



Home News

# Nisei ballet tells in dance a story of Japanese Americans

Story

Print Font Size:

Recommend 0 Tweet G+1 0 Share

Posted: Wednesday, July 9, 2003 12:00 am

By KENDYCE MANGUCHEI - TGI Staff Writer | 0 comments

"Nisei" tells the story of second-generation Japanese World War II veterans through a ballet conceived by Hilo-born New York-based choreographer Marla Hirokawa, who dedicated it to her late father, Lawrence Hirokawa, a 100th Battalion soldier and recipient of the Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

The ballet, presented by Hirokawa's New York dance company Covenant Dance Theatre with a dozen dancers from Oahu's Ballet Hawaii, will be presented at the Kauai Community College Performing Arts Center Tuesday, July 8 at 7 p.m.

Nisei was first based on the story of Lawrence Hirokawa, said Marla's sister Laurie Hamano, in a recent interview at the Performing Arts Center. Hamano is serving as a production coordinator for Hawaii, where "Nisei" makes a nine-show tour this month. Lawrence was drafted into the military and sent to Schofield Barracks for training. Then, he was brought to Italy, where he lost his eye and had shrapnel wounds from a battle on Mt. Casino.

However, the story was missing something, Hamano remembered. Marla realized that friends in Brooklyn and elsewhere in the East Coast had never known that Japanese both fought in World War II and were sent to internment camps. About 120,000 Japanese-Americans were "relocated" to camps in California, Arizona, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Arkansas and Texas. The 100th Battalion became the most highly-decorated World War II unit. More than 18,000 individual decorations were awarded.

The ballet opens with an old Nisei looking at a photo album with his granddaughter, as memories come to life. The grandfather as a young man remembers the ways of his father and mother, a picture bride. When the nisei gets drafted into the military, his mother tells him he must serve his duty to America, and to bring honor to his family and country.

The ballet continues with the nisei's family hosting a party at their home. They hear the Day of Infamy speech given by President Roosevelt after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, a turning point. Friends begin to shun the nisei and his family; his mother and sister are sent to an internment camp. Although no one in the Hirokawa family was sent to a camp, it was vital to the story. "This is The Japanese Story" all across the country, it's not one person's story," Hamano said.

The nisei continues training for battle, with a broomstick because he "isn't trusted to carry a weapon," Hamano said. After a war scene and the A-Bomb announcement, the show comes back to present day, with the nisei and his granddaughter getting ready for a Veteran's Day parade. Toward the end of the show, veterans of the 100th Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team will walk across the stage and be recognized. Hamano said that because the 100th Battalion veterans are in their 80s and many have health problems, some have chosen to be



Custom Search

SEARCH THIS SITE

## Most Popular

Articles Most Commented Stocks

Man injured in shark attack

recognized from their seats in the audience instead. But, she is still looking for veterans to participate, and bring their families.

"If it has allowed even one person to start talking to their families and make that connection, there's a window of opportunity that may not have been there," Hamano said.

The Nisei Project also includes an arts-in-education program, as each scene in the ballet can teach about vocabulary, cultural appreciation, government and the military. For one example, communications during the 1940s was quite different than today, using telephones, radio, telegraphs and letters instead of cell phones, the Internet and e-mail.

Nisei Project's opening night was Thursday at the Leeward Community College Theatre in Pearl City, with a performance and reception. On Kauai there will be one public performance only, but Hirokawa has added two performances for senior citizens and youth, to be held July 8 and 9 at the Performing Arts Center.

A short performance of "A New York Rhapsody," set to George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" will also be featured. The theme of the dance is "a day in the life of a New Yorker."

Tickets are \$25 for general admission; \$20 for senior citizens 62 and older, military and veterans; and \$15 for children under 12. For information, please call the KCC Performing Arts Center during regular business hours at 245-8270, call the Nisei Project at 1-888-8115 or access their Web site at <http://www.niseiproject.com>.

© 2017 Thegardenisland.com. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

['I'm leaving under protest'](#)

[Honu attacked at harbor](#)

[Hanakapi'ai, Haena plans to be discussed](#)

[Community explores new bridge on](#)

['Loop Road'](#)

Recommend 0



Share

Discuss

Print

Ads by Adblade

## Trending Articles and Offers

[25 Woodstock Photos That Will Make Your Skin Crawl](#) [Bad News About Metformin](#)

[On May 14, see the sights on two wheels during DC's only 20-mile car-free bike ride. Save \\$10 with code: VISITDC17.](#) [Walmart Cameras Captured These Hilarious Photos](#)

Posted in News on Wednesday, July 9, 2003 12:00 am.

The Latest: Arkansas AG to appeal 1 of 2 execution stays  
Farm-to-school program honored  
Police arrest suspect in pharmacy robbery  
CBS' The Doctors Tried WunderBrow, Here's What Happened (Health & Style magazine)

Recommended by

The Latest: Trooper describes gun injuries left by 'coward' 'Mad Men' in a 'League' of its own — and that's 'Final' KPD is changing

Recommended by

## Rules of Conduct

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1 Keep it Clean.</b><br/>Please avoid obscene, vulgar, lewd, racist or sexually-oriented language.</p> <p><b>2 Don't Threaten or Abuse.</b><br/>Threats of harming another person will not be tolerated. AND PLEASE TURN OFF CAPS LOCK.</p> <p><b>3 Be Truthful.</b><br/>Don't knowingly lie about anyone or anything.</p> | <p><b>4 Be Nice.</b><br/>No racism, sexism or any sort of -ism that is degrading to another person.</p> <p><b>5 Be Proactive.</b><br/>Use the 'Report' link on each comment to let us know of abusive posts.</p> <p><b>6 Share with Us.</b><br/>We'd love to hear eyewitness accounts, the history behind an article.</p> |
|--|---|

## Follow Us On Facebook