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THE 39 STEPS

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 Simon Corble and Nobby Dimon

Wed 11 - Sat 14 May 2011

Time: 8pm • Saturday Matinee: 2.30pm • £7.00 - £10.00 (concessions available)



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The 39 Steps

Richard Hannay

Dan Clucas

Annabella Schmidt, Pamela Edwards, Margaret

Sally Geoghegan

Clown 1

Mike Code

Clown 2

Malcolm Emms

Director's Notes

During the Christmas holidays in 2009 I treated my 12 year old son to a West End matinee. What to see? The 39 Steps? A comedy-thriller? That'll do the trick I thought, hoping it would entertain him - hoping it would not bore us! Little did I realise that the whole family would leave The Criterion Theatre that afternoon exhausted from gasping and laughing.

It was a totally mad-cap affair, and I was left with no doubt as to why the show had won the Olivier Award for Best Comedy. The kids in the audience loved it because it was silly. The adults in the audience loved it because it was silly.

"The 39 Steps? A Comedy?" It isn't an obvious choice for a slapstick production I agree. However, in the hands of Patrick Barlow (probably most well known as founder, writer and co-performer of the National Theatre of Brent whose two-man epics include Zulu, The Charge of the Light Brigade, The Messiah and The Charles and Diana Story) this adaptation was bound to be a comedic triumph. Adapted from the Hitchcock film the play captures all the romance and style of the 1930s, when chaps were chaps, had pencil moustaches, smoked pipes, drank whisky and said "golly" and "gosh" and "I say".

Patrick Barlow intended his adaptation to be performed in small-scale theatre venues, so The Court Theatre is the perfect place to unravel our rehearsals and give the actors the opportunity to demonstrate their craft and create something from almost nothing.

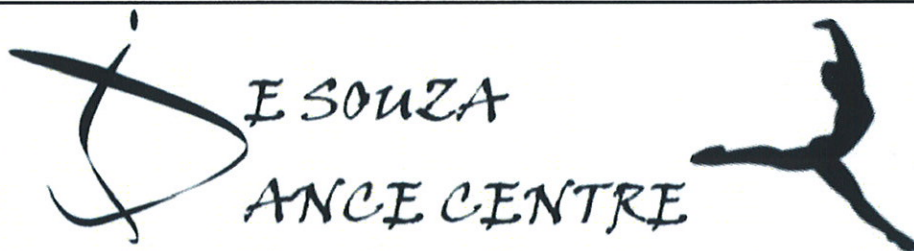
So this evening, with their upper lips quite stiff, our four actors, armed with trunks, wheels and a handful of props, will recreate for you the dozens of roles from the Hitchcock movie and find comedy where you would least expect it. Nothing has been cut, so prepare yourselves for a death-defying train chase, bi-plane explosions, missing fingers, howling wind and a lot of smoke.

We hope you enjoy this show as much as we have enjoyed preparing it for you. It has been one of Frayed Knot's most challenging productions and it would not have been possible without The Hidden Army. It is normally large scale musicals that require a lot of people working backstage but The 39 Steps has a second show running behind the scenes that the audiences never get to see.

From the moment we began to hatch our plans it was vital that we recruited a committed technical and backstage team. Having a revolving door of characters on-stage keeps the storytelling moving. However, quick costume and scene changes mean that back-stage The Hidden Army are working like soldier ants and without their support the actors would be unable to perform effectively. The light and sound cues were considered weeks before we came to The Court Theatre and practiced in rehearsal. I would particularly like to thank Nick Cooper for making that possible.

Cast and crew have worked incredibly hard and I would like to thank everyone involved.

Enjoy the show.



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The 39 Steps – A Production History

The Thirty-Nine Steps (novel, 1915)

The source material for all later versions, John Buchan's novel was the first of five books featuring protagonist Richard Hannay, a former mining engineer in South Africa. In this instalment, Hannay learns of an international conspiracy to assassinate a Greek political leader and draw all of Europe into war. One of the earliest novels in the thriller genre, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* has been continuously in print since its original publication.

The 39 Steps (film, 1935)

Alfred Hitchcock, an admirer of Buchan's fiction since his teenage years, nevertheless altered the plot of his adaptation so significantly that it barely resembled the original text. This version, coauthored with screenwriter Charles Bennett, sends Richard Hannay, a recent Canadian émigré, on a quest to stop foreign agents from stealing British air defense secrets. Rather than focusing on espionage and impending threats to England, Hitchcock instead uses the spy thriller plot to examine Hannay's relationships with women and marriage in general. This movie launched Hitchcock into renown in the UK and the US, and continues to be popular to this day (in 1999, it was named the 4th greatest British film ever in a poll by the British Film Institute).

The 39 Steps (film, 1959)

This color remake was directed by Ralph Thomas, a British director known for a series of comedies based on Richard Gordon's *Doctor* series of novels. Closely following the storyline of the 1935 film, Thomas uses many of Hitchcock's plot devices (e.g. Mr. Memory, the theft of British military secrets). Released only in the UK, it did not see the success of the Hitchcock original.

The Thirty Nine Steps (film, 1978)

Compared to the other two film versions, director Don Sharp's is quite faithful to Buchan's novel. Set in 1914 (as in the original), this film deals with the conspiracy to draw all of Europe into war. It differs most markedly from Buchan's plot in its ending, which takes place on the clock hands of Big Ben rather than on the British coastline.

Hannay (tv series, 1988-89)

Robert Powell — who portrayed Richard Hannay in the 1978 film — stepped into the role again for this UK television program, which aired on Thames TV. Airing for two seasons (six episodes in 1988, and seven in 1989), the show followed Hannay's pre-World War I exploits.

The 39 Steps (live theatre, 2006)

This live theatrical adaptation draws heavily from Hitchcock's movie, but relies on four actors to play all roles. It was adapted by Patrick Barlow, a comic performer and writer known for reworking many-character pieces into two-actor shows. First presented at West Yorkshire Playhouse, it went on to successful runs in London's West End and on Broadway, as well as Australia, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Israel, Mexico, Spain and South Korea.

The 21 Steps (interactive online novella, 2008)

Part of Penguin Books' online series of six interactive stories, spy fiction author Charles Cumming's version is only tenuously based on Buchan's novel. Using a Google Maps interface, *The 21 Steps* tells the story of Rick Blackwell, a man forced to smuggle an unidentified package across the UK after a complete stranger dies from gunshot wounds in front of him. Visit <http://wetelstories.co.uk/stories/week1/> to learn more — but be sure not to click on the map while it's in motion, or you'll have to start the entire chapter over.

The 39 Steps (TV movie, 2008)

This most recent version is a BBC-commissioned work for television that follows Buchan's original plot, but incorporates some changes, including adding a love interest for Hannay and cutting parts of the lengthy journey through Scotland. Although the movie was the most-viewed program on the day it aired (December 28th, 2008), it received poor reviews and was criticized for anachronisms (such as a biplane that chases Hannay and the appearance of a submarine).

Cast Biographies

Dan Clucas

Having first seen the National Theatre of Brent at the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn in 1980-something, Dan has always been a big fan of Patrick Barlow's work and enjoyed immensely seeing Mr Barlow's crowning glory *The Thirty Nine Steps* in London. Between 1980-something and now, Dan has been... Well what has he been? All sorts of things including "Alfie" in Eileen's "Alfie" and "Aston" in Bill's "Caretaker", and ... but wait a minute... There is a dangerous conspiracy to take an important secret out of the country that is vital to our air defence... Taking inspiration from Mr Barlow, Dan's next project will be a large cast stage production of his own adaptation of the classic film "The Italian Job".

Sally Geoghegan

Sally moved to Hemel Hempstead a year & a half ago. She joined the Hemel Hempstead Theatre Company & had great fun playing Florence in 'The Odd Couple'. There she met Naomi, who is the Director of 'The 39 Steps', and a firm friendship was forged. Sally is delighted to be given the opportunity to appear at The Court Theatre, and hopes to take part in future productions.

Mike Code

This year is the 10th anniversary of Mike's amateur acting career and he is more than a bit happy to be marking it with this show. Not content with playing just one character Mike has decided to play 13, ranging from salesmen and miserable old farmers to the wife of a professor and a hotel manageress. He is exceedingly proud of this show and hopes you will be too as we follow the escapades of Richard Hannay, the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time (and when Mike first saw some of the outfits he was going to have to wear he knew exactly how that felt!). So come join this excellent cast as they take you on a breathless, exciting and often hilarious thrill ride that stretches from the London Palladium to the Scottish moors and back.

Malcolm Emms

After catching the bug at an early age playing the Tin Man in a school production of *The Wizard of Oz*, Malcolm has trod the boards on and off ever since. Roles have varied from Willie Mossop in Harold Brighouse's *Hobson's Choice* to Banquo in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to Ben in Harold Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*. Malcolm was also commissioned to produce and tour Roald Dahl's *Revoltin' Rhymes* which led to writing and touring *The Beauty and the Beast*, *Rumpelstiltskin* and *The Frog Prince*.

Having taken a break from performing for several years Malcolm was asked late last year to join the chorus in a production of the musical, *The Follies*, which was his first foray into dancing, and spurred him on to taking Salsa lessons. Consequently, his friends suggested he stick to plays!

Crew

Director	Naomi Glasser
Lighting Design	Chris Cooper and Viv Cooper
Sound Design	Nick Cooper
Stage Manager	Jamie Scott
Assistant Stage Manager	Chris Barnett
Stage Crew	Sebastian Gibbs, Hazel Gibbs, Jean Petticrew, Jayne Scott, Emma Blyth
Costume	Emma Blyth, Hemel Hempstead Theatre Co
Props	Sue Templar
Shadow Puppets	Sylvie Carstairs
Make-up and Wigs	Jayne Tardieu
Set Construction	Bob Randall, Chris Barnett, Jamie Scott
Programme Design	Kate Blanchard
Marketing	Eileen Reece
Photography	Nick Spurling
Front of House	The Court Theatre Ltd

Thanks to: Rob Farrow and Matthew Homes, Simon Blanchard at Image House, Tim Amsden, Allport Packaging, Court Theatre Volunteers, Hemel Hempstead Theatre Company, New Mill Community Centre.

Naomi Glasser

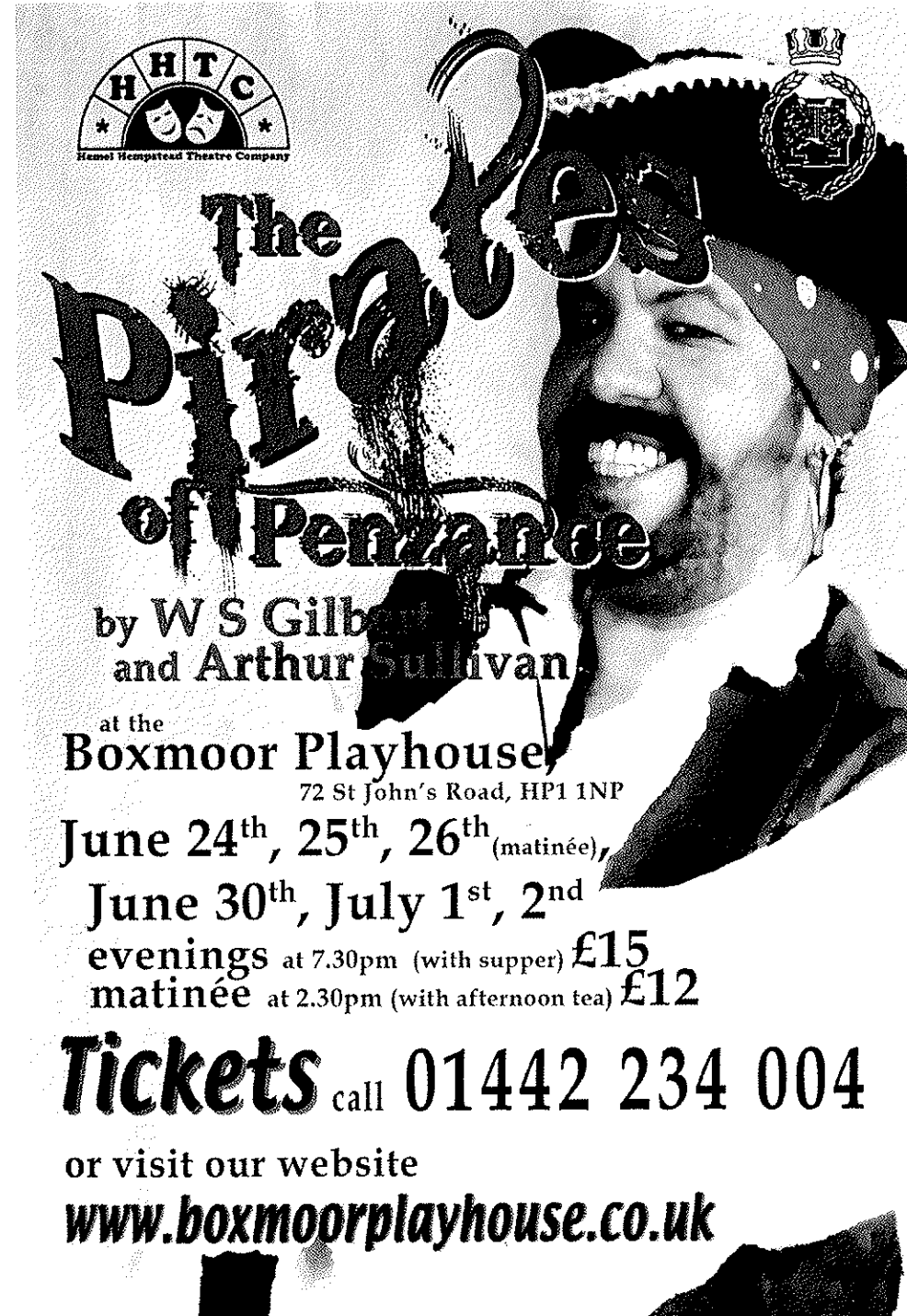
This is the third play that Naomi has directed, all for Frayed Knot and all performed at The Court Theatre. Her first, a few years ago, was the comedy 'Neville's Island' where she and her enthusiastic friends naively attempted to re-create a life-sized island on the stage, complete with lake, forest and an awful lot of thick fog (and so much so that at one point the audience couldn't see the actors and the actors couldn't see the stage!). They've learnt an awful lot about smoke machines since then and are confident that you will be able to see and enjoy every single moment of this wonderful comedy 'The 39 Steps'.


Chris Cooper

Chris has been involved in the amateur theatre scene since his school days doing both lighting, sound and even trying his hand at Stage management, but in the end it was lighting that he enjoyed the most. Chris has done lights for many shows in the Harrow and Kings Langley area and still does three shows a year for a drama club in Pinner. Chris moved to Tring in 2002 where he quickly became involved in The Court Theatre, doing lights for such shows as Panto, Drama & Musicals as well as providing assistance to many professional groups who use the theatre. Chris has worked with Frayed Knot for many years and is very pleased to be involved with this production of the 39 Steps as it is a very technical show and the lighting is an integral part of it. He hopes that you have as much enjoyment watching the show as he has had working on it.

Nick Cooper

Nick was first bitten by the theatre bug at 15 when he was taken along to see the shows that his dad and brother did, the problem was he didn't share their interest in stage lighting but was more interested in helping with the sound. After standing in for an absent sound man one night, he was hooked, and has been ever since. He must have made the right decision back then as he is now entering his 26th year of doing shows, and people still keep asking him! Over the years he has done the sound for many local, and not so local groups, but now splits his time between the Boxmoor Playhouse in Hemel and the Court Theatre here in Tring. This is Nick's first show for Frayed Knot, and he has thoroughly enjoyed the experience as this is such a challenging show to do. He would like to thank the company for being given this opportunity to work on it, and looks forward to working with them again in the future.




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