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FOR THIS YEAR'S ROUNDUP OF YOUNG DESIGNERS TO WATCH, WE'VE EXPANDED OUR SEARCH AND (NEARLY) DOUBLED YOUR PLEASURE

Every year a raft of young new designers make a splash in the industry, and every year Entertainment Design has chronicled their rise. For the previous four years, we've shone a light on a small group of predominantly New York-based young artisans as part of our Young Designers to Watch. But it's a big country, and there's a lot of talent out there, so this year the spotlight has gotten a whole lot bigger: nine—count 'em, nine—young designers, from California to Nevada to Washington to Illinois to Milwaukee to New York and even Canada, make up the class of 2004. Keep an eye out for these talented young tyros if they end up working near you, as this group clearly demonstrates.

BY DAVID JOHNSON,
ELLEN LAHPERT-GREAUX
& LAUREN THOMPSON

BRIAN SIDNEY BEMBRIDGE



Profession: Set, Lighting, and Production Designer

Age: 30

Education: BFA North Carolina School of the Arts

Recent Work:

The Shaggy: Philosophy of the World (Set), Lookingglass Theater, The Power House Theater, LA Weekly Award; *The Post of Bethesda* (Set and Lights), Umallenay Productions, *Hannah and Martin* (Set and Lights), Timeline Theater Company, Joseph Jefferson Citation; *Far Away* (Set), Next Theater Company, James Joyce's *The Dead* (Set), The Court Theatre, After Dark Award for the design team; *Hard Times*, Lookingglass Theatre at The Arden Theatre (Lights); *Our Town* (Set), and *Benefactors* (Set) Writers' Theatre; *Sunday in the Park With George* (Set) and *Romeo and Juliet* (Set), Chicago Shakespeare.

Influences:

"Everything from Boris Aronson to Jim Ingalls, as well as the work of European artists, architects, and interior designers. Scenic and costume designer Franco Colavecchia was a large influence on my work while a student at North Carolina School of the Arts where Colavecchia is on the faculty. An around-the-world trip as a dancer after college."

Why He's Worth Watching:

At age 30, Brian Bembridge has won a considerable number of awards for his work. As a student he started ICE (Interior, Commercial, and Entertainment) Designs, working on interiors and furniture market showrooms, as well as theatre design, but has phased into theatre and film design almost exclusively now. He has his own website at www.briansidneybembridge.com that illustrates the scope and depth of his design talent, and if you "google" him, you'll find page after page of articles and references about this work. Yet he embraces old-fashioned design techniques, doing everything by hand, putting pencil to paper, although he admits to using PhotoShop® to create a photo-realistic backdrop for a recent production of *The Seagull*.

Moving from a performing career into design, he first was a lighting designer, then embraced scenic design as well, and often does both. He once designed the sets, lighting, and costumes for a 90-minute three-person *Hamlet* ("What was I thinking?" he quips). He has worked in Chicago since 1997, and currently works in almost every theatre in town, while considering the Timeline Theatre Company as home base, designing all four shows there this season. He is also teaching at DePaul University and Loyola College.

His sets for *Romeo and Juliet* at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre evoked this comment

from a reviewer: "As the play opens, the first thing to catch the eye is the scenery—morable scaffolding that variously serves as the Capulet's house, public places in Verona, Friar Laurence's cell, Juliet's chambers, and the tomb of the Capulet family. An abstract set is eminently practical for a traveling stage production, of course; but more than that, Brian Sidney Bembridge's scenic design ingeniously establishes at the outset the universal, timeless theme of this commendable production."

Bembridge's biggest challenge at the moment is breaking into regional theatre without moving to the East or West coast as many other young designers have done. He may have hit a glass ceiling in Chicago, but he seems poised to shatter that and hit the national theatre scene in a big way. —ELG

Through The Grapevine:

"Brian is an unusually versatile and prolific designer, with tremendous energy. Though primarily a lighting designer, he is equally at home designing scenery. His designs are always both elegant and playful."

—Linda Buchanan, set and costume designer, head of the scenic design program at DePaul University