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Selling (101)  
OR  
theatre  
through  
posters



BY KAVITA NAGPAL


Each little theatre group puts aside a small sum of money for advertising. Most of it goes down the gawing jaws of the jute press. Beyond a few handpainted posters at prominent art centres groups only have the wherewithal to print leaflets or perhaps single or two colour standard-size posters. This is evident from the Indian posters exhibited at the NSD Gallery Wall-Space.

There are certain posters designed by Barry John for Theatre Action Group, those advertising enactments by Non-Group and Ruchika that catch the eye. Ruchika's design in black and white of Happy Days rises far above mere cognitive information. Some of the NSD posters too show a desire to capture the spirit of the drama in a few strokes. Bansi Kaul's Three Penny Opera design is symbolic of the latent criminality of the bourgeoisie seen by Brecht.

The concept and design for the exhibition emanates from Bansi, an NSD alumni and one of its more creatively fecund ones. His work in the small towns of Uttar Pradesh, Sitapur, Gorakhpur, Dehra-Dun, Agra and so on, has led to the creation of a strong theatre movement in the Hindi belt. It took a Kashmiri to show the theatre

workers of Lucknow the contemporary possibilities inherent in Nautanki, the performing folk art form of U.P. His adaptation of Gogol's *Inspector General* in this traditional form was a bold venture.

The current exhibition at NSD is probably the first of its kind. And it is perhaps for the first time that an Indian artist has designed a



poster for the theatre in Delhi; Jatin Das's involvement in the painting and printing of the Gallery brochure brings to mind that phase in the history of the poster in Europe when Picasso, Matisse and Chagall would destroy original sketches of posters for art, theatre and other exhibitions rather than let poor art advertise good art.

Raoul Dufy was the first painter to design a poster for an exhibition of French art in Scandinavia. In 1947 Picasso created a poster for an exhibition of pottery. The remarkable thing about these efforts is the fact that the painters would also supervise the printing, often making last minute additions and changes.

Some of the posters from

the Berliner Ensemble advertising Brecht's plays are beautifully laid out. The American Conservatory Theatre and posters from Japan are quite disturbing in their treatment of figures. A delightful poster in the cubist style comes from Poland, communicating the enactment and form of the play *Inspector General* by Gogol.



## 3 PENNY OPERA

*Bansi Kaul's Three Penny Opera design is symbolic of the latent criminality of the bourgeoisie as seen by Brecht.*