

Steps live theatreassignment assignment

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Earlier this summer on the 14th of August at the Criterion Theatre in Oxford Circus, I went to the evening performance of *The 39 Steps*. *The 39 Steps* was originally a book by John Buchan set before the First World War, the book was later adapted into a film directed by Alfred Hitchcock. It was a serious book and film following a bachelor called Richard Hannay who meets a mysterious German woman at a play, the woman begs him to take her home with him and later reveals she is a spy trying to discover the truth about an organization trying to steal British defense plans and something called the 39 tepees.

Later the woman is assassinated in Hannay's home and he is the main suspect, he sets out to try and prove his innocence by finishing what the woman started. He becomes involved with another woman named Pamela and tries to win her trust. Patrick Barlow adapted this story further into a theatre production; however he turned it into a comedy. With a cast of only four they used physical theatre and many Brechtian techniques to turn a famous spy story into a joke.

Apart from the actor who played Hannay all other actors constantly change roles. They do this by a quick change of costume sometimes in front of the audience. For example in one scene Hannay is on a train desperately trying to avoid two police officers asking if anyone had seen a man who matched his description. Hannay was sharing a carriage (they were sitting on two suitcases rocking backwards and forwards to suggest this) with two other commuters.

One of them say they “ will be back in a jiffy’ stands up mimes leaving the carriage and then swaps his bowler hat with a police officers hat turns around and starts talking to the other two en in a different accent showing his change of character. They also used a cyclorama and shadow puppets at one point to show Hannah being chased by police. This illusion was quick broken when the two actors “ accidentally” dropped the cyclorama showing Hannah playing with the puppets.

There was a part in the play where one actor was playing two characters at once and was dressed in drag on one side and dressed in a suit on the other and had a long speech where he was basically turning back and forth having a conversation with himself as the actors looked on as confused as the audience. There was a lot of breaking the fourth wall to keep to audience involved because the main priority of this play was to entertain not to tell a story, in fact a lot of the story was left out and left the audience’s imagination.

In the climax of the play the villain is shot dead by a mysterious hand that you could see creep out of the curtain and shot him. His final words were “ IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A CAST OF FOUR! ” as all four actors were on stage so it couldn’t have been anyone the audience were aware of. There was banter at n?? e point between the actors and the audience where Hannah was making a speech to an invisible audience but also us at the same time, he asked what was supposed to be a rhetorical question he asked “ Shall we not just enjoy this period of peace? And someone shouted out “ YEAH! ” and he looked directly at them and pointed and said “ thank you kind sir! ” the actors made the audience feel it was acceptable to interact with them even <https://assignbuster.com/steps-live-theatreassignment-assignment/>

unpredictably. Using a very limited amount of props and only a small end on stage, they managed to create multiple characters and locations; they had a lot of securing jokes and used the rule of three and a lot of slapstick humor.

For example at one point the German woman says 'where are men following me look out that window the two men by the lamppost??' Hannah does this and as he draws back the curtains two men run on carrying a lamppost hold it up and a light shines on them as they stand there looking up as if they could see Hannah even though he was behind them. They repeated this gag three times. It was a very funny play even when the story didn't make sense at times and I would easily recommend it to anyone.