**Programme Notes for 39 Steps**

**The Set**

The set is a collection of objects with a look and feel that reflects the time in which The Hitchcock film was made. They evoke the spirit of the 1930s. The cast use the objects to tell the story. There’s a small theatre arch with red curtains. There’s an old-fashioned lamp post. Two ladders and a plank become the Forth Railway Bridge at one point; chairs become a train and at another time a car. There’s a hotel reception desk and a bed as well as an armchair, a small table and a standard lamp. There are lots of opening and closing doors with just the frame attached and a couple of windows. There’s also a gate with bars. In the distance ‘the big hoose’ can be seen on a hill. All of the bits and pieces which comprise the set are moved in and out by members of the cast. At the start of the show there’s a big poster for the film, hanging from a pole and two ladders, one on either side, and a couple of buckets. The poster shows the profile of a man and a woman. The man has dark hair, slicked back, thirties style, and a thin pencil moustache. The woman has blonde hair, plastered close to her head. The writing on the poster, in capital letters and large lettering reads ‘Fated to be Mated with the man she hated…….’ In slightly smaller, lower case letters a legend reads, ‘The most charming brute who ever scorned a lady’.

**The Cast**

The actors are four in number but it’s almost impossible to count the number of people they play.

Michael Johnston consistently plays Richard Hannay. He is tall and slim and very thirties, with a conventionally handsome face, slicked back dark hair and strong dark eyebrows over dark eyes. He has a wide mouth, with a thin, neat pencil moustache above it, good teeth and a square jaw. He wears a smart three piece Harris Tweed suit in shades of brown, tastefully woven with a hint of red and yellow. He wears brown shoes. Richard Hannay cannot be parted from his pipe, which he is usually smoking, though sometimes he keeps it in his pocket.

Hannah Brackstone –Brown plays three different female parts, Annabella, Pamela and Margaret. She is very slender, with an oval face and large eyes and hair which varies according to the part she plays. As Annabella she has dark sculptured hair, plastered to the side of her head and she wears a long black, sleeveless, slinky dress. As Pamela she is transformed with a blonde, curly wig and a scarlet, close fitting, knee length thirties-style dress. She wears red shoes to match her dress and a small black hat is perched on the side of her head when she rides on the train. When playing Margaret, she becomes a peasant. She wears a pale green dress with a gathered skirt and a khaki apron tied over it around her waist. She has a navy knitted cardigan on top while a headscarf conceals her hair. She wears functional flat calf length boots and her long, thick, beige socks are visible above the leather tops of the boots.

The two clowns are played by Michael Condron and Benjamin Stratton. The clowns play a huge variety of roles, including a milkman, a charlady, variety-act performers, salesmen, policemen and hotel proprietors, a Scottish farmer, spies, Professor Jordan and his wife. A Sherlock Holmes look-alike even appears at one point. As Professor Jordan the clown wears a green velvet smoking jacket with a green-tassel, velvet smoking cap and a tartan scarf around his neck. His wife wears a modest dark grey dress topped with a grey wig. The other costumes indicate the roles being played, but sometimes the change is so fast that a hat removed and a different hat put on are the only indication we have that the character has changed. As performers at the London Palladium they wear black tails and trousers with white shirts and huge red cravats tied as bow-ties around their necks. The milk man has a white coat and cap. The salesmen wear suits and trilbys, the paper boy a soft cap. As policemen they have the standard hard helmet of a London policeman sometimes, but not always, with navy jacket and trousers. The Scottish crofter wears a waistcoat, grey trousers and a soft Scottish bonnet on his head. The Council Members wear black suits with gold chains of office round their neck, identical, long bushy, sandy-coloured beards and top hats. The female hotel-keeper wears a maroon dress, a green, sleeveless, waistcoat-style cardigan and Argyll diamond patterned socks. The man wears a red tartan kilt with a cream Aran knit jumper and a black beret. Egyptian dancers appear at the London Palladium in stylised Egyptian costumes with fringed, long, straight, black wigs. This is to give you a flavour of what you’ll see but the audio-description will keep you on track when the different characters appear. I’m sure you will enjoy the show.