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Mauckingbird Theatre Company presents
Beautiful Thing

By Jonathan Harvey

Directed by Peter Reynolds, January 15-February 2 at the Adrienne Skybox

PHILADELPHIA – *December 2, 2013* – Renowned in the region for their productions of gay-themed works, **Mauckingbird Theatre Company** begins their 2014 season with a down-to-earth look at first love in their production of *Beautiful Thing* by English playwright **Jonathan Harvey**. The play, which was described as an “endearing, lopsided smile of a comedy about a boy who falls for the boy next door” by *The New York Times*, will run **January 15 – February 2** in the Skybox at the Adrienne.

In a rough, working class neighborhood in South East London, Jamie (**Griffin Back**), Ste (**Kevin Murray**) and Leah (**Sofie Yavorsky**) are high school aged neighbors growing up surrounded by violence, poverty and drugs. When Jamie’s single mother, Sandra (**Melanie Julian**), and her boyfriend, Tony (**Kevin Chick**), take in Ste for a few nights after his abusive father beats him during an alcohol-fueled rage, the boys share a kiss that allows a bit of hope to break through the misery.

Mauckingbird Artistic Director **Peter Reynolds** chose the piece for Mauckingbird’s 2014 season to celebrate *Beautiful Thing*’s twentieth anniversary. “This is one of my all-time favorite stories, something I didn’t have as a young gay person: a sweet love story between two young, gay men,” says Reynolds. “It isn’t bubblegum, but it is heartening that amidst such a volatile situation we can be reminded that you have to be who you are, and love who you love. Harvey has crafted marvelous characters who are coping with first love in a most challenging environment. He uses specificity and superb storytelling rather than political platitudes to make his point; I have tremendous admiration for this play.”

Beautiful Thing runs **January 15-February 2, 2014** (*press opening is Friday, January 17, at 8 p.m.*), at the **Skybox at The Adrienne Theatre**, located at 2030 Sansom St. in Philadelphia. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$20 for seniors and \$15 for students and are available by calling the Mauckingbird Theatre Company box office at **(215) 923-8909** or online at www.mauckingbird.org.

Mauckingbird Theatre Company will continue its season with a gender bent production of William Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, August 22 – September 14 in the Randall Theater at Temple University.

ABOUT THE CAST AND CREW

Griffin Back plays the role of fifteen-year-old Jamie, and was previously seen as Claudio in Mauckingbird's *Much Ado About Nothing*. He is currently a Temple University student studying Theater with a concentration in Musical Theater. Greater Philadelphia Area credits include *Peter Pan* (Walnut Street Theater), *Caroline, or Change* (Arden Theater Company), and *Lost in Yonkers* (Broadway Theater of Pitman). Actor **Kevin Murray**, making his Mauckingbird debut, plays Jamie's love interest, Ste. Kevin is also a Temple University theater student, recent performances at Temple include *Spring Awakening*, *Oklahoma!*, and *Boys from Syracuse*. **Sofie Yavorsky** joins the cast as Leah, Jamie and Ste's neighbor. Sofie is a recent Temple graduate and has been seen in regional productions such as *August: Osage County* (Ritz Theatre Company), *Midsummer* (Tudor Theatrical), *The Marriage of Bette and Boo* and *que{e}ry*, both at Temple University.

Melanie Julian, who previously performed with Mauckingbird in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, plays Sandra, Jamie's mother. Regionally, Melanie has performed with The Mondavi Arts Center, The Soho Playhouse, The Pittsburgh Playhouse, Penumbra Theatre, the Minnesota Orchestra, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, EgoPo Classic Theater and the Sacramento Theatre Company, among others. She will appear later this season with EgoPo Classic Theater Company in their production of *Gint*. Melanie is a member of the Actors' Equity Association and a certified Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework.

Sandra's boyfriend Tony is played by **Kevin Chick**, a Philadelphia based artist who has performed in New York, Minneapolis, Iowa, throughout Argentina and around South America and Mexico. He has performed as a puppeteer, clown, musician, actor, improv-er, in Spanish, and with masks. His favorite credits include: *X Tink Shun*- Jim Henson Company, *Flash of Time* with the Kimmel Center in The Philadelphia International Festival of Arts, *The Black Arts* by Lamb Lays with Lion at The Guthrie Theatre, and of course his original clown duet *Do Not Push* with Alex Suha in Chicago and at Plays and Players in Philadelphia. Up next he is performing in *Lady from the Sea* with EgoPo Classic Theatre.

Mauckingbird's Resident scenic designer **Andrew Laine** is charged with creating a highly intimate layout for the neighborhood of Thamesmead. The design will take advantage of the space in the Skybox theater at the Adrienne, bringing audiences directly into the homes and lives of the characters. **Matthew Miller** (*The Temperamentals*, *Tru/Baldwin Winter Repertoire*) will create lighting, with sound design by **Brandon McShaffrey**. Costume design will be by newcomer **Ariel Wang**.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Jonathan Harvey is an award-winning playwright whose plays include: THE CHERRY BLOSSOM TREE (Liverpool Playhouse Studio), WILDFIRE (Royal Court); BEAUTIFUL THING (Bush Theatre, London and Donmar Warehouse/Duke of York's), John Whiting Award; BABIES (National Theatre Studio/Royal Court), George Devine Award and Evening Standard's Most Promising Playwright Award; BOOM BANG-A-BANG (Bush Theatre); HUSHABYE MOUNTAIN (ETT/Hampstead); and OUT IN THE OPEN (Hampstead/Birmingham Rep). Television and film work includes: "West End Girls" (Carlton); "Beautiful Thing" (Channel Four); "Gimme Gimme Gimme" (BBC).

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Peter Reynolds (Artistic Director) currently serves as the Head of Musical Theater for the Department of Theater at Temple University. In Philadelphia, he has worked at Media Theatre, Act II Playhouse, Walnut Street Theatre, Hedgerow Theatre, Villanova Theatre, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Philadelphia Young Playwrights and the Lenape Regional Performing Arts Center in New Jersey. Reynolds spent six years as Artistic Director of the award-winning HealthWorks Theatre in Chicago and has also worked at the Oregon

Shakespeare Festival, Theatre Building Chicago, Apollo Theatre Chicago, St. Louis' HotCity Theatre, Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre and Maples Repertory.

ABOUT MAUCKINGBIRD THEATRE COMPANY

Founded by Artistic Director **Peter Reynolds** and Managing Director **Lindsay Mauck**, Mauckingbird Theatre Company produces innovative, affordable, gay-themed theater. Past productions include critically acclaimed all-male versions of *The Misanthrope* (2008) and *Shakespeare's R & J* (2008, 2013); Caroline Kava's lesbian adaptation of *Hedda Gabler* (2009) and Jane Chambers' seminal lesbian play *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* (2011); the dark crime drama *Never the Sinner: The Leopold and Loeb Story* (2009); *TRU* and *The Threshing Floor* (2010), a repertory of two one-man shows about influential gay writers Truman Capote and James Baldwin; original modern interpretations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2010), *Much Ado About Nothing* (2012), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2013); the regional premiere of Jeff Bowen and Hunter Bell's musical [*title of show*] (2011); the Philadelphia premiere of Jon Marans' *The Temperamentals* (2012); and a reading of Maxwell Anderson's *Bad Seed* (2013). Mauckingbird Theatre Company is a proud member of the **Off-Broad Street Consortium of Independent Theatres**.

Beautiful Thing

FACTS

Performances:	Dates: January 15 – February 2, 2014 Preview: January 15 + 16 Opening: Friday, January 17 at 8:00 p.m.
Wed., 1/15 7:30 p.m.	Presented by: Mauckingbird Theatre Company Location: Skybox at The Adrienne Theatre 2030 Sansom St., Philadelphia, PA 19103 Prices: \$25 Adults, \$20 Seniors, \$15 Students Mauckingbird Box Office: (215) 923-8909 <i>*Please do not publish the phone number for The Adrienne Theatre. All ticket reservations and questions about Mauckingbird must be directed to (215) 923-8909. *</i> Web: www.mauckingbird.org
Thu., 1/16 7:30 p.m.	
Fri., 1/17* 8:00 p.m.	
Sat., 1/18 8:00 p.m.	
Sun., 1/19 2:00 p.m.	
Wed., 1/22 7:30 p.m.	
Thu., 1/23 7:30 p.m.	
Fri., 1/24 8:00 p.m.	
Sat., 1/25 8:00 p.m.	
Sun., 1/26 2:00 p.m.	
Sun., 1/26 7:00 p.m.	
Wed., 1/29 7:30 p.m.	
Thu., 1/30 7:30 p.m.	
Fri., 1/31 8:00 p.m.	
Sat., 2/1 8:00 p.m.	
Sun., 2/2 2:00 p.m.	
Sun., 2/2 7:00 p.m.	
*Opening Night	Beautiful Thing By Jonathan Harvey Directed by Peter Reynolds Cast (in alphabetical order) Griffin Back Jamie Kevin Chick Tony Melanie Julian Sandra Kevin Murray Ste Sofie Yavorsky Leah Production Team Andrew Laine Set Design Ariel Wang Costume Design Matthew Miller Lighting Design Brandon McShaffrey Sound Design JT Murtagh Stage Manager

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To request more information, photos, interviews and press tickets, please contact:

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