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For immediate release

COVERAGE REQUESTED

*Elmo Terry-Morgan (Artistic Director) available for interviews*

## **The Black Lavender Experience Explodes Boundaries of Queer, Black Theatre**

Providence, RI – *February 27, 2009* – Rites and Reason Theatre is pleased to present *The Black Lavender Experience: Theatre and Conversations Sparked by Queer Playwrights*, **Thursday April 2nd, 2009 through Saturday April 4th, 2009**. All dramatic readings will take place at **Rites and Reason Theatre, Brown University, Churchill House, 155 Angell St. Providence**. *Black Lavender* is free and open to the public; seating is open and limited. For more info check <http://blacklav.com>, email [blacklavender@brown.edu](mailto:blacklavender@brown.edu) or call the Africana Studies Department at 401-863-3558. All are invited.

**The Black Lavender Experience** begins with a Brown Pride Month Convocation performance by **Staceyann Chin**. An esteemed poet and founding partner in **Russell Simmons' Def Poetry Jam** on Broadway, Chin's published work has appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Pittsburgh Daily. Her performance on **Thursday April 2 at 7:00 p.m. in The Salomon Center** kicks off a weekend of dramatic readings and conversations inspired by the work of Black, Queer playwrights, **Brian Freeman, Sharon Bridgforth, and Daniel Alexander Jones**.

Friday's program begins with *Production, Performance, Product*, to be held at **4:00 p.m. in Rites and Reason Theatre**. This provocative discussion about the politics of writing and performing Blackness/Queerness will bring together Chin, **Andre Lancaster**, the Executive Director of **Freedom Train Productions** in New York, and cultural critic **Ernest**

**Hardy**. At **7:00 p.m.** Distinguished Producing Director at Emerson College, **Benny Sato Ambush**, will direct a dramatic reading of *Civil Sex*, by **Brian Freeman** followed by a FolkThought facilitated by **Connie Crawford** of Brown's Department of Theatre, Speech and Dance.

*The Black Lavender Experience* continues **Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.** with a moderated discussion featuring the three producing playwrights. At **1:30 p.m.** **Robbie McCauley**, renowned performer and professor at Emerson College, will direct **Sharon Bridforth's** *Con Flama*. The FolkThought to follow will be facilitated by **Kym Moore** of Brown's Department of Theatre, Speech. At **6:00 p.m.** **Daniel Alexander Jones** will stage his self-directed piece, *Book of Daniel*, with a FolkThought facilitated by Theatre, Speech and Dance's **John Emigh**. Both readings and the discussion will take place in the **Rites and Reason Theatre**.

Ten years after developing the class **Black Lavender: A Study of Plays with Black LGBTQ Content**, Professor Elmo Terry-Morgan began to have visions of a weekend-long "experience" that would be a means of sharing the groundbreaking works he had discovered through refining Black Lavender's syllabus: "Production opportunities are sparse for most Black playwrights. But for Black LGBTQ playwrights they are almost nonexistent. In order for these Black Lavender voices to be heard in wider communities they must be provided a stage, in fact, many stages. Being able to offer a platform for extraordinary talents such as Sharon, Brian and Daniel is an honor for Rites and Reason and an unparalleled opportunity for Providence's arts community."

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The mission of Rites and Reason is to develop new works for the American Stage that analyze and articulate the phenomenal and universal odyssey of the African Diaspora. Over the years, the mission has grown naturally to embrace this expression of other cultural experiences.