

# Liner Notes for Island View, by Ozzie Kotani

## 1. *I Kēlā'Apōpō (Tomorrow)* G6th Tuning DGDEBD

Composed in the G6th Tuning I found by purposefully tuning my third string down from the standard Taro Patch G until I found something I liked. I discovered some unique voicings in the tuning and latched upon the idea of a sort of jazzy, lazy piece. *I Kēlā Apōpō* means that tomorrow there will be new pieces such as this one and new slack key players – and I feel very assured of this. They will shape it, present it, and preserve and nurture it with care and aloha. *E Ola Mau Ke Kī Hō'alu!*

## 2. *Ka Wailele O Nu'uānu* F Taro Patch CFCFAC

One of my favorite recording duos and references for Hawaiian music has been the Brothers Cazimero, Robert and Roland, who did a wonderful rendition of this touching piece. The beautiful song was composed by Jay Kauka in memory of his father. It speaks of “the waterfall of Nu'uānu” that will always be there and never cease flowing. What I call the “ballad” style of playing is completely different from traditional slack key but is supported by it and often follows the phrasing of Hawaiian lyrics.

## 3. *Ehu's Trot* Taro Patch DGDGBD

My beloved miniature dachshund Ehu passed away in October of 2012. She was challenged by arthritis but I used to watch her little paws twitch as she dreamt and imagined she was trotting about in green pastures... The piece has some syncopation and what I call a delayed resolve in the vamp – to reflect Ehu's limited mobility and hesitancy. In the end she scampers about! Despite her arthritic condition, she would insist upon sitting in on lessons I gave from my living room. Incessant barking would only cease after I carried her and placed her by my side next to my seat. There she would rest quietly for the duration of the lesson. To honor her, I composed this little instrumental in hopes she is trotting and prancing about in Doggy Heaven waiting for me!

## 4. *Island View* E Taro Patch

With Aron Nelson on keyboards, Joy Waikoloa on vocals.

Lyrics by Sherrie Sato/music by Ozzie Kotani) **Read the lyrics on the last page**

This is my first collaboration with a lyricist and a unique experience. I had met Sherrie Sato as a student, but at the lessons, she shared pieces she had written. I liked her song writing and impulsively asked if she would entertain the thought of writing words to music I had recently come up with. I then asked the talented vocalist Joy Waikoloa if she could take a stab at singing our song. She in turn introduced me to Aron Nelson, a gifted musician and recording engineer who provided the amazing keyboard work, and Shawn Takabayashi, the wonderful engineer who pulled it all together so brilliantly at their great studio Audio Bytes Corp. In Sherrie's words, “I listened and listened, and hopefully wrote what I think we all feel: How we love our land, its people, and everything that makes Hawai'i our home.”

## 5. *Maui Serenade* Taro Patch DGDGBD

Cord International released a series of wonderful vintage compilations one of them being The History of Slack Key Guitar that featured the earliest recordings in the style. This medley of Maui songs was recorded by Abraham Konanui along with an unidentified accompanist possibly Fred Punahoa, and features wonderful melodic development over the alternating bass line. I arranged this as a solo work for my vintage slack key class that I once offered at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

## **6. Kona Hema** G6th Tuning DGDEBD

This is the very first song I composed in this tuning I had newly stumbled upon. One day, I just decided to “de-tune” my guitar to see what would come of it. Since my third string was already flat, I just made it flatter until I heard something I liked. *Kona Hema* or *South Kona* is a koa forest preservation area established by the Nature Conservancy and I was approached to provide music for a video that conveyed something a bit haunting about it – thus the intro in minor.

## **7. Nā Kīkā ‘Elua** Taro Patch DGDGBD

Although I identify myself as a soloist, one of the things I enjoy doing is accompanying others. It is a skill one must learn to do and a completely different approach compared to solo guitar work. *Nā Kīkā Elua* translates to “The Two Guitars” and I composed this duet to feature harmonization. Ryan Izutsu, a very capable student, plays this bouncy piece with me.

## **8. Aloha Slack Key** G6th Tuning DGDEBD

In 2012, I had the wonderful opportunity to share at Keola Beamer’s Aloha Music Camp and introduced this song there. Even knowing the great artist is wonderful in that his music drew me into the world of *ki ho’alu* and had a strong and lasting influence. I decided to compose an upbeat traditional work in the newly found tuning that provides a unique color and sound to it.

## **9. Behold Lā’ie** F Taro Patch CFCFAC

Back in the day, one of my favorite destinations was Lā’ie Point on the Windward side of O’ahu where I would dive and fish on weekends. When I first heard the recording by Loyal Garner (who was accompanied by the incomparable Robert Cazimero), I instantly fell in love with the rendition of this song and came up with an instrumental version based on their lovely arrangement. This was originally recorded in 1988 on my long out-of-print debut cassette tape “*Classical Slack*.”

## **10. The Star Spangled Banner** Taro Patch DGDGBD

A student asked me if I could play The Star Spangled Banner and Hawai’i Pono’i as they do at the University of Hawai’i ball games. Since, at the time I played neither, I decided to give it a try. Stepping out of the slack key tradition, this is what I call playing in an alternate tuning. I also salute Hawaii’s 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion and my Uncle Robert Sasaoka who was an original member of that decorated and honored group. Composed by John Stafford Smith in the 1770s, lyrics by Francis Scott Key were added later.

## **11. Hawai’i Pono’i** Taro Patch DGDGBD

*Hawai’i Pono’i* is the state song and former national anthem of *Hawai’i*. The words were written in 1874 by King David Kalākaua with music composed by Henri Berger who was the king’s bandmaster at the time.

**12. *Ke Aloha ‘Āina*** Taro Patch w/modulation to D

A dear friend, Gordon Mark, called and asked if I was familiar with a song composed by Queen Lili‘uokalani titled, “*Ke Aloha ‘Āina*.” I was intrigued by the fact that I had never heard this piece. Gordon got hold of the music and I had my sister play the melody on the piano so I could get the chord structure of this unrecorded song. Composed in 1896, the title translates to “Love for the Land” and reflects the Queen’s sentiments regarding events shortly after her release from house arrest. This is my arrangement with Gordon, a renowned ukulele virtuoso, taking the modulation to D on his baritone.

**13. *Hawai‘i Aloha*** G6th Tuning DGDEBD

The music for “Hawai‘i Aloha” was taken from a Christian hymn written in the 1840’s by composer James McGranahan. The Reverend Lorenzo Lyons re-wrote the words during the reign of Kamehameha III. I used to hear Hawai‘i Aloha on the radio a lot when I was younger and the version I remember was by Likelike Weisbarth – just her and her uke. Having closed many performances as a sing-a-long with the audience, I decided to record an instrumental version keeping it upbeat for a change. As the lyrics go, “...Happy youth of Hawai‘i, rejoice! Rejoice!

**14. *Island View*** (bonus track – radio version)

# Island View - by Sherrie Sato

We've seen thunderous waves  
We've seen the mountains range  
Strolled on the shore  
Climbed higher than birds can soar

We've seen the bluest sky  
Turn gray before our eyes  
And pour the heavens down  
Into emerald ground

## **(Chorus)**

A poet said,  
So various,  
So beautiful,  
So new

Come to the window  
Come see our world  
This is our Island view

The days seem endless here  
Until they disappear  
Under a blanket  
Of glimmering stars...

That light a path  
Uncharted, on a map  
For someone guided  
By their own questing heart

## **(Chorus)**

Come to the window  
Come see our world  
This is our Island view

## **Bridge 1**

In life, sorrow may find you  
Trouble, with its ties bind you  
Reach out, hear it calling  
The wind will catch you if you're falling

We hold to our breast  
With love and tenderness

The child who cries alone  
The old man without a home

We know how care can heal  
How magic in a smile it feels  
The kindest word we know  
Aloha is our soul

## **(Chorus)**

So various,  
So beautiful,  
So new

Come to the window  
Come see our world  
This – our Island view

## **Bridge 2**

You and I are the waves  
We are the mountain's range  
We frolic on the shore  
Like birds that swoop and soar

You and I are the rain  
And sun that shines again  
We make of today  
Our every tomorrow

## **(repeat as verse)**

## **(Chorus)**

The Poet says  
So various,  
So beautiful,  
So new

Come to the window  
Come share our world  
It is our Island view

## **(repeat)**

Our loving Island view