

PLAYBUILDERS OF HAWAII  
in collaboration with  
HAWAIIAN MISSION HOUSES HISTORIC SITE AND ARCHIVES  
presents

Open  
Your Hearts  
Wide

**A Community Collaborative Play  
by Marion Lyman-Mersereau**

Workshopped by Mark Branner and Will Ha'o  
Featuring eleven local actors in forty-four roles  
Vocals by Nikki Dee and Sound by Fletcher Young



On April 14, 1820, the brig *Thaddeus* anchored a short distance off the shore of Honolulu. Missionaries Hiram Bingham and Samuel Ruggles were the first to step ashore seeking accommodations. Two hundred years later on April 14, 2020, during the early days of covid-19 social distancing, missionary descendant **Marion Lyman-Mersereau** sat in front of her computer in her Manoa home, adding the final touches for the first completed draft of a play she wrote based on a series of interviews and story circles she conducted with fellow descendants between April 2018 and January 2020. Ten days later, Marion participated in a *Zoom* recorded reading of her play, which focuses on the first American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) missionaries and the impact they had on Hawai‘i nei.

Now, become a part of history by joining us in the next stage of developing this groundbreaking play, written with and for missionary descendants. Simply read the scenes along with the recorded voices of the actors and fill out the *Google* survey form afterwards to share your thoughts and opinions by June 30. Marion will then make changes to the script based on what you tell us. Live performances of the finished play will take place in November.

Thank you and enjoy the recorded reading!

***Please remember to fill out the survey form  
and share your thoughts and opinions with the playwright!***

*Notes from the* **PLAYWRIGHT**

## Marion Lyman-Mersereau

When Terri Madden asked me if I would be interested in writing a play about missionary descendants several years ago, I thought it would be an interesting project. When she explained the PlayBuilders process of using story circles to create community, I became even more interested. When we decided to add in Ali‘i letters and missionary journals, this interesting process became much more complicated than I anticipated. There were so many pieces to make fit. I found the research enlightening, the commonality in story circle sharing comforting, and the workshop process essential. This play is a result of the many participating descendants who stepped forward and generously shared their stories, and the insightful feedback from the actors and directors who workshopped this play for many months. I am indebted to their steady and sincere dedication to this project. As I say in the prologue, when “our stage is set and the lights are all lit, this puzzle has pieces we will make fit.” The list of *Story Circles* identifies descendants who participated in the development of this play. It has been a wonderful opportunity and privilege to discuss our common links to the past with this amazing group of people. Working with Mark and Will and Terri has been a great learning experience that I look forward to repeating again in the future.



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Born and raised in Honolulu of missionary and Hawaiian descent, Marion’s first play, *Eddie Wen’ Go—The Story of the Upside Down Canoe*, was adapted from her children’s book of the same title. It was first given a staged reading by Terri Madden’s company, PlayBuilders, at their Play Festival and was produced in 2014 at Hawaii Theatre Center. It was directed by Mark Branner, our workshop co-director with Will Ha‘o, who was a Hokule‘a crew member in the play.

# The Story Circles

*Descendant participants and their missionary ancestry*

## 1st Story Circle April 2018

Steve Pope	Whitney, Pogue
Paul Morgan	Cooke
Barb Morgan	Bingham
Patricia Morgan	Cooke, Judd
Charles Black	Bingham
Robin Midkiff	Cooke [Atherton Foundation]
Robby Mist	Clark
Martha Morgan	Cooke
Caroline Bond Davis	Cooke, Judd, Rice, Bond
Dudley Hulbert	Gulick
Chauncey Hirose-Hulbert	Gulick

## 2nd Story Circle February 2019

Peter Young	Bingham
Nancy Beadle	Chamberlain, Lyman
Brailey Hirose-Hulbert	Gulick

## 3rd Story Circle March 2019

Duane Preble	Bailey
Sarah Preble	Bailey
Pat Morgan	Judd
Barb Morgan	Bingham

## 4th Story Circle April 2019

Julie Cooke	Cooke
Peter Young	Bingham
Barb Morgan	Bingham
Po'ai Lincoln	[Hawaiian Mission Houses]
Kim Hee	[Oral history person]
Brailey Hirose-Hulbert	Gulick

## Reading of "Aloha Ke Akua" Scene April 2019 (Annual Meeting)

Eckhart	Lyman/Clark
Barb Morgan	Bingham
Paul Dahlquist	Judd
Paul Morgan	Cooke
Susie Anderson	Cooke
Lynn Oakley	Hall

## Ali'i Letters Interview Fall 2019

Puakea Nogelmeier	[Executive Director of Awaiaulu, Inc. and Professor Emeritus of Hawaiian Language at UH Mānoa]
Jon Yasuda	[Translator of Ali'i Letters with Awaiaulu Inc.]

## Vonnie Turner & Joan Pratt Interview September 2019

Vonnie Turner	Judd
Joan Pratt	Judd

## Lyman Story Circle November 2019

Myron Isherwood	Lyman
Gwen Isherwood	Lyman
Pam Isherwood	Lyman
Lani Isherwood	Lyman
Lono Lyman	Lyman
Marion Lyman-Mersereau	Lyman
Donna Reid-Hayes	Lyman
Chris Lyman	Lyman
Kepa Lyman	Lyman



Notes from the WORKSHOP DIRECTOR

## Mark Branner

SCENE: Mark being asked anywhere in the world where he's from

Q: So Mark, where are you from?

A: Kaohsiung, Taiwan. I grew up in Asia. My parents were missionaries.

SCENE: Mark being asked in Hawaii where he's from

Q: So Mark, where are you from?

A: Kaohsiung, Taiwan. I grew up in Asia. My parents worked there.

How is it that the perception of the word “missionaries” can skew so decidedly from one location to another? In the rest of the world, the word “missionary” just doesn't seem to carry the same burden of negativity as it does in Hawaii. Truly.

Let me offer an example. I have primarily studied and worked in decidedly secular settings—performing arts departments in state funded academic institutions. Discussing things of religious faith are generally frowned upon. However, as a young undergrad at UCLA, I distinctly remember the Q & A above with a fellow student and my rather sheepish answer. I didn't really want to be “found out.” But I told the truth. “My parents were missionaries.”

My fellow classmate lit up. (She was decidedly NOT a religious person.) “Wow! You were raised overseas? That's amazing. And your parents were missionaries! That means you were surrounded by service; by caring for others; by concern for the poor. That's great.” I was dumbfounded. This secular classmate thought that being raised by missionaries was “great.” And, throughout much of the rest of my “secular life” in the world, most people are rather interested about my unique upbringing. But I find that this is not true in Hawaii.

Another example. Now, my own children live here. They attend Hawaii DOE schools. A few weeks ago, my eleven-year-old offered this thought as we drove to a local park: “I wonder what this area looked like before the missionaries destroyed everything.”

**Dad:** What?! Where did you hear that?

**Daughter:** From my teachers at school. The missionaries came and ruined Hawaii.

Really? The missionaries did it all? Not the sailors or the merchants or the business barons who seem to have readily traded trinkets for sandalwood, seeing profit over people? Is there any other nuance to this story?

This play is about the particular “skewing” of the word “missionary” here in Hawaii. I am deeply honored and humbled to be a part of the team investigating this question, for this is what theatre does well. It provokes. It asks questions. It provides insight into other points of view. It encourages empathy and understanding. The best theatre doesn't hit you over the head with the “right answer” but leaves you jabbering after the play ends asking, “what do you think about that?”

So, we invite you to “open your hearts wide” and consider this story anew.



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Born in Los Angeles but raised primarily in Taiwan, Mark returned to the U.S. to attend college, whereupon he quickly dropped a scholarship from UCLA to work as a clown with the *Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus*. Mark eventually received an MFA from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa where he now teaches courses in theatre for young audiences, puppetry, mask, and physical comedy. Previously Mark served as the director and producer of Theatre Arts at Antelope Valley College in Lancaster, California. He has toured nationally with various groups, including

Diavolo, and performed extensively in Asia, most notably in *chuanju* (Sichuan Opera), a regional Chinese theatre form. He and his family operate *CiRCO Redempto*, a community outreach program designed to benefit children from the Nosu Yi minority nationality of central China.

WORKSHOP CO-DIRECTOR & ACTOR

## William Ha'ō



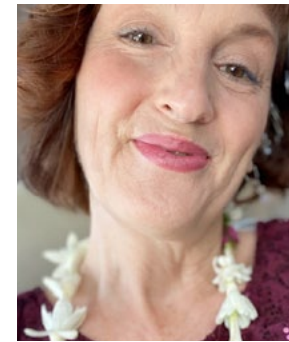
Will directs the Hawaiian Mission Houses' popular *Cemetery Pupu Theatre* series. He also directed *Twelf Nite or Wateva*, *The Tempest*, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* for their outdoor summer shows. Will has been a professional actor for over 25 years, and while based in New York City, performed for many Broadway and off-Broadway theatre companies. Will has toured with shows in almost every state of the Union and beyond, including Vancouver, Canada and Athens Greece. This is Will's

second project with PlayBuilders. He directed PB's multi-Po'okela award winning community collaborative play, *Dragonfly, The Story of a Young Local Girl's Journey Through Foster Care*.



Photos by Karis Lo

## the ACTORS



**Lala Kamalani Buzzell** feels so thrilled to work with PlayBuilders of Hawai'i. Lala is a trained actor (London + UH Mānoa) with thirty years of experience.



**Michael "Donut" Donato** is a full-time dog handler, and enjoys the open and supportive theatrical community here on Oahu.



**Jason Ellinwood** is an actor and translator from Kāne'ohe. After graduating from Mid-Pac, he completed his BA and MA in Hawaiian at UH Mānoa. Recent acting credits include *Way of a God* at Kumu Kahua and *'Au'a 'Ia: Holding On* at Kennedy Theatre.



**Claire Fallon** has a Bachelor of Science in Theatre from Skidmore College. Claire is a founder and co-owner of The Wayfinder Experience, a theatrically therapeutic summer camp for kids in Upstate New York. There she has developed and taught improvisational theatre workshops to youth. More recently, Claire stoked the fires of creative expression for the young women of St. Andrew's Schools, as Director of Theatre

from 2014 – 2017. She was last seen on stage in Honolulu Theatre for Youth's *Elephant & Piggie* and Lee Cataluna's *Home of the Brave*, Hawaii Shakespeare Festival's *Comedy of Errors* and *All's Well that Ends Well*, Manoa Valley's *Stage Kiss*, an improvised *Victorian Murder Mystery* at UH, and Kumu Kahua's *Way of a God*. She received a Po'okela for her performance as Elsa in *The Road to Mecca* at The Actor's Group.



**Elizabeth Lentz-Hill** has been a non-profit administrator, performing artist, and educator for over 20 years. She moved back home to Hawai'i in 2018 after an extensive dance theatre performance career, including tours to France, Mexico, Brazil, and across the United States. Most recently, Lentz-Hill was Interim Chair of both the Theatre and Dance Departments at University of Southern Mississippi, where she was also a tenured professor of Dance. Lentz-Hill's administrative work includes garnering grants from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as state and local funding, and founding two regional dance festivals. Lentz-Hill is currently an Executive Team Member and Director of Development at Hawaiian Mission Houses Historic Site and Archives, where she continues to re-learn her history as an Alexander, Bond, Bishop, and Baldwin descendant. Lentz-Hill appears in *Open Your Hearts Wide* in an individual capacity, not as a representative of Hawaiian Mission Houses, and is grateful to those who shared their stories to make this performance piece possible.



**Cecilia Fordham** has been active in arts education and program development in Hawai'i for several decades including work with the SFCa grant committees, HSTC Board, and UH Mānoa, COE/CRDG, Iolani School, LCC and KCC. She has a B.S. in Speech & Drama Education, SUNY Fredonia; MFA in Theatre Directing, UH Mānoa, Dept. of Theatre. She has acted, directed, choreographed and produced more than one hundred productions for stage, film, radio and television—both commercial and instructional.



**Tyler Haugen** is an MFA Directing and Acting student at UH Mānoa. You may have seen (or heard) Tyler on stage in the community as the voices of Leonato and Borachio in Hawai'i Shakespeare Festival's *Much Ado About Nothing* at Hawaiian Mission Houses, several characters in Open Home Performance Network's production of *Indecent* at The Arts at Mark's Garage, and a small cameo appearance in *Dial M for Murder* at Hawai'i Theatre Center. This is Tyler's farewell performance for the theatre community in Honolulu, as he will be moving to Minneapolis, Minnesota after his graduation in May.



**Moanililia Miller** is grateful to be part of this amazing creative process. Born and raised in Hilo, Moanililia has dabbled in community theater on O'ahu over the years and most recently has been involved with the Hawai'i Pono'i Coalition production of *Mai Poina*. Mahalo to Marion Lyman-Mersereau for inviting us on this creative journey!



**David Heulitt** was last seen on stage in MVT's production of *Once*. Previous stage credits include *Full Monty*, *It Shoulda Been You*, *Shipment Day*, and *Tommy* (MVT); *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Fox on the Fairway*, and *Camelot* (DHT). Thank you so much to Marion, Will, Mark, Terri, PlayBuilders of Hawaii, the Hawaiian Mission Houses, and everyone involved in this show.



**Albert Ueligitone** is originally from American Samoa, He studied Theater at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa. He has appeared on *Hawai'i Five-0*, *Magnum P.I.*, Marvel's *Inhumans*, and the films *Winter for the May Queen*, *Tropical Bliss*, *Hae Hawai'i*, and *Haole*. He has performed onstage at Kumu Kahua, Kennedy Theater, and Hawaiian Mission Houses. Based in Honolulu, Albert also works as a storyboard artist for film and TV.

## *the* MUSICIANS



**Nikki Dee**  
VOCALIST

International Jazz Vocalist Nikki Dee was born in Maui but raised on O'ahu, She just recently moved away from Seattle and returned to her beloved Hawai'i to live. Nikki's roots run deep in Hawaii. From her father's side of her family, she is descended from three Hawaiian lines. Her father's paternal grandmother, and both maternal grandparents): Na'ai, Kainoa and Pamahoa lines. She is also a direct descendant of King Pōmare of

Tahiti, and has blood ties to Charles Kana'ina, father of King Lunalilo. Nikki is the 2017 winner of the Seattle-Kobe Female Jazz Vocalist Audition, sponsored by the SKSCA, Pacific Jazz Institute, and Dimitrou's Jazz Alley. She was selected to perform at the Kobe-Shinkaichi Jazz Queen Vocalist Contest in Kobe, Japan, where she also performed at the renowned Sone Jazz Club and the historical Shushinkan Sake Brewery. Nikki has been a vocal teacher, coach, and consultant for over fifteen years. Her students have included members of prominent Seattle bands, choirs and theater companies. She has also performed extensively throughout the Seattle area in a variety of music projects and genres: vintage through modern jazz, Bossa Nova/MPB, Latin jazz, French and European cabaret, classical/opera, pop/rock, funk/soul, and R&B.

**Pavlina Nakalenova**  
PIANO

A classical pianist, Palina Nakalenova is originally from Bulgaria, where she began studying music at the age of five. She graduated from Dobrin Petkov Music Academy in her home city of Plovdiv. After attaining honors in several piano competitions and attending Sofia University to study Piano Pedagogy for two years, she transferred to Manchester College in Connecticut, where she assisted Dr. Deborah Simmons in her work with the Chamber Ensembles and the College Choir. She completed her degree in Piano and Liberal Arts, and then journeyed to Hawai'i, where she earned a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance and a Master of Music in Piano Performance Degree at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa with Dr. Thomas Yee. She is in great demand as a soloist and accompanist.

**Mycle Wastman**  
GUITAR

Seattle's soul-singer, Mycle Wastman, emerged as a stealth frontrunner on Season 3 of NBC's *The Voice*. Rightly so! He delivers a refreshing combination of an old soulful vibe, R&B sensibilities, and a splash of pop. Wastman is a singer's singer, interpreting from all of the greats who have come before him while still firmly exerting a style all his own. Wastman's influences range from the likes of Al Green all the way to Led Zeppelin, and he not only sings with the best of them, but he also plays guitar, bass and drums.

## *the* PRODUCTION TEAM



**Terri Madden**  
PRODUCING MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLAYBUILDERS

Terri founded PlayBuilders of Hawai'i Theater Company early in 2011 and has served as its managing director since. An award-winning actress, director, and playwright, Terri holds a BA in Political Science and an MFA in theatre from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She has spearheaded twelve original community-based plays that were written in collaboration with residential communities of Wahiawa, Waipahu, and Chinatown, as well as special interest groups such as Honolulu's homeless, LGBTQ (Honolulu and Leeward), former foster youth, and sexual assault survivors. Terri also produces PlayBuilders' annual PlayFestival and has introduced over eighty new plays over the last nine years. In addition to producing *Open Your Hearts Wide* under special agreement with Hawaiian Mission Houses Historic Site and Archives, she is currently working on a play with and for domestic violence survivors titled, "Bursting Bubbles" which is planned to be presented in October either at the ARTS at Marks Garage corona virus willing, or on-line.



**Traci "Cici" Oya**  
STAGEMANAGER

Traci has worked extensively backstage on multiple shows on this island as a stage manager. She is so thrilled and grateful to be able to work on such an amazing production!



**Fletcher Young**  
SOUND DESIGN AND ENGINEER

Fletcher Young was born and raised in Honolulu, and considers himself to be a jack of all trades (mostly because he's never become the master of anything). Although he has experience in musical theatre and mixing live music performances, this is his first time operating solely as a recording engineer.



**PLAYBUILDERS MISSION**

To gather and share real stories that resonate with, empower, and connect people throughout the culturally rich and diverse communities of Hawai'i.

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**HAWAIIAN MISSION HOUSES HISTORIC SITE AND ARCHIVES** preserves the heritage and interprets the stories of the American Protestant Missionaries, their descendants, and their relationships with the people and cultures of Hawai'i, connecting with contemporary life, and encouraging a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complex history of Hawai'i. Founded in 1820, the site is now a National Historic Landmark, and the organization is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. Hawaiian Mission Houses preserves two of Hawai'i's oldest houses, including the 1821 Mission House, and the site includes a cemetery and a collections, archives, and library facility known worldwide for the largest collection of books written in 'ōlelo Hawai'i and over 7,500 missionary-related and Polynesian artifacts.



***Open Your Hearts Wide*** is made possible  
with grants from the **Cooke and Atherton Foundations**  
and the **National Endowment for the Arts.**

**SPECIAL MAHALO** to the following:

***Hawaiian Mission Houses Historic Site and Archives*** for their gracious hospitality and support during the development of this play. We are especially grateful to ***Neal V. Hitch, Peter Young, Mary Ann Lentz, Michael Smola, William Ha’o*** and ***Elizabeth Lentz -Hill.***

***Terry Liu***, former Executive Director for the Hawai‘i Arts Alliance for his help in connecting us to the National Endowment for the Arts. His assistance, knowledge and advice was fundamental in the planning of this project.

***Mark Branner and his applied theatre class*** at the UH Mānoa Drama Department for helping us write our very first the grant application for the National Endowment of the Arts.

***Sujatha Raman*** for her help in grant writing and participation in story circles.

***Linda Rucci*** for program design.

***Hawaii Life Real Estate Brokers*** and ***Rhonda Hay***, and ***Jeanie Schmaltz*** for opening their hearts wide and providing additional workshop space at their lovely Kaimuki branch office.

Most of all, we wish to thank the ***missionary descendants*** and ***Ali‘i Letters scholars*** who generously shared their stories with Marion. Several went beyond the call of duty and attended more than one story circle. They include ***Peter Young, Barb Morgan, Julie Cooke***, and ***Nancy Beadle***. The complete list of those who participated may be found on page 3 of this program.



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FRONT COVER: Palm illustration from *Native Man—Mode of Sitting, Hawaii*, wood-engraving by Benson John Lossing and William Barritt; source: *Sandwich Island Notes* by George Washington Bates; publisher: Harper & Brothers, New York (1854).

PAGE 1: Thaddeus illustration from reproduced missionary map; source: *A History of C. Brewer & Company, Limited* by Josephine Sullivan; publisher: Walton Advertising & Printing Co., Boston (1926).