

Honoring

MARK YAMANAKA

Distinguished Alumnus



Born on Oahu but raised from a young age in Hilo, Mark Yamanaka has become one of Hawaiian music's most recognizable voices. A self-taught musician, Mark's talent was identified early on by well-known Kumu Hula and Hawaiian musician, Johnny Lum Ho, who became a mentor to Mark in 1997. Under Uncle Johnny's tutelage, Mark learned to play and sing in the challenging falsetto style, mastering the difficult ha'iha'i technique with his clear, soaring voice.

Though he is most notably identified with Hawaiian music—Mark counts Uncle Johnny, Gary Haleamau, and Dennis Pavao as major influences in the development of his distinctive style of Hawaiian music—those who have seen him perform live know that Mark is a very versatile artist who can seamlessly cross over into other genres of music and deliver powerhouse performances inspired by vocalists like Luther Vandross, Whitney Houston, and Peabo Bryson. Whether he's crooning a country ballad, pouring out his heart in a gospel hymn, or hitting the highs of a falsetto melody with effortless precision, Mark has wowed audiences around the world.

In 2011, Mark's debut album, *Lei Pua Kenikeni*, won four prestigious Nā Hōkū Hanohano Awards. He followed that success with a second album, *Lei Maile*, which again went on to win several of the highest honors at the 2014 Nā Hōkū Hanohano Awards celebration. In 2015, Mark collaborated with his friends Kellen and Lihau Paik (known collectively as Kūpaoa) on a holiday album, *A Gift of the Heart*, which received similar acclaim at the 2016 Hōkū. This year, Mark released his highly anticipated third solo album, *Lei Lehua*, which includes nine original compositions either written or co-written by Mark.

Family—especially his two children and his wife—plays a key role in Mark's success, and the future looks bright indeed for this humble Hilo boy.