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For immediate release

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Hi-resolution photos are available on request.

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From *the road weeps, the well runs dry* playwright Marcus Gardley comes *The Gospel of Lovingkindness*, a poetic new play about mothers and sons affected by gun violence

Minneapolis, MN—Pillsbury House Theatre presents the area premiere of *The Gospel of Lovingkindness* by **Marcus Gardley, May 29 – June 28, 2015**. A powerful and poetic drama about two black mothers and their sons whose lives are shattered by the heartbreak of gun violence, *The Gospel of Lovingkindness* is directed by **Marion McClinton** and stars **Aimee K. Bryant, Thomasina Petrus, Namir Smallwood** and **James A. Williams**.

On the South Side of Chicago, Mary and Miriam are two single mothers with teenage sons. Mary's son, Manny, is all she had hoped he would be. He is doing well in his North Side school, he just sang at the White House for President Obama, and he is kicking it in a new pair of Air Jordans. Miriam's son, Noel, however, is struggling to stay on the track his mother has put him on. He is making minimum wage at Walmart, he just found out he has a newborn son, and his hopes for a basketball scholarship have vanished. Longing for a better future for himself and his family, Noel goes to work for his drug-dealing uncle. But when Noel's uncle asks him to prove himself by stealing Manny's \$260 shoes off his feet, Noel's desperation leaves behind two grieving mothers and a city on edge.

The Gospel of Lovingkindness is at once an urgent appeal for an end to gun violence and a prayer for forgiveness, dignity, and hope. "*The Gospel of Lovingkindness* is my attempt to start a healing process," says Gardley. "Perhaps, by sharing a play that explores a common experience, we can find communal healing."

The world premiere of *The Gospel of Lovingkindness* was produced in 2014 by Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago, Illinois (Chay Yew, Artistic Director; Chris Mannelli, Managing Director). *Newcity Stage* called it "a rollercoaster of emotions, from unequivocal joy to heart-wrenching sorrow and everything in between." *Chicago Theater Beat* wrote of it: "Gardley crafts a very poetic script that's more reminiscent of a gospel hymn than a traditional stage play. In many respects, it works. The same passion you'd hear from a choir singing in a church is felt in each spoken line."

The Gospel of Lovingkindness plays **May 29 – June 28, 2015**, at Pillsbury House Theatre, 3501 Chicago Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Performances are Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:30 pm and Sundays at

3:00 pm. All tickets are pick-your-price (regular price = \$25), and available at pillsburyhousetheatre.org, 612-825-0459, or 612-787-3622 (for group sales).

Free child care, provided by the staff of Pillsbury Early Education Center, is available for the 3:00 pm performances on Sundays, June 7 and 14. **Audio-description** will be available for the 7:30 pm performance on June 12. **American Sign Language** interpretation will be available for the 7:30 pm performance on June 20. **Post-show discussions** with our community partner will be held following performances on June 7, June 11, June 17, and June 26.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Marcus Gardley is a poet-playwright. His work was most recently seen on Pillsbury House Theatre's stage in the rolling world premiere of *the road weeps, the well runs dry*. Gardley is a 2012 James Baldwin Fellow, a 2011 PEN Laura Pels award winner for Mid-Career Playwright, and a Mellon Foundation Playwright in Residence Grantee with Victory Gardens in Chicago. *The New Yorker* described him as "the heir to Garcia Lorca, Pirandello and Tennessee Williams." His most recent production, *The House That Will Not Stand*, won a 2014 Glickman Award, and *every tongue confess* was nominated for the Steinberg New Play Award, the Charles MacArthur Award for Best Play and was the recipient of the Edgerton New Play Award. His musical, *On the Levee* premiered at Lincoln Center and was nominated for 11 Audelco Awards including outstanding playwright. His critically acclaimed epic *...and Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi* was received the SF Bay Area Theater Critics Circle Award. Gardley holds an MFA in Playwriting from the Yale Drama School and is a member of The Dramatists Guild and the Lark Play Development Center. He is a professor of Theater and Performance Studies at Brown University.

ABOUT THE ACTORS AND DIRECTOR

Aimee K. Bryant (ensemble): Since graduating from Howard University, Aimee has appeared on several stages throughout the Twin Cities and across the nation. Her Pillsbury House Theatre credits include: *Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet*, *In the Red and Brown Water*, *River See* and *Phoenix Fabrik*. Aimee is also a teaching artist and songwriter. Her original music can be heard on her debut CD, *Becoming*.

Thomasina Petrus (ensemble): Thomasina was most recently seen on stage in Park Square's *The Color Purple*, and, before that, in Pillsbury House Theatre and The Mount Curve Company's co-production of *Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet*. Thomasina is a company member at Penumbra Theatre and Mixed Blood Theatre. In addition to being a 20+ year Equity actor, she is known for her multifaceted range as a vocalist on stages both locally and abroad. She has performing with the likes of James "Cornbread" Harris, Sr., Jevetta Steele, T. Mychael Rambo, Stokley, Walter Chancellor and Prince. A successful departure from performing, Thomasina has also created Thomasina's Cashew Brittle.

Namir Smallwood (ensemble): Namir was most recently seen on stage in the Twin Cities in Ten Thousand Things' production of *Romeo and Juliet*. He has also appeared in Pillsbury House Theatre's productions of *Buzzer*, *The Brothers Size*, and *Pa's Hat: Liberian Legacy*, as well as on numerous stages around the Twin Cities including at the Children's Theatre Company, Penumbra Theatre, Mixed Blood,

and the Guthrie Theater. Television credits include NBC's *Chicago Fire*. He is an alumnus of the UMN/Guthrie BFA Actor Training Program.

James A. Williams (ensemble): James is an Artistic Associate at Pillsbury House Theatre where he was most recently seen in all three of Tarell Alvin McCraney's *The Brother/Sister Plays*. He has also performed with Signature Theatre, CenterStage, The Goodman, Mark Taper Forum, The McCarter, Seattle Rep. and Yale Rep., culminating on Broadway in August Wilson's *Radio Golf*. Williams performed multiple roles in the Kennedy Center's August Wilson's Century Cycle in 2008 and Off-Broadway in *My Children! My Africa!*, *Jitney* and Marion McClinton's *Walkers*. He was named "Actor of the Year" by City Pages in 2003, and in 2008, he received an Ivey Award for performance excellence and was named "Artist of the Year" by the Star Tribune.

Marion McClinton (director): Marion has directed several critically acclaimed productions for Pillsbury House Theatre including *Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet, Buzzer, The Brothers Size* and *In the Red and Brown Water* at the Guthrie Theater's Dowling Studio and *the road weeps, the well runs dry, Pa's Hat: Liberian Legacy, Bulrusher, and Home* at Pillsbury House Theatre. He has also directed on Broadway, at the Royal National Theatre in London and in numerous regional theatres including the Goodman, Guthrie, Arena Stage, Mark Taper Forum, Kennedy Center, Seattle Rep., CenterStage, Pittsburgh Public and Huntington Theatre among others. He has directed in NYC at the Public Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage, the Foundry and Juilliard. He has won numerous awards including the Obie Award for directing, two AUDELCO's, two Beverly Hills/NAACP Image Awards, among others, and his nominations include a Tony nod and Drama Desk Award. He is a Core Member for Life of The Playwrights' Center, an alumni of New Dramatists, a longstanding member of Penumbra and an Artistic Associate of Pillsbury House Theatre. He concluded his life-changing collaboration with the great August Wilson by giving the eulogy at his funeral. In 2014, Marion received an honorary doctorate of letters from Concordia University. He is the father of Jesse Mandell-McClinton.

CALENDAR LISTINGS

The Gospel of Lovingkindness

A powerful and poetic drama about two mothers and their young, black sons whose lives are shattered by gun shots.

May 29 – June 28, 2015

Wednesdays – Saturdays at 7:30 pm

Sundays at 3:00 pm

at Pillsbury House Theatre

3501 Chicago Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN

Tickets: Pick your price (Reg. = \$25)

Box Office: pillsburyhousetheatre.org or 612-825-0459

ABOUT PILLSBURY HOUSE THEATRE

From the Mainstage series to Chicago Avenue Project and Naked Stages to the Power of Our Voices teen ensemble, **PILLSBURY HOUSE THEATRE** brings audiences closer—to the edge, to the actors, to affordable, adventurous theatre, to fellow audience members, and to a strong community. Now in its 24th season, Pillsbury House Theatre is proud to be a professional theatre unlike any other. In partnership with Pillsbury United Communities, one of the largest human services organizations in the state, Pillsbury House Theatre demonstrates that the highest quality art is an integral part of all healthy communities, winning awards for theatre across the metro while also inspiring choice, change, and connection through raw, intimate drama. pillsburyhousetheatre.org.

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