

# 'It's something I needed to do'

Fantasia says her life made it easier to play lead role in 'Color Purple' musical

By Mary Carole McCauley

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When Fantasia Barrino opens her mouth as Celie in the national tour of *The Color Purple* and belts out the lyrics to "I'm Here," she could be talking about her own life.

Like Celie, the heroine of Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, the teen-age Fantasia contended with rape and domestic abuse. And, like Celie, she launched a successful career against all odds when she won the third season of *American Idol*.

Two best-selling albums followed, along with a memoir called *Life Is Not a Fairy Tale* that later was made into a movie for cable television.

As she raced to a rehearsal, the R&B star, who celebrated her 25th birthday Tuesday on stage, answered a few quick questions about her life and career.

**QUESTION:** You performed the role of Celie on Broadway for a year. Why did you want to reprise the role in the national tour?

**ANSWER:** I have to be honest, this show is really hard to do. I'm not going to say it's fun. But, it's something I needed to do.

It's easy for me to go into the character, which is good and bad. I don't enjoy reliving some of the things that happened to me in the past. But, these events made me stronger, and they made Celie stronger, and that makes it OK for me to walk each night in

## If you go

*The Color Purple* runs through Aug. 9 at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 2700 F St. N.W., Washington. Showtimes: 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays; 1:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. \$25-\$90. Call 800-444-1324 or go to [kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org).

her shoes.

**QUESTION:** Before *The Color Purple*, had you ever considered performing on Broadway?

**ANSWER:** I'd never even seen a Broadway show before, and I couldn't believe everything those people were doing on stage. Then, after the show, my agent told me the producers wanted to take me out to eat. I didn't know why, but I thought, "Well, maybe they like my singing."

When we got to the restaurant, they showed me a poster of a marquee with my name on it. I told them I'd have to get back to them. But then I thought about it and realized that this was something God would want me to do.

**QUESTION:** Tell us about your new album.

**ANSWER:** It's going to be dropping at the beginning of next year. I'm taking my time with it, because it has to be right. I'm going to be doing more song-writing with this album. My life is an open book [she giggles] and I want to use what I've been through to help inspire people. Music is my first love, and I'll always come back to it.



BRYAN BEDDER/GETTY PHOTO

Fantasia Barrino will reprise the lead role of Celie in the national tour of *The Color Purple*.