

## 'Intimate Chaos' explores lesbian relationships

by GAIL T. BOATMAN  
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"Intimate Chaos," a play by a Mount Laurel woman that explores lesbian relationships, opens tonight at the Academy Theatre on Route 130 in Bordentown Township.

The work by **Cheril N. Clarke** is based on her third novel, which was inspired by personal experiences. It chronicles the romantic relationship between two black women, but it is a story about much more, the playwright said in a telephone interview.

"No matter what your race or orientation, you will be able to relate to his story," she said.

Her main characters, Sadira and Jessie, are women not often seen on television or in the theater. One of Clarke's purposes in writing the play was to showcase characters that are most often left out of leading roles in those mediums. To help solve that problem, Clarke started her own production company.

Both women in the play are struggling with issues from their childhoods, such as abandonment and time spent in foster care, Clarke said, adding, "These are universal themes."



Clarke believes many people have been waiting for a drama that examines these issues, and she expects the play to be well received.

"We are all human beings who want to be loved and respected. That's the core of all of us," she said.

Also a novelist and poet, Clarke is

dedicated to bringing to life stories of gay men and women.

Because of its cabaret-style seating, the Academy Theatre will provide an intimate setting for her play, one that allows the audience to be close to the unfolding story, she said. She also loves the idea of having her work performed close to home in New Jersey.

Director **Stephen Stahl** said he found the play "enlightening and touching" and has tried to bring out the humor in it.