AURORA CREATES
Arts & History Worth Discovering
February-March 2019
Aloha Aurora Aloha
In 2016, Keoni Lagunero asked Mark Kahalekulu if he knew of a venue in the Denver metro area where he could give free ukulele lessons. Lagunero’s ohana (family) had a long history of sharing the Hawaiian culture as a family tradition while he was in the military, including performances at Sea World and Disney World. When he and his ohana moved to Colorado in 2015, they brought with them their aloha (love, respect and sharing of Hawaiian culture) and live it every day.

“My ohana and I are very community-service minded, and we give back by performing for free at nursing homes, assisted living facilities and fundraisers for the homeless and other deserving projects,” Lagunero said. “There were also a number of hula halaus (schools) that were very happy for the opportunity to dance to live musicians rather than to CDs.”

From the time he was very young growing up on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, Lagunero remembers his mother instilling in him the value of his culture and “performing became a way of life for me.” Although he tried ukulele lessons when he was seven, he didn’t take to it. At the age of 22, however, while stationed in Mannheim, Germany, he decided to get serious and developed his unique Polynesian style of playing the ukulele and the guitar.

Mark Kahalekulu, on the other hand, never thought of himself as a cultural resource. Other than a few Hawaiian classes back in high school at Kamehameha and junior college, he had no prior academic background in Hawaiian language, history or culture. Yet, throughout his life, he had unconsciously absorbed the Hawaiian traditions of his kūpuna (ancestors). Kahalekulu’s father came from a native Hawaiian family who worked as paniolo (Hawaiian cowboys) and fishermen of the deep waters of Kona in the traditional way—from outrigger canoes. Kahalekulu eventually grew into an accomplished Hawaiian waterman, following in the footsteps of his idol Duke Paoa Kahanamoku, a traditional net fisherman, rough-water
swimmer, free-diver, spearfisherman, big-wave surfer, surfboard maker and underwater videographer.

When Kahalekulu’s first mo’opuna (grandchild) was born, he felt compelled to write down for him his recollections of his ohana’s traditional way of fishing. Mo’olelo (stories) of laying nets in the ocean for travelling shoals of fish, free-diving the offshore reefs for lobster and octopus and gathering shellfish and seaweed along the shore were some of the topics that he wrote to him about. In 2013, two of his mo’olelo were published on the Hawaiian Cultural Foundation’s website.

Since Kahalekulu had been doing various Hawaiian musical programs for different groups in Aurora, including the city’s Global Fest and the Asian-Pacific Partnership dinners, he told Lagunero that he thought the Aurora History Museum might be the right place for a Hawaiian cultural program. He set up a meeting for Lagunero with the museum staff. That morning, Kahalekulu had one of those “a-ha” moments, and the partnership was born. Kahalekulu would piggyback on Lagunero’s ukulele lessons with a Hawaiian cultural presentation series of his own.

The two pitched their idea of a free monthly half-hour topical Hawaiian cultural series followed by a one-hour ukulele class. And so for the last two and a half years, Kahalekulu’s, “Just Talking Story” has followed Lagunero’s ohana “Ukulele and Hula” every third Saturday of the month.

Lagunero enjoys witnessing how his programs affect people: “What I learned is that teaching my culture through hula and ukulele and then witnessing the joy in my students’ eyes as they practice and improve, gives me happiness in knowing that other people are appreciating my culture.”

Kahalekulu gets excited by how his programs help to create a sense of community; “First and foremost, the sharing of Hawaiian culture among Hawaiians themselves provides a stabilizing support mechanism,” he said. “Every year many Hawaiian families relocate to Colorado in search of a better life. Yet the unfamiliar climate and social environment create stress, separation anxiety and a deep sense of loss. To counteract such feelings, Hawaiians seek the company and comfort of other Hawaiians and opportunities to share their native music, food and language. Having more Hawaiian arts and culture here in Colorado actually makes assimilation easier.”

Both men understand the role that preserving any one culture plays in the bigger picture. They recognize that Colorado, and especially Aurora, includes many cultures—all of them sharing with the rest something unique and precious and something that sustained them and gave them strength in their long journey. Through their programs, Lagunero and Kahalekulu hope to convey the ideas that no individual is an island, that our collective fortunes rise when we respect and honor relationships and work together, and that the sacrifices made by the present generation will somehow make a difference for the next generation.

“We as a family have been blessed to share the aloha of Hawaii through the playing of the ukulele and guitar, singing Polynesian songs and dancing Hawaiian hula for 30 years,” Lagunero said.

Kahalekulu, the storyteller, offered this analogy. “Like the nature of Hawaii itself, a healthy environment is one that can maintain a stable, bio-diverse population,” he said. “This diversity contributes to, and helps to develop, overall growth and evolution in an environment, enabling it to sustain a wide variety of life forms. Aurora, not unlike a coral reef, has a highly diverse population, rich in differing cultures, thoughts and practices, the whole eventually becoming greater than the sum of its parts.”

All of us who call Aurora our home are the beneficiaries of this gift of aloha.
02 Artist Exhibition, Maker Showcase $  
6 – 10 p.m.  
5280 Artist CoOp  
ACAD

06 “Black History Month” with Shane Franklin a.k.a. SF1  
Noon  
Metropolitan State University of Denver and Colorado Folks Arts Council  
Aurora Fox Arts Center

07 1st Thursday ACAD Mixer  
6 – 8 p.m.  
ACAD

7:30 p.m.  
Runs from Feb. 8 to March 24  
Vintage Theatre

08-09 Aurora Fox Cabaret Series: Robert Michael Sanders $  
7:30 p.m.  
Aurora Fox Arts Center Studio Theatre

09 “Icons, A Tribute to African Americans in Art” $  
7:30 p.m.  
5280 Artist CoOp  
ACAD

10 “Tunes for Toons”  
Free Family Concert  
11 a.m. and 1 p.m.  
Aurora Symphony Orchestra  
The Hanger at Stanley Marketplace, 2501 Dallas St.

Closing Performance: “Hooded or Being Black for Dummies” $  
2 p.m.  
Post-show discussion after each performance  
Aurora Fox Arts Center

15 House of Poetry $  
7 p.m.  
5280 Artist CoOp  
ACAD

16 Ukulele and Hula Lessons  
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.  
Aurora History Museum

20 Lecture: Cider in Aurora $  
Noon – 12:45 p.m.  
Aurora History Museum

7:30 p.m.  
Runs from Feb. 22 to March 17  
Aurora Fox Arts Center

22 “Get Your Ears Swoll, Night 3” $  
7:30 p.m.  
A showcase of local independent musicians  
The People’s Building

23 “The Pillars of African American Art Songs” $  
7 p.m.  
Featuring Stephanie Ball  
The People’s Building

24 Beatles Tribute, Concert and Flash Mobs  
Flash mobs: 1 and 2:30 p.m.  
Concert: 3 – 4:30 p.m.  
Neighborhood Music Stapleton Stanley Marketplace  
2501 Dallas St.

28 “Idiopathic” $  
7:30 p.m.  
Circo de Nada  
The People’s Building
01-03

“Idiopathic” $  
7:30 p.m.  
Circo de Nada  
The People’s Building

02-03

Aurora Singers Presents “Director’s Choice” $  
Saturday, 7 p.m.  
Sunday, 2 p.m.  
East Middle School  
1275 Fraser St.

07

1st Thursday ACAD Mixer  
6 – 8 p.m.  
Contact ACAD for location

07-09

Evolving Doors Dance Concert $  
7 p.m.  
The People’s Building

08

Opening Night: “The Happiest Place on Earth” $  
7:30 p.m.  
Runs March 8 - 24  
Aurora Fox Arts Center Studio Theatre

Opening Night: “Living Echoes” $  
7:30 p.m.  
Runs March 8 – 16  
Larry D. Carter Theater at Community College of Aurora

15

House of Poetry $  
7 – 10 p.m.  
5280 Artist CoOp ACAD

15-16

“Mary Poppins Jr.” $  
Neighborhood Playhouse  
Children’s Theatre Company  
The People’s Building

16

Ukulele and Hula Lessons  
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.  
Aurora History Museum

20

Lecture: Landscape Photography $  
Noon – 12:45 p.m.  
Aurora History Museum

22

Drumming Group  
7 p.m.  
OOMPH = Spirit ACAD

23-24

“Romantic Elegy” $  
Saturday, 7:30 p.m.  
Sunday, 3 p.m.  
Aurora Symphony Orchestra  
Aurora Fox Arts Center

ongoing

“Hooded or Being Black for Dummies” $  
Post-show discussion after every performance  
Aurora Fox Arts Center  
Through Feb. 10

“Betrayal” $  
Vintage Theatre  
Through Feb. 17

Aurora Public School Traveling Art Show  
Aurora Municipal Center  
2nd floor mezzanine  
Through Feb. 28

18th Annual Exhibition of Aurora Art Teachers’ Artworks  
DAVA  
Through March 8

“Cultivating Community: Hoery Family Photos”  
Aurora History Museum  
Through March 10

Feb. 8 – March 24  
Vintage Theatre

“Life Sucks.” $  
Feb. 22 – March 17  
Aurora Fox Arts Center

DAVA Student and Staff Show  
Aurora Municipal Center, 2nd floor mezzanine • March 5 – 29

“Living Echoes” $  
Larry D. Carter Theater at Community College of Aurora  
March 8 – 16

“The Happiest Place on Earth” $  
Aurora Fox Arts Center Studio Theatre  
March 8 – 24

“Drink Local: Aurora’s Craft Beer Scene”  
Aurora History Museum  
Through April 7

Drinking Local Craft Brew Passport  
Aurora History Museum and participating companies  
Through April 7

“One Small Step: Fifty Years Later”  
Aurora History Museum  
March 12 – July 21

programs at acad

Roshni – Mothers’ Choir  
Mondays, 12:30 p.m.

Mexican Folklore Dance Class $  
Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m.  
Presented by Academia de Ballet Folklórico Nezahualcoyotl

Martial Arts Meet-up $  
Wednesdays & Thursdays, 7 p.m.  
Saturdays, 10 a.m.

Roshni – World Dance  
Fridays, 1:30 p.m.
AURORA’S
other connection to Hawaii

Aurora History Museum Director T. Scott Williams, before coming to Aurora, spent six years as the museum curator at Kalaupapa National Park in Hawaii. When Hansen’s disease (leprosy) was introduced to the Hawaiian Islands, King Kamehameha V banished all afflicted to the isolated Kalaupapa peninsula on the north shore of Molokai in 1866. Since then, more than 8,000 people, mostly Hawaiians, have died at Kalaupapa, including Father Damien, the “Apostle of the Lepers” and spiritual patron for the outcast.

Once a prison, Kalaupapa is now refuge for the few remaining residents who are now cured but were forced to live their lives in isolation. Kalaupapa National Historical Park is responsible for the preservation and maintenance of over 200 historic buildings, nearly 100 historic roads, walls and small-scale objects, almost 1,200 grave markers and 300,000 objects, primarily representing the late 20th century experiences of patients/residents within the Kalaupapa Settlement, nearly all of which today is part of the Kalaupapa National Historic Landmark District. As museum curator at Kalaupapa, Williams was responsible for a collection that included an ever-growing number of archaeological assemblages and representative natural history specimens as the National Park Service continues to inventory resources associated with the park. Kalaupapa National Historical Park maintains its museum collection to illustrate and document the compelling story of separation forced by a devastating disease and the nationally significant natural and cultural resources found within its boundaries.

ONE SMALL
Step: 50 Years Later

In July 1969, humanity gathered and witnessed one of the most impressive and awe-inspiring events in history. For the first time, a man walked on the moon. The United States’ Apollo 11 mission, which successfully put Commander Neil Armstrong and Lunar Module Pilot Buzz Aldrin on the moon, was a culmination of technological achievement, years of ingenuity and a product of world powers dueling in a so-called “space race.”

For those who witnessed the event, it was life-changing. For those who have grown up hearing about the moon landing, it is a monumental moment in history.

To commemorate this pivotal achievement and to educate a new generation about such a momentous time in history, the Aurora History Museum presents an exhibit chronicling the moon landing. “One Small Step: Fifty Years Later” will highlight humanity’s fascination with the cosmos, recount the history of space travel, provide historical context of the Cold War and detail the Apollo 11’s mission - from launch to reentry. Join us in celebrating the moon landing, 50 years later.

The exhibit “One Small Step: Fifty Years Later” will be on display from March 12 to July 21. Admission to the Aurora History Museum is always free. Visit AuroraMuseum.org for more details.

ART IN PUBLIC
Places: The Next Five Years

Aurora’s Art in Public Places Commission is required to develop a new master plan every five years. Over the course of this past year, the commission took on this responsibility with gusto. The year began with public engagement initiatives, including presentations at ward meetings, neighborhood organizations and other interest groups. A short survey was
Art In ... cont.

available at those meetings and online. The response and information collected helped to frame the master plan, which is a tool for setting priorities and articulating a vision for the next five years. Thank you to all who shared your thoughts and opinions!

The Art in Public Places Master Plan 2019-2024 goals and objectives include: a) diversity: facilitate art that reflects the city’s diversity in culture, history, beliefs, heritage, race, age, ethnicity and gender; b) education: continue to educate residents, visitors and stakeholders to increase understanding within the community about public art in Aurora through outreach, social media and events; c) advocacy: advocate for public art in the city of Aurora through outreach efforts, staff, city budgeting and other local and state art groups; d) public engagement: engage and connect the public to public art in Aurora through interacting with the pieces, participation in the art selection process and plan updates, education and outreach efforts; e) maintenance: review and continually update a maintenance plan for the entire collection; and f) innovation: encourage and foster art that is innovative, creates a sense of place, sparks conversation and community and captures Aurora’s diversity.

Aurora’s Art in Public Places Program has grown and changed since the development of the last five-year plan. Major artworks envisioned along the light rail line are now all a reality. The kinetic series “Lenticular Dreams” by Reven Swanson has been installed at renovated Nome Park. Murals by Yulia Avgustinovich, Bimmer Torres and David Garcia have brightened the Aurora Cultural Arts District. Several of these artworks were community engagement projects. Architecturally integrated artworks by the team of David Griggs and Scott Parsons will be featured at the Central Recreation Center when it opens in the spring of 2019. Other projects are nearing completion, and new projects will be announced soon. Regular cleaning as well as maintenance and restoration is taking place throughout the collection.

The new master plan, which is aspirational, sets high goals and reflects the city’s transformation during this same time period.

You can access it at AuroraGov.org/PublicArt.
“Hooded or Being Black for Dummies”
Now through Feb. 10

Two mid-teen black guys chat about their aspirations and dreams:
- “So you don’t want to be a vet anymore?”
- “No.”
- “What do you want to be?”
- “Alive.”

Even though “Laugh” signs light up to prompt the audience to take this as a joke, what happens if no one laughs?

“Hooded or Being Black for Dummies” by Tearrance Arvelle Chisholm and directed by award-winning Colorado Director Betty Hart “addresses some really complicated issues, but does so in a way that remains accessible to an audience,” says Aurora Fox Arts Center Executive Producer Helen R. Murray. “That’s the power of comedy. Smart comedy, like this, can allow us to face and acknowledge our own prejudices without feeling judged for them.” Director Betty Hart or Aurora’s Poet Laureate, Assétou Xango, will moderate post-show discussions after each performance.

“Life Sucks.”
Feb. 22 to March 17

“Life Sucks.” by Aaron Posner is a brash and revelatory reworking of Anton Chekov’s “Uncle Vanya,” that finds a group of old friends, ex-lovers, estranged in-laws and lifelong enemies gathering to grapple with life’s thorniest questions. And each other. What could possibly go wrong? Called “sassy yet heartfelt” by The Washington Post, “Life Sucks.” proves that sometimes even unhappiness can be tons of fun! Helen R. Murray returns as director for the second time this season, following her critically acclaimed Colorado directorial debut of Jason Robert Brown’s “Songs for a New World.”

“The Happiest Place on Earth”
March 8 to 24

One actress plays all eight characters in Philip Dawkins’ heartwarming play, “The Happiest Place on Earth.” Taking place after the very public death of one family’s beloved father and husband, “The Happiest Place on Earth” recounts the true story of how the Dawkins women grew up and moved on while still believing in a magic place where dreams can come true. Washington, D.C.-based actor, Tia Shearer, reprises her roles in this wonderfully bittersweet family saga that the DC Metro Theatre Arts called “delicious,” “affecting” and “deeply emotional” in the intimacy of the Fox Studio Theatre.

For tickets to any of these Colorado regional premieres, call the Aurora Fox Box Office at 303.739.1970 or visit AuroraFox.org