Hawaiian Moʻolelo bursts onto the Mainstage

World Premiere of “Lāʻieikawai” at Kennedy Theatre

The Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa is proud to present the third Mainstage production of this season, “Lāʻieikawai.” This new play is the inaugural production of the Hawaiian Theatre program at UHM. “Lāʻieikawai” is also Kennedy’s first Mainstage Hawaiian medium show. It incorporates the traditional Hawaiian performance forms of hula (dance), mele (song/Hawaiian poetry), oli (chant) and hula kiʻi (puppetry) to create hana keaka (drama). The show will be performed on the Mainstage Feb. 20, 21, 27, and 28 at 8 p.m., & Feb. 22 and March 1 at 2 p.m. A pre-show chat will precede the performance on Feb. 21 and 28 at 7 p.m. Feb. 21 chat is called “Moʻolelo & Kaʻao: The Perpetuation of Hawaiian History, Stories and Tradition,” while the Feb. 28 chat will be called “Haku Hana Keaka: The Journey & Process,” and will feature all collaborating kumu.

“Lāʻieikawai,” adapted for the stage and directed by Assistant Professor Tammy Hailiʻōpua Baker, follows the story Lāʻieikawai (played by Kauʻi Kaina), one of famed separated Lāʻie twins Lāʻieikawai and Lāʻielohelohe, who were separated at birth. The story focuses on her isolation from the outside world, and the numerous suitors that seek her hand. Among them is Kauaʻi chief ʻAiwohikupua (played by Ioane Goodhue), who brings his Maile sisters,
renowned for their fragrant scents, to help him woo the princess. Ultimately failing, he leaves his
sisters behind. Grief stricken and lost, they go to the princess for help. Eventually, a bond of
sisterhood is formed between them that will help them weather the seemingly insurmountable
challenges ahead.

The show will be performed in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, that is, the Hawaiian language, and marks
a turning point for the department and for the university on a much broader level. A work 20
years in the making, a fully realized Mainstage Hawaiian show is finally coming to the
University of Hawai‘i. Baker's academic work focuses on the revitalization of Hawaiian
language and culture, particularly in the realm of theatre. She is a co-founder of Ka Hālau
Hanakeaka, a Hawaiian medium theatre troupe whose productions have toured internationally
and throughout the Hawaiian archipelago. In addition to her Hawaiian medium plays, Baker's
English and Pidgin (Hawaiian Creole English) plays have been produced at many theatres in
Hawai‘i. But just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes many minds and sets of knowledge
to stage a production. As specialization was practiced in traditional Hawaiian society, a cadre of
kumu, or teachers/experts, contribute their expertise as collaborators on this groundbreaking
production.

Kumu Kaliko Baker, an instructor of Hawaiian at Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian
Language, serves as the dramaturge and language coach for the production. Assistant Professor
of Pacific Island Studies, Moana Nepia, contributes his modern dance expertise.

Kumu R. Keawe Lopes Jr., Assistant Professor at Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian
Language, is a native of Nānākuli, O‘ahu. He currently teaches Hawaiian language courses that
include the study and practice of mele to enhance language acquisition and is working with
original compositions of chant and hula for the production. Kumu Keawe and his wife Kumu
Tracie Lopes are kumu hula of the award winning hālau hula Ka Lāʻōnohi mai o Hae‘haʻe. Snowbird Puananiopaoakalani Bento is also native of Nānākuli, O‘ahu and kumu hula of the prestigious hālau, Ka Pā Hula o Ka Lei Lehua. Kumuhōmua is contributing with original mele compositions and choreography for the production. Both hālau will be featured in a hula segment in the production.

This production is presented by the Department of Theatre and Dance and is hosted by the Asian Theatre Program. It is also co-sponsored by the UHM Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge, the Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language, and Halele‘a Arts Foundation.

Tickets for “Lā‘ieikawai” are available online at etickethawaii.com, by phone at (808) 944-2697, at participating outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre box office. The box office is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday, with extended hours on performance dates. Prices are $25 for general admission; $22 for seniors / military / UH faculty and staff; $15 for non-UHM students; and $8 for UHM students with a valid Spring 2015 UHM photo ID. All service fees are included in ticket prices. For more information, please visit hawaii.edu/kennedy or call the theatre at (808) 956-7655. For disability access, please call the theatre.

EVENT: “Lā‘ieikawai”

PRESENTED BY: UHM Department of Theatre and Dance

WHEN: Feb. 20, 21*, 27, and 28* at 8 p.m.
       Feb. 22 and March 1 at 2 p.m.
       * Free post-show discussion on Feb. 21 and 28

WHERE: Kennedy Theatre
       1770 East-West Road, Honolulu

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$22 seniors / military / UH Faculty and staff  
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