.7b - Lead-in for vamp (1), “Ku’u Hoa,” Author’s rendering

Figure 5.7c - Lead-in for vamp (2), “Ku’u Hoa,” Joseph Mahoe

Figure 5.7d - Lead-in for vamp (2), “Ku’u Hoa,” Author’s rendering

---

\(^8\) Although figure 4.11a does not include the grace note approach to beat 1, Young does play the grace notes, which are notated in what would be the previous measure. To see these, please refer to the Appendix of Young’s full performance.
Figure 5.8a - Lead-in for vamp (1), “Ke Aloha,” C. Lanihuli Lee

Figure 5.8b - Lead-in for vamp (1), “Ke Aloha,” Author’s rendering

Figure 5.8c - Lead-in for vamp (2), “Ke Aloha,” C. Lanihuli Lee

Figure 5.8d - Lead-in for vamp (2), “Ke Aloha,” C. Lanihuli Lee
Figure 5.9a - Lead-in for vamp (1), “Home Kapaka,” Alika Young

Figure 5.9b - Lead-in for vamp (1), “Home Kapaka,” Author’s rendering

Figure 5.9c - Lead-in for vamp (2), “Home Kapaka,” Alika Young

Figure 5.9d - Lead-in for vamp (2), “Home Kapaka,” Author’s rendering
In terms of the lead-in for the vamp, which occurs in the next measure of each figure, there is a general tendency toward a downward motion in the right hand. In every single figure, beat 1 of the measure is avoided. In general, the lead-in begins on beat 2 of the measure and continues to even anticipate the vamp beginning in the next measure, save Mahoe’s performances. In his performance, he anticipates the lead-in by a sixteenth note.

Paying particular attention to each performance provides insight into how each pianist deals with the lead-in material idiosyncratically. In Mahoe’s performances, he moves conjunct chromatically in the right hand where the basic melody of the material begins on B⁴ and basically descends chromatically down to the F♯⁴ in the next measure. The F♯⁴ is the note upon which the next vamp begins according to the formula presented earlier.

In the left hand, Mahoe makes much use of block, cluster chords no doubt reminiscent of his Exotica influences. Mahoe adds “when I play, I hear a full orchestra in my head and the vocalist is not singing at these points in the song anyway so it’s my time to make sure every instrument in that orchestra is playing.” While I would not interpret this as Mahoe’s attempt at being the orchestra, it is noteworthy that Mahoe is cognizant of harmonically, rhythmically, and melodically filling in the areas between, and within sustained, vocal phrases.

This notion of being able to play more during the moments in the song where singing is not taking place is reminiscent of the logogenicity of Hawaiian music. The foundation of the hula ku‘i is the lyric. Mahoe’s acknowledgement that since the vocalist

---

86 Mahoe, interview.
has presumably finished the vocal line for that phrase, the piano, as auxiliary and melodic instrument to the ensemble, has an ability to “play out more.” This will become more readily apparent in looking at how the piano registers while the actual verse is being sung; the next section of the analysis.

Lee’s performances are not as intricate as are Mahoe’s, however, the function of the lead-in remains the same: to anticipate the vamp. In general, his handling of this particular section of the music is much the same as both Mahoe’s and Young’s.

In the right hand, Lee completely avoids the beat 1 of the measure, and, in figure 4.10a/b, he begins the descent from C#6. Melodically, the descent creates an A major chord with an added 6th. This quality of chord is considered aesthetically pleasing, if used tastefully, in hula kuʻi music. Leila Hohu Kiaha states:

It’s one thing if you are going to play the [Charles E. King] music, the classics. You cannot add any old chords you want to. You have to stay with the classical chords. But in hula music, you can add things to the chord like the 6th but not all the time. You have to know when you can and when you shouldn’t. Sometimes you need the 6th because the music calls for it and it sounds right. But, you [emphasis added] are not the star; the dancer is the star. So, you have to know when you can shine and when you have to pull back.

Lee makes use of the left hand sparingly without playing any block chords. However, the tendency to decorate each beat is still apparent. Using the quarter-note/eighth-note triplet and tying the eighth note into the next beat to employ a technique called ghosting-the-beat, as in figure 5.8c/d, he creates a forward motion in the bar which creates forward musical motion. In terms of how this would function with respect to the primary trio ensemble, there is an assumption that can be made that someone in

87 Ibid.
88 Kiaha, interview.
the group—either the ‘ukulele, the guitar, the bass, or a combination of the three—will strum or sound at each downbeat. With that assumption, then, other instruments within the group, especially the auxiliary ones, are allowed and encouraged even, to explore musically.

This movement around the beat and decoration of it are an attribute readily apparent in the music figures performed by Young. Immediately visible in both figures 5.9a/b and 5.9c/d is the grace note approach F2-C3 in the left hand decorating beats 1 and 3. I am tempted to surmise that this anticipation of the beat can be likened to what is called the kūpaloloi in ipu playing for hula. Literally, the term means “to vibrate, as the ruffle of a drum; to trill; to drum with the fingers.”

When a chanter performs with the ipu, there is an aesthetic expectation in most hula traditions that the kū beat—the downbeat of the ipu, usually occurring on beat 1 and beat 3 of a 4/4 measure, is decorated in anticipation of the downbeat, with use of the fingers. That action is called the kūpaloloi and, though I am referencing specifically the piano in this thesis, the function is the same. The aesthetic toward an audible and musical decoration of the beat is a notion that resonates with pianist and composer, Randie K. Fong who says that there is an expectation, especially in the left hand, to “do something before the beat itself. I want to hear that tenth-arpeggio: C-G-E where E is on the downbeat and the C-G come right before it.”

—

89 Pukui and Elbert, 184.

90 For more information on the kūpaloloi action and function, see Elizabeth Tatar, Nineteenth Century Hawaiian Chant (Honolulu: Department of Anthropology, Bishop Museum) 1982.

C) rather than based on an interval of a tenth (C-G-E) which is more normative, the function of the grace-note I-V into the beat is the same.

Another feature of interest, related to the right hand in Young’s performances, is that, save for the very last eighth note, his right hand material is absolutely identical. In fact, Young keeps this as his primary pattern throughout the performance, varying it only late in the song. What makes this important is not so much the music itself as the purpose of this kind of musical maintenance. I invoke the words of his own teacher, Leila Hohu Kiaha, from an interview taken some five years before Young’s own performance:

> You have to be consistent: same vamp and same way to get into the vamp every time. Otherwise, [you're] gonna throw the dancers off. Again, this is hula music so it has to be about the hula and the piano is a cue for the hula dancer to say, ‘ok we’re getting ready to vamp. And, now, we’re vamping.’

In addition to his piano talents, Young is also a hula dancer with Hālau Nā Mamo o Puʻuanāhulu and while he does maintain that he plays the way Kiaha taught him, it would be natural then that part of his reasoning for using the same musical material is two-fold: because his teacher taught him to play this way and because the expectation is actually functional to him as a hula dancer. In thinking as a dancer, he plays as it makes sense for the hula.

Returning to the notion that Young plays the way his teacher played and the way she taught him resonates with several different Hawaiian values. Indeed many of his own idiosyncrasies are exact replicas of musical signatures created, and made popular, by Kiaha herself. What would be construed as musical plagiarism in Western music,

---

92 Kiaha, interview.

93 William Kahakulelehua Haunuʻu “Sonny” Ching is the kumu hula of this hālau hula.
however, is revered in Hawaiian culture and seen as flattering. Young has become affectionately known as “Baby Leila” in Hawaiian music circles and he is many times sought after as a pianist because he is able to play just like she did. In hula, the genealogy of a kumu hula’s (hula teacher) hula lineage is paramount. It allows a kumu hula to stand as representative of his or her own teacher should that teacher not be present. Likewise here, Young was asked to participate because, as a representative of his teacher, he exemplified how she would have played and also, he himself is an example of how a lineage of knowledge is passed on orally. The lineage is even more evident in looking at Young’s treatment within the verse proper, the next and final section of music to be analyzed.

The Verse Material

The final section of music to be analyzed in this thesis is the piano material that takes place during the actual vocal verse. Unlike the vamp and the lead in material, what music the piano registers during the verse proper is not governed by any specific formula or expectation. This musical material is exceptionally individual and musical idiosyncrasies abound. What I have opted to do here is to present the first verse with vocal line and lyrics notated above the piano score in order to show where the vocal line lies and how the piano is situated around it.

I am concerned both with what the piano played at certain points within the verse and how the piano and the voice interacted during the verse proper. However, in order to examine how the pianist himself interacted with the vocal line, I have opted not to re-transcribe the original MIDI performance. Moreover, I do not claim here to have
transcribed the melodies of the vocal verse according to the original intent of the composers of each respective song. To my knowledge, no music has been published for any one of these three songs and one of the accepted practices in the performance of hula ku‘i is vocal improvisation upon the generally accepted melody. The melodies transcribed here are the melodies I sang for each song while recording each pianist into the Finale 2009 software. They are also the generally accepted melodies for the performances of these particular songs.

Joseph Mahoe’s performance is found in figure 5.10a-b; Figure 5.11a-b presents C. Lanihuli Lee’s performance; and, Alika Young’s performance is figure 5.12a-c.
Figure 5.10a
“Ku‘u Hoa,” Verse 1
Joseph Mahoe
Score

Ku‘u Hoa

Voice

Piano
Figure 5.10b

Ku‘u Hoa
Figure 5.11a
"Ke Aloha," Verse 1
C. Lanihuli Lee

Ke Aloha

Score

Voice

Piano

Pno.
Home Kapaka

Figure 5.12a
Home Kapaka, Verse 1
Alika Young

Voice

Piano
Figure 5.12c

Home Kapaka

Pno.

7

8

9
At first glance, the scores are complicated. Because of the kinetic nature of the MIDI transcription, knowing exactly when a key on the keyboard was played is clear but knowing how it sounds by reading the score is difficult. However, several generalizations about this piano style become discernible by looking closely at the interaction of voice and piano. I will look at each transcription in a general way in order to assess what each pianist is playing through the entire verse.

In all three performances, the piano actually avoids the downbeats upon which lyrics are sung. In Mahoe’s performance, no overpowering melodic action takes place when words are sounded. Throughout the entire verse, whenever the vocal melody has movement, Mahoe tends to play more subtly as in m. 7. The piano follows the contour of the vocal line so as not to distract from the lyrics. The opposite is true when the vocal melody is sustained as in m. 4 and m. 6. Once the vocal line recesses, as it does over the two half notes in m. 4 and the whole note in m. 5, Mahoe uses rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic movement creating continual motion from that vocal phrase to the next.

Additionally, Mahoe references an aesthetic element usually reserved for vocalists. That Hawaiian aesthetic can be described as sounding the break in the vocal register between chest- and head-voice. This vocalization, popularly called haʻi (to break), has its own roots in the chanting styles of traditional mele. In vocal performances, singers take advantage of moments in the lyrical phrase that allow the time to haʻi through the holding of one vowel sound while alternating back and forth between octaves much like Mahoe does in the piano part in m. 6.
Arguably, the melody for “Ke Aloha” (figure 5.11) is the most complex in relation to the three songs transcribed here. Seemingly because of that complexity, Lee plays in a way that subtly complements the melody. Like Mahoe before him, Lee plays minimally when there is movement in the vocal line, as in m. 1 and m. 5, unless he is following the contour of the melody, as in m. 3. He does take the opportunity to embellish both melodically and harmonically when the vocal line is sustained over a period of time, as in m. 6, but even then, his embellishments are simple and non-distracting from the vocal line. He avoids the first entrance of the voice completely, choosing to rest for a whole quarter beat in the first bar, giving due prominence to the lyrics, and therefore melody, in the vocal line.

Young follows many of the same parameters already mentioned in his treatment of “Home Kapaka” (figure 5.12). In general, he avoids competing with the vocal line when there is movement there, as in m. 6 through m. 8. Young does play the melody along with the singer for many of the verses, which was also expressed in the piano scores of the King (1917) and Noble (1935) songbooks, but this performance practice appears to be an exception to the norm.

The singer sings almost unopposed on each downbeat the voice is heard all the way through m. 5. Not until the downbeat of m. 6 does Young actually play the downbeat with the voice. However, he is quick to take advantage of an open opportunity, as in m. 2, beat 2. There, with a half note in the vocal line, an almost glissando-like arpeggio takes over the measure for just under two whole beats and the piano disappears again on beat 4 reappearing only to decorate the time in between beat 4 and beat 1 of the next measure. Beat 1 of the next measure is avoided. In every half
note opportunity created by the vocal line, Young creates rhythmic and harmonic movement into the next phrase.

As this seems to be normative amongst the three pianists, I am again tempted to look at why this might be so. I believe that an awareness of the piano’s secondary role not only to the primary ensemble but also to the vocal line is critical to the success of the pianist’s performance in this genre of Hawaiian music.

The foundation of the Hawaiian song is its text. Because text is paramount, the voice is foregrounded in the song’s performance. The piano’s role is subordinate. This subordination can be likened to the role the steel guitar plays when part of the ensemble. Well-known steel guitarist Alan Akaka states that “the role of the steel guitar is to lead to the next chord or to fill in the pukas [holes].”

This is perfectly akin to what the piano is expected to do; it is clearly supported in these performances.

Simply put, the basic make up of the verse in looking at it in terms of the vocal line and its interaction with the piano is that when a vocal phrase is being sung, the expectation is that the pianist will play more subtly with less melodic interference. Then, when the vocal phrase begins to taper, the role of the piano is to create a sort of melodic filler to connect one vocal phrase to the next. The verse, altogether then, while a series of short vocal phrases connected by even shorter melodic filler, essentially becomes one long vocal and instrumental verse.

I believe that this aesthetic has traditional origins. In the seminal work, *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of the Hula* published in 1909, author Nathaniel B. Emerson writes:

---

94 Alan Akaka, guest lecture to Music 478B class, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, September 14, 2010.
The vocal execution of Hawaiian music, like the recitation of much of their poetry, showed a surprising mastery of a certain kind of technique, the peculiarity of which was a sustained and continuous outpouring of the breath to the end of a certain period, when the lungs again drank their fill. This seems to have been an inheritance from the old religious style of prayer-recitation, which required the priest to repeat the whole incantation to its finish with the outpour of one lungful of breath... A logical analogy may be seen between all this and that unwritten law...which made it imperative for the heroes and demigods, kupua, of Hawaii’s mythologic age to discontinue any unfinished work on the coming of daylight.95

For centuries, there has been a tendency in Hawaiian music to create long sustained phrases beginning, as Emerson writes, “with ancient Hawaiian chant music.”96 It seems natural to me that this aesthetic value would translate into modern hula music performance. The piano is being used as a tool for the extension of that aesthetic. It is critical to note that all three performances, in turn, demonstrate this aesthetic.

Conclusions

Current and normative performance practice for the piano is highly improvisatory. But to be successful in the genre, there is a necessity for the pianist to be grounded with a set of tools that inform the performance intrinsically. My purpose in this chapter was not to show causation, that the pianists intentionally made the decisions that they did, but to show that, even if intention was not transparent, a collective set of idioms does exist. The analysis of the MIDI performances has revealed several points where that collective has acted in concert with components of Native Hawaiian aesthetics including certain techniques used in the playing of the ipu, the

96 Ibid.
piano’s imitation of traditional vocal manipulations mostly in the usage of large leaps, and especially the movement toward creating a continuous vocal line from the beginning to the end of each verse. Thesis idioms are fundamentally based upon an aesthetic value system in turn grounded in Native Hawaiian culture.

Chapter Six will now bring the aspects of the piano’s history both in Hawai‘i and in published songbooks together with evidence found in the analysis of current performance transcriptions in order to synthesize an understanding of piano performance in hula ku‘i music.
CHAPTER SIX
HEA AKU NŌ AU, E Ō MAI ‘OE!
RETURN TO THE THEME OF OUR SONG

Ha‘ina ‘ia mai ana ka puana
Hoa ‘alo‘alo o ke kulu aumoe

The refrain will be told
Of my companion who comforts me at the midnight hour

My work in this project has rendered salient several points both pertinent specifically to the piano and its performance role in hula ku‘i music as well as to a consideration of issues from a broader ethnomusicological perspective. To that extent then, this final chapter proposes first to review and summarize those primary points made in each chapter before discussing both the challenges encountered as well as the discoveries made in terms of the methodology I used to elicit the data that was analyzed. My findings in the analysis of the data have provided, as well, directions for an exploration of ideas for further research. Finally, I reflect upon my own positionality and the diverse, and personal, identities I negotiated in the process of writing this thesis.

Thesis Summary

In Chapter One, I discussed how it is necessary for an ethnomusicologist to navigate a field which seemingly has no unified theoretical structure. I have found in this process, however, that it is the very lack of theoretical structure that is fundamental to the success of looking at music and culture in the ways that we, as ethnomusicologists, do. To be limited to one lens with which to view and analyze a subject consequently limits the resulting value of the research. The very definition of

ethnomusicology itself calls for our ability and willingness to seek an understanding of music on both terms of musical consensus as well as on terms governed by the values of that music’s culture of origin. That we are encouraged, expected even, to seek knowledge by looking at cultures in relation to themselves and to others and to use tools gained not only from a multi-cultural perspective but also by interdisciplinary means is critical to our ability to address both music and culture. That knowledge, then, comes not just from knowing music from in its cultural context but also from within that culture’s own context.

Chapters Two and Three first presented the history of the piano in Hawai’i and then described its presence in Hawaiian music. A number of insights emerged. Importantly, the piano was a symbol of elite status in its early days in the islands. It reflected the Victorian lifestyle of the era’s elite. Moreover, its probable use by the missionaries in religious conversion, and music literacy-acquisition, reveals a point of connection for Hawaiians to consider the piano a tool in music-making both as a symbol of elevation and as one possible of domestication. Emerson’s acknowledgement of the use of the piano in the performance of the hula ku’i, a Native endeavor, implies that a domestication in the style of performance had occurred at least by 1909.

The proliferation of published songbooks occurring around the turn of the 19th century along with the nature of the piano scores included further evidence that Hawaiians were using the piano as a vehicle for Hawaiian expression. By 1917 with King’s The Latest Hawaiian Hulas and Johnny Noble’s Collection of Ancient and Modern Hulas Including ‘Hula and How’ - Illustrated and Interpreted in 1935, a
focussed attempt at the dissemination of piano accompaniment scores for hula kuʻi appeared to be in place.

Chapters Four and Five examined the piano’s place in current hula kuʻi music practice. The transcriptions, generated through MIDI technology, offered much in terms of how traditional Hawaiian aesthetic values have influenced current practice. Firstly, although two of the three pianists are musically literate, all three pianists acknowledged that the tradition of piano performance in hula kuʻi music is largely aural, learned by ear. This aural principle parallels the oral nature of the traditional transmission of culture itself as knowledge was passed from kumu\textsuperscript{98} to haumana\textsuperscript{99} by oral means.

Secondly, the percussive nature of the piano resonates with the traditional practice of using the ipu as main rhythmic instrument in the accompaniment of traditional dance forms. The piano exemplifies this point in several key ways: 1) the physical aspect of the pā kāhela is similar to the movement of the left hand between bass note on beats one and three of a measure followed by the filling out of a harmonic chord on beats two and four; and 2) the kūpāloa gesture, which decorates the first beat of the kāhela, is almost identical to the piano’s grace-note decoration of beat one in a 2/4 or 2/2 measure and beats one and three of a 4/4 measure.

Thirdly, the piano’s imitation of the voice is reminiscent of the logogenic orientation of traditional Hawaiian mele. The use of leaps in melodic lines, especially apparent but not exclusively found, in the vamps is in accordance with an Hawaiian

\textsuperscript{98} Source; teacher

\textsuperscript{99} Student
technique of composing song melodies with large leaps in the vocal line. The use of
leaps in the melodic line also falls inline with traditional techniques of vocalization in
the performance of Hawaiian chant. Ha‘i, and yodeling in the post-contact era, are both
imitated in the piano.

Fourthly, and arguably most important, is the proclivity to connect vocal lines by
providing more complex instrumental material between vocal phrases and during the
vamps. In contrast, the instrumental material becomes more economical while singing
goes on. The illusion that the entire mele is one long vocal performance rather than
verses separated by instrumental interludes and lyric phrases conjoined by instrumental
filler, resonates with an Hawaiian aesthetic for prolonged and extended vocal
performances.

**Challenges and Discoveries for a MIDI Methodology**

At the outset, I thought that the methodology that I employed in the process of
preparing this thesis had a primary trajectory. After immersing myself in the extant
hula ku‘i literature, mostly by one scholar, and sitting with my own mentors, as well as
other pianists and several musicians active in the genre, I foolishly assumed that my
plan to have pianists play into a MIDI platform was brilliant. The explanation of the
MIDI process was fairly straightforward. It was a matter of telling the computer to
calculate certain values of notes in a certain way, therefore producing a preconceived
transcription that I would have little problem analyzing. I could not have been further
from the mark. Brilliant as my original idea may have been, the outcome was
nonetheless frequently problematic if not perplexing.
MIDI does not account for dynamics or use of the sustain pedal. Further, though MIDI can be told where on the keyboard to divide the right hand from the left, it does not account for when a pianist decides to break that rule. MIDI does not, therefore, know how to deal with what the pianist intends for the listener to hear in a performance. So locked into the computation of music-as-mathematical event, according to the length of time a note is physically sustained, and so incapable is MIDI to compute the fluidity of time from a mathematical perspective, that the musical intent of the performer is often shrouded in a barrage of bullet-like rests and off-kilter notes. My need to sort out the intent of each pianist by way of re/transcription, consequently, became a necessity rather than an option in order to disentangle pianistic intent from mechanical physical performance.

What MIDI does do, however, it does very well. The resulting transcriptions from every single performance are not just descriptive of the performance itself but hyper-descriptive of an entire musical event. MIDI illustrates kinetic maps that serve as comprehensive tools for studying the physical behavior of a pianist at the keyboard. Thus, it provides data for discovering how, more than what, the pianist played.
Although MIDI is seemingly incapable of transcribing the fluidity of time because its notation process is confined to a strict metronomic beat, it is able to show absolutely in the performance the pianist’s own time-sense as more reactive to other musical events occurring around the piano than restricted by a metronomic time. Much of hula ku’i performance itself is dependent upon time’s fluidity and the acknowledgment of the beat as an area of time rather than a point within it. MIDI, then, provided the very means to examine how the fluidity of that area is played at a high level of specificity.
Were I to transcribe a recorded performance by ear, my own bias as a listener would have ignored many nuances and gestures, and confined the notation to beats in a restricted bar. My human ears would have forgiven any “mistake” in performance. Hence, MIDI is a welcome but qualified asset to the transcription and analysis process.

**Directions for Further Research**

This thesis provides a foundation for further research along several different lines. I have focussed here on the domestication of the piano in Hawai‘i, its subsequent performance practice in hula ku‘i music and the piano’s own role as an auxiliary instrument within the hula ku‘i genre. However, in the performance of Hawaiian music, the piano has not been confined to the hula ku‘i. It has also found a place in the performance of hapa-haole songs, the songs of Tin Pan Alley, and especially the himeni-type song, now referred to in current usage as mele Hawai‘i. While I would hypothesize that a style of piano playing informed by an Hawaiian-aesthetic value system exists in the performance of these types of music, it would be interesting to investigate whether or not that aesthetic system is the same as the one outlined here. If so, then is there just one way of playing the piano that could be considered Hawaiian? If not, then where are the differences located and how are musical idioms realized?

The knowledge I sought and the data I analyzed for this thesis dealt specifically with the musical score and printed publication. I have purposely set aside the large volume of recorded works which include the piano in the performance of hula ku‘i songs. An examination of such data is for another project and another time.
Relative to the numerous musicians who play the guitar, the ‘ukulele, and the bass, the number of musicians who play the piano in any genre of Hawaiian music is small. Save the pianists whom I inquired to play for my purposes in this thesis, I have consciously refrained from examining specific personalities in any kind of detail for this study. Certainly a study of specific personalities should and would include my own mentors, Mahi Beamer and Leila Hohu Kiaha, along with such accomplished pianists as Richard Kauhi, Charles K. L. Davis, John Lino, Warren Akana, Sonny Waiau, Wehilani Ching, Elizabeth Papaia, and Anuhea Brown. By no means is this list exhaustive. Rather, it represents a selection of pianists some of whom are, or were, musically literate as well as some who do not, or did not, read music. Further, the notion of musical literacy itself, or lack thereof, among pianists presents yet another avenue for research.

Finally, what would be of significant interest to me as a researcher is the possible role that gender may play in a pianist’s approach to playing at the keyboard. With gender as its main theme, a natural branch of this study might be to look at the binaries of uptown/downtown playing styles and or refined/robust playing styles.

My Native Voice(s)

I am a husband and then a father. I am a son and then a son-in-law. I am a Native student and then a Native practitioner. I am a Native performer and then a Native scholar. In much Western scholarship, the author is capable of separating the research from the researcher. In my experience, my own unwillingness, more inability, to separate myself from what I was studying is what most challenged the process.
In the introductory chapter to this thesis, I explored the methodology called ethnography. Ethnography is based upon a researcher’s observation and participation in the field. The expected scholarship is the result of an emic, or insider’s, perspective produced by observing and participating in the activities of the subject group but without imposing a researcher’s own conceptual framework upon it. For an ethnographic treatment to be accepted by other scholars in the field, the researcher must show that he or she has remained objective throughout the research process. Ethnography, then, is an important process for those researchers who originate outside the subject culture.

For a Native Hawaiian practitioner, the rules of engagement are different. First, we are taught not to ask to learn anything. The value of what we learn lies in the very process of learning itself: pa’a ka waha, lohe ka pepeiao, hana ka lima.\textsuperscript{100} The result of this process is that we gain knowledge intrinsically. Our consequent ‘ike\textsuperscript{101} is innate. We do not just observe and participate, we live. Our ‘ike becomes just as much a part of us as the air we breathe. How do we separate ourselves from that kind of knowledge in order to prove objectively that what we know, we really do know? Knowledge is not objective. It is just as fluid as time in music.

Though I was a casual student of Aunty Leila for years before, I interviewed her in September of 2004. Her answer to most of my questions about what she played was simple: “Why are you asking me that? You already know the answer.” Several times I

\textsuperscript{100} “Close the mouth, listen with the ears, work with the hands”

\textsuperscript{101} Knowledge
responded by saying, “Aunty, I just need you to confirm it.” Her response: “That’s silly! Why do you need confirmation for something you know you know?”

For almost a decade I have tried to find a way of reconciling an internal kānalua\textsuperscript{102} over what the Academy expected of me as an etic—outside—scholar with what my community expected of me as an emic, more Native, practitioner. The constant re-negotiation of identities was a task I was not prepared for at the beginning of this study. I could not separate my role as a Native student in a Native context (pa‘a ka waha, lohe ka pepeiao, hana ka lima) with my role as a Native researcher in a Western context (observe, participate, step back, assess, present).

Moreover, I know that in the preceding pages of this thesis, my voice has changed often. When discussing scholarly material, I sound like a scholar. In contrast, when discussing material I am closer to, I am more informal. I have considered trying to unify these voices in order to create a study that is coherent and linear, but my own journey from beginning to this point has been dynamic and complicated. I have struggled with finding the right words and presenting ideas in the right way. To unify my voice(s) would create an illusion of deftness with both the subject matter and the process. With the former, I have always been most comfortable. With the latter, I still find difficulty. My own conception of ethnography as a methodology from a Native Hawaiian perspective is still in flux.

Researchers are often seen as maha‘oi\textsuperscript{103} by Hawaiians because they oftentimes miss the most important part of the learning process: internalization. It was when I

\begin{footnotes}
\item Confusion
\item Presumptuous
\end{footnotes}
myself began to internalize what going through this process was that I gained the confidence to continue this journey as both a Native Hawaiian and an ethnomusicologist. My kuleana, my responsibility, my right, does not belong to ethnomusicology as a field of study. My kuleana belongs to the people who make up the community I represent in this endeavor.

There is a culminating lesson in this journey for me as an individual and as a member of a larger community of Native Hawaiians. The lesson is that, as Native practitioners, we cannot allow the Academy to instill in us the notion that we transcend our kumu. We can, however, use the Academy as a tool in the transcendence of the hana. It is at this point where the Academy can find common ground with Native ways of knowing. It is precisely in this space where I am comfortable functioning as both emic-participant and etic-scholar. The Academy, in general, and the field of ethnomusicology, in specific, offer potential vehicles for use by Native practitioners to communicate Native expressions to Native people. It is our very agency as Natives that empowers this. It is a way for us to make sense, and make use, of what the Academy can offer to Native knowledge.

**Haʻina ‘ia mai ana ka puana**

My grandmother, Cecilia Kaʻihilani Cabral (1930-1999), has been gone now almost twelve years and still I remember how her hands used to float across the keyboard as if she were showing me the kuhi lima (hand gesture) to a hula she knew so well. Every time I sit at the piano, I know that she sits with me. I know that she is there

---

104 Teacher; source.
playing right alongside me. I hear her more and more these days and I realize that my fingers naturally gravitate toward the places that hers would have. She is my kumu and she continues to teach me each time I play.

Like the last verse in all hula kuʻi songs, so does the haʻina of our song now begin. Here, we revisit the theme of a mele begun years ago, sitting upon a piano bench in a quaint Kailua home. I return to the keyboard, me ka waha i hoʻopaʻa ʻia, e lohe ana me nā pepeiao, a e hana ana me nā lima i hoʻomākaukau ʻia ai. Finally, I do as I am taught as an Hawaiian: hoʻi mai wau i ka piko. I return to the source of my knowledge and take care of it.

105 “...mouth closed, listening with the ears, and working with readied hands.”
Appendix A
Hula Ku‘i Songbook Covers

Johnny Noble’s Collection of Ancient & Modern Hulas
Including “Hula and How” - Illustrated and Interpreted
The Latest Hawaiian Hulas

BY

Charles Edward King

PUBLISHED BY

Charles E. King

Copyright, 1917, by Charles E. King
Appendix B

Joseph K. Mahoe Performances

“Ku‘u Hoa”
Appendix B
Performance I
Joseph K. Mahoe

Ku‘u Hoa

Score

Piano

112
Ku‘u Hoa
Ku'u Hoa
Appendix C

C. Lanihuli Lee Performances

“Ke Aloha”
Ke Aloha
Ke Aloha
Appendix D

Alika Young Performances

“Home Kapaka”
Appendix D
Performance 1
Alika Young

Home Kapaka

Score
Home Kapaka

Score

Piano
Home Kapaka
Glossary

The following translations are the author’s and reflect each term’s usage in the text proper.

Ekalesia: Term referring to a religious education course at the Kamehameha Schools’ Kapālama campus.

Haʻi: Lit. to break; this is a reference to the transition between vocal registers in falsetto singing.

Haumana: Student

Hoʻopaʻa: Lit. to make steadfast; also, in reference to music-making, this term refers to the musician.

Hula kuʻi: A hula format originating in the 1860s. A hula kuʻi song is strophic whose verses are usually two or four lines in length. The last verse of the song usually begins with the phrase “haʻina ‘ia mai ana ka puana” or a variation thereof.

‘Ike: Lit. to see; to know

I leʻa ka hula i ka hoʻopaʻa: Proverb, “hula is enjoyed because of the musician”

Ipu: Hawaiian music instrument - gourd idiophone

Kāhea: To call

Kāhela: Hula beat played on the ipu

Kuhi lima: Hand gesture in hula

Kānalua: Confusion

Kū kāhela: Hula beat played on the ipu

Kuleana: Responsibility

Kumu: Source; teacher

Kūpaloloi: “Drumming” with the fingers

Kūpe'e: Bracelet; Anklet
Lei: Garland
Lū'au: Party
Maha'oi: Presumptuous
Mele: Song; poem to be sung or chanted
Mele ho'oipoipo: Love song
Mele Pana: Song of a storied place
Nā Lani ‘Ehā: Lit. “the Four Chiefs;” Referent to HRH King Kalākaua and his siblings -- Lili‘uokalani, Likelike, and Leleiōhoku.
‘Ōlelo No'eau: Hawaiian proverb
Pā kāhela: (See Kāhela)
Pa'a ka waha, lohe ka pepeiao, hana ka lima:
Proverb - “Close the mouth, listen with the ears, work with the hands.”
Paukū: Verse (of a mele)
Pono: Balanced
Tempo di hula: In hula tempo
References


Keawe, Eric. E-mail message to author. May 22, 2009.


-----, “Published Hawaiian Songbooks.” Notes 44, no. 2 (1987): 221-239.

