

This article was first published in the December 2019 issue of the Sylvia Woods Harp Center e-Newsletter. It is part of Sylvia's ongoing series about living on Kauai, Hawaii.

Silent Night in Hawaiian

When guests come to visit me from the mainland, I love taking them to the Wai'oli Hui'ia Church (aka the "green church") in Hanalei for Sunday services, because we get to sing hymns in Hawaiian. It is a fun challenge to sing beloved hymns in a different language.



Would you like to impress your friends and family this Christmas? Why not learn to sing "Silent Night" in Hawaiian! This translation was created by Rev. Stephen Desha Sr. (1859-1934).

Pô la'i ê, pô kamaha'o	Pô la'i ê, pô kamaha'o	Pô la'i ê, pô kamaha'o
Maluhia, mâlamalama	Oni na Kahuhipa e	Keiki hiwahiwa aloha ê
Ka makuahine aloha ê	I ko ka lani nani no	Ka lama la'i mai luna mai
Me ke keiki hemolele ê	Mele nâ `anela "Haleluia"	Me ka lokomaika'i makamae
Moe me ka maluhia lani	Hanau `ia Kristo ka Haku	Iesu i kou hanau `ana
Moe me ka maluhia lani	Hanau `ia Kristo ka Haku	Iesu i kou hanau `ana

You can listen to a beautiful YouTube rendition of this carol by [Kapono Beamer and Mac Prindy](#).

Kapono Beamer, the instrumentalist on this video, is a member of one of the most influential Hawaiian musical families. His great-grandmother Helen Desha Beemer was a prominent Hawaiian songwriter and musician. She was the matriarch of a musical dynasty that includes her grandson Mahi Beamer, granddaughter Winona (Nona) Beamer, and Nona's two sons, Keola and Kapono. She was also the niece of Stephen Desha, who wrote these Hawaiian lyrics.

Besides listening to the video, these hints can help you learn this carol. The Hawaiian language has only 12 letters: the seven consonants h, k, l, m, n, p, and w, and all five vowels a, e, i, o, and u. Consonants are always followed by a vowel, and each vowel only has one pronunciation.

a = "ah" as in "father"
e = "ay" as in "way"
i = "ee" as in "see"
o = "oh" as in "so"
u = "oo" as in "noon"

Each vowel is pronounced separately; there are no diphthongs. The 'okina (') is a glottal stop that separates two consecutive vowels. The 'okina is sometimes omitted in printed words, but is always used in speaking. For example, the town of Kapa'a (or Kapaa) on Kauai is pronounced kah-pah-ah.

Check out the article [How to Pronounce Hawaiian Words in 15 Minutes](#) from MauiGuidebook.com for more helpful information.

Mele Kalikimaka! (Merry Christmas!)