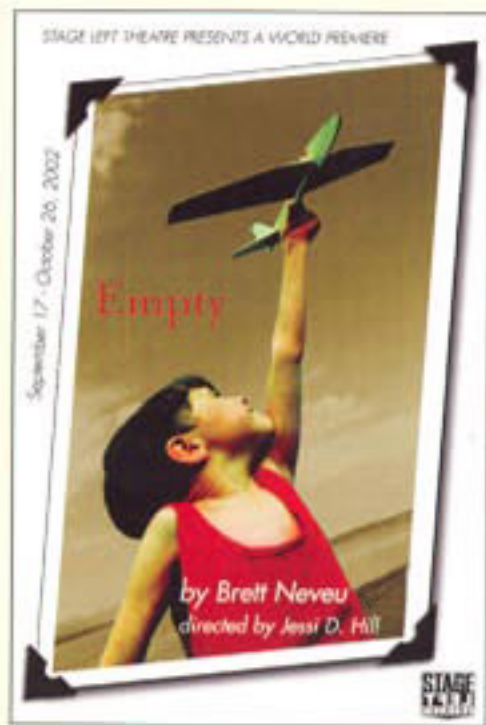


Picture This: The Poster's the Thing



By Karin McKie

Viewers can judge an entire theater company by one seriously amateurish poster," says theatrical graphic designer Jemal Diamond (www.thejemalshow.com), who has designed for many theaters, including American Theater Company, Strawdog Theatre Company and Eclipse.

That's why Diamond believes selecting a designer and an image are crucial. "It can be dangerous to try and tell the whole play in one poster," he cautions. "The result can be horrible — messy and busy."

A striking image that captures the essence of the play, however, can help fill seats, Diamond contends.

"The graphic designer is the only designer whose work will be seen by the general population," he says. "Companies that consider the graphic designer part of this team are smart. We're a visual culture, and our visual



If you can't judge a book by its cover, can you judge a play by its poster?

landscape can be less overwhelming with a competent designer."

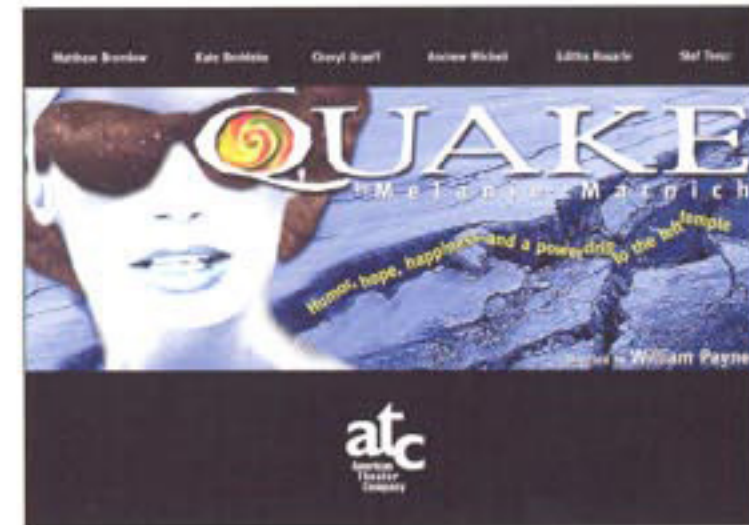
Bailiwick's producing director and graphics coordinator Rusty Hernandez maintains that artwork should be "intriguing and bigger than life." Yet, it must "stay true to its material and never be misleading."

CollaborAction's Anthony Moseley seeks an image with "the right combination of style, mystery and overall street feel," one that will "challenge, attract, and flirt with the audience, just as our plays do."

To create the art for CollaborAction's fall premiere, *The Joy of Going Somewhere Definite*, by Quincy Long, Moseley collaborated with director Ric Murphy and art director Wesley Kimler. They invited photographer Marc Hauser to shoot a corner of their studio. The image, they decided, would support the theater's identity (since it was shot in their actual workspace), and make a joke about the play, which involves three lumberjacks heading toward a "corner" of their own.

Stage Left's Artistic Director Jessi D. Hill also chose a photograph to promote *Empty*, Brett Neveu's meditation on Sept. 11, which opens the 2002-03 season. Last season, however, she selected a darkly comic cartoon to portray *Mrs. Mackenzie's Beginner's Guide to the Blues*, about a teacher's improper involvement

Stage Left used a photograph to illustrate *Empty*, Brett Neveu's meditation on Sept. 11, but opted for a cartoon for *Mrs. Mackenzie's Beginner's Guide to the Blues* to soften the disturbing subject matter of the play.



Jemal Diamond added a hint of fire inside the "Q" to suggest the heat and primal energy of *Quake*, at the American Theatre Company.

with a student. She decided a drawing would be the best way to ease potential audience members into such a controversial topic.

A theater's posters, like any advertising, should help attract customers, but Diamond believes that a designer should not become fixated on that goal.

"Sometimes your job as a designer is to bring the art to the corporate world," he admits, "but when you design for arts organizations, the art is already there, the language of art is there. It's our job as designers to help bring people into the art."

Karin McKie is an actor, writer and a publicist for her company, Tree Falls Productions. She'll perform in *The Joy of Going Somewhere Definite* at the Storefront Theatre in October.