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Stage play explores brothers on the DL

By Nikki Clifton

What do you get when you mix a tablespoon full of soul, a few cups of passion, several ounces of love, a batch of lies and a whole lot of deception? A recipe for drama that will cook up just right before your eyes as No Jive Productions, Inc. brought to the stage *His Double Life*, recently at the Joseph Caleb Auditorium. *His Double Life* is a stage play about one man's struggle with life's reality, a successful Black man, his beautiful live-in girlfriend, his strong Christian family and his best friend!

Nial Martin, president and CEO of No Jive says that the mission is to provide a diverse multi-cultural group of minority youth and young adults in the community an opportunity to explore new avenues of learning and self-expressions through the fine arts that will serve to shape their dreams and develop their minds into mature responsible young men and women.

Martin shared this with the **Westside Gazette**:

Westside Gazette: How did you first become interested in theater?

Nial Martin: I was in middle school and I discovered my interest in the arts. I remember watching *Different Strokes*, seeing Arnold (Gary Coleman) say, "What you talkin' about Willis?" At that point I knew I wanted to be an actor, producer, director and leader. My mom enrolled me in the Coconut Grove Children's Theater where I was educated and learned the craft of becoming a successful entrepreneur.

WG: Who wrote the play *His Double Life*?

NM: Myself (Nial Martin) and Edward Jacobs, a freelance writer.

WG: Was there any one in particular who inspired the play?

NM: Yes, I have a few friends who are living a double life and they told me their stories of how hard it is to live up to everyone's expectations and restrain from desires that are not the norm or accepted in the Black community. This inspired me to push forward with the project and bring it to life on stage. Also, I could not have done this without my team, the "kids:" Carlos A. Harris, Joseph Reed III, Roderick Harvey, Alicia Simpson and the cast and crew. They really helped make the show happen. They also inspired me to go forward with the show and do something different; something that other stage companies have not done on the scale we are doing it. Right now we are the leading company bringing light to a situation that is having an effect on so many people.

WG: Why did you choose this medium as an educational tool?

NM: This was chosen because in today's society there are young people and families who are going through the exact same scenarios shown in our productions. Through the use of theater, people can actually see themselves and their situations displayed on a live stage. This in turn, may shed new light on the situation and allow individuals to see things from a different perspective. People often have problems dealing with how to approach loved ones and friends about certain things. So, by showing them "how to" in a form where both parents and friends could understand, we not only allow them to see each other's points of view, but we educate them as well.



WG: Why should someone see this production?

NM: *His Double Life* is a play about love and understanding and building a relationship between a father and his son. Back in May when we first did this production, people were telling us thank you for doing a play like this. Its not too far left or too far right, its right down the middle and it's about being honest and faithful to the one you love.

WG: What have been your biggest successes/challenges with this particular play?

NM: One of the biggest successes for No Jive has been developing raw talent...meaning we take people who have NEVER stepped foot on stage and mold them into superb actors and actresses. One of the biggest challenges of the play has been a lack of understanding and tolerance within the community to the subject matter.

WG: Are there any other upcoming projects?

NM: Yes... No Jive Productions is working on a 24 city tour of *His Double Life*, several plays such as *The Value of Life*, *Anne from the Hood* and there are many more to come. We do an annual *Back to School Jam* to promote kids

reading and staying in school. We strive to let them know that success can and will be theirs. I let them know that at the young age of 16 years old, I started No Jive Productions and they can do anything if they work hard.

We are also working on a project called *We Are All One*. This project is to bring awareness to the community about drugs, AIDS, diabetes and cancer to people from all walks of life, letting them know we are all one.

WG: What did you do as a profession prior to theater?

NM: I was going to school. I started the company at the age of 16.

WG: Are you currently (or considering) training up and forthcoming actors/actresses?

NM: Yes. The good thing about No Jive Productions is that we look for talent within the community. I believe there is so much talent out there that is just waiting to be discovered.

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