Theatre Three's 'The 39 Steps' Is a Frenzied, Fun-Filled Farce!

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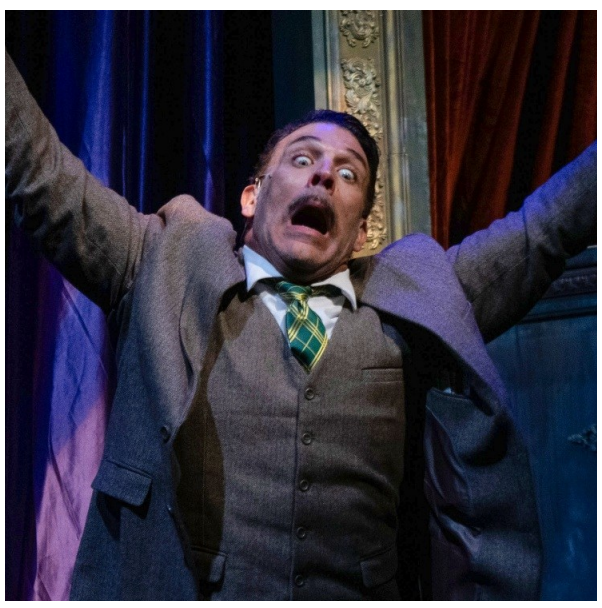
"Let's all just set ourselves resolutely to make this world a happier place!"

Saturday's opening-night audience erupted in continuous laughter as Theatre Three's well-cast, Broadway-caliber ensemble, Michael Limone, Ashley Brooke Curtis, Dan Schindlar, and Jae Hughes, raced across the stage, embodying 150 stock, gag, and parodic characters. Watching Schindlar and Hughes morph at the speed of light from one zany role to the next felt more like watching trained athletes competing in the Olympics than actors appearing on stage.

The stage adaptation of "The 39 Steps" turned the classic 1935 Alfred Hitchcock suspense film into a hilarious parody of the spy genre, filled with murder, mayhem, and madness. The iconic movie was based on John Buchan's 1915 man-on-the-run novel, "The Thirty-Nine Steps." The original 1996 four-actor play was written by Simon Corble and Nobby Dimon. Theatre Three's stellar production features a script by Patrick Barlow, the English actor, comedian, and playwright. His 2005 adaptation won the 2007 Olivier Award for Best New Comedy and earned two Tony Awards in 2008 for its Broadway run. Barlow's two-act adaptation honors both Buchan's novel and Hitchcock's film while infusing it with vaudevillian flair, showcasing slapstick and split-second timing.

The quirky plot revolves around the dashing but depressed Richard Hannay, whose dull routine is upended when he is unwittingly caught up in a web of conspiracy. Hannay, forced to flee, dodges the police and foreign agents while trying to uncover the secret of "The 39 Steps," a clandestine German spy ring. His madcap adventure takes him from London to the Scottish Highlands, where he meets a host of eccentric characters and finds himself in preposterous but suspenseful situations.



With the threat of World War II percolating in the background, this wild and wacky whodunit abounds with spies, spoofs, and suspense. Under Christine Boehm's skillful direction, "The 39 Steps," a theatrical study in minimalism, where a wig, a prop, a gesture, or an accent creates a masterful dramatic effect, kept the audience on the edge of their seats from the first cue to the final bow.

Limone is one of the finest actors you will see on any stage, and his riveting portrayal of Richard Hanney was one of the show's highlights. Limone possesses the old-school Hollywood charm needed to embody this debonair 1930s character. Limone's intense facial expressions, nuanced body language, and strong physical comedy skills effectively conveyed the remarkable transformation Hannay underwent, from a panic-stricken English gentleman to a consummate hero.

Curtis, a charismatic actor with a flair for the dramatic, delivered an award-worthy performance in all three of her female roles: Annabella Schmidt, a mysterious secret agent; Margaret, a frustrated Scottish wife; and Pamela, Richard's unwilling accomplice who undergoes a change of heart.

Hughes and Schindlar perform more than 100 roles, and these two versatile actors are the true comedic engines driving the fast-paced plot through one convoluted detour after another. Throughout the show, they exhibited high energy and expert comedic timing that enhanced every absurdly entertaining scene. From train conductors to hotel keepers to policemen, they aced their roles. Hughes, dressed as a clown, prompted spontaneous applause from the audience with a juggling act. Schindlar delivered a spine-chilling performance as Professor Jordon, the antagonist and leader of an international spy ring stealing British military secrets. Hughes garnered some of the biggest laughs as Mr. Memory, a stage performer with an encyclopedic ability to remember facts.

A special shout-out goes to Theatre Three's immensely talented creative team, including Randall Parsons for his outstanding scenic design, Ronald Green III for his authentic 1930s costumes, Steve Barile, Jr. for his evocative lighting design, and Tim Haggerty for his spot-on sound design. Adding to the immense success of this show were Ally Humanitzki and Heather Rose Kuhn's meticulously chosen props, which helped define the characters and enhance the storytelling.

Theatre Three's comedic thriller runs through May 3, 2026. For tickets, call the box office at 631-928-9100 or visit www.theatrethree.com. The much-anticipated Twenty-Seventh Annual Festival of One-Act Plays runs from April 18 through May 9, 2026, at the Ronald F. Peierls Theatre on the Second Stage of Theatre Three.

Cindi Sansone-Braff is an award-winning playwright. She holds a BFA in Theatre from the University of Connecticut and is a member of the Dramatists Guild. She is the author of "Grant Me a Higher Love," "Why Good People Can't Leave Bad Relationships," and "Confessions of a Reluctant Long Island Psychic." Her full-length Music Drama, "Beethoven, The Man, The Myth, The Music," is published by Next Stage Press.

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