

Lifestyles & Entertainment

No Jive Productions brings reality to the stage

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When James Achille, PR coordinator for No Jive Productions, approached me about doing an article on the Miami-based nonprofit theatre company's latest play, *His Double Life*, I'll admit, I was torn.

As a Christian, I don't endorse lifestyles that I don't believe in. Because I had no idea what message the play's creators were trying to promote, I was afraid that covering the play would make me guilty of compromise.

I even went to my editor and told her that I wasn't sure if I could do the story. I kept putting it off, yet the story just would not go away.

After being put in touch with No Jive's president and CEO, Nial Martin, I learned that the play was really about honesty, unity and love. He said they wanted to get people to understand, "You don't have to agree with what I do, but just love me for who I am."

The night of the production, I was still skeptical. As I sat waiting for the show to start, I looked around at all the different types of people in the audience. In the Caleb Center's auditorium was a small melting pot. And then, curtains.

As I watched the original drama penned by Please turn to **PLAY 5C**

"All of our shows address issues that are affecting the community. We don't sugar coat anything because we're going to stand out and be different."

— Nial Martin



Nial Martin

His Double Life is a great play

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the No Jive staff, I had to laugh at my preconceived notions. I was wildly entertained and the play addressed lots of deep-seated issues that affect our community.

While it was mainly centered around the hot topic of the 'Down Low' trend that has been garnering nationwide attention in the past year, the messages presented were universal.

The play followed the life of Matthew, a 27-year old successful businessman with a beautiful girlfriend, who is living a secretly gay lifestyle and tackled many other true-to-life issues that we can all relate to.

Family division, alcoholism, dishonesty, forgiveness, traumatic childhood events and unconditional love are just some of the areas *His Double Life* delves into; each one manifested in the different characters in the play that are authentic representations of members of our community.

You have Vanessa Clark, the polished and beautiful girlfriend that any man would love to have; Wynikka Jones, her 'hoochie-mama' best friend that lives life to the fullest; Theo Martin, Matthew's best friend/lover; Mama Brenda Sanders, the strong Black woman who exudes wisdom, love and understanding; Reverend James Sanders, the alcoholic, mean-spirited Reverend, who is constantly judging his son, yet has many issues himself; and as mentioned before Matthew, the sexy, successful businessman who is living a lie and has a strained relationship with his father.

In the end, all is revealed. Vanessa finally knows the truth and is learning to cope with her newfound reality; Wynikka is no longer chasing after Theo; Mama Sanders remains steadfast in her love for her family; and Matthew and Reverend Sanders find themselves at the start of a reconciliation. Past behaviors have been explained and long-standing wounds have begun the healing process.

At the play's conclusion, I was happy that I had come. I had almost missed out on the opportunity to not only view an outstanding show, but also get a refresher course in unconditional love.

I was so impressed that I sat down with Martin last week and had an in-depth discussion about the play. I asked him what made them decide to tackle such a controversial topic and what he and the No Jive staff hope to accomplish.

He said that since the 'Down Low' trend was so hot and especially after watching the show Oprah did on it, they were convinced it was something that needed to be addressed.

"All of our shows address issues that are affecting the community. We don't sugar coat anything because we're going to stand out and be different. Right now there are no plays out there like *His Double Life*," Martin said.

Martin also said that after the show several people came up to him and told him the play had a huge impact on them. "One lady told me that watching Vanessa go through the hurt and pain of Matthew's betrayal started a healing process for her because she

had once been in a similar situation."

According to Martin, in order for them to be so effective, it took a lot of writing and rewriting from the No Jive staff. They did a lot of research and made sure they were as realistic as possible. Martin worked hard to achieve authenticity because he feels that "sometimes people can't realize the truth until they actually see it played out."

"You would be surprised of the men that are out there on the 'Down Low,'" said Martin. "People should just be honest about who they are," he continued. "We strove to promote honesty, love and unity," Martin concluded.

On that mission, they were very successful. More than a play, *His Double Life*, is very thought-provoking. If you're anything like me, it will help you to remember that you may not always approve of what people do, but it is your responsibility to love them for who they are; a person created by God.

Due to the play's huge success, *His Double Life* will be showing again on November 17 and 18 at the Joseph Caleb Auditorium. Be sure you check it out. I guarantee you'll enjoy it.

Because their primary goal is giving back to the community and providing unity and awareness through the arts, No Jive is currently seeking investors to help them expand to other areas so this play's message can benefit as many people as possible. All donations are tax deductible.

To learn more about No Jive Productions, visit them online at www.nojiveproductions.com.