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Shadow of a Shadow: An Interview with Fascious

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SHADOW OF A SHADOW
An Interview with Fascious
by Maya Pope-Chappell

Combining poetry, hip-hop theater, and dance, Anthony “Fascious” Martinez recently debuted the revised version of his one-man musical called Penumbra at The New York International Fringe Festival (FringeNYC), an annual multi-arts event. Described by one woman as “Shakespeare on speed,” Fascious started working on the play at 16 but has spent the past year revising the original script with Director Shidan Majidi. Using various aesthetics to share his story, Fascious discovered that art was not only a means of expression, but a means through which he would discover his manhood, attempt reconciliation with his estranged father, and express feelings from the stage that he couldn’t share face to face.

I sat down with Fascious just before his debut at FringeNYC to talk about Penumbra and the power of the arts.

_Maya Pope-Chappell_: Why did you choose an obscure word like Penumbra as the title of your play?

_Fascious_: Penumbra, meaning a shadow of a shadow, has a lot to do with ancestry and present individuality. For me, it has a lot to do with my family and identifying who I am as a person in the context of my life. [It is also] a shadow of four plays that I’m writing about my life.

_MPC_: In the play, you deal with the balance between masculinity and femininity and what those terms have meant in your life. How did you come to understand manhood?

F: My father was in jail from when I was eight to 13, which is a key time for puberty so I kind of had to discover what I believed manhood was through a woman. And kinda understand what it means to be a woman first and then build on my manhood. [In
Penumbra], I analyze specifically my relationship with my father and grandfather and my mother and grandmother and the parallels and the differences I’ve been able to take from them.

**MPC:** Being that Penumbra is so personal for you, what is the toughest part of the play to perform?
We [my father and I] go through this serious incident that’s described in the play, where my father was shot at six times by an off duty correctional officer right in front of me, my little sister and my uncle. It was in broad daylight in a park in front of a lot of little kids. One big point that’s made is that throughout the process when my father’s shot and when we’re going to the hospital afterwards, he didn’t cry. Not once. Not in front of me. As one who’s gone to jail and had to live the life he lived growing up, it doesn’t allow him or many men to express themselves in a way that is sensitive or seems soft in any way.

**MPC:** What were your parent’s reactions to the play?
When I first did the play, my mom attended and my older sister who I hadn’t met until I was 21. I’ve never cried on stage. Ever. I get to this one part in the play where I’m talking about my dad and I couldn’t hold it. She [my mother] really connected to the piece and speaks to me about it, which is really helpful. My father seen it on DVD and he responded but he didn’t get into details about it. I say a lot in the play and I think that’s kind of why I did it to say ‘look dad, there’s something I want...HE DIDN'T CRY. NOT ONCE. NOT IN FRONT OF ME.'
to sit down and speak to you about’ but that didn’t happen. I know whenever we’ve tried to get into serious discussions, even back when I was in high school, we would start to talk and then we would be quiet because it was about to get emotional. He would stop and change the subject and we would never finish our conversation. He’s never addressed it directly which is kinda what I wanted.

**MPC:** It must be hard to share so much of yourself on stage. What is that like?

Every aspect of my life is tough because it’s my life that I’m sharing and these people are alive. Every line that I write in my play, I have to be cognizant of how it will resonate when the person hears it. I don’t want to exploit anybody but at the same time, I’m trying to be as true as I can. And sometimes it’s brutal truth. But then there’s multiple perspectives to every story so it’s just tough. My truth may vary according to who’s listening to it. I just feel like this is a story that I have to tell and I feel empowered through being able to share it.

**MPC:** Why did you choose art to express your story?

Taking on these different aesthetics [hip-hop, poetry, theater and dance], clashing them together and using them to tell my story has really helped me develop as a person and as an artist. Truthfully, art is a lot of what saved my life.
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was opening up in a way that I've never opened up personally. And art does that. You tell strangers what you wouldn't tell family members. It's like going through therapy every time you're on stage.

For more info about Penumbra or upcoming shows, check out www.Fascious.com.