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For downloadable images, visit itvs.org/pressroom/

For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/menofhula

“NA KAMALEI: The Men of Hula”

**TO HAVE ITS BROADCAST PREMIERE ON THE EMMY AWARD–WINNING PBS SERIES
INDEPENDENT LENS ON
TUESDAY, MAY 6, AT 10:30 PM**

Story of Hawaiian Male Pride That Goes Beyond Stereotype of “Grass Skirt Girls”

(San Francisco, CA)—From dashboard dolls to old Hollywood movies, we’re all familiar with romanticized images of Hawaiian women dancing the hula. Yet few are aware that in ancient times, men also learned the dance, along with the martial arts of battle. Lisette Kaualea Flanary’s **NA KAMALEI: The Men of Hula** goes beneath the grass skirt to explore the surprising and thriving role of male hula dancers. The film will have its broadcast premiere on the Emmy Award–winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, May 6, 2008, at 10:30 PM. (Check local listings.)

In 1975, at the height of the hula revival, master hula teacher Maiki Aiu Lake asked her student, legendary entertainer Robert Cazimero, to open a school for male dancers. With six young high school students, Cazimero founded Halau Na Kamalei, and it suddenly became “hot” for men to dance hula again. Celebrating the school’s 30th anniversary, **NA KAMALEI: The Men of Hula** tells a story of Hawaiian pride through the examination of male roles in Hawaiian culture both past and present.

Blending dance and culture with the personal stories of the men, the film follows the dancers—who range in age from 18 to 55 years old—as they return to the largest hula competition in the world. Often called the “Super Bowl of Hula,” the stakes are high at the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival. The school won the competition in 1975; but today the competition typically favors women and the younger, more physically chiseled men’s groups. These men, many of whom are the oldest in competition, seek not to win, but to dance with pride and masculine grace.

Na Kamalei’s exciting return to the stage thrusts male hula dancers into the spotlight once again. Will their warrior-like dancing achieve victory, a rare triumph for men? **NA KAMALEI: The Men of Hula** captures the grueling rehearsals, the nervous last minutes backstage, the preparations of leis and offerings to the goddess of the volcano. It highlights the men’s ageless joy of dancing to reveal a renaissance that is not fading, but continuing the proud legacy of men perpetuating the art of hula.

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To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **NA KAMALEI: The Men of Hula** at *Independent Lens* online. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions. **NA KAMALEI: The Men of Hula** companion website launches on April 15 at pbs.org/independentlens/menofhula.

NA KAMALEI: The Men of Hula is a co-production of Lehua Films, LLC and the Independent Television Service (ITVS), and a presentation of Pacific Islanders in Communications (PIC), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

About the Filmmaker

As a filmmaker and a hula dancer, Lisette Kaualea Flanary creates documentary films about the hula dance that celebrate a renaissance of Hawaiian culture. Flanary's first feature, *AMERICAN ALOHA: Hula Beyond Hawai'i* was an hour-long documentary that broadcast nationally on the award winning non-fiction showcase *P.O.V.* on PBS in 2003 and received an encore broadcast in 2004. Winner of a CINE Golden Eagle Award, the film focused on the perpetuation of the hula dance in Hawaiian communities living on the mainland in California. Winner of the CINE Golden Eagle Award, the film screened in numerous film festivals and is now available from NetFlix.com. *AMERICAN ALOHA: Hula Beyond Hawai'i* broadcast internationally on ITVS' *True Stories* series in 2007 and is currently showing on AMDOC's series, *True Lives*.

Flanary is the writer, producer and director of films produced by Lehua Films and recently completed **NA KAMALEI: The Men of Hula**, which premiered at the Hawai'i International Film Festival's Sunset of the Beach screening in October 2006 and was awarded the Hawai'i Filmmaker Award and an Audience Award for Best Documentary. In 2007, **NA KAMALEI: The Men of Hula** screened in numerous film festivals and received the Audience Award at the San Francisco Asian American Film Festival, the VCFILMFEST Special Jury Award for Best Non-Fiction Feature, the Emerging Director Award at the New York Asian American International Film Festival, and Best Documentary at the San Diego Asian American Film Festival.

Since graduating from NYU's film school in 1995, Flanary has worked on many independent productions both in the United States and abroad, as well on her own, a 16mm short film entitled *Kill Kimono*. She earned an MFA in creative writing from the New School in 2000 and continued her traditional hula studies under master hula teacher, Patrick Makuakane, in San Francisco, California. In 2006, she formally graduated as an 'olapa (dancer) in the Papa 'Uniki Lehua class. Under the blessing and guidance of her teacher, Lisette formed a *hui*, or a group, called Na Lehua Melemele and continues to teach classes that perpetuate the art of the hula in New York City. Flanary is currently directing a documentary entitled *One Voice* about the Kamehameha Schools Song Contest and recently finished production in Honolulu in March 2008. Her final film of the hula trilogy, *Tokyo Hula*, will focus on hula in Japan and is slated to begin production in 2009.

About Independent Lens

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS, hosted by Terrence Howard. The acclaimed anthology series features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities and moments in history. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen. Visit www.pbs.org/independentlens for more information.

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