

**Deb Flomberg - Denver Theater Examiner**

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# It's Alfred Hitchcock meets Monty Python...on stage

What happens when you take four actors, 50 roles, a classic Alfred Hitchcock script, and a liberal dose of Monty Python meets Airplane style humor? The result is a hilariously funny, razor sharp, and endlessly entertaining production of *The 39 Steps*.

*The 39 Steps* is a play adapted by Patrick Barlow from Alfred Hitchcock's film which was a loose adaptation of John Buchan's original novel. Yeah, it's a bit confusing – but the basic premise is still there. However, the original Hitchcock film has been transformed from dark British thriller into a side-splitting comedy. And it is currently playing at the Ricketson Theatre at the Denver Performing Arts Complex

This is the story of Richard Hannay, a man that ends up being in the wrong place at the wrong time when he attends a performance at a London theatre. During the show shots are fired and Hannay finds himself taking a frightened woman back to his flat with him. This woman explains that she is a spy and that there are assassins out to murder her. Of course the woman is then murdered and Hannay is the prime suspect. He takes to the streets, on the run for his life, as he unravels the tale of espionage and the secret organization called *The 39 Steps*.

Chances are, unless you are a die-hard Hitchcock fan, you probably haven't seen *The 39 Steps*, it isn't one of his most known works. However, do not let that keep you from seeing this production. Quite simply – this production will have you laughing from the minute it starts and will keep you entertained through the very end. Creative staging and clever

visual tricks take the audience on an action packed ride that never slows down. A clever mix of projection design (**El Armstrong**) and excellent direction (**Art Manke**) bring this production to life. And it is definitely brought to life with tons of visual effects and action – including an actual chase on top of a moving train...sort of.

This is clever theatre production at its best supported by some of the most gifted comedic actors to grace Denver stages. **Sam Gregory** takes on the role of the dashing Richard Hannay, and he is absolutely wonderful in the role. His comedic timing is superb and he brings an honesty and charm to the part that makes Hannay someone the audience really wants to root for. The busy supporting cast is made up of **Victoria Mack** (who takes on three female roles) **Larry Paulsen** and **Rob Nagle**. Between the 3 of them, they make up the rest of the 50 different characters that appear on stage. They are all wonderfully cast and incredibly funny. **Paulsen** and **Nagle** truly brought out all the stops and tirelessly bring each and every moment to life. It's exhausting just to watch, but when the two of them carry on a conversation between four people, it's a sight to behold.

This may also be the hardest working run crew in the business. With lightning fast set changes, furniture pieces running from one side of the stage to the other, and never a slow moment during the entire production – this run crew and stage manager (**A. Phoebe Sacks**) deserve recognition for their work.

The production takes a classic spy/thriller/chase movie and turns it on its head. With well known gags that you can see coming a mile away (yet are delivered with such impeccable timing, you can't help but laugh anyway) to inventive and clever new ways to bring this type of material to the live stage, this show is a must see. The humor is done with a wink and a nod to all things Hitchcock, so fans will delight in the many moments that pay homage to everything from Psycho to Rear Window to North by Northwest. But non-Hitchcock fans will be endlessly entertained by the comedic skills of these fine actors. I haven't been to a show in years that had me laughing this hard. Truly, it is a show that must not be missed.