

COMMONLY USED THEATRE ACRONYMS

ARTS (The Arts at Marks Garage)
CAATA (Consortium of Asian American Theatres and Artists)
EE (Earle Ernst Lab Theatre, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)
HSF (Hawai‘i Shakespeare Festival)
HTY (Honolulu Theatre for Youth)
KKT (Kumu Kahua Theatre)
TAG (The Actors Group)
UH Hilo (University of Hawai‘i at Hilo)
UHM/UH Mānoa (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)

Daniel Akiyama is the author of the full-length plays *A Cage of Fireflies* (Sundance Institute Theatre Lab selection; Eugene O’Neill National Playwrights Conference finalist) and *Games for Boys* (Sundance and O’Neill finalist). A graduate of UH Mānoa, Daniel is a member of the Dramatists Guild, New Play Exchange, CAATA, and Tree Moss Playwrights, and serves on the Keakalehua board and on the community advisory board for the Edward Sakamoto Collection at UH Mānoa. Daniel has been a script reader and panelist/respondent for several organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts under the Biden administration.

Diane Aoki, born in Kona, raised on Guam, currently lives in Honolulu. Her first play, *Wind Dances*, was produced at East West Players in Los Angeles in 1982. In Guam, a children’s play, *Pulani*, produced in 1989, was reprised in 2015. In 2016, it was produced at FestPac there. Her monologues were in HTY’s Christmas Talk Story every year from 2000 to 2007. A short play, *Taotaomona and the Two Sisters*, was in HTY’s Mixed Plate Special in 2000. A few of her plays have had staged readings. *Memory Beads* will be produced at Kumu Kahua this season.

Jeannie Barroga, Lifetime Member—Dramatists Guild, writes on social justice, art and women. She is nationally produced with works archived at Stanford University Special Collections, served as both Artistic Directors and literary managers for continent theatres, and received Awards from (selected): the Gerbode/Hewlett Foundations grant (*Buffalo’ed*) and the NEA Access to Artistic Excellence Grant (*Walls*). She has directed at La MaMa, dramaturged/produced at: Kumu Kahua, Asian American Theater, El Teatro Campesino, Pan Asian, Mark Taper Forum, TheatreWorks, Bindlestiff, Brava, San Jose Stage, New World, Asian American Rep, etc. She is published by Amherst Press, Routledge, and Regent Press. Residency: Tree Moss.

Kealii Beck is a long-time *supporter* of the Arts...and a short-time *participant* of the Performing Arts. His passion for the stage Arts has been encouraged by Keakalehua since its inception during the early days of Covid, when a friend invited him to join an online theatre “meeting.” Little did he know his “support” entailed reading and writing scripts—something entirely unfamiliar and outside of his comfort zone. Through the support of Keakalehua and its members (and his inability to say “no”), he has embraced the necessity of Art in life, its place of importance in our community, and its place in his heart. Nothing worthwhile comes easily...

Donna Blanchard is an accomplished nonprofit and for-profit business development professional with more than 30 years of experience in business rescue, management and alignment for strong resiliency, stability, and growth. She is also a published writer, voice artist, award-winning actor and director, and co-host of the podcast *Mickey is Dying*. She's the Managing Director of Kumu Kahua Theatre, past Executive Team Member of the 'Ohina Showcase, Labs and Films, past President of the Hawai'i State Theatre Council, recipient of the Pacific Business News "Women Who Mean Business" 2022 recognition, and a former Community Advisory Board Member of Hawai'i Public Radio.

Sean-Joseph Takeo Kahāokalani Choo is a playwright of Hawai'i. His work has been featured at Honolulu Theatre for Youth, Kumu Kahua Theatre, and The Skeleton Rep. Different programs Sean has been involved in: Lambda Literary Writers Retreat for Emerging LGBTQ Voices fellow; Workshop Intensive Playwright, The Workshop Theater; Native American Artist Lab playwright, The Playwrights Realm; Creative Lab Hawai'i Playwrights Immersive Program Fellow; awards from the Emmys, semi-finalist and finalist for Bay Area Playwrights Festival and the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference. His thoughts and writing have been published by The Dramatist, Bamboo Ridge Press, and Lambda Literary. www.seanjosephchoo.com

Dr. Tom Cooper was guest scholar at Oxford, Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Berkeley, Cambridge, Princeton, East-West Center, University of Hawai'i and founded The Association for Responsible Communication which was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Cooper taught at his alma mater, Harvard, and was an "ethics expert" at the UN. Assistant to Marshall McLuhan, he worked with the Elders Project involving Nelson Mandela and Jimmy Carter. His Ph.D. is in theatre/media. A black belt, union musician trained at Royal Conservatory, author of nine books, he premiered music from his current musical, *Higher! Higher!*, in 2025 at TAG in Honolulu.

Karen Yamamoto Hackler is a playwright, storyteller, and writer of travel stories. Her play *Song of the Rice, Song of Life*, commissioned by Honolulu Theatre for Youth, was given a staged reading at the New Visions/New Voices Festival at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and at San Jose Theatre's New American Playwrights Festival. She has acted for Kumu Kahua Theatre in Daniel Akiyama's play *A Cage of Fireflies* and in Edward Sakamoto's *Aloha Las Vegas* and *The Taste of Kona Coffee*. Karen was a member of the Honolulu Theatre for Youth acting company and was HTY's Education Director.

Nick Higginbotham (UHM, 1979) began writing stage musicals in Newcastle with composer Gareth Hudson in 2002. Their award-winning 2006 rock opera, *Shining Isle*, was inspired by the Hawaiian legend Ke Alohi Lani. Next was a light-hearted romp through the zany world of Gilbert and Sullivan aficionados (*Mermaids of Mull or The Lost McAdo*). 'Āwili: Between Worlds, capturing James Cook's death in Hawai'i, was performed at the Australian Theatre for Young People (2017) with a concert/reading at Kahilu Theatre (2018). West Coast Folk Rock-inspired *Summer of Love* is under way, as is Nick's Japanese ghost story (*Tomb of Heike*).

Ruth Ann Howden has a B.A. in Art from UCLA, has done graduate work at the University of Oregon, and was in the kūpuna program at UH Mānoa. A visual artist all her life, mainly in mixed media works on paper and handmade books, Ruth Ann dabbled in poetry along the way. The haiku format is her favorite: sometimes 17 syllables can produce surprising results. Ruth Ann only started writing plays in the last few years and has completed three (not polished/finished, but complete). Currently she is working on a handmade book with her illustrations of dancing, and haiku with a dance theme.

Jackie Pualani Johnson is a director, playwright, actress, costumer, and UH Hilo professor emeritus, where she taught and directed for 38 years. In 1978, she founded Hilo Community Players' Shakespeare-in-the-Park, eventually adding Kid Shakes, a youth component. She has written about indigenous playwrights John Kneubuhl, Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl, and Vilsoni Hereniko, and voiced audiobooks for Lois-Ann Yamanaka. She is a founder of Hilo's KEAKA Hawaiian Language Theatre Festival, serves on the Board of the Keakalehua Playreading Hui, and creates living histories of historical Hawai'i characters, particularly Hawaiian Ali'i. Her love for Hawaiian language and culture infuses her work.

Brian Johnston: Born in Scotland, now living in New Zealand, Brian's writing credits include: *Assassin*, awarded Highly Commended by the adjudicator of the 2023 UK Pint-Sized Plays. Shortlisted for several 2023 and '24 Short + Sweet Festivals, *Assassin* was performed in New Zealand, Dubai, London, and San Diego during the 2024-25 theatre season. *Souls* was a finalist and performed at the 2025 Pint-Sized Play Competition, Queenstown, New Zealand. Three of his plays were performed in 2023 at the Simply Short Play Festival, New Zealand. *Keep It in the Family* was awarded first place in the 2021 Playwrights Association, New Zealand, One Act Play Competition.

Victoria Nālani Kneubuhl is a Hawai'i writer. Her plays have been performed in Hawai'i, the continental United States, and have toured to Britain, Asia, and the Pacific. Two anthologies, *Hawai'i Nei, Island Plays* and *Navigating Islands, Plays from the Pacific* have been published by the University of Hawai'i Press. She is the author of three mystery novels set in Hawai'i, also published by UH Press. Her short stories have appeared in various anthologies, and she is a writer/producer for the documentary series *Biography Hawai'i*. She has received the Hawai'i Award for Literature and the Elliot Cades Award for Literature.

Michael Kramer (Columbia, MO) is a snowbird member due to daylight savings time. He is a retired professor of organizational communication from the Universities of Missouri and Oklahoma. His "slice of life" plays explore people living somewhat ordinary lives but focus on problems and conflicts they face. The topics include a teacher's career (*Eight Hours*), boredom after years of marriage (*Not Then, Not Now*), jealousy in a community theatre (*One by One*), 21st-century life (*Our Suburb*), artificial intelligence (*Allen Irwin*), and managing stuff after parents' death (*STUFF*), among others. His credits include staged readings and productions.
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Ian Agustin Lactaoen is a born-and-bred local of ‘Aiea, Hawai‘i. He usually writes and speaks in Standard English instead of Hawaiian Pidgin because that’s his natural style, making him a crazy person. He went to ‘Aiea High School, Hawaii Tokai International College, and Hawai‘i Pacific University, where he majored in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Ian used to be involved with Youth Speaks Hawai‘i and got into playwriting simply because he could. In his spare times he likes reading, writing, practicing kendo and kenjutsu, and replaying classic games of Go from the Edo period.

Marion Lyman-Mersereau authored a children’s book, *Eddie Wen’ Go*, about her experience on the famous voyaging canoe, Hōkūle‘a, when it capsized in the Kaiwi channel in 1978. She adapted the book into a play which was first produced in 2014 to sold-out audiences at Hawai‘i Theatre. *Eddie Wen’ Go* was remounted at Kennedy Theatre, UHM, in 2022 where seating was limited due to Covid. Marion also wrote *Open Your Hearts Wide*, a play based on stories told by missionary descendants who reflected on their feelings of being descendants. It was produced by PlayBuilders and because of Covid, the play became a film.

Dwight Martin holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in theatre acting and directing. He has performed on stages in New Jersey, Indiana, Missouri, North Carolina, Arizona, and Afghanistan. His Hawai‘i performances include Manoa Valley Theatre’s presentations of *Sylvia* (’98), *Deathtrap*, *Gunfighter*, *Sleuth*, *God of Carnage*, *M. Butterfly*, *Becky’s New Car*, *Equus*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *Dial M for Murder*. He has also directed and performed at The Actors Group and appeared in numerous Windward Readers Theatre presentations. He served at the helm of Manoa Valley Theatre for 38 years as its Producing Director until retiring in July 2019.

Justina ‘Olalimākiaikalauaki Mattos, Ph.D. is an educator, networker, actress, and director who works in college, community, and semi-professional theatre. She serves as Associate Professor of Drama, and Chair of the Performing Arts Department at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. She writes plays in English, HCE (Hawai‘i Creole English/Pidgin), and ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i; and also dabbles in film. She serves on the Board of Directors for [KEAKA Hawaiian Language Theatre Festival](#); and for [Keakalehua Playreading Hui](#). She loves to encourage the development of original scripts, especially works about Hawai‘i and the Pacific. You can learn more about her at: justinatheatre.com.

Randal McEndree has the great good fortune to live in Hilo since the beginning of 2004. Almost immediately upon moving here from San Diego, he was involved in the local theatre scene—first in UH Hilo productions, then with the Hilo Players and the Palace Theater. He directed *Our Town* for the Hilo Players, which closed on Feb. 23, 2020 right before Covid hit. Zoom play readings have greatly helped fill the gap. After retiring from teaching at Hawai‘i Community College, he now teaches at United Hawai‘i College and is a docent at the Pacific Tsunami Museum.

Leroy Olen is a Hawai‘i-based playwright and president of [Aloha Common Theatre](#), supporting emerging writers and local stories. Active with Keakalehua in 2025, he values rigorous table work. His flagship play, *Apocalypse and Aloha*, is a two-act sci-fi romance written, workshopped, and set on Kaua‘i—aimed toward full production and wider audiences. *Apocalypse and Aloha: The Great Reset is here—will Kaua‘i survive? Doomsday comes disguised as the cure. Kaua‘i must stand as one—or be torn apart.*

Tony Pisculli is the co-founder and former Artistic Director of the Hawai‘i Shakespeare Festival. He wrote and directed *The Magic of Polly Amnesia* (KKT). With Stephanie Keiko Kong, he wrote and directed *Enigma* (TAG) and wrote *#haoleboyfriend* (KKT). Other produced plays include: *Double Above the Knee* (Cruel Theatre), *Small Gods* (EE), *The Eternal Champion* (EE) and *Life Among Shadows* (EE) and the original commedias *Dromio and Juliet* (HSF), *Temper, Temper, Tempest* (HSF), *Duck, Duck, Scrooge* (ARTS), *Zanni Got His Gun* (EE) and *Guano dell’Amore* (EE, San Francisco Fringe Festival).

Eric Stack is a playwright from Kea‘au, Hawai‘i. He writes plays about his home, Hawai‘i with a particular focus on the island of Molokai. He is the author of *Mū, Vitae, Brought to Bear*, and *Kūpe‘e* (winner of 2019 Kumu Kahua Playwriting Contest) and the book and lyrics for the Hawaiian operas, *Hā‘upu, Kū I Ka Mana, Pai‘ea*, and *The Battle of Kuamo‘o*. His produced plays include *Mendokusai* (KKT and UH Hilo Performing Arts Center), *Punikawā* (Kamehameha High School Hawai‘i), and *Hae Turned Upside-Down* (a Zoom reading for the Reset Theatre Coalition). He teaches at Kamehameha High School in Kea‘au. www.hppragman.com

Sara Ward is a multi-hyphenate theatre practitioner. Her contributions in theatre range from playwriting, props design and spot op to arts management. Her most recent play *Smother* was produced at Kumu Kahua Theatre in September 2025. Other plays include *The Sapphic Mantodea Complication*, *Big Chicken* and *Wednesday’s Child*. For her work on props, she has received four awards from the Hawai‘i State Theatre Council. In 2019 Sara was awarded the Pierre Bowman Award which is given each year to a person “through whose efforts the life of theatre in Hawai‘i has been uplifted.”

Catherine Williams, a Big Island resident since 1981, is a veteran of the local theatre community. She holds a B.A. in Liberal Studies from UH Hilo and a Master’s in Theatre Production from Humboldt State University. Catherine served as Executive Director of the Hilo Community Players from 1995–2000 and has dedicated over 40 years to the stage as an actor, director, costumer, and lighting designer for both the Hilo Community Players and Aloha Theatre. Her lifelong passion for the arts began under the mentorship of Jackie Pualani Johnson, and she continues to view life as a blessing.