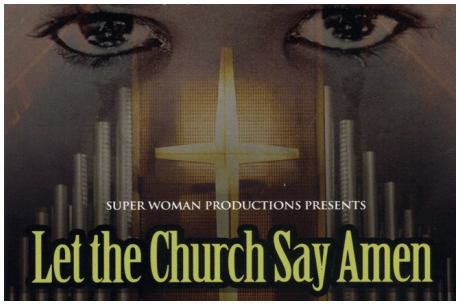

What happens when the devil manifests himself in the form of a mega church pastor who happens to be the father of a 13-year-old girl's baby? Simple; it gets swept under the pews. But unsettled dirt always comes to surface, and the Rev. Martin will have to deal with his demon**s** after all in the sure to be a hit stage production "Let the Church Say Amen."

Playwright tells why there's a new church in session

By FELICIA C. HANEY

Staff Reporter

Thirteen and pregnant.

Sounds like a recipe for hell breaking loose, which usually happens after the devil's been on the run. But what happens when the devil manifests himself in the form of a mega church pastor who happens to be the father of the 13-year-old girl's baby? Simple; it gets swept under the pews. But unsettled dirt always comes to surface, and the Rev. Martin will have to deal with his demon**s** after all in the sure to be a hit stage production "Let the Church Say Amen."

Written, produced and directed by Cleveland's own Kylynn, "Let the Church Say Amen" was conceived in Atlanta but, will be birthed right here in the playwright's hometown when it premieres at the Masonic Auditorium for two shows this Saturday, Feb. 11. Just shy of a year old in theory, Kylynn is ready to push her baby out of the paper nest and watch it soar on stage. The Cleveland opener has an all local cast – including Kylynn's Atlanta neighbor and fellow Cleveland native Dave Tolliver, of Men at Large fame, and local drumming sensation, Damon "Dame the Drummer" Taylor. The play's debut will serve as the testing ground for a 22-city tour.

But for the self-proclaimed superwoman, Cleveland wasn't her first choice as a launching pad due to what she feels is a lack of support from the home team. "Well you know, Cleveland
isn't all that welcoming when it comes to supporting its own people," Kylynn said. "I tried to do some things here before I left and really couldn't break through. I felt like there were more opportunities in

Atlanta
. I thought it was a better place for me to go. So, I packed up everything, sold my house and moved to
Georgia
."

After loosing her real life five-month-old baby boy to SIDS and a few failed attempts at getting her dreams off the ground of Cleveland's streets, it's safe to say that the city had left a pretty bad taste in Kylynn's mouth. But an address change paired with an attempt at a bachelor's degree in business wasn't the complete remedy either. It wasn't until she stepped outside of the box, inside her own head, searched her soul and followed her heart that she "was convicted and was like… 'You're really supposed to be doing this.' So, I went on my convictions and I started doing Super Woman Productions."

With 10 plays in the arsenal, "Let the Church Say Amen" will be Kylynn's first production. "I have like 10 plays but, something told me to write another play about the things I was seeing behind the scenes at different churches," she said. "I started trying to get a closer walk with God. I got re-baptized last year and I really wanted to talk about different things I was seeing that were holding me back from getting closer to God. And I wanted to write about it. It's been about an eight-month process for me. I wrote 'Let the Church Say Amen' in March. It took me about a week to write it. I did casting calls in Birmingham and Georgia, then I came up here to visit and my parents were like 'why don't you do it up here in
Cleveland
?'"

Despite her vision for igniting the spark in the South, Kylynn's parents' insight was on the mark when, to her surprise, Kylynn found a super "supporting" cast right under her nose.

"When you start a company such as Kylynn did, you're not going to have a ton of resources. But, what she did was get people, such as myself, to listen to her vision," said Dame the Drummer, who has turned out to be the play's leading man in every sense of the word. Dame serves as the musical director as well as the lead character. How does that happen, you ask? Dedication. Known around the city for his skills with two drumsticks, the choice for MD was easy. But at 6'8" tall, who knew this ex-basketball player turned musician packed acting chops as well? Early on before all roles were cast, Dame – being the gentle giant he is – nicely stepped up to read the part of the lead for rehearsals while Kylynn waited for her leading man to come through. But by the time she got the call from actor/ex-county commissioner Peter Lawson Jones, Dame was already married to the part and wanted to see it through. "We don't

need him," Kylynn said in a deep voice imitating Dame's reaction to what she thought was good news concerning Lawson Jones' interest. "[Laughs] I had already owned it by then," said Dame. "It sounded like something I could make great through my contributions. I never had any intentions on acting in this play but, since I believe in it, I ended up taking on more than I expected. But, it's worth it. I mean, no disrespect but, I feel like we can make this happen without a big name."

So if there's no "big name," what's the draw? Why does Cleveland want to see another church play? "Oh no, it's not just another church play," Dame swore. "There's all types of action and twists, I mean, I can't give the play away but, there's something for everyone. You're going to be happy, you're going to be angry, you're going to be on the floor laughing."

"There's nothing like it," Kylynn added. "I use a technique with monologue and dialogue that I've never seen done before; not in Cleveland. Yes, all the stereotypes people say about church are in there… The pastor drives a Cadillac, the women gossip, etc. but it's flipped," Kylynn said. "When I wrote it, I struggled with the issue that there's cursing in it. And people said 'how can you have a play called 'Let the Church Say Amen' and there's foul language?' I wrestled with it but, it's real. It's not slap-stick comedy. That's the reason I wanted to write this play in the first place. I started seeing a lot of things behind the scenes that 'you're not supposed to see' and it kind of freaked me out. I had this boxed view on preachers and it made me feel like… 'I don't really know about church...' But, I had to remove myself from that and I don't let it affect my personal relationship with God."

"What people don't realize is that it's not about the church, it's about the person," Dame said. "Stop looking at the church, stop looking at your neighbor to place the blame. In the end, when you meet your maker, He's not doing a group call, it's a one-on-one. So, you have to start living like that now."

Chuuuch!

"Let the Church Say Amen" will show for one day only at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. this Saturday, Feb. 11 at the Cleveland Masonic Auditorium,
3615 Euclid Ave.
in downtown
Cleveland
. Tickets are available at

http://superwomanproduction,eventbrite.com
or the Masonic Box Office the day of the show. Call 216.482.7835 for more info.