

This amateur production of *The 39 Steps* is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd on behalf of Samuel French Ltd. The original London production directed by Maria Aitken designed by Peter McKintosh, lighting designed by Ian Scott, sound designed by Mic Pool and movement directed by Toby Sedgwick, opened at the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn, London in August 2006 and transferred to the Criterion Theatre in London's West End on 14 September 2006. The original production was directed by Fiona Buffini. This production is licensed and the films distributed by ITV Global Entertainment Ltd

SHATTERED WINDSCREEN theatre company

presents

by arrangement with Edward Snape for Fiery Angel Limited
John Buchan and Alfred Hitchcock's

THE 39 STEPS

adapted by Patrick Barlow

from an original concept by Simon Corble and Nobby Dimon



CAST

Richard Hannay	Darren Barsby
Annabella, Pamela and Margaret	Georgina Bennett
The Clowns	Julia Arundale, Harry Janes Jo Manser, Paul Morton Gavin Palmer, Paul Russell
The Molvenny Duo	Pete Dawson, Calypso Powell

CREATIVE & TECHNICAL TEAM

Musical Director	Pete Dawson
Choreographer	Louise Davis
Stage Director	Derek Palmer
Lighting Design	Ken Allford
Costumes	Hannah Leonard, Shelagh Maughan
Set Design & Construction	Steve Onyon
Sound Design	Andy Lee
Stage Manager	Brenda Onyon
Properties Team	Jenny Allford, Ros Barnes, Sheila Grimmant, Olga Nitschke
Technical Team	Andy Pierce, Maddie Lee, Dawn Meadowcroft
Publicity Design	Simon Wallace, Melting Pot Pictures

Directed by Jan Palmer Sayer and Chris Janes

There will be a 20 minute interval between the two acts

“Let’s all 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! Is that the sort of world that you want? Because that’s the sort of world I want.”

OUR SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Linda and Jeremy Secker for the use of their lovely Amores garden

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Angela Reiss for the loan of props

Hertford Dramatic and Operatic Society

The Barn Theatre Club, Welwyn Garden City

The Company of Players (Hertford)

John Buchan

Real lives have a story, but no plot. They are, from an artistic point of view, quite unsatisfying, which is why fiction was invented. John Buchan (1875-1940) led a full life, blessed with friends and family, decorated with all sorts of honours and achievements. There was action in it, but not much drama, and that lack may have inspired his stories of derring-do, of spies and adventurers and innocent men wronged. Like many writers, he lived his best and most fulfilling life in his head, among his characters; his actual life could not compete with it.



In August 1914, the month Britain entered the war, Buchan began writing *The Thirty Nine Steps* while on holiday with his family in Broadstairs. When published in October 1915, it was a hit, not least among soldiers at the front. "It is just the kind of fiction for here," one officer wrote. "The story is greatly appreciated in the midst of mud and rain and shells and all that could make trench life depressing." It is thought that editions still bearing a dustjacket are rare because most of them were lost in the mud of France.

The book that Buchan nonchalantly dismissed as a 'shocker' changed his fortunes, and Hitchcock's 1935 film – a racier affair – cemented it in the public imagination for good. Richard Hannay, the story's hero, became a byword for pluck and resourcefulness under pressure.

1. In Buchan's original novel, what actually are the 'thirty nine steps'?
2. Which *Dad's Army* actor made a cameo appearance in Alfred Hitchcock's film of the book?
3. A future planned Netflix adaptation will feature which famous British actor as Hannay?
4. In Hitchcock's film, on which steam train does Hannay make his journey from London to Scotland?
5. Scene Two takes place in a Music Hall; which popular Music Hall features in the children's nursery rhyme *Pop Goes the Weasel*?
6. Which 1934 Oscar-winning film starring Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert is said to have influenced Hitchcock's adaptation, as it also features a bickering couple forced to take a cross-country journey?
7. Which long-running children's show features a parody called *The 39 Stairs*, where Grover climbs a set of stairs counting as he goes? At the top, he finds a brick wall, so he slides down the banister.
8. John Buchan also wrote four other novels featuring the all-action hero Richard Hannay. Can you name any of them?
9. In which famous novel does protagonist Holden Caulfield reveal that he and his sister are huge fans of *The Thirty Nine Steps*?
10. Author John Buchan had a very varied life and went on to become Governor-General of which former British colony in 1935?
11. In the 1978 film adaptation starring Robert Powell, which London landmark does Hannay end up hanging from?
12. In London, Buchan lived at 76 Portland Place, the address he gave Hannay. Other literary residents include the brothers in *The Million Pound Bank Note* published by which American author in 1893?

How Many Steps?

John Buchan wrote *The Thirty Nine Steps* while he was in bed with a duodenal ulcer, a disease which remained with him all his life. The novel was his first 'shocker', as he called it, and introduced his famous adventuring hero, Richard Hannay, complete with stiff (moustachioed, of course) upper lip and a miraculous knack for getting himself out of sticky situations. The intriguing title of the book originated when the author's six-year-old daughter, visiting him in the private nursing home in Broadstairs where he was convalescing, counted the wooden stairs leading down to the beach. There were actually 78 of them, but Buchan thought that half that number, 39, would make the better title.

First published as a serial in Blackwood's Magazine in the autumn of 1915, the story is set in 1914, just before the outbreak of war, and spies are everywhere. Hannay is buttonholed by a stranger who claims to be in fear for his life and in possession of knowledge of an anarchist plot to destabilise Europe, beginning with a plan to assassinate the Greek premier, Karolides. The stranger is killed in Hannay's flat and Hannay, finding both the body and the stranger's pocket book, begins his chase to save Karolides and discover the identity of the mysterious Black Stone and the meaning of "the thirty nine steps". The story finishes with the dramatic thwarting of a plot, the United Kingdom entering the First World War with its military secrets intact, and Hannay receiving his commission as a captain in the New Army.

With its dramatic chases, larger-than-life characters and plenty of exciting derring-do, *The Thirty Nine Steps* makes for a wonderful screenplay and indeed has been filmed three times. The first, and arguably the most memorable, was directed by Alfred Hitchcock and starred Robert Donat. The film plays fast and loose with Buchan's original plot but nevertheless, of the three films made, is regarded as the best, and



Robert Donat and Madeleine Carroll in Alfred Hitchcock's version

indeed in 2004 Total Film named it the 21st greatest British movie of all time. The 1959 colour remake starred Kenneth More as Hannay and the 1978 version starred Robert Powell in the central role. The latter is regarded as the closest to the original novel, being set at the same critical pre-World War I period, but it too added exciting sequences of its own, with the most notable being the film's climax which sees Hannay hanging from the hands of Big Ben.

Following Powell's film version, a spin-off television series was created, imagining stories set prior to the beginning of the novel with Hannay in plenty more adventures and intrigues, and in 2008 the BBC commissioned a new television adaptation which starred Rupert Penry-Jones. Not surprisingly, it also makes for fine radio, and Orson Welles (1939) and Glenn Ford (1948) both recorded it.

Mr Memory, are you right?

You'll hear these questions in the play, but do you agree with the answers?

1. Who won the Cup in 1926?
2. What was Napoleon's horse called?
3. How old is Mae West?
4. How far is Winnipeg from Montreal?
5. Who built St Paul's Cathedral?

Since the action swings wildly from London to the Scottish Highlands and back, and features trains, car chases and planes, a stage version of the story seems inconceivable. But a comic theatrical adaptation, written for just four actors by Simon Corbie and Nobby

Dimon, premiered in 1995 at the Georgian Theatre Royal in Richmond, North Yorkshire before embarking on a tour of village halls across the north of England. In 2005, Patrick Barlow rewrote the script but retained the scenes, staging and small-scale feel. The rest, as they say, is history. The play opened in London's Tricycle Theatre in 2005 and, one Broadway transfer, two Tony awards, one Olivier award and a Drama Desk award later, it packed 'em in at London's Criterion Theatre for nine years, closing in September 2015, making it the fifth longest running play in West End history.

Interestingly, all film versions of the book explain the thirty nine steps not only differently from each other, but also differently from the book. Secret organisation, steps leading somewhere – or something else? You'll just have to come back after the interval to find out...

Cliffside Quiz answers

1. A codename derived from the staircase down to the beach from the villain's house in Bradgate, Kent
2. John Laurie (Private "We're doomed" Frazer) – he played the Crofter
3. Benedict Cumberbatch
4. *The Flying Scotsman* – which only went as far as Edinburgh, but the Forth Bridge is actually north of Edinburgh!
5. The Eagle Tavern – "Up and down the city road, in and out The Eagle"
6. *It Happened One Night*
7. *Sesame Street*
8. *Greenmantle* (1916), *Mr Standfast* (1919), *The Three Hostages* (1924), *The Island of Sheep* (1936)
9. *The Catcher in the Rye*
10. Canada
11. Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben is the name of the bell). The scene was inspired by the 1923 Harold Lloyd classic, *Safety Last*
12. Mark Twain

Mr Memory's

answers (but don't read these until after the performance!)

1. Bolton beat Manchester City 1-0 in the 1926 FA Cup Final. Tottenham have never played Arsenal in an FA Cup Final.
2. He rode Marengo at Waterloo. Bellerophon rode on Pegasus to kill the Chimera in Greek legend.
3. Well, she was born in 1893...
4. Via the Trans-Canadian Highway, it's 1410 miles.
5. Christopher Wren designed it, of course, but other stonemasons and sculptors built it. And he didn't "done" it in the year 1660; the first stone was laid in 1675.

SHATTERED WINDSCREEN theatre company

In 2001, Shattered Windscreen made their début at the Minack with a stage adaptation of Peter Barnes' TV play *Arabian Nights*. They returned in 2003 with that epic of the French cinema, *Les Enfants du Paradis*. Then followed *Peter Pan* (2005), *The True Story of Martin Guerre* (2007), *Coram Boy* (2009) and *Cyrano de Bergerac* (2011). In 2013 came the rib-tickling spoof western, *Wild Oats*, and in 2017 Bryony Lavery's adaptation of *The Wicked Lady*. Such ventures typify the company's commitment to developing and adapting new and existing works for the stage, playing to full and appreciative audiences.

In 2015, Shattered Windscreen won the Minack Trophy with John Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Grapes of Wrath*, the story of the Joad family's flight from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl to California's golden west. They were named runners up for their last production here in 2019 – *I, Don Quixote* – when the weather wasn't at all kind to them and they had two and a half shows called off. They're hoping for an Indian summer this year! And they are very much looking forward to coming back in 2023 with a big production of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. See you then!



The Grapes of Wrath at the Minack, 2015