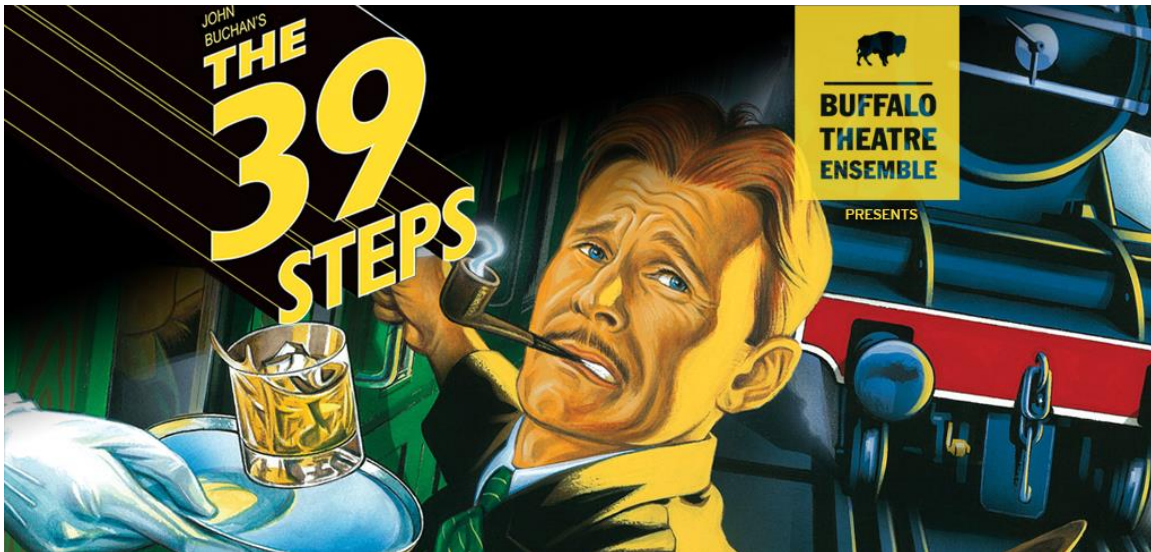


BUFFALO THEATRE ENSEMBLE

PRESENTS



Adapted by Patrick Barlow

From the novel by John Buchan

From the movie of Alfred Hitchcock
Licensed by ITV Global
Entertainment Limited

And an original concept by
Nobby Dimon and Simon Corble

Directed by Kurt Naebig

Sept. 8 - Oct. 8
Preview Sept. 7
The Playhouse Theatre

Time and Setting: England and Scotland 1935

Characters:

Richard Hannay
Annabella Schmidt/Pamela/Margaret
Clown 1
Clown 2

Director's Note:

Why do we go to the theatre? Hopefully, theatre provides a unique experience that is impossible to get anywhere else. What we see onstage exists for a moment in time...never repeated in quite the same way again. We can hear the actors breathe, we see the sweat on their brows, we feel the audience sharing the experience with us....we laugh and sometimes cry together.

The story of 'The 39 Steps' comes from the book by John Buchan written in 1915. In 1935 Alfred Hitchcock directed it as a film and it was produced in movie form three more times after.

In 1995, two actors Simon Corble and Nobby Dimon adapted the story for the theatre. It began in Yorkshire England, moved to London and soon found it's way to America. Within a few years it had won Olivier, Tony and Drama Desk awards and had become a staple of theatres throughout the world.

This highly theatrical version of the story is the kind of play I love to see. It's a thriller/chase/comedy and it calls on the audience to use its imagination as it moves from location to location and character to character.

It also demands a tremendous amount from all of the designers involved, as set, costumes, sound, lighting and props are used to quickly move the play forward from the shadowy streets of London to the wild moors of Scotland, while four extremely versatile actors play more roles than one can count.

We hope to give you a highly visceral, fun and exciting visit to our theatre here at BTE.

Enjoy the show. KN

Origins

(Origins section reprinted from Vertigo Theatre Company website

http://misterpeebles.weebly.com/uploads/3/2/3/1/32317745/the_39_steps_study_guide3.pdf)

When John Buchan (1875 – 1940) wrote the novel, The Thirty-Nine Steps in 1915, he called it a “shocker, where the incidents defy the probabilities and march just inside the borders of the possible.” With secret ciphers, German conspiracies, ruthless foreign agents, and chance encounters, it fit this description: however, the book was written out of boredom as Buchan was confined to his bed in the winter of 1914 as he recovered from an ulcer. The Thirty-Nine Steps pits protagonist Richard Hannay, an ordinary guy, against a network of German spies preparing to storm Great Britain. The story can be seen as the battle between Good (the allies as represented by Hannay) and Evil (Germany and the Ottoman Empire as represented by the character of Professor Jordan). In 1935, the same year that author John Buchan became the Governor General of Canada, Alfred Hitchcock directed a film adaptation of “The Thirty-Nine Steps,” adding a love interest to the story.

Alfred Hitchcock was a master of mystery and suspense. His films usually centered on either murder or espionage, with deception, mistaken identities and chase sequences complicating the plot. His film version of “The Thirty-Nine Steps” is no exception, including one of Hitchcock’s common themes of an innocent man, mistakenly suspected or accused of a crime, who must then track down the real perpetrator in order to clear himself.

In 1995, two writers based in the North of England named Nobby Dimon and Simon Corble,, came up with a stage version of The Thirty-Nine Steps based on both John Buchan’s book and Alfred Hitchcock’s 1935 film version. It was their idea to have 4 actors, 3 men and 1 woman, play all the roles, a theatrically challenging accomplishment. The latest version of THE 39 STEPS, the play you will be seeing at Vertigo Theatre, was adapted by Patrick Barlow and premiered in England at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in June of 2005. It was his choice to base his adaptation on the film, watching it over and over again. Classifying the film as a comedy thriller, Barlow took the film and then added things that he found funny.

In his foreword to the script, adaptor Patrick Barlow says: “One of the thrilling things about writing this was the challenge of putting an entire movie on stage, complete with film noir murders, shootings, train chases, plane crashes, heavies in fast cars, villains with little fingers missing, not to mention some of the most classic moments in the history of cinema. There is much opportunity for comedy and satire here. But it is also a love story. A man and a woman who have never loved anyone, yet miraculously – through all the adventure and hanging from bridges and clinging to trains and escaping from villains – discover the beating of their own true hearts. That there’s a reason to live and a reason to love. And

above all a reason – as our hero (fired up by love although he doesn't know that's what it is yet) blissfully realizes in his passionately impromptu political speech – to look after each other and look after the world.

“Let's all just set ourselves resolutely to make this world a happier place! A decent world! A good world! A world where no nation plots against nation! Where no neighbor plots against neighbor; where there's no persecution or hunting down, where everybody gets a square deal and a sporting chance and where people try to help and not to hinder! A world where suspicion and cruelty and fear have been forever banished! That's the sort of world I want! Is that the sort of world you want?”

Words written – remarkably – in 1935 by one of Alfred Hitchcock's team of writers and as resonant today as they were then.

Characters

(Characters and glossary sections reprinted from Vertigo Theatre Company website http://misterpeebles.weebly.com/uploads/3/2/3/1/32317745/the_39_steps_study_guide3.pdf)

In Patrick Barlow's play adaptation, 4 actors play all the roles. The hero, Richard Hannay, is played by one man throughout. The roles of Annabella, Pamela and Margaret are played a woman in the cast. All the other characters, are played by the two other actors in the cast. Below are brief descriptions of the main characters in THE 39 STEPS.

Richard Hannay is the hapless hero of the play. An ordinary man who has led a pretty hum-drum existence, finds himself fleeing from the wrongful accusation of murder through a series of improbable adventures as he is pursued by the authorities.

Anabella Schmitt is the mysterious woman with a German accent who Richard Hannay meets at a London theatre.

Pamela is the woman Hannay meets on the train to Scotland as he runs from the police who are hot on his trail.

Margaret is the wife of the Scottish farmer who invites Hannay to stay the night at their cottage. She flirts with her houseguest, enraging her husband, and helps our hero to get away when the police are at the door.

Compere is the Master of Ceremonies at the London theatre show Hannay attends. Mr. Memory is the star of the London show – a gifted man who Compere describes: “Every day Mr. Memory commits to memory fifty new facts and remembers every one of them.” His performance demonstrates his amazing skill, a photographic memory.

Professor Jordan is described by Annabella Schmitt as an Englishman living in a grand house at Alt-na-shellach in Scotland. She believes that he holds the secret of the Thirty-Nine Steps, containing top secret and highly confidential information crucial to the safety of the country

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND REFERENCES

compere: host, master of ceremonies of a stage revue or television program

trilby: a hat of soft felt with an indented crown

shakedown: bed, as of straw or blankets spread on the floor; any makeshift bed

do a bunk: to leave hastily, especially under suspicious circumstances; run away

lavatory: toilet facility

here's a corker: someone or something that is astonishing or excellent

crofter: person who rents and works a small farm, especially in Scotland or Northern England

box bed: a bed completely enclosed so as to resemble a box; a bed that folds up in the form of a box

flailing stick: an implement consisting of a handle with a free swinging stick at the end; used in manual threshing

Procurer Fiscal: a public prosecutor in Scotland who investigates all sudden and suspicious deaths as well as presenting cases for the prosecution

Madame Tussauds: a wax museum in London with branches now in a number of other major cities. It is a tourist attraction displaying waxworks of historical and royal figures, film stars, sports stars and famous murderers.

The London Palladium: This theatre started as the Palladium, a premier venue for variety performances. Called the London Palladium now, it seats 2,286. From the roster of stars who have played there and many televised performances, it could be considered the most famous theatre in London and the United Kingdom, especially for musical variety shows.

The Forth Bridge: also known as the **Forth Rail Bridge** or the **Forth Railway Bridge**, spans the Firth of Forth in the east of Scotland. Opened on March 4th, 1890, it acts as a major artery connecting the north-east and the south-east of the country. It is a cantilever bridge using cantilevers that project horizontally into space, supported only on one end. The Collins Encyclopedia of Scotland

describes the Forth Bridge as “the one immediately and internationally recognized Scottish landmark.”

Things to think about prior to the performance:

- What do you think “The 39 Steps” are?
- In this play, some people play many roles. What ways might an actor employ to seem like a different person?
- How are plays different than movies? What might an actor, director or designer do to differentiate this play from the feel or look of the movie?

Things to think about during the performance:

- How do you think the set will be used when you first see it before the play begins? How does that differ from what actually occurred onstage?
- Why do you think there are so many different scenes (34 in total) in this play?
- There are a number of chairs in the back of the stage area. Why do you think they are there?

Things to think about/discuss after the performance:

- Did *The 39 Steps* resolve in the way you thought it would? Why or why not? Were you surprised by the ending?
- In *The 39 Steps*, Richard Hannay goes on a wild, dangerous adventure he’s not prepared for and finds that even he has the potential to be a hero. Do you have what it takes to be a hero? What situations can provoke ordinary people to find the hero within?

Other Analysis “Tools”:

- What is the significance of the play’s title?
- What happens in the very last moments of the play? Certainly, the last few minutes, but more importantly, the last 30 seconds? In that time, what happens or is said, and what does that say about what the play is “about?”

The running time for this production is approximately one hour and thirty minutes, plus intermission.

Please join us for a **pre-show discussion Thursday, September 7 from 6:45 – 7:15 pm in MAC 140** preceding the preview performance. Note that pre-show discussions will include the director and designers, and will be a discussion of the approach to this production.

There will be a **post-show discussion** following the **Friday, September 15** performance. The post-show will be with director, cast and crew, and will be fielding questions from the audience.

Please join us!