

InsideOUT

PRODUCED BY THE DENVER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Alfred Hitchcock's *THE 39 STEPS*
Adapted by Patrick Barlow
From the novel by John Buchan
From the movie of Alfred Hitchcock
Original concept by Nobby Dimon and Simon Corble
Directed by Art Manke



THE 39 STEPS
Alfred Hitchcock's

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Synopsis

“HANNAY: And I was bored.
No, more than bored. Tired.
Tired of the world and tired of life frankly.”
—*The 39 Steps*

But the situation is definitely looking up for Richard Hannay. At a theatre performance of *Mr. Memory*, shots ring out through the crowd and Mr. Hannay is thrust into a world of intrigue and espionage by a mysterious woman claiming to be a spy—or an agent. When she winds up dead in his London flat, Richard flees the city with the police on his trail. Filled with car chases, dangerous train rides, marching bands and rustic Scottish country cottages. Patrick Barlow’s 4-actor stage adaptation of *The 39 Steps* is a lighthearted homage to Alfred Hitchcock’s film and John Buchan’s book. ■

GREAT BRITIAN 1931-1936

“When you think about the defense of England you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover. You think of the Rhine. That is where our frontier lies today.”

Stanley Baldwin (1867-1947)
Speech in the House of Commons
July 30, 1934

As Richard Hannay notes in the beginning of the play the newspaper is full of elections and wars and rumors of war. In 1931 Ramsey MacDonal and Stanley Baldwin presented themselves as a national coalition to the electorate. They received an overwhelming response, but the result was a Conservative government with a Labour prime minister. In the second half of the decade the great issues in England were how to respond to the expansionist policies of Adolf Hitler and the unemployment of more than 25% of the workforce.

In 1935 MacDonal ceded the prime minister’s role to Baldwin who was confronted in 1936 by a royal love affair. In January of that year George V died to be succeeded by his eldest son, Edward VIII. Charming and handsome with a playboy reputation, Edward was very popular with the public; however, those in the know were concerned with his passionate involvement with Wallis Simpson, an American woman already in her second marriage. In the summer of 1935 Edward and Wallis went for a cruise; three months later the future king told Prime Minister Baldwin that he intended to marry her. He accepted that the union must be morganatic (one in which the offspring have no rights of succession), but Baldwin felt the marriage of a king and a divorced woman to be out of the question. The only solution was abdication, and on December 10 Edward voluntarily gave up the throne, declaring in a historic radio broadcast that he could not carry the burden of responsibility “without the help and support of the woman I love.”¹ Wallis and Edward were married in France in 1937. The couple then lived a marginal and somewhat embittered existence in France and the West Indies as the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

Meanwhile, the national government became associated with the policy of appeasement—the belief that compromise with Europe’s fascist dictators would provide the best chance for peace. This policy was attributed to the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, but it characterized the practice of his predecessor Stanley Baldwin and to some extent, the French government. Both countries were unprepared for another war and so adopted this conciliatory attitude which allowed Hitler to create an air force, launch a major program of military and naval rearmament and introduce conscription. All these actions were in direct violation of the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles.

In 1935 Britain was a very class-ridden society because the divisions were acute and obvious. On the one hand, there was a hereditary peerage and monarchy underlined by an entrenched education system of public schools and the Oxford-Cambridge university system. On the other hand, the working class of England was the oldest, most ingrained and traditional in the world, and had built up defensive networks in order to protect its interests. The peasantry had been destroyed by the Industrial Revolution and modern agriculture. In the play *Richard Hannay* is somewhat patrician, but the milkman and the under garment salesman are definite working class members. Ross McKibbin in his book *Class and Cultures: England 1918-1957* writes that English workers had a lack of religious or conservative family ties (compared to most of continental Europe) which had made them outward looking, adventurous and open to new cultural influences.

The British were also the greatest cinema-goers in the world in the 1930s and 40s. The English workers preferred American films to British ones because they described them as “vigorous, materialist, and democratic.”² They disliked British films because of their emotional restraint and the affected accent of the actors. ■

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1. www.historyworld.net
 2. McKibbin, Ross. Pp.433-34.

[http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?groupid=1175 & History/DeabO7](http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?groupid=1175&History/DeabO7)

McKibbin, Ross. *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998.

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THE AUTHOR OF THE NOVEL

John Buchan was born in Perth, Scotland in 1875, the first son of the Reverend John Buchan, a Free Church minister and his wife, Helen. He attended Glasgow University and later Oxford, where he became president of the Oxford Union and published a collection of his own short stories. In 1907 he married Susan Grosvenor and became the chief literary advisor to Thomas Nelson and Son, publishers as well as deputy Chairman of Reuters News Agency. In 1912 the couple moved to 76 Portland Place, London; John continued writing and publishing short stories, essays and biographies and began dividing his time between London and Scotland.

In 1914 he was drawn into secret intelligence work. That year, plagued by a duodenal ulcer, he was ordered to bed where he rested and wrote *The 39 Steps*. In 1917 he was appointed director of the new Department of Information responsible directly to the Prime Minister. A year later he became Director of Intelligence in the newly formed Ministry of Information. At the same time he wrote the four volume *History of the Great War*.

In 1927 Buchan became a member of Parliament representing the Scottish Universities. As the 1930s dawned, he became a close advisor to Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald. In 1935 as Lord Tweedsmuir of Elsfield he sailed to Canada to become Governor General. Adventurous and pioneering he journeyed into the Arctic, but continued to write. He died in February 1940 after an accident related to a stroke and was mourned across Canada. ■

THE DIRECTOR OF THE FILM

Alfred Joseph Hitchcock was born in Leytonstone, a suburb of East London to William and Emma Hitchcock, a lower middle class couple who owned and ran a grocery and poultry shop. The youngest of three children, he was brought up a strict Catholic and at the age of 11 was sent to St. Ignatius, a Jesuit school in Stanford Hill, London. By his own account, he was a lonely child with a penchant for practical jokes, a habit that remained with him for the rest of his life. He voraciously read magazines, novels and plays, developing a taste for the macabre stories of Edgar Allan Poe, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*.

When Hitchcock's father died in 1914, he began working for the Henley Telegraph Company, first as a clerk and then in the advertising department where he exercised his talent for drawing. He also attended evening art classes at the University of London. In 1920, eager to break into the film industry, Hitchcock secured a menial job designing titles at Famous Players-Lasky, an American-owned studio in North London. In a short time he became head of the titles department, which devised and supervised the text that was inserted into the silent films produced by the company, a job that involved an element of scriptwriting. In 1922 Famous Players-Lasky pulled out of their studios and rented the property to Michael Balcon and Victor Saville, who formed Gainsborough Pictures. Balcon recognized Hitchcock's skills and offered to let him try his hand at directing. Balcon also introduced Hitchcock to Alma Reville, a film editor and scriptwriter whom he married in 1926.

Hitchcock joined British International Pictures (BIP) under the direction of producer John Maxwell in 1927 for a record fee, making him the highest paid director in England at only 28 years old. During this period he began to explore the possibilities of manipulating space through creative camera placement; changing time through editing, and psychology through

the insertion of subjective shots. With the development of his visual language, he signed a deal with Balcon's Government British Pictures in 1934 that allowed him to make a series of suspense thrillers with writer Charles Bennett. These included *The Man who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The 39 Steps* (1935), *Secret Agent* (1936), *Sabotage* (1936), *Young and Innocent* (1937) and *The Lady Vanishes* (1938).

Hitchcock is acknowledged as the master of the thriller or suspense genre, manipulating his audience's fears and desires and taking the viewers into a state of association with the representation of reality facing the characters. He often placed an innocent, average, responsible person into a strange, life-threatening or terrorizing situation, in a case of mistaken identity, misidentification or wrongful accusation as in *The 39 Steps*, *The Wrong Man* (1956) and *North by Northwest* (1959).

He came to the United States in 1939 under contract to David O. Selznick. Here he made such thriller classics as *Dial M for Murder* (1954), *Vertigo* (1958), *Rear Window* (1954) and *Psycho* (1960). This master of suspense died in Los Angeles in 1980. ■

THE ADAPTER OF THE PLAY

Patrick Barlow, the stage adapter of *The 39 Steps*, born in March 1947, is an English actor, comedian and playwright. He is founder, Artistic Director and Chief Executive of the two-man National Theatre of Brent.

On television he played the character Bob in a British sitcom "Is It Legal?" who was besotted with his co-star Imelda Staunton. His film work has been small cameo roles in such movies as *Shakespeare in Love*, *Notting Hill*, *Bridget Jones' Diary*, *Girl from Rio* and *Nanny McPhee*.

He is best known for his adaptation of Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* which premiered in June 2005 at the West Yorkshire Playhouse. It transferred to London's Tricycle Theatre in 2006 and opened on Broadway in early 2008. ■

Buchan, John. *The 39 Steps*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Haeffner, Nicholas. *Alfred Hitchcock*. Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2005.

<http://www.filmsite.org/thrillerfilms.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patrick_Barlow

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN

THE BOOK, THE MOVIE AND THE PLAY

“Drama is life with the dull bits cut out.”

Alfred Hitchcock

John Buchan’s book *The 39 Steps* takes place in 1915 England where Richard Hannay is a colonial mining engineer. There are no female characters; the murdered spy in Hannay’s flat is a man named Scudder whom Hannay has known for a few days. Buchan spent much ink describing the glens and mountains of the Scottish highlands and populating his story with colorful eccentrics—an innkeeper with literary aspirations, a Liberal candidate with pacifist sympathies, a lower class railroad man addicted to drink and a bald archaeologist who is not what he seems. In the book the enemy agents aren’t just trying to steal information, they’re also planning to assassinate the Greek Premier. In addition, Hannay doesn’t have a love interest. Finally, “The 39 Steps” is an actual staircase containing 39 steps leading to a beach. Buchan’s book sold a million copies before he died in 1940.

Alfred Hitchcock ripped away most of the contents of the novel and, in doing so, “struck a blow for the director as a creative voice in his own right, independent of and superior to the novelist.”¹ The movie is a picaresque thriller that “deals with the travails of a plucky and adventurous character, who, in a series of interlinked and colorful episodes, confronts various adversaries and life threatening situations.”² In *The 39 Steps*, Hitchcock took the premise of the innocent bystander pushed and pursued by both the forces of good and evil, but brought in the atmosphere of the vaudeville and music hall, added bits of slapstick, provided sexual tension and changed the period from 1915 to the 1930s. Hitchcock also used the MacGuffin, which is “a plot element that catches the viewers’ attention and appears to be of utmost importance, but functions to intentionally misdirect the audience.”³ In the film the MacGuffin is the smuggling of secret plans vital to England’s defense as well as the nature of the 39 steps. Hitchcock added the character of Mr. Memory who answers Hannay’s question as to the nature of The 39 Steps. “The 39 Steps is an organization of spies, collecting information on behalf of the foreign office—.”⁴ Then he is shot by Professor Jordan. According to Marian Keane, a Hitchcock scholar, “the director’s deepest subjects—theatre and its relation to film, the abandonment of human beings in vacant and foreboding landscapes, the complex human quest for knowledge, and the nature of accidents—abound in *The 39 Steps*.”

In the play every scene from the movie is reproduced by four actors who play a cast of some 50 characters, scrambling hats, props and accents. The play makes many references to Hitchcock’s other films as well as some popular movies set in English locales. This play is a hilarious love letter to movies, melodrama and Hitchcock. ■

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- 1 Eder, All Movie Guide.
 2. Haeffner, p. 20.
 3. www. filmsite. Org
 4. Keane.

Buchan, John. *The 39 Steps*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Eder, Bruce. All Movie Guide.

Haeffner, Nicholas. *Alfred Hitchcock*. Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2005.

<http://www.filmsite.org/thrillerfilms.html>

FROM TENSE BRITISH THRILLER TO BROADWAY COMEDY

John Buchan, recovering from a duodenal ulcer, wrote and published *The 39 Steps* in 1915. In the book Richard Hannay, a mining engineer, is framed for a spy's murder, learns of a plot to steal British defense secrets and flees London for Scotland. Four Hannay stories followed, but the first one remained most popular and stayed in print to the present day thanks to Alfred Hitchcock.

Hitchcock adapted the novel in 1935. He added various nuances such as romance in the notorious scene in which Pamela (Madeleine Carroll) removes her stockings while handcuffed to Hannay, Robert Donat. The year it was released Buchan became Governor General of Canada and said Hitchcock "improved on his novel."¹

But others believed they could improve this movie. In 1959 Ralph Thomas made a Technicolor version that matched Hitchcock almost shot for shot. Another remake, in 1978, starred Robert Powell and stayed much closer to Buchan's novel—that is, until a final scene in which Hannay (like Harold Lloyd) dangled from Big Ben's clock hands.

Ten years later Powell starred in a TV series called "Hannay," which lasted for 13 episodes. Then in 1996 another remake was discussed: a contemporary American one to be written and directed by Robert Towne, screenwriter of *Chinatown*. Rumors proliferated that Mel Gibson would be the star, but nothing materialized.

In 1998 Simon Corble and Nobby Dimon scripted a stage adaptation using four actors that re-created chase scenes with sheets, ladders and trunks. The same year they toured Britain. Producer Edward Snape bought the script in 2001, but couldn't seem to get it to London until 2004 when he hired Patrick Barlow, founder of a comic troupe known for send-ups of the Bible and the Ring cycle. Barlow, meant to play Hannay,

instead rewrote the whole script, adding numerous Hitchcock references. Two years later, director Maria Aitken joined the group and added a vaudevillian flavor.

Transferring to the West End of London in late 2006, the show won a surprise Olivier (a British Tony award) for Best New Comedy and made it to Broadway a little over a year later. After a lengthy run on Broadway, the show is now enjoying a successful run off-Broadway. ■

1. nymag.com

<http://nymag.com/arts/theatre/longstory/42755>

ESPIONAGE BY THE GERMANS

AND THE BRITISH BEFORE WORLD WAR II

“A spy, like a writer, lives outside the mainstream population. He steals his experience through bribes and reconstructs it.”

John Le Carre

The **Abwehr** (meaning “defense” or “fending off”) was the German military intelligence organization from 1866-1944. It was founded to gather information for the Prussian government during a war with neighboring Austria.

During World War I in 1914 German agents worked to pinpoint the location and strength of Allied forces, helping the German army to invade and progress through northern France before trench warfare began. Agency director Walter Nicolai recognized the need for a modernized intelligence force and reorganized the department to include experts in reconnaissance, cipher and radio monitoring and counter espionage. This enabled the agency to tap communication wires and intercept and decipher Allied dispatches. Abwehr also sent several agents to spy on the manufacture of poison gas in France and tracked munitions production and shipping in Great Britain. While the Abwehr was generally successful, the loss of the German codebook to British intelligence undermined the agency’s ultimate efficiency during World War I.

When the Nazis gained control of Germany in the 1930s, the Abwehr expanded from an organization of 150 persons to nearly 1000, employing civilians as well as army and navy personnel. Under its director Wilhelm Canaris the agency reorganized into three branches: espionage, counter-espionage and saboteurs. Its successes included placing two operatives inside the British intelligence agency for two years and developing

an encryption device called the Enigma machine. Agents tracked and monitored various resistance movements in occupied Europe and even sabotaged military and government strongholds behind Allied lines. Spies managed to steal the blueprint for every major American airplane built for the war effort.¹

Despite their successes, the Abwehr had some failures. Its surveillance of the Russian Red Army prior to the 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union proved inadequate, just as their various attempts to infiltrate the spy systems of Great Britain, Canada and United States failed completely. By 1939, there were no German agents working in England.

The Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) is responsible for supplying the British government with foreign intelligence. It is more often referred to in the mass media and popular speech by its former name MI6. The Service was founded in 1909, a joint initiative of the Admiralty and the War Office to control secret intelligence operations in the UK and overseas, particularly concentrating on the activities of the Imperial German government. Its first director was Captain Sir George Marshall Smith-Cumming. He typically signed correspondence with his initial C in green ink. This usage evolved as a code name and has been adhered to by all subsequent directors of SIS when signing documents to retain anonymity.

After World War I and throughout most of the 1920s and under Sir Smith-Cumming's direction, the SIS was focused on Communism, in particular, Russian Bolshevism. Examples included a thwarted operation to overthrow the Bolshevik government in 1918 by SIS agents Sidney George Reilly and Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart as well as additional espionage efforts within early Soviet Russia.

In the early 1930s attention was shifted to Germany following the ascendance of the Nazis. During World War II the human intelligence work of the service was overshadowed by several other agencies. These were:

- The cryptanalytic (code-breaking) effort undertaken by the Government Code and Cypher Service.
- The extensive “double-cross” system run by MI5 to feed misleading intelligence to the Germans.
- Imagery intelligence activities conducted by the Royal Air Force Photographic Reconnaissance Unit.

Despite these difficulties the SIS nevertheless conducted substantial and successful operations in both occupied Europe and in the Middle East where it operated under the cover name Interservice Liaison Department (ISLD). ■

Adams, Jefferson. *Historical Dictionary of German Intelligence*. Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009.

West, Nigel. *Historical Dictionary of British Intelligence*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005.

<http://www.answers.com/topic/abwehr>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secret_Intelligence_Service

VAUDEVILLE AND THE BRITISH MUSIC HALL

“Everything I know I learned in vaudeville.”

James Cagney

The term “vaudeville” refers specifically to American variety entertainment; M. B. Leavitt, a variety showman, claimed the word originated from the French “vaux de ville” meaning worth of the city, or worthy of the city’s patronage.”¹ In England such variety shows are referred to as burlesque.

At any rate, vaudeville was made 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. Beginning in the 1880s and through the 1920s, vaudeville was home to more than 25,000 performers and was the most popular form of entertainment in America.

Throughout the 1850s and 60s, variety entertainment became popular among the frontier settlements and urban centers. These shows were intended for an all-male audience and were often obscenely comical. In 1881 Tony Pastor, a ballad and minstrel singer, created a variety show for families. Other managers recognized that a wider audience meant more money and followed his lead. With an influx of recent immigrants and quickly growing city populations, vaudeville soon became a central point for American cultural life.

There were usually a dozen or more acts in every vaudeville performance. Starting and ending with the weakest, the shows went on for hours; the performances ranged from the truly talented to the simply awful. There were musicians, such as the pianist Eubie Blake and the child star, Baby Rose Marie. There were great acts of physical talent, everything from contortionists to tumblers to dancers. Actors performed skits; magicians did tricks; jugglers juggled, but the real focus of vaudeville was comedy. Great comic acts such as Will and Berg and Burns and Allen brought in the biggest crowds.

Vaudeville’s attraction was more than simply a series of entertaining

sketches. It was symbolic of the cultural diversity of early 20th century America. Vaudeville was a fusion of centuries-old cultural traditions, including the English music hall, minstrel shows of antebellum America and Yiddish theatre. Though certainly not free from the prejudice of the times, vaudeville was the earliest entertainment form to cross racial and class boundaries. For many, vaudeville was the first exposure to the cultures of people living in the same neighborhood.

Some of the most famous vaudeville performers began at an early age. Like the Yiddish theatre and the circus, vaudeville was a family affair—singing sisters, dancing brothers and flying families. For many of these people the traveling lifestyle was simply a continuation of the adventures that had brought them to America. Their acts were a form of assimilation, in which they could become active parts of popular culture through representations of their heritage. Many created acts from the confusions of being foreigners, while others displayed skills they had learned back in the old country.

Ironically, it is through the movie and TV industry that vaudeville eventually left its greatest mark. Nearly every actor at the beginning of the 20th century either performed or visited vaudeville. The silent movies, with former vaudevillians such as Burt Williams, Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin, incorporated the animated physical comedy of the vaudeville stage. Many of the big names in vaudeville went on to be stage, movie and TV actors, such as Will Rogers, Bob Hope, Burns and Allen and Fanny Brice. Even today such shows as “Late Night with David Letterman” and “Saturday Night Live” continue the traditions of popular variety entertainment.

British taverns had provided musical entertainment since medieval times; outdoor musical “pleasure gardens” flourished in the 1700’s. The early 1800’s brought “saloons” offering variety acts and liquor, with some going so far as to add theatres to their original structures. When the Theatre Act of 1843 declared that such establishments would only be licensed if run as theatres, the first music halls appeared in suburban London. Although the emphasis was on entertainment, alcohol flowed, to the delight of customers and the ongoing profit of the proprietors.

As Great Britain’s Industrial Revolution created a new urban working class in the mid-1880s, the music halls provided this new audience with inexpensive entertainment. In time, intellectuals and the upper classes enjoyed these unpretentious variety shows. By 1875 there were over 300 music halls in London, with countless more scattered across the British Isles. With names like “The Empire” or “The Hippodrome,” they became favorite hangouts for people of every class and persuasion. “The Palladium” is a 2,286-seat West End theatre located off Oxford St.

In time, all music hall performances followed a basic format. A “Chairman” acted as master of ceremonies, introducing singers, dancers and specialty acts such as magicians or mentalists. The halls were everything from huge ornate theatres to stuffy converted basements. All that was required was a stage, audience seating and a strategically placed bar.

While everyone went for the music and comedy, there is no question

that the availability of liquor was part of the music hall's appeal. The temperance movement complained that the halls encouraged heavy drinking among both men and women, particularly among the lower classes. A few booze-free halls opened but soon faded. The British public went to the music halls to kick back and have a good, rowdy time.

The audience often joined in the singing of popular songs and cheered on favorite performers. Mediocre acts were booed off the stage, but these rejections were more spirited than vicious. Those who were not tough enough to take such treatment soon sought other forms of employment. ■

1. xroads.virginia.edu

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/vaudeville/about-vaudiville/721/>

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/-MAO2/easton/vaudeville/vaudevillmain.html>

<http://www.musicals101.com/musichall.htm>

MENTALISM

Mentalism is a performing art in which its practitioners, known as mentalists, provide their audiences with a theatrical experience of witnessing or participating in demonstrations that appear to utilize highly developed mental or intuitive ability. These performances may include telepathy, clairvoyance, divination, precognition, psychokinesis, mediumship, mind control, memorization and rapid mathematics.

Much of what the modern mentalist performs in his or her acts can be traced back directly to tests of supernatural power that were carried out by mediums, spiritualists and psychics in the 19th century. ■

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mentalism>

THE 39 STEPS QUESTIONS

PRE-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS

- 1) What happens to the story and characters when adapting a novel to a movie or a play? Or in this case, from a novel to a movie and then to a play? What is left out or added? What is changed to fit the medium?
 - 2) What plot devices and/or characters are needed to make a mystery or suspense play work?
-

POST PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS

- 1) How does the character Mr. Hannay change in the play? How would you describe Hannay at the beginning of the play? How would you describe him at the end?
 - 2) How does the genre of film noir and vaudeville accentuate the play? Give specific examples where the plot or character development fit into the genre and how it affects the play.
 - 3) How many of Alfred Hitchcock's films were mentioned or alluded to in the play? Create a list of the referential moments that you remember and compare your list to someone else's list.
 - 4) Is there commentary on class issues in the play? How would you describe Hannay's interaction with the multitude of characters? Does class play a part in his interactions?
 - 5) Are there moments where the characters in the play comment on the play's actions? How does this make you feel as an audience member?
 - 6) The cast of characters is rather long but only played by four actors. Were the character changes simple or complex?
 - 7) How were different locations represented in the play?
 - 8) If you are familiar with either the book or the movie, what are the similarities and differences in the stories? How were moments from the Hitchcock movie portrayed in the play?
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THE 39 STEPS ACTIVITIES

FAIRYTALE ADAPTATIONS: GENRES

1. Create a list of different genres and write these on the board. For example, film noir, kung fu, western, silent movie, etc.
2. Give each group about five minutes to cast and rehearse their scenes.
3. Perform the scenes for the rest of the class.
4. After the initial performances, assign the students one of the genres from the compiled list. You may give them a few extra moments to rehearse or, if able, have them incorporate the genre while acting.
5. Discuss what adding the genres did to the performances. Did they enhance the performances? Did they add or detract from the original fairytales?

Colorado Model Content Standards

Reading and Writing 2:

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Reading and Writing 4:

Students apply thinking to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

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FAIRYTALE ADAPTATIONS: TABLEAUS

1. Break the class into smaller groups of about 5 or 6 students for each group. If you prefer, you may use the same groups in the previous exercise or start from the beginning.
2. Each group will pick a fairytale to work on and cast the scene. Each group will create three frozen images (tableaus) that tell the entire story of their fairytale. Every student must be in at least one of the images that are created and as they are frozen images, there should be no movement or voice.
3. The three tableaus should convey the whole story including character and setting. What happens if the groups create one single tableau that shows the whole story?
4. Discuss what each tableau contains and the challenges that each group faced in creating these pictures. What are the actors doing to that conveys the idea of the story? What can be improved to make the story clearer?

5. To add a variation, see if the groups can adapt a recent movie and transform them into three (or five) images. What allows the audience to recognize the movie?

Colorado Model Content Standards

Theatre 1:

Students develop interpersonal skills and problem-solving capabilities through group interaction and artistic collaboration.

Reading and Writing 4:

Students apply thinking to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

CHANGE THREE THINGS

1. Students line up in two lines facing each other so that each person has a partner who is standing across from them. One row will be Row A and the other is Row B.
2. Tell the group that they will have 30 seconds to observe their partners. At the signal, they will turn their backs to each other.
3. While their backs are turned, each person must change three things about their appearance. All changes must be visible. This can be simple; taking off a shoe, switching their hair style or more difficult; removing an earring.
4. At the signal, the two rows turn back and face each other. They have two minutes to figure out what their partner changed.
5. Discuss which were easy changes to spot and which were more difficult. How many people caught all three changes?
6. After the performance, discuss how the two actors were able to represent all their characters in *The 39 Steps*. Were costume changes the only device they used or were there others?

Colorado Model Content Standards

Theatre 1:

Students develop interpersonal skills and problem-solving capabilities through group interaction and artistic collaboration.

Science 1:

Students understand the process of scientific investigation and design, conduct, communicate about, and evaluate such investigations.

NOTE TO TEACHERS:

Note to Teachers: It takes more than 50 trained professionals to bring you any single production at the Denver Center Theatre Company. Did you know that Colorado has over 186,000 people employed in what are called the Creative Industries? Career Exploration and ICAPs (Individual Career and Academic Plans) are part of the new Post Secondary and Workforce Readiness Standards adopted by the State Board of Education <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdegen/downloads/PWRdescription.pdf>. Creative Careers are “front and center” in this conversation. Your students can find out more about themselves and the career pathways open to them at Colorado’s free online Career and College Planning Tool, www.CollegeinColorado.org. They will find out about trends and salaries for thousands of jobs across the state. They can explore colleges and courses that will prepare them for successful careers and learn what they need to know about paying for college, applying for grants, loans and scholarships.

College in Colorado is pleased to offer your students a free Career Exploration Workshop in your classroom. For more information, please contact Gully Stanford, Director of Partnerships at 720-264-8563 or gully.stanford@cic.state.co.us

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