

ALFRED
HITCHCOCK'S

THE
39
STEPS

ADAPTED BY

**PATRICK
BARLOW**

FROM THE
NOVEL BY
JOHN BUCHAN

FROM THE
MOVIE BY
ALFRED HITCHCOCK

AND AN ORIGINAL
CONCEPT BY NOBBY DIMON
AND SIMON CORBLE



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Vertigo Theatre is committed to creating a welcoming atmosphere for schools and to assist teachers and parent chaperones with that process. It is our wish to foster and develop our relationship with our student audience members. It is our intention to create positive theatre experiences for young people by providing study guides and post-show “talk backs” with our actors and theatre personnel, in order to enrich students’ appreciation of theatre as an art form and enhance their enjoyment of our plays.

THE HILARIOUS BROADWAY HIT!

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S THE 39 STEPS

Adapted By Patrick Barlow

THE CAST

JOHN ULLYATT	Richard Hannay
ADRIENNE SMOOK	Annabella/Margaret/Pamela
ANDY CURTIS	Man 1
CHRISTOPHER HUNT	Man 2

CREATIVE TEAM

MARK BELLAMY	Director
IAM COULTER	Assistant Director
NARDA MCCARROLL	Set & Lighting Designer
CHRISTIAN GOUTSIS	Sound Designer
DEITRA KALYN	Costume Designer
CAROLYN DEVINS	Costumer
ANASTASIA VOGL	Wardrobe Apprentice
JOHANNE DELEEUW	Stage Manager
HEATHER RYCRAFT	Assistant Stage Manager
MEGAN GURNSEY	Apprentice Stage Manager
TERRI GILLIS	Production & Facility Manager
BECKY SOLLY	Technical Director
TYNE FOX	Production Associate
WES HARDER	Head Scenic Carpenter
AMANDA FOX	Props Mistress
KURTIS WILKINSON	Props Builder
JEANNETTE HALL	Props Builder
RON SEIGMUND	Wig Stylist
JANET MADER	Head Scenic Painter
JESSE SINCLAIR	Scenic Painter
CHELSEA MOSSING	Scenic Painter
ERIN SNEATH	Scenic Painter
KALYNA CONRAD	Playhouse Technician

SETTING

Various locations in London & Scotland

TIME

August, 1935

SPECIAL THANKS

JV Theatre Productions, University of Calgary, The Calgary Opera, Andy Goertzen, Martin Harder, Goodall Rubber, The Citadel Theatre, Edmonton

Vertigo Theatre is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatre and engages professional artists who are members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association through the Canadian Agreement.

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WHO IS VERTIGO THEATRE



Vertigo Theatre operates out of Vertigo Theatre Centre and is located in the heart of downtown at the Calgary Tower.

Housing two performing spaces, The Playhouse and The Studio, Vertigo Theatre produces a mystery series (Vertigo Mystery Theatre) and presents theatre-for-young-audience productions from across the country (Y Stage).



Vertigo Mystery Theatre is a unique opportunity for students to come together and engage in an entertaining theatrical experience that promotes problem solving. Appropriate for Junior and Senior High School students, Vertigo Mystery Theatre allows students to study the literature of authors such as Agatha Christie and J.B. Priestly while engaging in a shared cultural experience.



Y Stage provides young audiences and adults alike an opportunity to investigate and rediscover our world. Y Stage is ideal for educating young people on the vast scope of theatre as we feature a wide variety of performance styles including physical theatre, mask, dance and spoken word. With five productions and an additional show aimed specifically at teens, Y Stage truly has something for students of all ages.

ABOUT GOING TO THE THEATRE

Going to the theatre to see a play is a unique and wonderful experience. The sense of being “right there” in the characters’ lives, the exchange of energy between actors and audience, this cannot be found in front of television, films, computers, iPods or Blackberries. In the theatre, the audience shares what the actors on stage are doing by watching and listening. The actors on stage also respond to the audience and the way they are reacting to the performance.

Some students may be coming to the theatre for the first time; others may need to be reminded of appropriate audience behavior. The following is offered in the hope that your students gain the most from their theatre experience.

- Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers, chaperones and theatre personnel.
- Once seated, stay put, watch and enjoy the play. If you absolutely must use the washroom during the performance, please exit the theatre quickly and quietly. You will be readmitted to the theatre at the discretion of the House Manager.
- Please do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat or stage in front of you.
- Remember, this is “live” theatre. If you even whisper to someone beside you during the performance or in a blackout between scenes, you could disturb the concentration of the actors doing their jobs, or other audience members’ enjoyment of the play.
- Eating, drinking or chewing gum is not permitted in the theatre.
- Feel free to talk quietly before the show. When the houselights go down at the beginning of the play, this lets you know that we’re starting. It is at this moment that the actors and technical staff do their final preparation for the opening moment, so please let them do their work by being quiet and respectful.
- Laugh if it’s funny, cry if it’s sad, think, watch, listen, feel, respond, and, above all, applaud at the end. Let the actors and everyone else involved in the production know in the curtain call that you had a good time and appreciated their work.
- If you have a cell phone, iPod, iPhone, Blackberry, or any other electronic device, please make sure it is turned off or leave it with the Front of House Manager until the performance is over. If you feel the urge to text during the performance, just don’t out of courtesy to your fellow audience members and the performers.
- The use of cameras and recording devices in the theatre is strictly prohibited.
- At the end of the performance and “talk back”, please wait for the ushers to escort your group out of the theatre.
- Above all else, have a good time!

ABOUT THE PLAY

Note to Teachers

You may wish to watch Alfred Hitchcock's 1935 film version of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* with your students at some point, either before or after you attend Vertigo Theatre's stage production. If time is an issue, some of the key scenes to look at are the first Mr. Memory scene at the Palladium, the train top pursuit, and the Forth Rail Bridge escape.

If you watch the film before students see the play, it may very well pique their curiosity about how such a massive filmic work could ever be presented on stage with so many settings and only four actors in the company.

If you watch the film after seeing the play, Vertigo Theatre's mad-cap romp through the story, it might encourage them to think outside the box in their own work. Being able to think creatively and problem solve is an asset in any field or area of study.

Origins

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 centred 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 neighbour plots against neighbour; 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

In Patrick Barlow's play adaptation, 4 actors – 3 men and 1 woman play all the roles. The hero, Richard Hannay, is played by one man throughout. The roles of Annabella, Pamela and Margaret are played by the woman in the cast. All the other characters, approximately 150, are played by the two other men 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 beautiful, mysterious woman Richard Hannay meets at a London theatre.

Pamela is the attractive 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 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.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Richard Hannay is at a London theatre, attending a demonstration of 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, Hannay finds himself holding a frightened Annabella Schmitt, 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”.

The next day, Hannay wakes up to find her dead, stabbed with his bread knife. He sneaks out of the flat disguised as a milkman and takes a train to Scotland where Annabella had told him she was going to find the man. On the train, he sees the police on his trail. In desperation, he enters a compartment and kisses the sole occupant, the attractive Pamela, in an attempt to escape detection. She, however, manages to free herself from his unwanted embrace and betrays him to the law. He jumps from the train onto the forth Rail Bridge and escapes.

He stays the night with a poor older farmer and his young wife, Margaret, who flirts with Hannay. The next morning, he leaves in the farmer’s Sunday coat and calls at the house Annabella had told him of. There he finds the man with the missing finger-joint, the seemingly respectable Professor Jordan, who shoots him after a brief conversation and leaves him for dead. Luckily, the bullet fails to penetrate the farmer’s prayer book, left in the pocket of his coat, and Hannay flees once more.

He goes to the local police, but they refuse to accept his story, since they know Jordan well. Hannay jumps through a window and escapes into the crowd. He tried to hide himself in a political meeting, but is mistaken for the keynote speaker; he gives a rousing impromptu speech (without knowing a thing about the candidate he is introducing), but is recognized by Pamela, who gives him up once more. They are handcuffed together and taken away by “policemen”. Hannay eventually realizes they are agents of the conspiracy when they bypass the nearest police station. 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, the woman still not believing Hannay’s story. While he sleeps, she slips out of the handcuffs, but then eavesdrops on one of the fake policemen on the telephone downstairs; the conversation confirms Hannay’s assertions. She returns to the room and sleeps on the floor. The next morning, she tells him what she heard, and is sent to London to pass it along to the police. No secrets have been reported missing, however, so they do nothing to help. Instead, they follow her to get to Hannay and arrest him for Annabella’s murder.

She leads them to “Mr. Memory’s” show at the London Palladium, where the police close in on the fugitive. When the performer is introduced, Hannay recognizes his theme music – it’s the annoyingly catchy tune he hasn’t been able to forget for days. Hannay puts two and two together and realizes that “Mr. Memory” is the means by which the spies are

smuggling the military secrets out: he has them memorized. As the police take him into custody, Hannay shouts out a question about the 39 Steps. When “Mr. Memory” compulsively begins to answer, Professor Jordon shoots him and tries to flee, but is apprehended. The dying “Mr. Memory” recites the information stored in his brain, a design for a silent aircraft, and Hannay and Pamela stroll off, hand in hand.

ABOUT THE PLAY ADAPTOR

Patrick Barlow is probably best known in the UK for his hilarious two-man National Theatre of Brent, which has become a legend in British theatre, television and radio. Their comedy epics include *Zulu*, *The Charles and Diana Story*, *Messiah* and *The Wonder of Sex*. They have won two Sony Gold Awards, a Premier Ondas Award for Best European Comedy and the New York Festival Gold Award for Best Comedy. Other screenwriting includes: *Adrian Mole*, *Christopher Columbus*, *Queen of the East*, *Van Gogh* (Prix Futura, Berlin Film Festival), *Revolution!!* (Best Comedy, Jerusalem Film Festival), and *Young Visitors*. Publications include: “Shakespeare: The Truth!” and “The Complete History of the Whole World.” Screen/theatre acting credits include: *Wind in the Willows*, *Absolutely Fabulous*, *Clatterford*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Notting Hill*, *The Diary of Bridget Jones*, and *Nanny McPhee*.

THE 39 STEPS won Mr. Barlow a London Olivier Award and Whatsonstage Award for Best New Comedy in the UK. His Broadway adaptation received 6 Tony Award nominations, winning 2 for Best Lighting Design and Best Sound Design. The play also won the Drama Desk Award, Unique Theatrical Experience.

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 Encyclopaedia of Scotland* describes the Forth Bridge as “the one immediately and internationally recognized Scottish landmark.”

MEET COSTUME DESIGNER, DEITRA KALYN

What is your educational background and what brought you to your choice of costume design as a career?

I have a Fine Arts Diploma from Grant MacEwan University, and an Honors Degree in Painting from the Alberta College of Art and Design.

After High School, I was really torn as to what I wanted to pursue as post secondary education but I knew that I wanted it to be in the Arts. I was interested in Fine Arts, Fashion and Theatre. I settled on taking the Fine Arts program and decided that at the very least it would be a great start to an Art career and that at least the vocabulary would be the same among all three disciplines. While I was at both Institutions I had very supportive instructors who encouraged me to explore my love of theatre through Fine Art. I spent the last two years of my Degree doing very theatrical installations and discovered that Theatre was what I wanted to do.

After my degree I received an AFA (Alberta Foundation for the Arts) grant where I specially designed a practicum at Theatre Calgary to give me the specific theatre experience that I lacked. I then spent the next few years working on small scale productions and working for free while I built up my resume.

Briefly describe your process as a designer from your first read of a script up to and including opening night.

First I will read the script quickly to get a sense of what the play is about. Then I will have a 'prelim' meeting with the Director where they will explain and describe their sense of the show and how they want it to look in terms of a concept. During this meeting I am able to voice my opinions about particular design elements and concepts that I think might work for the show. After that meeting I go back and read the play again.

Here generally I have a notebook with me while I read the script. I first look at the time period, number of characters and how many costumes each character might be wearing during the show. I will write down every bit of information that is stated in the script that describes each character. Everything from their name to particular mannerisms that might be indicated in stage directions that might affect how they behave in a certain costume. I generally pay special attention to scene changes noting any 'quick changes' or special requirements for certain characters from one scene to another.

After I have all the basic information of a character down, I will go into further detail with each costume listing the 'parts' that each costume requires, such as 'socks', 'suspenders', 'undershirt' etc. This way I can be sure that no parts of costumes are going to be left out, or also see if I've repeated myself with a particular costume item.

I then begin the process of 'hunting' and 'gathering' the items that I have created on my list. This can include everything from purchasing, to building and borrowing items. I

coordinate with Stage Management for fittings where I will try the options that I have gathered on each actor, and make the necessary changes. The process of ‘fittings’ to a finished product can take several tries. Once the actors, the set designer and the Director are happy with the finished products they become ‘show pieces’, and can be used either in rehearsal or in most cases when the actors reach the stage.

During the technical days, I will watch the show in tech runs. This is where all the technical elements of a show come together and we can watch all the parts working at the same time. During these ‘runs’ I will watch for any problems that might arise for the actors while they are working with the costumes on stage. Generally this process can take up to and including to the Opening Night.

As a designer I am contracted to see at least one Preview performance and make any necessary changes that come out of that time. Once the show gets to Opening, my job is essentially done and I can sit back and enjoy it!!

You have designed costumes for many plays over the past few years. Would you say you have a favorite and why or why not?

It’s a tough decision to have a ‘favorite’. I have many things about many shows that I have loved over the years. Every show is different so it’s hard to compare them. I really loved working on quite a few Vertigo shows for a number of reasons, but mainly because the family there is so amazing.

A few fun shows that stand out for me are AN INSPECTOR CALLS, THE MOUSETRAP, MURDER ON THE NILE, THE LIEUTENANT OF INNISHMORE, EVIL DEAD THE MUSICAL and THE PENELOPIAD. I’ve loved all of these shows for different reasons, but because of my very short attention span, it is easy for me to not feel nostalgic about the past and get excited for the future!!

What challenges do you face designing the wardrobe for the Vertigo Theatre production of THE 39 STEPS?

Obviously the largest challenge is the sheer amount of costumes that only 2 actors are getting in and out of by making these costumes as easy to work with as possible, but also making them as authentic as possible so as not to destroy the integrity of the period. I also want to make sure that because the actors have limited time in some of the costumes and don’t necessarily have time to wear a ‘full’ costume, I want to make sure what they are wearing is as good as it can be for the audience to understand who they are. It’s certainly a very fun challenge.

What advice can you offer to students who are considering costume design as a career?

Work hard and always keep your mind open to learning new things. It doesn’t matter how many shows I do or who I work with, there is always something new that I take away

from every show. It can be as simple as learning a new way to make a closure on a costume or learning about a whole new time period.

I think that to make it in this industry you need to have a large willingness to learn and be very open to change!

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Britain in the 1930's

In order to get a sense of the time in which the play, THE 39 STEPS, is set, it might be useful to do some research into the period.

As the play opens we meet our hero, Richard Hannay. He says:

“London. 1935. August. I'd been back three months in the old country and frankly wondering why. The weather made me liverish, no exercise to speak of and the talk of the ordinary Englishman made me sick. I'd had enough of restaurants and parties and race meetings... Dropped into my club. Full of old colonial buffers. Had a scotch and soda, picked up an evening paper, put it back. Full of elections and wars and rumours of wars...”

Below are some topics to explore about Britain in the 1930's.

Employment and Unemployment
Business and Industry
Industrial Towns and Country Communities
Incomes, Expenditures and the Value of the British Pound
The Effects of the Great Depression
Causes of Poverty
Housing
Social Class
Clothing and Fashion
Health
Cars and Transportation
Radio
Education
Sports and Hobbies
Newsreels and Movies
Religion

Vaudeville

At the turn of the century in America, a popular form of entertainment was vaudeville, made up of comedians, singers, plate spinners, ventriloquists, dancers, musicians, acrobats, animal trainers, and anyone who could keep an audience's interest for more than three minutes.

This kind of entertainment was also beloved in Britain, often known as music hall. In America, such performers as Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Will Rogers, Bob Hope and Fanny Brice began as vaudeville performers. Even today, shows such as late Night with David Letterman and Saturday Night Live continue the traditions of popular variety entertainment.

Among the best-known and loved American vaudeville performers are William (Bud) Abbott and Lou Costello. This comedy duo worked in radio, film and television. Their

iconic and influential patter routine, “Who’s on First?”, with its rapid-fire word play and comprehension confusion set the framework for many of their best known comedy bits.

To get a sense of the style, divide students into pairs and have them work the following routine made famous by Abbott and Costello. Encourage them to move the scene quickly and pick up cues while still speaking clearly in order to be understood.

Two Tens for a Five routine made famous by Abbott and Costello

This is a classic vaudeville routine that sets the “slickster” character of Bud Abbott and his willingness to con his buddy Lou Costello when needed. It can be seen in *One Night in the Tropics*, Abbott and Costello’s film debut.

Abbott: *Have you got two tens for a five?*

Costello: *Yeah.*

Abbott: *There we are. There’s your ten.*

Costello: (irritated) *Come on, come on!*

Abbott: *What’s the matter with you? Something wrong?*

Costello: *Yeah, fifteen dollars went south!*

Abbott: *What do you mean?*

Costello: *You give a lot of fast talk! You say “give me two tens for a five” and I give it to you.*

Abbott: *Oh, you did? Wise guy! Okay, here’s your five, give me back my two tens.*

Costello: *That’s better.*

Abbott: *Now get out of here.*

Much of the play, *THE 39 STEPS*, moves at the same break-neck speed through the story of Hitchcock’s film. Examine the following script excerpt in which two ‘heavies’ discover their prisoners, Hannay and Pamela are missing. Have students play with it with the same attack and pace as the Abbott and Costello vaudeville routine.

Heavy 2: *They got away!*

Heavy 1: *Where’d they go!?*

Heavy 2: *How do I know!?! If we don’t find them –*

Heavy 1: *Yes?*

Heavy 2: *- our lives won't be worth living!*
Heavy 1: *Oh my God!*

Heavy 2: *Wait wait!*

Heavy 1: *What what?*

Heavy 2: *The car the car!*

Heavy 1: *Where? Where?*

Heavy 2: *There! There! Take it take it!!*

Heavy 1: *I'm taking it I'm taking it!*

Heavy 2: *Gotta find'em! Gotta find'em!*

Heavy 1: *Gotta find'em! Gotta find'em!*

Heavy 2: *I just said that!*

Heavy 1: *I know you just said that!*

Heavy 2: *Well don't say it again!*

Heavy 1: *Alright! Alright!*

Heavy 2: *Now come on come on!*

Heavy 1: *Come on come on!*

Acting Challenges

In THE 39 STEPS, four actors depict well over 150 roles, with Man #1 and Man #2 playing most of them. What an astounding challenge for those two actors! How can they possibly pull off this feat? By using all the skills in their actor toolboxes, such as vocal variety, dialects, movement skills, creative physicality and clever text interpretation. And, of course, their work is enhanced by the use of different costume pieces and props. To assist students to appreciate and get into this “acting zone”, try the following activity. Have on hand a varied collection of simple hand props and costume pieces, such as hats, coats, shawls, scarves, vests, ties, handbags, shopping bags, walking sticks, eyeglasses, etc.

Brainstorm to come up with a list of locations where you would find someone dealing with a client and/or a service being provided to a member of the public. Some examples are:

a department store
a grocery store
airport check-in or security
a restaurant
a bank
a post office
a hair-dressing salon or barber shop
etc.

In pairs, students decide in which location to set their scene and who will be Person #1 and Person #2.

In the first version of the improvised scene, Person #1 will play one character – the one providing the service, while Person #2 plays two different clients. For example, if the setting of a restaurant is chosen, Person #1 will play the server while Person #2 plays two different customers. Encourage students to make use of all the skills in their actor toolboxes as well as one or two simple costume/prop changes.

Now switch – Person #1 plays two different customers while Person #2 plays the server. Rehearse and present.

Persuasively Speaking

In *THE 39 STEPS*, our hero, Richard Hannay, finds himself embroiled in a number of tricky situations. In one instance, he attends a political meeting, but is mistaken for the keynote speaker; he gives a passionate impromptu speech without knowing anything about the candidate he is introducing. Here is an excerpt from that speech to share with your students.

Hannay: ... *So look here – let's 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 neighbour plots against neighbour, 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! So I'm asking you – each and every one of you here tonight – you and you and – you and you and you and – definitely you! Is that the sort of world you want? Because that's the sort of world I want! What do you think? Let's vote on it! Come on! Vote for a good world! A better world! A new world! ...*

Rousing political speeches can often influence voters if they think the speaker is able to create the changes they wish to see in their world. Ask students to imagine they are running for office in positions of their choosing, whether it be class president or Prime Minister of Canada. Write short campaign speeches designed to persuade others that they can be trusted to do an excellent job when elected. What does it take to be a good speaker? What skills does a political candidate need in order to convince people to trust him or her with their votes. What is their vision of the kind of world they want to inhabit?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Play Themes to Explore

The book on which the play, THE 39 STEPS, is loosely based was written by John Buchan in Scotland in 1915. The play is actually more accurately based on Alfred Hitchcock's 1935 film version.

In her 2009 foreword to the published play script, Deborah Buchan, Lady Stewartby of Scotland, who happens to be John Buchan's grand-daughter, said:

"My grandfather, John Buchan, would be amazed and delighted that a play of his novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, is being published as a script nearly a century after he wrote it for his own amusement. JB was never proprietorial about his work – for example, he loved the 1935 Alfred Hitchcock film of the book – and the more people who feel they want to put on and perform what was possibly the first spy thriller, the more delighted he would be.

On a serious note, two themes JB was anxious to convey in his novels were, firstly, that the veneer of civilization is very thin, easily exposing the horrors beneath and, secondly, that evil comes in very attractive forms, making it all the harder to resist. So the leader of the Black Stone gang in the book (Professor Jordan in the film and play) is urbane, cultured, charming and established in British country life – to such an extent that Hannay cannot believe he is evil. Despite the deft and funny way the action in this marvelous script by Patrick Barlow is portrayed on stage, those themes are not lost. I think my grandfather would have been very proud."

Were John Buchan's themes conveyed in the stage version of THE 39 STEPS? Have students prepare brief essays, choosing one of Buchan's themes and citing moments in the story that back their chosen theme. They may also wish to conclude their essays using examples in our present-day era that may or may not support the chosen theme. Are there universal themes and truths that never change throughout time?

Alfred Hitchcock and his MacGuffins

Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980), "Master of Suspense", came from humble beginnings as the son of a London poultry dealer. Often making cameo appearances in his own films, his career spanned from the inception of talking pictures in the late 1920's through to the 1970's.

Hitchcock's films usually centred around either murder or espionage, with deception, mistaken identities and chase sequences complicating the plot. Touches of humour and the macabre were often components as well. Some of his most important films include *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1935), *Rebecca* (1940), *Strangers on a Train* (1951), *Dial M for Murder* (1954), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1955), *Vertigo* (1958), *North By Northwest* (1959), *Psycho* (1960), *The Birds* (1963), *Topaz* (1969), and *Family Plot* (1976). He received the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award in 1979 and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1980.

Some of Alfred Hitchcock's most popular films utilized the story device known as the MacGuffin (or McGuffin) - a plot element that catches the viewer's attention or drives the plot of a work of fiction. Sometimes the specific nature of the MacGuffin is not important to the plot such that anything that serves as a motivation serves its purpose. The MacGuffin can sometimes be ambiguous, completely undefined, and generic or left

open to interpretation. Commonly, though not always, the MacGuffin is the central focus of the film in the first act, and later declines in importance as the struggles and motivations of the characters play out. Sometimes the MacGuffin is all but forgotten. Spy thrillers are tailor-made for MacGuffins, and few filmmakers are as well known for both as Alfred Hitchcock.

Ask students what they think the MacGuffin is in *THE 39 STEPS*. (It is the British military secrets.)

Brainstorm about other films students have seen which contain the MacGuffin plot device. Some examples are: *Avatar* (unobtainium); *Mission Impossible III* (rabbit's foot); *Lord of the Rings* (the one ring); *The Da Vinci Code* (the Holy Grail).

Design Challenges

Just as the play, *THE 39 STEPS*, presents daunting acting challenges for the actors depicting over 150 characters, so are there huge design challenges to overcome. Alfred Hitchcock's film version contains set pieces that are iconic: the train top chase, the Forth Bridge escape, "Mr. Memory" at the Palladium.

Have a class discussion about what students thought of the set and staging of the play. How did those elements work? Were they effective? What were the biggest surprises?

Ask students to don their own design caps. Think of a film they know very well, preferably one with a lot of action/adventure sequences. How would they stage some of the memorable moments?

Encourage students to think inventively, rather than to rely on large expensive sets. They do not have a *Phantom of the Opera* budget! How can they creatively simplify the required set to tell the story? Using the elements demonstrated in *THE 39 STEPS* as a template for what is possible, have students come up with their own designs for their chosen film sequences.

Pastiche

Dictionary.com defines the word pastiche as:

1. a literary, musical or artistic piece consisting wholly or chiefly of motifs or techniques borrowed from one or more sources.
2. an incongruous combination of materials, forms, motifs, etc. taken from different sources.

In other words, pastiche is a work of art that mixes styles and/or imitates the style of another artist or period.

When asked whether his adaptation of *THE 39 STEPS* was pastiche, Patrick Barlow agreed that it was.

Discuss the idea of pastiche with your students and ask them to pinpoint examples in the performance they saw at Vertigo Theatre.

There are many other examples of pastiche to examine and explore. The works of Picasso are often borrowed from to create other pieces of art. Television variety shows, such as *Saturday Night Live*, are notorious for original scenes combining many styles and forms from other sources. The television show, *The Simpsons*, often uses known material to create its own brand of pastiche. Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders, British comedy duo, have come up with many hilarious spoofs and satires of popular culture, movies,

celebrities and art, such as The Lord of the Rings Trilogy, Madonna, Mama Mia, Harry Potter and America's Next Top Model. Canadian comedians, Johnny Wayne and Frank Shuster were active professionally from the 1940's until the late 1980's. They performed "literate" comedy, combined with slapstick, often using classical or Shakespearean settings and characters. For example, they created a modern murder investigation using Shakespeare's JULIUS CAESAR in a sketch called Rinse the Blood off my Toga. Check out you-tube to watch some of these clever pastiches.

Ask students to divide into pairs to create their own brief pastiches. Choose a short two-person scene from a serious play and rework it as a spoof or satire. It might be fun to look at the work of some of the greats, such as William Shakespeare, Sharon Pollack, John Murrell, Tennessee Williams, or Judith Thompson, to name a few. Write, rehearse and present the scenes.

Student Play Review

We would love to know what your students thought of our production of THE 39 STEPS. Please encourage them to write and send us copies of their play reviews. If they wish to be entered into a draw to receive 2 tickets to one of our upcoming productions, they must include the following:

First name

Last name initial only

Grade

School name

Teacher contact name

School phone number

Date of the performance attended

Please fax 403-263-1611 or email play reports to
nathan.pronyshyn@vertigotheatre.com

Once the draw is done, we will contact you and the school to let the student know. The winning student may then get in touch with us regarding how and when to pick up the tickets.

Before students write their reviews of THE 39 STEPS, talk about the role of a critic. Is the point of a review to merely describe the play and tell the story, or offer opinions on the production?

You may wish to offer the following as a guideline for student play reviews.

Some play and film reviews offer a rating in the form of a number of stars (*), with one star representing a weak rating and five stars representing a perfect one. Assign your review of THE 39 STEPS the number of stars you think it merits.

Write a headline for your review that sums up your thoughts and feelings about the production.

In your opening statement, state your expectations before you attended the performance and whether or not they were met.

Follow with comments on some or all of the following play elements:

- style, story and themes of the play
- conflicts in the play
- direction
- acting
- scenic design
- costume design
- make-up design (if applicable)
- lighting and sound

In your closing statement, include any final thoughts on the production and whether you would recommend it.

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Evaluation Form

Your Feedback is very important to us! Our series are growing rapidly and the information you provide will help us to determine future programming, booking procedures and educational content. Return by fax to 403-263-1611

SHOW:
TEACHER NAME:

SCHOOL:
GRADE:

Please rate the following from 1-10 (1=Poor, 5=Good, 10=Excellent)

1) Booking Procedure

(poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (excellent)

Comments:

2) Affordability & Accessibility (Price, Bussing, etc)

Comments:

4) Show Start Times & Performance Duration

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

5) Study Guide Material

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

6) Production Value (Set, Costume, Props etc.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

7) Educational Value: (Was the production successful as a learning experience for your students?)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

8) Entertainment Value (Did the production engage your Students?)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

9) Overall Experience

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

General Feedback and suggestions:

Thank you for helping us continue improving our series!