

STAGE SCENE

'Brothers' focuses on the nisei generation

By **Christie Wilson**
Neighbor Islands Editor

KAHULUI, Maui — Good things come in threes for Wahiawa-born playwright, filmmaker and actor Lane Nishikawa, who has become a leading voice for the Asian-American experience.

He continues to tour the country in a trilogy of biting one-man plays inspired by his adventures in show business, and is working on the final installment in a trilogy of films sharing the stories of the brave Americans of Japanese ancestry who fought in World War II.

Tonight, the second part of a planned trilogy of stage plays about life in Hawai'i over the past century will premiere at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center's McCoy Studio Theater.

"We Were Brothers" is the follow-up to Nishikawa's "When We Were One," which introduced six families of first-generation immigrants who came to the Islands to work the plantations. The first play spans the period from 1905 to 1925. "We Were Brothers" picks up the story of the second generation of sons, who must grapple with tremendous change during the 1930s, '40s and '50s, including Pearl Harbor, the war years, statehood and the rise to political power.

The characters and events are loosely based on the experiences of Nishikawa's family. Three of his grandparents immigrated from Japan and one was born on Maui. Nishikawa, 45, moved with his parents to San Francisco at age 3, but has regularly visited the Islands. He was invited by Maui Arts & Cultural Center to be its first artist in residence through a grant from the Arts Partners Program of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters.

Living most of the time on the Mainland, Nishikawa said he is fascinated by Hawai'i's racial alchemy.

"The plays focus on what Hawai'i means to me. It's not just a story about my family but about why I feel so at home here. It's because of the first generation of all these different cultures that came, and they all kind of meshed and lived and worked together. They created this brotherhood."

"We Were Brothers" conveys the sacrifices of the World War II generation — in particular, the nisei, or second-generation AJAs. While members of their own community were sent to internment camps by the U.S. government, others stepped forward to fight in the famed 100th Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team on the bloody battlefields of Europe.

"If there is a message it's that because of them, I'm able to fully see my dreams. I walk with my head held higher because of them," Nishikawa said.

The 15-member Maui cast includes first-time and veteran actors alongside performers who starred in "When We Were One."

In addition to Nishikawa, the actors are Rueben Carrion, Larry Davis, Tiffany Iida, Dain Kane, Kathy Mayo Collins, Richard Minatoya, Derek Nakagawa, Dennis Nakamura, Lana Queddeng, Jamar Salomon, Carey Seki, Peter Stahl, Denise Toledo Fleetham and Tim Wolfe.



'We Were Brothers'

• 7:30 p.m. today through Sunday and Nov. 8-10

• McCoy Studio Theater, Maui Arts & Cultural Center

• \$18 general, \$9 for kids 12 and younger

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