

THE 39 STEPS

Director's View

John Buchan's 1915 novel, *The 39 Steps*, possibly the first true spy thriller, established a literary genre that peaked during the Cold War, yet survives robustly into the 21st Century. Although it has spawned numerous film and television adaptations, it is Alfred Hitchcock's 1935 film version, starring Robert Donat, that remains the best loved. The stage version of *The 39 Steps* presented here at the Criterion this evening is a joyous homage to that film.

Patrick Barlow wrote the adaptation, based on the original concept by Simon Corble and Nobby Dimon, which calls for the entirety of the 1935 film to be performed with a cast of only four actors creating the widely varying locations, with little resources. One plays the hero, Richard Hannay, another plays the three women with whom he has romantic entanglements, with the remaining two actors playing every other character in the show, including heroes, villains, men, women, children and even the occasional inanimate object. This often requires lightning fast quick-changes and occasionally for them to play multiple characters at once. Thus the film's serious spy story is played mainly for laughs, with a script and soundtrack full of allusions to (and puns on the titles of) other Hitchcock films, including *Rear Window*, *Psycho*, *Vertigo* and *North by Northwest*.

Rehearsing this play has challenged the actors not only in terms of their ability to change character at the drop (or change) of a hat, but also in the level of fitness required to keep up with the fast-paced plot and ever-changing settings. However, as Buchan's grand-daughter points out in the foreword of the play, we should also remember that JB - as she called him - was anxious to convey two themes in his novels; firstly, that the veneer of civilisation is very thin, easily exposing the horrors beneath, and secondly, that evil comes in very attractive forms!

We have laughed and worked long and loud during rehearsals to bring you this celebration of *The 39 Steps*. I hope you enjoy it as much as we have enjoyed creating it for you.

Sit back and enjoy the ride!

Criterion Lottery Fund and Draw

Funds for the theatre are raised through our Lottery Fund. Please consider buying a number (or or more than one) for the small sum of £5 per number per month. Please contact **Mike Tooley** on **024 7667 3789** or **mike_tooley@hotmail.com** for details.

Remember... you've got to be in it to win it!

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Our next production:



Guys and Dolls

3rd - 10th December 2011

Set in Damon Runyon's mythical New York City, this oddball romantic comedy - considered by many to be the perfect musical comedy - soars with the spirit of Broadway as it introduces us to a cast of vivid characters who have become legends in the canon: Sarah Brown, Sky Masterson, Adelaide and Nathan Detroit. On its first run on Broadway, it went through a staggering 1,200 performances! First performed at the Criterion in 1973.

BOX OFFICE (Direct)

024 7667 5175

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Supported by Shortland Horne



Dastardly murderers, double-crossing secret agents and dazzling women in a hilarious take on a Hitchcock classic

THE 39 STEPS

by John Buchan
and Patrick Barlow

Programme

Produced in association with Samuel French Ltd



James Wolstenholme

James' first appearance at the Criterion was for the Criterion's 50th Festival earlier this year (Peter in Zoo Story) and before this has been involved at the Loft Theatre for a number of years acting in productions including Glengarry Glen Ross (Richard Roma), Into The Woods (Wolf/R

Prince), Absent Friends (John) and Hobson's Choice (Will Mossop). He hopes the audience enjoys the production and gives a huge thanks to the cast and crew for making what has been a very complex show an absolute delight to be part of.



Cathryn Bowler

The 39 Steps marks Cathryn's return to the stage after last year's production of a different kind - a gorgeous little girl, Harriet Matilda. Previous productions at the Criterion include The Blue Room (Girl, Au Pair, Married Woman, Model, Actress), Brassed Off (Sandra), Hedda Gabler (Hedda), Four Nights in Knaresborough (Catherine), Memory of Water (Mary), Oliver Twist (Nancy), The Crucible (Goody Proctor) and Life x 3 (Sonya) and Educating Rita (Rita) at The Loft in Leamington Spa.



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.

Cast

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

James Wolstenholme
Cathryn Bowler

Jon Elves
Craig Shelton

Production Team

Director
Stage Manager
Set Design
Set Build
Lighting Design
Sound Design
Sound Operator
Properties i/c
Wardrobe

Tim Willis
Dave Crisp
Paul Chokran
Led by Pete Bagley
Led by Ian Knight
Becky Bartlett
Richard Taylor
Frances Dixon
Maureen Liggins &
Pam Coleman
Maggie Parkes
Robin Stokoe

Prompt
Choreography



Jon Elves

Jon has been a member of the Criterion Theatre for more years than he cares to remember... His most recent roles have included Stephen/Barney in 'Chinamen' (part of the Festival 50), James 'Sharkey' Harkin in 'The Seafarer', and Orin Scrivello DDS in 'The Little

Shop of Horrors. The 39 Steps marks Jon's 32nd production at the Criterion... which ruins any chance of a joke and proves that comedy is, indeed, in the timing...Doh!



Craig Shelton

This is Craig's 3rd show at the Criterion but only his second on stage. He played the Voice of the Plant in Little Shop of Horrors last year and Ivan in The Seafarer in May. Other favourite roles have included Alex in A Clockwork Orange, Casimir in The Aristocrats

and Benny in Rent. Craig teaches drama at a local comprehensive school. He is hoping that by the end of the weeks run he may have shed a few pounds - it is certainly the most exercise he has done in a while! He would like to say a huge "thankoo" to Tim, the cast and crew for making it such a fun production (as well as his wife, Joanne and two kids who let him disappear 4 nights a week!).

With thanks to:

Rugby Theatre and Loft Theatre, Leamington Spa for loan of some of the props used in this production

