

state ed

39 Steps

Adapted by Patrick Barlow



PRESENTING PARTNER
Adina
apartment hotels

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE PARTNER
QATAR
AIRWAYS القطرية

MEDIA PARTNER
9

DURATION APPROX: *2 hours (including interval)*

SUITABLE FOR *Years 9 - 12*

DWS performance followed by a 20 - 30 min Q&A session

**STATE SA
THEATRE
COMPANY**

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Cast & Creatives

Director

Jon Halpin

Set & Costume Designer

Ailsa Paterson

Lighting Designer

Geoff Cobham

Composer

Stuart Day

Assistant Director

Evie Leonard

Accent coach

Simon Stollery

Stage Manager

Melanie Selwood

Assistant Stage Managers

Laura Polombella &

Alira McKenzie-Williams

CAST

Man one or two (Clown)

Charles Mayer

Man one or two (Clown)

Tim Overton

Richard Hannay

Nathan Page

Annabella Schmidt / Margaret / Pamela

Anna Steen

Book

WRITER - JOHN BUCHAN

The Thirty-Nine Steps is an adventure novel by author John Buchan, which was published in 1915. It is the first of five novels featuring the adventure hero, Richard Hannay. The novel formed the basis for a number of film adaptations in 1959 and 1978 and a British television version in 2008. The most famous version, however, is Alfred Hitchcock's 1935 film.

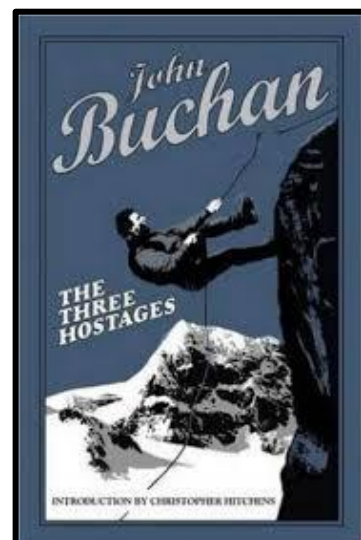
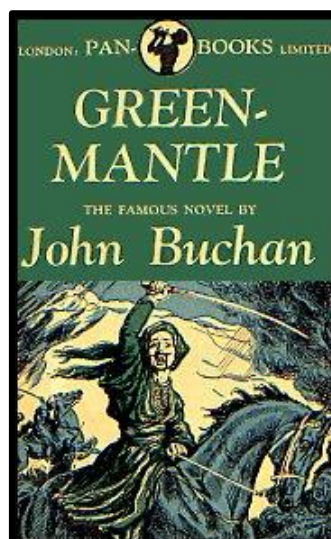
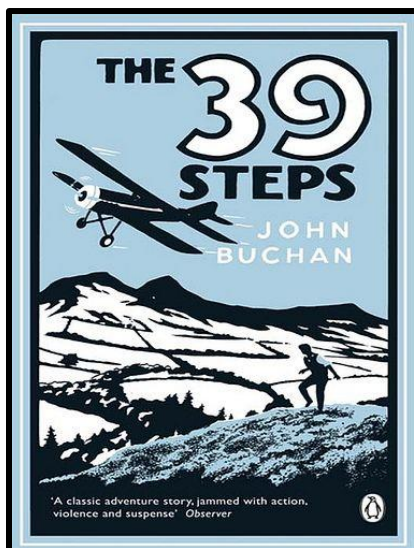
Born in Scotland in 1875, Buchan was an avid reader and writer from a young age and began publishing poetry and historical pieces to pay his way through school. He published over 100 works whilst also working as a barrister and a member of the diplomatic service.



Moving to London, he became the director at Nelson's, a publisher for whom he wrote. When the war broke out in 1914 Buchan was unable to join the army, becoming bed-ridden for several months, but he remained director of information for the British government. Whilst ill he wrote the novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. His behind-the-scenes knowledge of espionage, double-crosses, and rising European tensions informed his work and created the action hero with a stiff upper lip, Richard Hannay. *The 39 Steps* was Buchan's most popular of Hannay's five series secret service thrillers. Two more were set during the war when Hannay continued his undercover work against the Germans, *Greenmantle* and *Mr Standfast*; followed by *The Three Hostages* and *The Island of Sheep* which were set in the post war period.

The 39 Steps is one of the earliest examples of the 'man-on-the-run' thriller archetype adopted later by Hollywood as a popular plot device.

Buchan passed away in 1940.



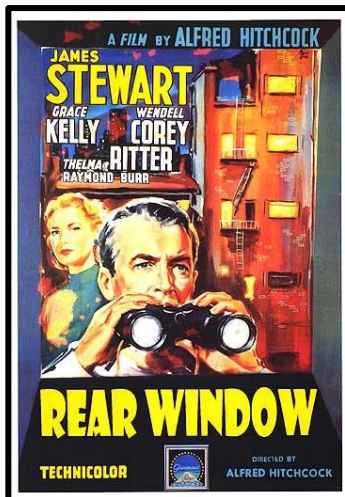
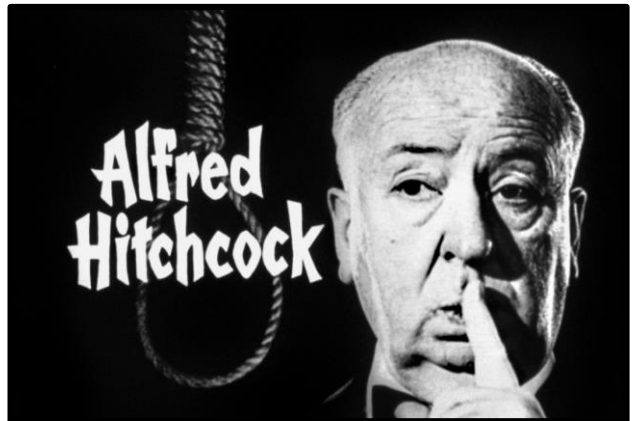
Film

The film of *The 39 Steps* by Alfred Hitchcock was adapted from the book by John Buchan.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK (Film)

Known as 'The Master of Suspense,' Alfred Hitchcock was and remains the consummate director of the thriller genre, with an impressive career spanning 60 years.

Director, producer and screenwriter, Alfred Hitchcock was born in London, England in 1899. He described his childhood as lonely and sheltered. He tells a story of his father who sent him to the local police station with a note asking to lock him away for bad behaviour; and his mother who would force him to stand at the foot of her bed for hours as punishment (a scene alluded to in the film, *Psycho*). In fact this notion of being harshly treated or wrongly accused was later reflected in his films.



Hitchcock studied art courses at the University of London, before obtaining a job as a draftsman and advertising designer for a cable company. During this time he started writing and submitted short articles for publication. From the beginning his writing reflected themes of false accusation, conflicted emotions and twist endings. In 1920 he entered the film industry, designing cards for silent films, before becoming an assistant director.

His first few directing attempts were never finished or were flops. His first commercial success was the silent thriller, *The Lodger* (1926). In the 1930s, he

directed the suspense films, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) and *The 39 Steps* (1935). In 1939 Hitchcock left England for Hollywood, where his film, *Rebecca* (1940), won an Academy Award for Best Picture.

During the next thirty years, Hitchcock would go on to produce and direct some of the most popular films of all time, including *Strangers on a Train*, *Dial M for Murder*, and *Vertigo* (1958). Some of his most famous films include *North by Northwest* (1959), *Psycho* (1960), *The Birds* (1963) and *Marnie* (1964).

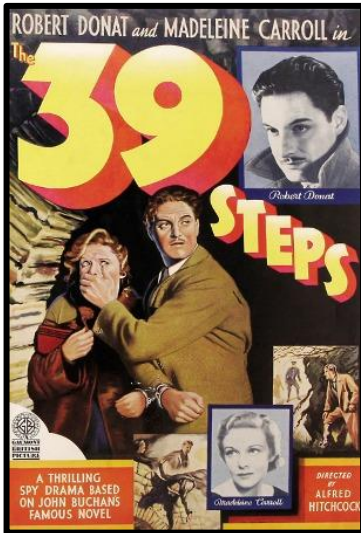
Hitchcock's films were known for their depictions of violence, complex psychological characters and his cameo appearances. In total, he directed more than 50 feature films. In 1979 he received the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award in 1980 was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II.

Alfred Hitchcock died in his sleep in 1980 in his California home. He was 80 years old.



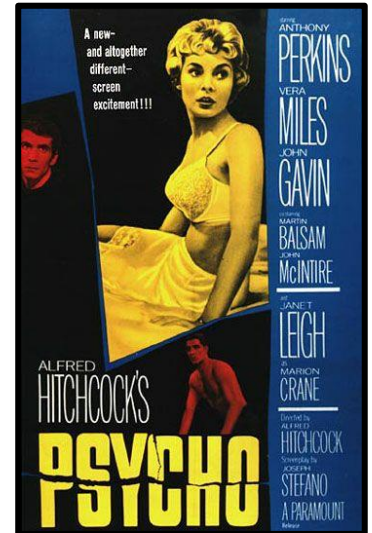
THE 39 STEPS

After the success of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, Hitchcock and writer Charles Bennet considered adapting John Buchan's book *Greenmantle* – the second Richard Hannay novel. However, the numerous European and Middle Eastern locations were too expensive to stage, so they turned to Hannay's first novel, *The 39 Steps*.



Hitchcock soon realised that he needed to take liberties with the book saying, "*The book was full of action – the story as it stood was not in the least suitable for screening. So many of the scenes would have looked unbelievable on the screen. Dressed up in Buchan's powerful art of description you could believe that in the book; but you wouldn't if you saw it in a picture.*"

He made changes including; introducing two major female characters, Annabella the spy and Pamela, the reluctant companion; and he referred to *The 39 Steps* as a clandestine organisation, whereas the book refers to physical steps.



The 39 Steps was a major British film of its time and cost nearly £60,000. Starring Robert Donat and Madeleine Carroll it was voted the best British film of 1935 and was the 17th most popular film at the British box office in 1935-36.

Hitchcock Elements

- *The 39 Steps* is the second film in a line of Hitchcock films based upon an innocent man being forced on the run.
- The Alfred Hitchcock cameo appeared towards the beginning of the film with Hitchcock and screenwriter Charles Bennett walking past a bus that the lead actors get onto.
- The film established the quintessential English 'Hitchcock blonde' – the template for his succession of ice cold and elegant leading ladies.

Adaptation

Patrick Barlow adapted Alfred Hitchcock's film, *The 39 Steps* for the stage.

"The original story by John Buchan is one of the great English thrillers and was a precursor to the genre. But it was the Hitchcock movie version that most excited me with the sheer challenge and madness of replicating an entire movie on stage."

PATRICK BARLOW

Patrick Barlow is an English actor, comedian and playwright. His comedic alter ego, Desmond Olivier Dingle, is the founder, Artistic Director and Chief Executive of the two-man National Theatre of Brent.



The stage version of *The 39 Steps* by Patrick Barlow is based primarily on Hitchcock's iconic movie with brief glimpses of Buchan's novel, all done with only four actors! The challenge of the work comes from staging the cinematic from train chases, plane crashes, murders in the dark to beautiful spies and classic villains. It's a thriller, comedic pastiche, drama and romance. Barlow observed, *"There's a reason to live and a reason to love. And above all a reason, as our hero blissfully realizes in his passionately impromptu political speech – to look after each other and look after the world."*

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK BARLOW

What was it about this particular story that made you want to adapt it to theatre?

The original story by John Buchan is one of the great English thrillers. It was really a precursor of the genre and is still much beloved in Britain. But it was the Hitchcock movie version that most excited me and the idea of adapting that really appealed. It's a wonderful film and a beautifully structured screenplay and Hitchcock introduced many sequences that are not in the original novel that have made it a movie classic. For example; Mr Memory, Pamela the damsel in distress (there are no women at all in the novel), the police chase across the moors, the Scottish hotel, the climax in the London Palladium and many more. Apparently Hitchcock and his screenwriter spent six whole months on the story structure alone. They rode up and down the Thames and lived on lobster and champagne. That's the way to write a screenplay! The other thing that appealed to me was the sheer challenge and madness of replicating an entire movie on stage. Since the success of *The 39 Steps*, there have been a lot of movie adaptations but it hadn't really been done before that.

Why do you think it resonates with audiences?

It's always been a classic British thriller that was popular in Britain, but what has surprised and delighted me is how popular it has been across virtually the whole world. I've seen it in Japan, Russia, America, Germany, Israel and it has been performed in many more places. Audiences, regardless of nationality, all seem to love it and, amazingly, laugh and gasp at the same things. We did make a point of keeping the story truly exciting and genuinely suspenseful and not sending it up and audiences really like that.

Ultimately, the 'Fugitive' genre is always popular, but I think the fact that it's funny is what chiefly resonates, not only in the dialogue but particularly the fact that the whole thing is done by four actors

which makes it a truly madcap ride. Audiences also seem to love watching the actors being challenged and succeeding, building the Forth Bridge out of ladders, for instance, or building a car out of four chairs in five seconds.

Then there is the love story of course and particularly the fact that our hero and heroine can't bear each other but are tied together (literally) so they can't escape, each other or their feelings.

Can you explain the reasoning behind the suggestion of casting four actors for all roles? How did this suggestion come about?

I think we love to see actors challenged by the seemingly impossible. As a child I was brought up on magic and circus and I think it came from that. I have made something of a name for myself in Britain doing theatre with minimal casts. With my company the National Theatre of Brent, I have done the *Ring Cycle* with three, *The Christmas Story* with two, *The Zulu War*, *The Charles and Diana story*, *The French Revolution*, *Madame Butterfly*, *The life of Leonardo da Vinci* and *The Russian Revolution*, all with two actors. As with *The 39 Steps*, all the actors do everything. In our time the two of us have played fifty Valkyries, ten thousand Zulus, the entire population of Nazareth and a million marauding Russians. So the idea of a cast of four was a positive luxury.



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Director

JON HALPIN

Jon was the Artistic Director of HotHouse Theatre from 2010 - 2014, and Queensland Theatre Company's Associate Director from 2005 – 2009. His directorial credits for HotHouse Theatre include *Fractions*, *Dame Farrar's Dazzling Display of Stupendous Acts for the Stage*, *Australia the Show!* and *The Messiah*.



For State Theatre Company, Jon has directed our 2015 Education production *This Is Where We Live*. For Queensland Theatre Company, he has directed twenty productions including *Betrayal*, *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*, *Stones in his Pockets*, *Heroes*, *The Estimator*, *American Buffalo*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Hitchcock Blonde*, *The Goat or Who is Sylvia?*, *Proof*, *The Lonesome West*, *The Messiah*, *Bill & Mary* and *Bash: Latterday Plays*. Jon was Associate Director on the premiere of Michael Gow's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, a co-production between Queensland Theatre Company and Playbox Theatre.

He was Assistant Director on Belvoir's production of *The Spook* as well as QTC's *The Road To Mecca*, *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second*, *Buried Child*, *Dirt*, *The Forest* and *Fred*. Other directing credits include *Women in Voice 13* (QPAC), *Harriers* (Metro Arts), *Cloud Nine* (QUT), *Five Women Wearing the Same Dress* (USQ), and *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* (Rolling Jaffa). He was invited to the Australian National Playwrights' Conference as a guest director in 2004 and 2006 and PlayWriting Australia in 2008 and 2009.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This is my third outing as director on a Patrick Barlow play, two different productions of *The Messiah* (in 2002 and then 2006) and now, *The 39 Steps* and I must say I feel very blessed to be able to revisit his work.

Patrick has an uncanny knack for putting madcap, slapstick and almost silly comedy up on stage, but always with an integrity and respect for the source material. In *The Messiah*, it's the nativity and in this play it is of course Hitchcock's 1935 seminal classic. Although the action may be ridiculous and unhinged, at all times the story of Richard Hannay's dangerous journey to learn the meaning of the 39 Steps is the beating heart of the play.

We have approached this production from the position that the movie, a film that is the prototype of all action films we know today, is impossible to stage. It is such an iconic piece of cinema and so utterly filmic, that to attempt to stage it is sheer folly. But stage it we shall! And we shall fail and triumph in equal and hilarious measures.

It has been a joy to work with Charlie, Tim, Anna and Nathan, pulling apart the film scene by scene, inventing the silliest and cleverest ways to put this work before and audience. To have the support and ingenuity of Ailsa Paterson, Geoff Cobham and Stuart Day offering creative and hilarious solution to unstageable conundrums has likewise been a sheer delight.

Finally, a big thanks to the entire mob at State Theatre for the opportunity to have a play on the big stage, it's been a lot of fun.

Actors

Tim Overton and Charles Mayer play the two clowns in *The 39 Steps*, who in turn play around 30 characters.

TIM OVERTON

Tim is thrilled to be working with State Theatre Company of South Australia on *The 39 Steps*. His other credits with STCSA include, *The Popular Mechanicals*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)* and *Buried Child*.

Earlier this year Tim starred in the Slingsby premiere of *The Young King* in the Adelaide Festival of Arts and looks forward to touring with them nationally and internationally over the coming years.

Tim has also performed on local, regional, national and international tours with renowned South Australian children's theatre company Patch in: *The Fastest Boy in the World*, *Little Green Tractor*, *Emily Loves To Bounce*, *Cranky Bear*, *Mr McGee and the Biting Flee* and *Me and My Shadow* - Winner of the 2011 Helpmann Award for Best Children's Presentation.

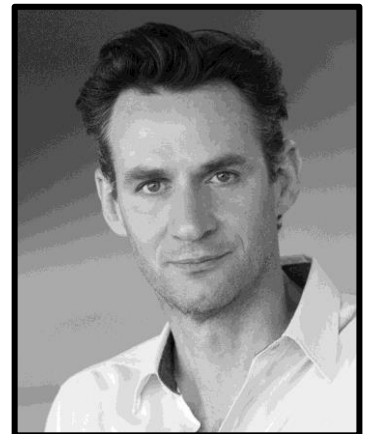
After graduating from Adelaide College of the Arts in 2008, Tim performed in and co-produced *Autobahn*, *Two*, *Boxing Day Test* and *The Call* with his own Adelaide based theatre company Junglebean.



CHARLES MAYER

After 11 years in the British Army, Charles trained at Guildhall School of Music & Drama, and has worked in London, China and Australia. Charles has appeared in the West End in *Bent*, on stage in Shanghai in *I Am My Own Wife*, *The Odd Couple*, *Oleanna* and *No Exit*, and in Adelaide in *Orphans*, *Man in a Bag*, *The Last Time I Saw Richard*.

For State Theatre Company, Charles has appeared in our productions of *The Popular Mechanicals* and *Othello*. Film credits include *Ip Man 2*, *Shanghai Calling* and *The Pack*, and TV includes *Hotel Babylon*, *Spooks*, *Sam Fox Extreme Adventures*, *ANZAC Girls*, *Gallipoli* and *Deadline Gallipoli*.



INTERVIEW WITH TIM & CHARLIE

What attracted you to the play *The 39 Steps*?

Tim: It's such a fun show! The story follows the journey of what was a new style of film at the time; a crazy, adventure, thriller by Alfred Hitchcock. The transformation from the film into a play is where the comedy becomes present and it is hilarious. The script also has so much scope for invention and devising, it's fun.

Charlie: When I first came out of drama school the show was on the West End in London, but I never saw it. I assumed it was a theatre version of Hitchcock's film. A 1930s Noir play and it wasn't until I was given the script that I realized it was such a comedy. The story itself is serious, but is backed up by

constant comedy with 4 actors doing all the work –and the idea that it is a play within a play, with everything falling apart makes it challenging, but exciting.

What are the biggest challenges in playing so many different roles and how are you overcoming them?

Tim: It's exhausting, but mentally so much fun. The biggest challenge is the costume changes. The wardrobe department are doing a great job at attaching all elements of the costumes together, so that you can just jump into each costume in one move.

Charlie: The fun thing is devising the various characters, finding their voice, finding their spine and playing around with the character's detail. For some the key is simple – such as their personality or voice and through this you easily become that character. But underneath all this, we are playing an actor who is playing all of these roles – trying to make the show work. We have to work together to make it all go wrong.

Does that mean you're not so worried about the accents?

They're not all going to be amazing accents, but we are relishing the opportunity to do all of the accents and getting them right. We might then have to spend some time making them bad again. We can't be too slick or the audience will forget that we're actors trying to put on the play within the play. The comedy in these characters comes from being under-rehearsed and ill-prepared.

The premise that you are actors putting on a play is something you tend to forget when listening to the play. How does the audience get reminded of this?

There's constantly a catastrophe being solved, it is very visual and very physical. We're also bringing the sets and props on, with things breaking and not being quite right and both changing every few minutes (or seconds), all becoming part of the physicality.

What techniques have you used to find the comedic elements in the play?

Tim: In rehearsals we constantly throw out offers. Everyone gives their ideas and we try them out and the director gets the final say. The main question we constantly ask is, *"What can go wrong at this moment? Is there a prop missing, something rolls away that is meant to be screwed into the ground, or is someone clumsy and falls over?"* This is the starting point for each scene.

Charlie: Everyone is up for putting as much chaos into the rehearsal as possible and to see what will work. All of the characters want the show to succeed, however, Tim and my characters aren't as competent as the other two actors at performing or making things work.

Comedy is all about timing – how are these scenes rehearsed?

Tim: Over and over and over again. Some people have naturally got comic timing, but you have to work on it through rehearsals. You also need to trust that if it was funny the first time, it will be funny to an audience, but you do get de-sensitized during rehearsals.

Charlie: The first read-through and attempt are incredibly funny, but through rehearsing and adding the props and set, it isn't as funny. You just need to practice and practice and know that what you thought was funny the first time, still is for the audience.

Do you enjoy acting in more comedic or serious roles?

Charlie: Dare I say, they're the same thing! Comedy is when a very serious person is trying to get their way out of a predicament. The style of getting out of the predicament defines whether it's a comedy or a tragedy. Comedy is a lot more fun, I enjoy being laughed at. In *Popular Mechanicals*, my characters, Bottom and Mouldy, are a pair of idiots who think they are good actors, but they really don't get the sense of it. I do like the feeling of tragedy with your heart breaking, but the delight you feel in your body and the timing of comedy feels great.

Tim: It takes the same amount of work. They're similar, but different beasts. Comedy is harder because you've got to get the timing absolutely right. It's brilliant to make people laugh or to be moved, but whatever you're doing, you make the audience become part of that space, you can feel their energy. Maybe comedy is a more shared experience because the audience is more open in their response?

Have you seen Hitchcock's film and what have you taken from this?

Charlie: Yes. However, the small roles were quite theatrical in the film, almost musical-esque. They lend themselves well to this play, as the stylings and the acting during the 1930s were quite melodramatic. Even though the film was a thriller, it can look like a comedy now, even though that wasn't the intent.

In the play, we explode the scene and fit as much as we can into it and then compact it again. However, we have to make sure we stick to the story and the text is being obeyed and that we follow the story from the film. Richard Hannay's journey still needs to be an epic and crazy adventure.

It's fairly unusual for a book to go to film, then to the stage, usually it becomes a play first before it's a film. How well do you think this works?

Tim: The secret ingredient in the comedy comes from the film. You would very rarely cast one person to play multiple characters in a film, you can get 100 different people in. But when you go to a play you can't have that many different people coming on for one line, let alone the budget that would need! The way Barlow dealt with this is very clever.

Charlie: Hitchcock made the book into an adventure, but realized for film, that he needed a female character, a love interest, so he created the character of Pamela. Whereas the book only follows Hannay's journey, with no female counter-part. It may be useful for Nathan who's playing Hannay to read into more about the character, but the script for the play doesn't really relate to the original book at all.

Synopsis

"Mix a Hitchcock masterpiece with a juicy spy novel, add a dash of Monty Python and you have the intriguing, thrilling, riotous and unmissable comedy, The 39 Steps."

www.samueelfrench.com

With equal parts farce, clowning masterclass and heart-stopping noir thriller, *The 39 Steps* is Patrick Barlow's hysterical stage adaptation of John Buchan's classic novel and Hitchcock's hit 1935 spy thriller film.

This wonderfully deranged comedy features four actors, playing 139 roles of fast-paced fun, thrilling action and riotous invention.

Set in 1930's London, the story is a classic portrayal of one man's flight from wrong accusation through a series of improbable adventures as he is pursued by authorities. The painfully British and devastatingly handsome, Richard Hannay finds himself in the clutches of a beautiful woman, Anabella Schmidt, who later reveals herself as a spy. She has uncovered a plot called 'The 39 Steps', but she is murdered clutching a map of Scotland.

Richard Hannay takes on the adventure, wooing every attractive lady in sight and jumping through windows and onto trains as he tries to escape spies and cunning murderers, before finding love whilst handcuffed to a beautiful woman. Hannay must solve the mystery of the 39 steps and save his skin before it's too late.



Production photo from West End production © Dan Tsantiki

Plot

ACT ONE

Richard Hannay is attending a London theatre watching the remarkable powers of 'Mr. Memory', a man with a photographic memory, when a fight breaks out and shots are fired. In the ensuing panic, he finds himself holding a frightened Annabella Schmidt, who talks him into taking her back to his flat.

There she tells him that she is a spy, being chased by assassins out to kill her. She claims to have uncovered a plot to steal vital British military secrets, implemented by a man with the top joint missing from one of his fingers, head of an espionage organization called 'The 39 Steps'. Annabella tells him that she must visit an Englishman in a place called 'Alt na shellach' in Scotland. Hannay wakes in the middle of the night, as Annabella approaches, but before he has a chance to obtain more information, she is mysteriously stabbed in the back and dies.

Hannay sneaks out of his flat, disguised as a milkman and takes a train to Scotland, but discovers the police are on his trail. In desperation, he enters a compartment and kisses the sole occupant, the attractive Pamela, in an attempt to escape detection. She frees herself from his unwanted embrace and betrays him to the law. He jumps from the train onto the Forth Rail Bridge and escapes.

He crosses the moors, finding a farm-house where he stays the night with a farmer and his young attractive wife. Early the next morning, two policeman rush into the house, but Hannay escapes wearing the farmer's Sunday coat for warmth. Running again out on the moors, the police, their dogs and a plane chase him, but he manages to avoid capture.

He appears at a door with the sign; 'Alt na shellach'. There he finds the man with the missing finger-joint, the seemingly respectable Professor Jordan, who shoots him and leaves him for dead.

ACT TWO

Hannay is in the Sherriff's office, having fled once more, saved by a prayer-book in his jacket pocket. The Sherriff and the Chief Inspector try to arrest him, but Hannay jumps through a window and escapes into the crowd. He tries to hide himself in a political meeting, but is mistaken for the keynote speaker, giving a rousing impromptu speech, but is recognized by Pamela, who gives him up once more. They are handcuffed together and taken away by the 'police'.

Hannay soon realizes they are agents of the conspiracy and when the car is forced to stop, he escapes, dragging an unwilling Pamela along. They travel cross country, and stay the night at an inn. While he sleeps, she slips out of the handcuffs, and eavesdrops on one of the fake policemen on the telephone downstairs; who confirms Hannay's suspicions. The next morning, she tells Hannay what she heard, and that they are off to The London Palladium. He leaves Pamela and sets off for London.

At the theatre he discovers the professor sitting in the box. Pamela appears behind him. She has gone to Scotland Yard, but without proof they could do nothing. Mr Memory's show is introduced and Hannay recognizes the annoying catchy tune he hasn't been able to forget for days. In that moment, he realises that Mr Memory is how the spies are smuggling the secrets out: he has them memorized.

The police arrive to arrest Hannay, but he shouts out a question about the 39 Steps. When Mr. Memory compulsively begins to answer, Professor Jordan shoots him and tries to flee, but is apprehended. The dying Mr. Memory recites the information stored in his brain, a design for silent aircraft, and Hannay and the girl stroll off, hand in hand.

Character List

Richard Hannay

Having just returned to England after serving as an intelligence officer in the Boer war, Hannay finds life in London dull and tiring. Although Hannay describes himself as ordinary, he is the typical English gentleman hero – well educated, rich, strong, fit and healthy, looking for fun and adventure. He is described by others as, thirty-seven years old, attractive with a pencil moustache. Later when on the run he is described as, *"slightly more rugged-looking, which makes him look even better looking than he did before."*

Looking for a quiet night at the theatre, he is thrust into the world of espionage and he feels it is his duty to put his country's interest before his own safety. He is the hapless hero of the play, wrongly accused of murder and pursued by the authorities through a series of improbable adventures.

Annabella Schmidt

The roles of Annabella, Pamela and Margaret are played by the same woman. Annabella Schmidt is the beautiful, mysterious German woman Richard Hannay meets at a London theatre. She tells him she is a spy and tells him

clues to a mystery before being stabbed and killed.

Pamela

Pamela is the attractive woman Hannay meets on the train to Scotland as he runs from the police who are hot on his trail. He meets her later at the political rally, but each time she gives him up to the authorities. She is reluctantly hand-cuffed to Hannay, who she thinks is a dangerous criminal and tries to escape, but discovers the truth and instead tries to help him.

Margaret

Margaret is the Scottish wife of the farmer who invites Hannay to stay the night at their cottage. She flirts with her houseguest, enraging her husband, and helps Hannay avoid the police.

Film critic Roger Ebert wrote: *"The female characters in his (Hitchcock) films reflected the same qualities over and over again: They were blonde. They were icy and remote. They were imprisoned in costumes that subtly combined fashion with fetishism. They mesmerized the men, who often had physical or psychological handicaps."*

The Clowns

All the other characters, approximately 30, are played The Clowns, changing over 100 times into these various disguises of every age and gender and dialect. Dialects include: Scottish, Cockney, British, and German.

These characters include:

- Milkman – who gives Hannay his coat and hat as a disguise.
- Compere - the Master of Ceremonies at a London theatre show.
- Mr. Memory - the star of the London show, who commits to memory 50 new facts every day.
- Professor Jordan – the villain, described as an Englishman living in a grand house at Alt-na-shellach in Scotland.

Mrs. Higgins

Salesmen 1 & 2

Paperboy

Policemen 1 & 2

Porter

Crofter

Pilots 1 & 2

Mrs. Jordan

Professor Sheriff Inspector

Mr. Dunwoody

Mr. McQuarrie

Heavy 1 & 2

Mr. and Mrs. McGarrigle

Albright

Themes

The director's deepest subjects—theater and its relation to film, the abandonment of human beings in vacant and foreboding landscapes, the complex human quest for knowledge, and the nature of accidents—abound in The 39 Steps. Hitchcock's perception of the precariousness of human existence, and his belief in film's capacity to reveal and reflect on it, lie at the heart of his achievement as a master of the art of film.

– Marian Keane

WRONGED MAN

Richard Hannay is an example of an ordinary man who puts his own country's interests before his own safety. Wrongly accused of a crime, he is caught up in a world of intrigue and danger as it slowly dawns on him that he has been thrown into the world of espionage and that he must struggle to survive. This scenario has occurred in many of Hitchcock's films, notably, *Strangers on a Train*, *The Wrong Man*, *Vertigo*, *North by Northwest*, and *The Man Who Knew Too Much*.

Through the theme of the 'wronged man', we look at human identity with the wrongly accused protagonist chasing the real culprits in the pursuit of truth and to clear his name. Hannay risks death, exposure and incarceration on his adventure to save the country. At the beginning of the play he tells us he is bored, needs some excitement, but this wasn't quite what he was expecting.

ADVENTURE

The story is as an adventure where the events in the story are unlikely and the viewer is only just able to believe that they really happened. In the Hannay novels, Buchan mixes the familiar and the frightening or the unexpected. The ingredients are simple: the government being threatened, Hannay's life in danger, him becoming a hero and saving the situation and the country.

THEATRE

The 39 Steps opens and closes with scenes set in the theatre. But the last scene destroys the invisible line between theatre and reality, stage and audience. The stage, and the events that take place on it, become part of the reality, as Mr Memory's talented has been used for espionage. Theater is exposed as vulnerable with the safety curtain falling in the final climatic scene.

THE ART OF THE DISGUISE

From his initial masquerade as a milkman on, the protagonist Richard Hannay takes on various disguises during his adventure. Sometimes his transformations happen merely on the surface: changing with the milkman, which is sufficient to fool anyone on Hannay's tail and allow him to escape to the train station. Similarly, adopting a thick Scottish brogue on the train, allows him to blend in. He even declares himself a political candidate and gives a rousing speech for a subject he knows nothing about.

There are of course also the Clowns who change a hat, article of clothing or facial hair becoming various characters. Some of these are obvious, others quite subtle and many are comical.

SENSE OF DUTY

Hannay and Mr Memory are both characters that feel a sense of duty. Hannay to his country by trying to uncover a threat to England's security and Mr Memory compelled to answer questions.

In the final moments of the play Mr Memory is asked about the '39 steps' and doomed by his sense of duty, or his role of entertaining to give the answers. He does this even though he has been shot, making

him seem heroic by risking death for his professional conscience. The formula memorized by Mr Memory is meaningless to us, but we believe that Hannay needs this information to stop it reaching England's enemies.

MacGUFFIN

"There's a lot to look for in Hitchcock's films, but watch out for the MacGuffin. It will lead you nowhere."

Some of Alfred Hitchcock's most popular films utilized the story device known as the MacGuffin; a plot element that catches the viewer's attention or drives the plot of a work of fiction setting the whole chain of events into action. The nature of the MacGuffin is not often important, but is the motivation for the hero and the central focus for the first act, declining in importance through the hero's journey. Sometimes the MacGuffin can be ambiguous, completely undefined, and generic or left open to interpretation. In *The 39 Steps*, the MacGuffin turns out to be the plans for an advanced airplane engine, stored in the mind of Mr Memory.

The term 'MacGuffin' was coined by Alfred Hitchcock, but the principle goes back to earlier films.

WATCH ALFRED HITCOCK EXPLAIN THE MacGUFFIN HERE

<http://www.openculture.com/2013/07/alfred-hitchcock-explains-the-plot-device-he-called-the-macguffin.html>

Interesting Reading

Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* is one of his first British spy-chase suspense-thrillers in the style of Film Noir. It contains all of the typical Hitchcock elements: a handsome everyman, a high-stakes international caper, a reluctant femme tossed into the hero's adventure, vast spy rings, double-crossing, deadly secrets and a dastardly villain. Whilst the play isn't strictly in the film noir style, it brings in many of the film's noir elements.

FILM NOIR

Film noir generally refers to mystery and crime dramas produced from the early 1940s to the late 1950s. Movies of this genre were characteristically shot in black and white, and featured stories involving femmes fatales, doomed heroes or anti-heroes, and tough, cynical detectives. These movies were highly stylized and overtly theatrical and reflected the resultant tensions and insecurities of the time period, and counter-balanced the optimism of Hollywood's musicals and comedies.

Inspired by the financial and artistic success of Billy Wilder's adaptation of James M. Cain's novella *Double Indemnity* (1944), studios began producing crime thrillers and murder dramas which were dark and menacing.

The term *film noir*, meaning 'black film' or 'dark film' was coined by several critics. The main characteristics of these films depicted dark locations, taxi drivers and bartenders who have seen it all, doomed romances, hard-edged cynicism, manipulation and betrayal. Women wore low necklines, mascara, red lipstick, and had gangsters for boyfriends, mixed their drinks and had soft sports for alcoholic private eyes. Men wore suits and fedoras, lived in shabby residential hotels with a neon sign blinking through the window. They drank coffee, had cars with running boards, ate at all-night diners and knew all the shady characters.

There heroes were often down-and-out detectives, private eyes, cops, government agents, lone wolf or plain Joes. This cynical, hard-hearted and disillusioned male character was central to the story, and often encountered a beautiful but seductive *femme fatale*. She would use her feminine wiles and sexuality to manipulate him into becoming the fall guy - often following a murder. After a betrayal or double-cross, she ultimately ended up dead on the floor with every limb meticulously arranged and every hair in place. The enemy were usually socio-paths, crooks, politicians, petty criminals or murderers from the gloomy underworld of violent crime and corruption.

The settings gave the dark, claustrophobic and gloomy appearance with low-key lighting, venetian-blinded windows and small rooms. Exteriors were often urban night scenes with deep shadows, wet asphalt, dark alleyways, rain-slicked or mean streets, flashing neon lights, and low lighting.

PASTICHE

A **pastiche** is a work of visual art, literature, theatre, or music that imitates the style or character of the work of one or more other artists. Unlike parody, pastiche celebrates, rather than mocks, the work it imitates.

(en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastiche)

Patrick Barlow adapted *The 39 Steps* play from Hitchcock's film, which was in turn adapted from John Buchan's novel. The original book and movie are serious thrillers, however, Barlow took the story and exaggerated the drama and cast 4 actors to play over 130 varying roles, giving it a comedic feel. This imitation is satirical or a send up of the original work.

Pastiche can be used across various art forms, with many books, television shows and movies paying homage to other works and artists. This style can also reference time periods, historic figures, places, styles, politicians and just about anything else you can think of, including being used in advertising and political campaigns.

Here are some examples of pieces and artists that you might recognize;

Music

- "Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen - this song references various musical styles all in one song, including opera, a cappella and heavy rock.
- Weird Al Yankovic – he re-writes the songs of others such as Michael Jackson's "Beat It", which became, "Eat It"

Film

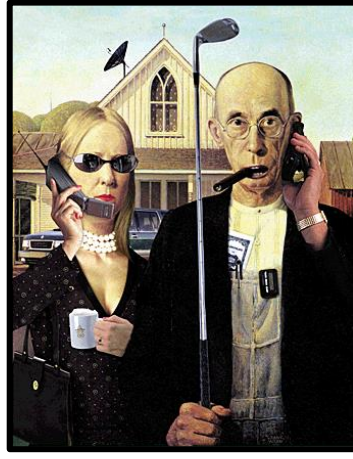
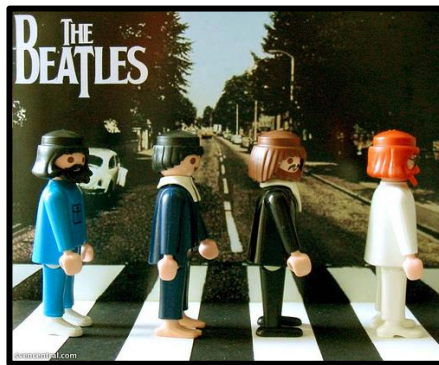
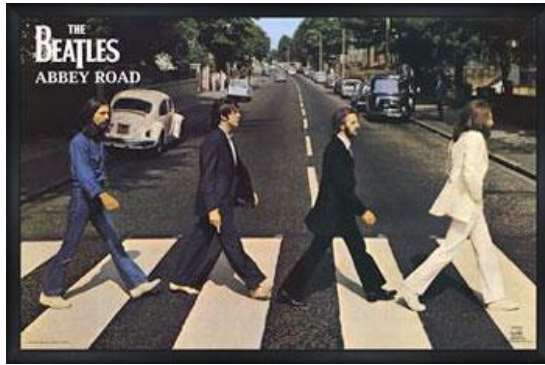
Quentin Tarantino often uses various plots, characteristics and themes from many lesser-known films to create his films. *Pulp Fiction* is a pastiche of 1950s pulp fiction texts and *Kill Bill* is a pastiche of Kung Fu films.

Literature

Stories featuring Sherlock Holmes, originally created by Arthur Conan Doyle, have been written as pastiches since the author's time.

Visual Arts





COMEDY ON THE STAGE

Plays are usually divided into three major categories: comedy, drama, and tragedy. The earliest known comedies were written during ancient Greece. Like modern comedies, these often satirized political and social issues.

During the 16th century many people were writing comedy, including William Shakespeare. His play, *The Comedy of Errors* is based on a Greek play by Plautus. His comedies use devices such as; mistaken identity, peasants becoming kings, physical comedy, sexual innuendo and verbal wit.

Restoration Comedy was dominant in England in 1660, using witty dialogue to satirize the petty concerns of the upper classes. During the 18th and 19th centuries many comedies were called 'farce', characterized by broad humour and very complicated and highly improbably plots.

Modern comedy has branched out in many directions, including musical comedy, but they are still known for their clever dialogue, complicated plot twists, familiar scenarios, and physical humor leading to a happy ending.

EXPLORING COMEDY COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE AND LAZZI

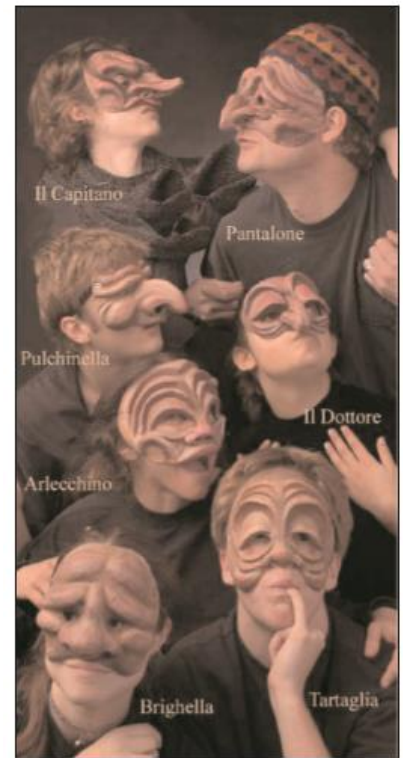
The physical comedy used in *The 39 Steps* traces its roots back to Italy in the 1500s and Commedia dell'arte. Commedia is a form of theatre characterised by masked stock characters, who would tell their stories. Throughout these stories, performers would insert a lazzi, or a short comedic scene that often had no correlation to the original story. For example, a lazzi might be one of the characters pretending to be a statue, only moving when the other performers on stage have their backs turned. These short scenes were often performed without words, the actors using broad, over exaggerated physicality to convey the story.

In *The 39 Steps*, the two clowns use specific, exaggerated physicality to become different characters. These characters interact with each other and the other 2 performers on stage. In some scenes the actors must switch between accents, costumes, ages and even genders, making these characters larger than life.

Here are the stock characters from Commedia. See which ones you can relate to from seeing *The 39 Steps*.

Examples of the Stock Characters:

- **Arlecchino** - Was an acrobat and witty, childlike and amorous. He wore a cat-like mask and often carried a bat or wooden sword.
- **Brighella** - Was roguish and sophisticated, a cowardly villain who would do anything for money. His movements are similar to a rat.
- **Il Capitano** (The captain) - Was a caricature of the professional soldier— bold, swaggering, and cowardly. He is often compared to a peacock.
- **Il Dottore** (The doctor) - Was a caricature of learning— pompous and fraudulent.
- **Pantalone** - Was a caricature of the Venetian merchant, rich and retired, mean and miserly, with a young wife or an adventurous daughter.
- **Pulcinella** - Was a dwarfish humpback with a crooked nose, the cruel bachelor who chased pretty girls. His name means “little chicken.” The character associated with the English Punch and Judy shows.



Film Clichés

The film of *The 39 Steps* uses many cinematic devices that have become clichéd. Many of these are highlighted in the play, heightening the pastiche. The following is a list of clichés – see which ones have been used in the play or the movie;

- A chase scene, either running on foot or a car chase.
- A deathtrap and accompanying monologue.
- Explosions where the characters walk away without looking at it.
- Hero who decides to let the villain go, only to have the villain turn around and try to kill the hero, leaving the hero no other choice then to kill the villain once and for all.
- Love interest for the protagonist.
- Telephone answering machines replacing conversations to establish a plot point.
- An inspiring speech for the antagonist to come to their senses
- A sleuth and a guilty rich person.
- Villains who attack one at a time, can't shoot straight, or become incompetent in the face of opposition by the protagonists.
- Comic book death, the apparent death and subsequent return of a protagonist.
- Cars that are never locked, and contain the keys needed to start them.
- A person who is about to be attacked, but doesn't look in the obvious direction from where the threat will come.
- London is foggy.
- Women can run in whatever footwear they're got on.
- The immediate reaction of anyone in the path of something life threatening is to stand completely still and stare at it.
- If a person knocks another out and takes their uniform, it will fit perfectly, irrespective of the relative size, sex or even species
- Dying people always live long enough to say something moving or significant.
- Falling from the roof of a moving train is much more likely when the train crosses a high bridge with a river below.
- Underground trains are just about to leave the station when you arrive on the platform or the station is totally deserted.
- The bad guy is the foreigner – who speaks English with an English accent.
- No matter how dead you think you've killed a bad guy, he can still get up at least 3 more times.
- Whenever a villain has captured the hero, he will pause for 5 minutes to tell the hero every detail of his plan to destroy and/or rule the earth, including times, dates, and addresses.
- Photos of loved ones, religious medals, and bibles can stop bullets better than a bullet proof vest.

Glossary

Here is a list of some of the English terms used during *The 39 Steps*.

Acquirer	One who buys or obtains an object or asset for oneself
Box bed	A bed completely enclosed so as to resemble a box
Buffers	People or things that prevent other incompatible people or things from coming into contact with or harming each other
Compere	Host or master of ceremonies of a stage revue or television program
Crofter	A person who rents and works a small farm, especially in Scotland or Northern England
Do a bunk	To leave hastily, especially under suspicious circumstances; run away
Flailing stick	An implement consisting of a handle with a free swinging stick at the end
Haddock	A silvery gray bottom-dwelling fish of the North Atlantic coastal waters, related to the cod; popular as a food fish and of great commercial value
Here's a corker	Someone or something that is astonishing or excellent
Liverish	Unhappy and bad tempered
Loch	A lake
Madame Tussauds	A museum displaying waxworks of historical and royal figures, film stars, sports stars and famous murderers
Manacled	Chained or shackled by the hands or ankles
Moors	A broad area of open land that is not good for farming
Piccadilly Circus	Famous road junction and public space of London's West End, connecting Regent Street with the major shopping street, Piccadilly
Procurer Fiscal	A public prosecutor in Scotland who investigates all sudden and suspicious deaths as well as presenting cases for the prosecution
The Forth Bridge	Also known as the Forth Rail Bridge, it spans the Firth of Forth in the east of Scotland. It is a cantilever bridge and is described as " <i>the one immediately and internationally recognized Scottish landmark.</i> "
The London Palladium	The London Palladium is a theatre which seats over 2,000 people. It is considered the most famous theatre in London and has hosted many famous performances.
Trilby	A hat of soft felt with an indented crown

Designer

Ailsa Paterson – Set & Costume Designer

Ailsa completed the Bachelor of Dramatic Art in Design (NIDA) in 2003.

Set and Costume Design credits for State Theatre Company include *The 39 Steps*, *Mendelssohn's Dream* (with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra), *Betrayal* (Associate Set Design and Costume Design), *Beckett Triptych*(*Footfalls*, *Eh Joe*, *Krapp's Last Tape*), *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Hedda Gabler* (Associate Set Design and Costume Design), *In the Next Room or The Vibrator Play*, *War Mother*, *The Ham Funeral*, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, *The Price* and *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. Costume Design credits include *Things I Know to be True*, *Little Bird*, *The Seagull* and *Three Sisters*.



Other theatre design credits include *Cloudstreet!* (Costume Design, State Opera of SA), *Naturally* (Restless), *The Streets* (OzAsia Festival 2015), *Cranky Bear* (Patch), *Mouse, Bird and Sausage* (Costume Design, Slingsby), *Other Desert Cities*, *Seminar* and *Skylight* (Ensemble), *You, Me and the Bloody Sea* (Adelaide Cabaret Festival 2013), *Ode to Nonsense* (Costume Design, Slingsby/State Opera of SA), *Shining City* (Griffin Theatre Company), *Hansel and Gretel* and *La Sonnambula* (Pacific Opera), *Faustus* and *Madame Melville* (BSharp), *Vampirella*, *The Internationalist* and *Bone* (Darlinghurst Theatre), *A Couple of Blaguards* (Seymour Centre/Comedy Theatre), *Shifted* (Sydney Dance Company) and *Debris* (Old Fitz /Melbourne Fringe). Ailsa worked on *The Straits* (ABC), *LAID* (ABC), *Underbelly — A Tale of Two Cities*, *Underbelly — The Golden Mile*, *Blue Water High*, *The Last Confession of Alexander Pearce*, *Ten Empty*, *The Boy from Oz Arena Spectacular*, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* *The Musical* and *High School Musical*.

Ailsa received the 2011 Mike Walsh Fellowship.

Set Design

The 39 Steps portrays the clowns as the producers, directors and designers of the play within the play. In this version it seems that they've received a grant to put on the show, but have overspent and run out of money part-way through.

The play takes place in many different locations, including 2 different countries, England and Scotland and contains every single legendary scene from the award-winning movie; including the chase on the Flying Scotsman, the escape on the Forth Bridge, the first theatrical bi-plane crash ever staged and the sensational death-defying finale in the London Palladium. Making 34 different scenes, it is a challenge to design.

It starts in front of a red theatre curtain, complete with theatre boxes and footlights for Mr Memory's vaudeville act. The curtain flies out to reveal Hannay's apartment with window, arm chair and side table. Although in the script, the heavies are below in the street, this design has them standing outside the window above looking in.

There are three scaffolds that re-arrange throughout the show. These become part of the train, the bridge, the backdrop of the town hall, become hotel rooms, houses and hold the motel sign and mayoral banner. Various doors come in for different scenes; the Professor's house has large wooden doors, the sheriff's office has saloon doors and the crofter's house has a door. *"It was essential to create the scenes quickly, so they are representational, with only a door or a move of the scaffolds to create the next scene."*



The Scottish moor is represented by a drop-cloth that is painted to represent the space, with lighting and smoke playing a crucial role in creating the atmosphere.



There are also other various theatrical elements added to help create the illusion, including; shadow puppets, slight-of-hand and tricks with lighting.

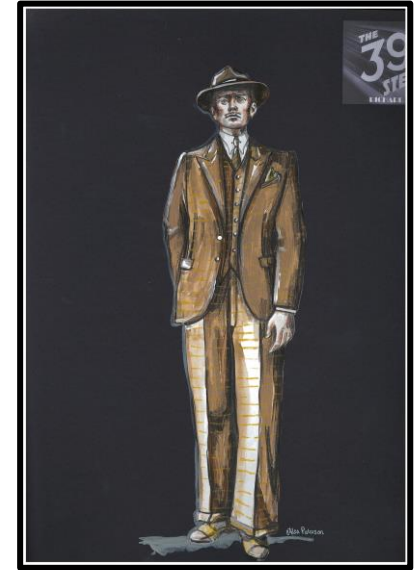
Costume Design

COSTUMES

All of the costumes were designed with the 1930s era in mind, adding detail and colour in the fashion.

Richard Hannay - wears a Paris tweed 3 piece suit from the 1930s era, an overcoat and a hat, only donning a milkman's coat for a disguise.

Anabella – the glamorous Anabella wears a 1935 bias cut full-length gown in a silky, clinging fabric, complete with long gloves.

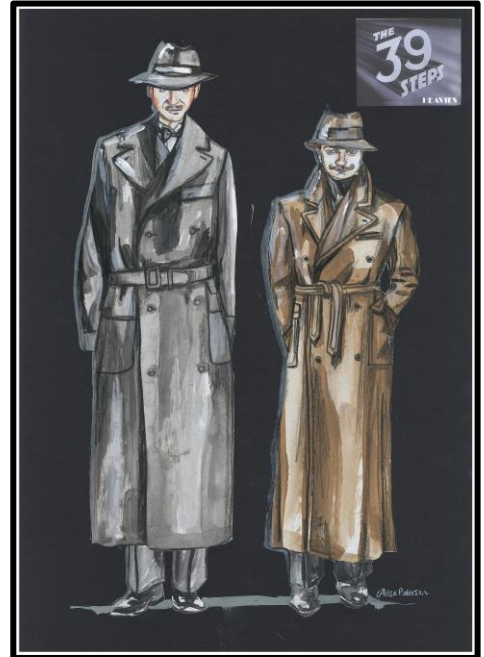


Pamela – wears classic day wear, with a skirt hemmed at mid-calf. The sleeves are ruffled and the waist is emphasised being fitted at the waist. Gloves and hats are also worn. In Act II she wears a tightly fitted coat typical of business attire.

Crofter's wife – wears a plaid skirt and a shawl, highlighting the difference between the farmer's wife and the glamorous life of Pamela.

Clowns

Charlie and Tim have a total of twenty costumes, which are added to a base costume of black pants and a white shirt. Jackets are used for the milkman, conductor, paper-boy and for the political supporters. The policemen have a blue cape and hat, the Sherriff wears a waistcoat and gun holster, the inspector and the heavies wear a trench-coat and the salesman wear a tailored 3-pce suit complete with bowler hat. In fact, almost every costume change includes a hat, ranging from bowler hat, to cap, a custodian helmet, fedora or scarf. There is also lots of tartan action! Many characters also have wigs or facial hair – moustaches and beards abound, and there is also the odd body suit!



Essay Questions

ENGLISH QUESTIONS

1. Create a list of the Top 20 movie thrillers and discuss why each film is successful and the common elements between them that create the thriller genre.
2. Watch the movie, *The 39 Steps*. Compare and contrast the film with the play, noting the differences in tone, speed, design, characters and plot.
3. Watch the movie, *The 39 Steps* and compare this with a modern spy thriller, such as James Bond, or *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. How has the genre changed? How has the hero and the femme fatale changed? Particularly note the change in camera work.
4. Richard Hannay is one of the first heroes of the spy thriller genre, some even describing him as the 'James Bond' of his day. What are some characteristics Hannay exhibits that make him Bond-like and how does he differ from the modern male action hero?
5. Discuss how the three females in the play move the story forward and how they affected Hannay's actions.
6. Research the role of the classic 'femme fatale' in film noir. Compare and contrast with the female characters in *The 39 Steps*.
7. What role does the audience have in creating the world of the play?
8. Research Alfred Hitchcock. After watching *The 39 Steps* on stage, create a list of Alfred Hitchcock's films that were mentioned or alluded to in the play.
9. Write a synopsis for a short thriller story.

DRAMA QUESTIONS

1. What makes a good movie thriller? Think about pace, surprise, fear, camera work, plot and situation and discuss how this works on film. Compare these elements to the play *The 39 Steps* and how these elements were augmented for the stage.
2. Compare the stock characters that the clowns play in *The 39 Steps* with the stock characters in Commedia Dell'arte. How many did you find? Give examples of each one.
3. How is the film noir genre used in the play?
4. Discuss the various devices that the actors used to change characters. Was it just costume, or were there other changes?
5. Look at the examples of pastiches and discuss with your class, why an artist would choose to imitate an existing work of art? Thinking back on the play, what techniques make this piece pastiche?
6. Discuss the set and staging of the play. How did these elements work? Were they effective? What were the biggest surprises?

DRAMA WARM-UP

Discuss and create a list of different genres, eg. Film noir, Kung Fu, western, drama, silent movie, action. Have the students come up in small groups to improvise a scene, giving them a location and the genre. To extend the task, change genres during the improvisation.

WRITING TASK

Choose a fairytale story. Create a pastiche from the story changing one of more rules of the story. Eg:

- Plot: Change the plot outline from a tragedy to a comedy or vice-versa.
- Setting: Change the setting. From past to present; jungle to a town; or an Australian setting.
- Character: Transform a character - male to female, villain to hero.
- Point of view: Re-write the story from the point of view of another character.
- Dialogue: Change the language of the play – modernise it, change region or social class

DESIGN TASK

Research train stations in the 1930s. Design a train station set that has no walls. What elements could you include to show the audience the setting without creating large set pieces?

OR

Ask students to think of an action/adventure film they know well and design a set for the play of the film. Create a journal of the difficulties in staging filmic elements and how these were overcome. Design a poster to accompany your adaptation to a play.

ACTING - PASTICHE

In pairs students are to come up with a location that deals with different members of the public; eg. supermarket, airport or a restaurant. Together they must work out a scene where they play varying characters by changing a prop, costume, voice or physicality. Supply a collection of simple hand props and costume pieces to help with the process. Rehearse and present to the class.

OR

Divide students into small groups. Choose a scene from an action/adventure movie and re-work it as a spoof for the stage. Write the script, rehearse the scene and present to the class.

OR

Divide students into small groups. Choose a scene from an action/adventure movie and get them to plan how to perform the action scene in the classroom using simple props and costumes to make the appearance of the action needed. Rehearse and perform.

Tables

	production elements	performance elements
strengths		
impact on audiences		
weaknesses		

design role	technique	What did this contribute to the performance?
lighting	<i>one</i>	
	<i>two</i>	
	<i>three</i>	
music	<i>one</i>	
	<i>two</i>	
	<i>three</i>	

Further Reading

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INTERESTING READING

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