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FOUNDATION

SEASON OF

AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY



THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS

BY JOHN BUCHAN, ADAPTED BY ROSS GUMBLEY

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Welcome to
The Lion Foundation
Season of



John Buchan's 1915 classic novel has been filmed three times and was recently included in "100 Best Books for Boys"!

This spirited new adaptation for the stage winks at THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS as a great example of the "invasion-fear" genre, where Edwardian Britain's collective paranoia of invasion by the "huns" spawned a whole canon of work. THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS also celebrates the art of theatre and actors' inventiveness as our cast of four take on a multitude of madcap roles.

Auckland Theatre Company is extremely grateful to The Lion Foundation for their huge

THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS

support of this season and the Company on an ongoing basis.

My thanks to Mike Edward, Lisa Chappell, Cameron Rhodes and Stephen Papps for their great performances, and for agreeing to rush about for 95 minutes every night in tweeds and kilts and heavy old fashioned clobber in the middle of an Auckland summer.

Huge thanks as well to Writer/Director Ross Gumbley and his design team, Elizabeth Whiting, Brad Gledhill, Eden Mulholland and Tony Geddes, who provided the original design concept for this show at Christchurch's Court Theatre.

This version of THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS originated at the Court Theatre and it's been our great pleasure to have the Court's Artistic Director, Ross Gumbley re-creating his production for

The first production
in Auckland Theatre
Company's 17th
season of plays.

Auckland Theatre Company. It's the beginning of a fruitful collaboration with our colleagues in the South Island. THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS is the first play in another great year of theatre from Auckland Theatre Company. There's something in our 2009 playbill for all tastes. Remember, if you are a regular theatregoer, it not only makes sense to subscribe to save money, but also to receive the extra benefits of subscription.

Enjoy!

Colin McColl

HELPING GOOD CAUSES ACROSS THE COUNTRY



We're supporting
'The Thirty-Nine
Steps' every step
of the way.

The Lion Foundation is committed to supporting the arts, an important part of New Zealand's cultural identity. To that end, we're delighted to help fund the Auckland Theatre Company's adaptation of the classic and popular story of heroes, murders and madcap antics.

Raising funds for community causes is at the heart of The Lion Foundation. This funding assists many groups nationwide to make a real and lasting difference in their communities. As a charitable trust, we return millions of dollars annually to a wide range of arts, cultural, sporting, educational and health focused causes – both large and small.

We are proud to work locally across the country to help make a difference to hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders every year. To learn more about The Lion Foundation or our community grants please visit www.lionfoundation.org.nz or call freephone **0800 802 908**.

Phil Holden
CEO – The Lion Foundation

 THE LION
FOUNDATION
SEASON OF

THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS

BY JOHN BUCHAN, ADAPTED BY ROSS GUMBLEY

CAST

Mike Edward — Richard Hannay **Lisa Chappell** — Doris, Julia Urquart, Paperboy, Angus Jnr, Lucy **Stephen Papps** — Walter, Paddock, The Milkman, Wallis, Inspector, Angus, Barclay, The Colonel, Sir Harry, James, Agnes
Cameron Rhodes — Marmaduke Mesmer, Franklin P Scudder, Barnes, Policeman, The Engineer, A British Seaman, Gibson, Alexander Turnbull, Bi-Plane Pilot, Deacon McNaught, Twisdon, Tarquin Jopley, Lord Carmichael, Zeppelin Pilot

CREATIVE

Director — **Ross Gumbley** Set Design — **Tony Geddes & Ross Gumbley**
Developed from the original design by Tony Geddes for The Court Theatre
Lighting Design — **Brad Gledhill** Costume Design — **Elizabeth Whiting**
Sound Design Adaptation — **Eden Mulholland**

PRODUCTION

Production Manager — **Mark Gosling** Technical Manager — **Bonnie Burrill**
Stage Manager — **Mitchell Turei** Operator — **Robert Hunte**
Properties Master — **Bec Ehlers**
Wardrobe Supervisor — **Cathy Pope** Set Construction — **2 Construct**
Costume Construction — **Cathy Pope & Sophie Ham**
Presented in association with The Court Theatre.

By arrangement with

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& SCRIPT ADVISORY SERVICE
www.playmarket.org.nz

THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS is the first Auckland Theatre Company production for 2009 and opened on 12 February. THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS is approximately 95 minutes long with no interval. Please remember to switch off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In mid 2006, I read an article in the newspaper about how international airlines had begun recording the types of meal that each passenger ordered for 'security reasons'. I knew then that the time had come to adapt John Buchan's novel **THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS!**

The book **THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS** was published in 1915, although Buchan set it, somewhat prophetically, in August 1914. It shared booksellers' shelves with such titles as **RIDDLE OF THE SANDS** and **THE INVASION OF 1910**. In this gripping yarn a German army invades Britain, aided by the fact that one in twenty Britons are already undercover German spies — surely a conspiracy theory as unlikely as the ones we are presented

with on a daily basis. It felt to me that the paranoia of our own time strongly reflected the paranoia of Buchan's time. I knew that any adaptation under my pen would inevitably be a comedy. This is my lot as a writer; it's what I do. But I wanted the comedy to be respectful of its source and not undermine the seriousness and suspense that the imminent threat of war brings to the original story. Comedy has the power to corrupt; you can often detect the author's desire to simply make their audience laugh through the voices of their characters. I wanted my audience to believe these characters were in genuine peril.

It also became apparent early on that this needed to be more than just a 'boys own' spoof. **THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS** is essentially a conspiracy theory and I've always found that kind of quantum paranoia

amusing. Surely it's easier to believe that a government is incompetent rather than able to skillfully manipulate the multiple strands required to create and maintain a genuine conspiracy.

I liked the idea of pushing the paranoid aspects of the characters to the point where they would become comedic. This type of extreme reaction also seemed to me to be rich in black comedy, for such 'theories' are all false — aren't they?

For the last word on paranoia I'll leave you with a quote from Charles Bukowski: "Show me a paranoid man and I'll show you a man in charge of the facts".

Ross Gumbley
Director

IN THE STEPS OF RICHARD HANNAY, 001

The cult of the great British Hero

John Buchan's Richard Hannay is one of the most enduring heroes from the Golden Age of the fast-moving adventure thriller, and his character and actions have formed the blueprint for a whole gallery of similar characters.

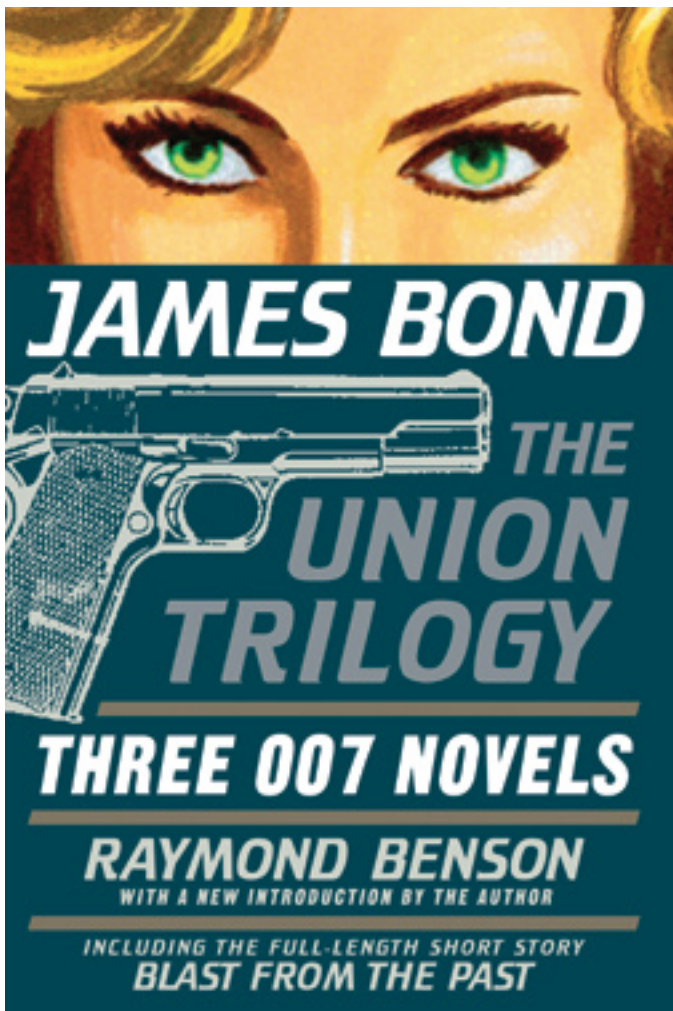
Although his way had been paved by the intellectual derring-do of such luminaries as Poe's Auguste Dupin and Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, it was really in the Edwardian era that the gentleman adventurer came into his own. And it is probably no accident that he was a distinctly English invention — with the Empire at its height, the Britisher at home and abroad was cock of the walk and monarch of all he surveyed. Petty crime was committed by the lowlifes who deserved nothing more than to be smacked smartly back into their place, bigger felons required equally weighty heroes from the same social class to combat them. It would have shown lack of taste for some ordinary copper from Scotland Yard to unmask a really important or dangerous international villain, hence Sherlock Holmes' greatest adversary, Moriarty, assumes the proportions of the Napoleon of Crime while by the same token



Hannay's first opponents, the Black Stone, are the instigators of a plot whose sole purpose is to foment war between the great European powers.

The character and attributes of the hero were standardised early on. He was invariably dashing, resilient and courageous, unfazed by the prospect of a horrible death and focused unwaveringly on the matter in hand. Superior in every way to the scurrilous enemies with whom he locked horns, he was also

unblushingly snobbish and xenophobic and as ruthless as his adversaries. Sapper's 'Bull-dog' Drummond was a typical upper-class thug of the time treating both the enemy and his social inferiors with equal disdain. Leslie Charteris' Simon 'The Saint' Templar and John Creasey's 'The Toff' were equally superior and condescending loners. These worthy ancestors went on to spawn imitators and descendants by the carload. Think of Ian Fleming, Alistair MacLean, Wilbur Smith — their heroes still



go through their dour and punishing (not to mention highly lucrative) paces for our amusements, though they themselves are invariably humourless to a fault.

While the pre-war yarns were full of guns, speeding express trains, flooding caves and violent explosion, the stories in the twenties and thirties took on a harder, more realistic feel.

The melodrama of the thriller's early days was replaced by something more in keeping with the public's recent experi-

ences. In the post world war one world the early stories seemed too quaint and the romanticised visions of war were out of touch with the horrors people had just experienced.

The boastful swagger of the bluff superheroes no longer cut the mustard, and in order to survive, the adventure story had to come down to earth. It gradually became more literate, more plausible, more mature. The heroes adopted more believable, human traits while the villains shed some of

their fantastical attributes and characteristics. It also grew sufficiently to encompass the spy story. In the grey fifties following World War II, it found its greatest hero in the hard and glamorous shape of James Bond, a much more brutal and humourless figure on the page than he became on the screen. Within barely a dozen years his first appearance was matched by his opposite, Len Deighton's distinctly unglamorous and down-at-heel working-class spy. The unnamed narrator-hero (he was called Harry Palmer only in the films of *The Ipcress File*, *Funeral in Berlin* and *Billion Dollar Brain*) is bolshie, unadventurous, and avoids troubles if he can.

He also wears glasses and cooks, unlike Buchan's Hannay, who boasts of possessing the eyesight of a hawk but is so undomesticated he needs a manservant called Paddock in his London flat to do his housework for him while he eats out at his club.

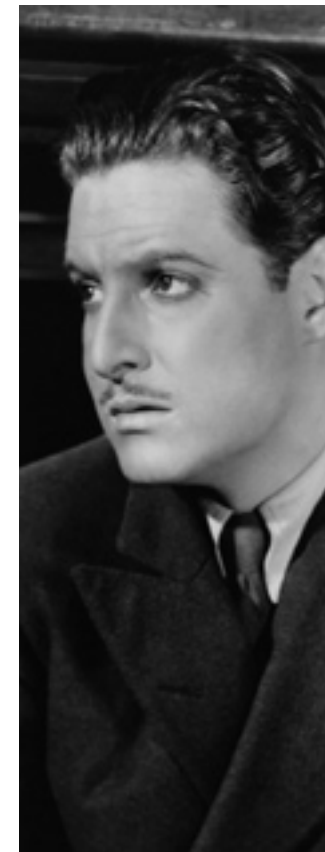
As the genre became ever more sophisticated and diverse, the moral dilemmas on which the plots turned became more subtle, ushering in the spiritual disillusionment of John Le Carre's George Smiley and the morally burnt-out Alec Leamas of *THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD*.

Since the forties and fifties such comic-book characters as Superman, Batman and Spiderman and any number of other colourfully adjectival



men in close-fitting Lycra body stockings have assumed the role of defenders of the faith in the popular imagination, and while fantasy has become the staple ingredient, it has replaced the more recognisable backgrounds against which the heroes of the Golden Age moved. Where Hannay was pursued across the moors of Scotland, everyone from Super Mario to Judge Dredd now carries on the fight in some virtual reality parallel universe where the goalposts shift on a regular basis according to the whim and inspiration of the programmer. These worlds are bound only by the reach of their invention and the continually expanding possibilities of the available hardware and software, but the further they get from reality, the less we can identify with the characters, which means we can no longer feel the same thrill of engagement.

Yet however fantastical and phantasmagoric the setting, the attributes of the hero will remain broadly the same. The issues are still fundamentally



black and white. Good must always triumph. The baddies are there to be butchered and our boy will forever be on the side of the angels, no matter how unangelic his appearance or the methods he used to achieve his ends. Whether he plays a straight bat or a plasma cannon, socks his enemies on the jaw or dematerialises them into a million atoms, sports a heather mixture hacking jacket or a pair of day-glo underpants over his tights, the hero is always the man we can depend upon to keep our society safe from foreign invaders. He is the perpetual winner par excellence, and in an increasingly complex world his simple morality remains our anchor



and our rock, the still reliable centre of a relentlessly changing universe. It's a comforting thought, and a necessary one. That's why the spirit of Hannay marches on.

CAST



LISA CHAPPELL

Lisa Chappell appeared to acclaim in last year's Auckland Theatre Company production of Noel Coward's *DESIGN FOR LIVING*. She grew up in Auckland and first came to prominence as Chelsea Redfern in the iconic hit television drama series *GLOSS*.

Roles in *SHARK IN THE PARK* and *CITY LIFE* followed, as well as the feature films *JACK BROWN*, *GENIUS* and *DESPERATE REMEDIES*. She also made frequent guest starring appearances in *HERCULES*, *THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS*.

A move to Sydney, where Lisa completed 'The Journey'

program at The Actors Center and received an Advanced Diploma in Acting, was followed by her winning the role of Claire McLeod in the popular Australian series *MCLEOD'S DAUGHTERS*, which is syndicated around the world. From many award nominations, Lisa won Most Popular New Female Talent at the 2002 Australian Logie Awards and the Silver Logie for Most Popular Actress in 2004.

Lisa left *MCLEOD'S DAUGHTERS* after three years, looking for a new challenge. She has since recorded and released an album, *WHEN THEN IS NOW*, and has revisited her love for theatre. Theatre credits include *EDUCATING RITA* and *THE HOMECOMING*.

Lisa has recently returned to New Zealand after filming the lead role in the Australian feature film thriller *COFFIN ROCK*, which will be released in cinemas later this year.

She is busy with a diverse schedule which includes emcee appearances, voiceovers, theatre and television, as well as replying to fan mail from the Czech Republic, where *MCLEOD'S DAUGHTERS* is just hitting the screen! Lisa is a proud member of New Zealand Actors' Equity.



MIKE EDWARD

A graduate of UNITEC's School of Performing and Screen Arts, Mike's television credits include *XENA*, *MERCY PEAK*, *CITY LIFE*, *RIDING HIGH*, *PLAIN CLOTHES*, *TRUE LIFE STORIES*, *ONE WEST WAIKIKI* and *SHORTLAND STREET*. He was a core cast member on TV3's *THE STRIP* and recently has appeared in both *POWER RANGERS* and *LEGEND OF THE SEEKER*.

His film works include *HIDDEN* and *AMAZON HIGH* (Pacific Renaissance), *A SOLDIER'S SWEETHEART* (Paramount

Pictures), and last year he worked on the American feature *A STOLEN LIFE* (Lifetime Network).

For Auckland Theatre Company, Mike appeared in *TRAVESTIES* and *HIGH SOCIETY*. Other theatre highlights are *LADIES NIGHT*, *THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW* and *THE COUNTRY WIFE* (The Court Theatre) and *MACBETH* and *UNIDENTIFIED HUMAN REMAINS AND THE TRUE NATURE OF LOVE* (Silo Theatre).

As a member of the theatre/cirque company, Co. Physical Theatre, Mike is currently involved in the development of a new show which will premiere in August.



STEPHEN PAPPS

Stephen first came to prominence after winning Best Actor at the 1992 New Zealand Film Awards for the role of Firpo in Ian Mune's *END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER*. Since then he has had an extensive career in film, television and stage. Most recently he was seen as Don Brash in *THE HOLLOW MEN*. Other theatre roles include Spike Milligan in *YING TONG* and Jamie Tyrone in *LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT* (The Court Theatre), Roderigo in Michael Hurst's *OTHELLO* and *LAND WITHOUT SUNDAYS*, *SAVING GRACE*, *BADJELLY THE WITCH* and *THE HOMECOMING*.

He has also appeared extensively in New Zealand television shows such as *LETTER TO BLANCHY*, *INTERROGATION* and *SHORTLAND STREET*. This year will see the release of Stephen Sinclair's feature film *RUSSIAN SNARK*, in which he stars.

From 1999 to 2004, Stephen

performed his co-written solo show *BLOWING IT* throughout New Zealand and internationally, including at The Sydney Opera House and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and in Berlin, England and Ireland. In 2000, he was nominated Best Actor at the Chapman Tripp Awards. Stephen is a proud member of New Zealand Actors' Equity



CAMERON RHODES

From drag queen to singing Kiwi bloke, dancing in *SWEET CHARITY*, playing the repressed art dealer in *DESIGN FOR LIVING* and the power hungry Cardinal in *THE DUCHESS OF MALFI*, Cameron has relished the variety and challenge of his roles for the Auckland Theatre Company. *THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS* is his ninth production with the company, and it certainly offers the greatest variety of roles and challenges thus far!

Over an acting career that spans twenty one years and more than seventy productions, Cameron's theatre credits include THE THREEPENNY OPERA, THE REAL THING and A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (Silo Theatre), A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM and A WAY OF LIFE (New Zealand Actor's Company), SWEENEY TODD, SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER and LES LIASONS DANGEREUSES (Downstage) and Kafka's THE TRIAL (The Edge).

He directed the Basement Theatre's recent Christmas hit THE EIGHT: REINDEER MONOLOGUES as well as A NUMBER, THE JUNGLE, CLOSER and HAPPY END.

Film and television appearances include SECOND HAND WEDDING, JINX SISTER, WE'RE HERE TO HELP, THE DEVIL DARED ME TO, LORD OF THE RINGS, BREAD AND ROSES, XENA WARRIOR PRINCESS and the upcoming titles; THE DEVIL'S RUN, RUSSIAN SNARK, BRAVE DONKEY and LIFE'S A RIOT.

Cameron's busy schedule includes voiceovers, working as an acting teacher and in the corporate world as a voice/presenting coach. Cameron is a graduate of Toi Whaakari: a New Zealand Drama School and a proud member of New Zealand Actor's Equity.



ROSS GUMBLEY PLAYWRIGHT, DIRECTION & SET DESIGN

Ross Gumbley's career in the theatre began in 1985 when he was a student actor at The Court Theatre, in Christchurch. Twenty four years later, Ross has appeared in over one hundred and twenty productions as a professional actor, written nine plays and directed more than thirty productions.

In that time he has anchored his own breakfast radio show, had his plays performed overseas and won a number of acting awards. Six of Ross's plays were co-written with Auckland Theatre Company favourite, Alison Quigan. These include BOYS AT THE BEACH,

SHOP TILL YOU DROP and FLAGONS AND FOXTROTS and have been performed to sell-out seasons throughout New Zealand.

In 2006 Ross was appointed Artistic Director of The Court Theatre. Under his stewardship 2007 was The Court Theatre's most successful year to date. The programme included his adaptation of THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS, which played to popular and critical acclaim.

This is Ross' first foray into transferring a novel to the stage, which, together with his solo play HAPPY COUPLING, saw him short listed for the 2008 Bruce Mason Playwright's Award.

"The design process of THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS was a unique opportunity to embrace the theatricality required to transfer such a robust and action-packed story from the page to the stage.

John Buchan's novel, set as it is in 1914, is part of an 'invasion

fear' genre of fiction, which has emerged at particular times of international political tension and vast technological change. As well as the story itself, the elements of this genre were the starting points for Tony Geddes, the designer of the set for the original Court Theatre production, which we have adapted for this Auckland production. Tony was fascinated by the nature of the British Empire at that time and how it was powered by new technology.

We were also mindful that this is a comedy about paranoia and thus it's important that the main character, Richard Hannay, has a sense of being trapped and of being constantly pursued.

From all this, emerged the idea of the set as a steel box, complete with rivets, to evoke the period's vast industrial and military machines and explore the idea that a society is made up of small parts joined together and rust, to suggest that the society is old before its time.

We also needed a set that, like the play itself, didn't reveal all its secrets at the outset. What lies behind those doors?

We hope that you enjoy discovering the surprises inherent in our approach as much as we enjoyed coming up with them."
— Ross Gumbley



TONY GEDDES SET DESIGN

Tony Geddes designed the original set for The Court Theatre.

Tony's first design for The Court Theatre was A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM in 1981. Two years later, he joined the company as resident set designer and has since designed for such memorable productions as LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT, THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, ANGELS IN AMERICA,

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN, ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA, THE JUNGLE BOOK, CABARET, THREE SISTERS and COPENHAGEN.

Tony has also designed for the Canterbury Opera Trust including productions of THE MAGIC FLUTE, ELIXIR OF LOVE, UN BALLO IN MASHERA, and THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO for Wellington City Opera.

He has exhibited work four times at the prestigious Prague Quadrennial International Exhibition of Theatre Design and in 1995, with assistance from Creative New Zealand, travelled to Prague to attend the exhibition.

Recent set designs have included MIDDLE AGE SPREAD, GREAT EXPECTATIONS, KING LEAR (set and costumes), VINCENT IN BRIXTON, THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW, OLIVER!, HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD, YING TONG, LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT, FLAGONS AND FOXTROTS, THE COUNTRY WIFE and set and costume design for THE GLASS MENAGERIE.



ELIZABETH WHITING COSTUME DESIGNER

"Music hall, film noir, Dick Tracey, Punch, Alfred Hitchcock... I find it hard to list the huge number of places I have visited in my excitement to find inspiration for this piece of fine entertainment! And of course, once the actors joined the mix, another set of ideas were added. Much of my job has been the corralling of a host of ideas into a cohesive whole.

The script has evolved in the same way, with Ross enhancing the piece by rewriting to suit the talents of the cast. I'm sure the process of costume design will continue to develop until opening night.

The play is a rollicking good yarn, in true British Boy Scout tradition. I wanted to honour this in a style of clothing that aids the audience's ease of recognition of the multitude of characters played by our four skilful actors, and also supports Ross's desire to move from reality to surrealism within the piece."

Elizabeth's recent costume designs for Auckland Theatre Company include DESIGN FOR LIVING, MY NAME IS GARY COOPER, THE PILLOWMAN, SWEET CHARITY, TWELFTH NIGHT, DOUBT, THE DUCHESS OF MALFI, EQUUS and WAITING FOR GODOT. The costume design for EQUUS was accepted for the Prague Design Quadrennial 2007 as part of the

New Zealand exhibit BLOW – the second time her work has been shown internationally. At present she is also working on The ARRIVAL for the 2009 Auckland Festival.

Elizabeth has had an illustrious career designing for a wide range of performing arts organisations throughout New Zealand. Recent highlights include LA BOHEME, FALSTAFF, FAUST, THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO, THE BARBER OF SEVILLE and COSI FAN TUTTE (NBR New Zealand Opera), LA CAGE AUX FOLLES and THE COUNTRY WIFE (The Court Theatre), THREE DAYS OF RAIN, THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP, THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED (Silo Theatre), as well as productions for the Auckland Festival and Southern Opera. Her work has also been seen in VERGE and SMASHING SWEET VIXEN (Royal New Zealand Ballet), AMATA (Black Grace), TENT (Michael Parmenter) and TAMA MA (Okareka Dance Company).

For Popup Theatre, London she has designed a children's play which was performed at the Edinburgh Festival.



BRAD GLEDHILL LIGHTING DESIGNER

"This work gives me the opportunity to really explore shape, angle and colour by allowing them to play a major role in creating the atmosphere of paranoia as seen through Hannay's eyes"

Brad is a Lighting and Audio-Visual designer who has designed for Auckland Theatre Company and numerous dance and theatre productions.

He lectures in the Performance Technology Programme at UNITEC'S Theatre, Dance and Film School.

Brad has designed lighting for Auckland Theatre Company productions of WHO NEEDS SLEEP ANYWAY?, THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES, DESIGN FOR LIVING, MY NAME IS GARY COOPER, THE TUTOR, THE SHAPE OF THINGS, THE TALENTED MR RIPLEY, PLAY 2 and PLAY 2.03.

Other designs include THE CUT (Silo Theatre), HEAD (AK07), ALADDIN, MEASURE FOR MEASURE, MINIATURES, LASHINGS OF WHIPPED CREAM, KNOCK KNOCK TURN, CORAM BOY and many National Dance Tours of works by Michael Parmenter, Simon Ellis, Daniel Belton, Raewyn Hill and Chris Jannides.



EDEN MULHOLLAND SOUND DESIGNER

Eden has been composing music for theatre and contemporary dance since 2000. His recent credits include FEMALE OF THE SPECIES, DESIGN FOR LIVING, MY NAME IS GARY COOPER, THE PILLOWMAN (Auckland Theatre Company), LOST PROPERTY (Fidget Co, Belgium), MINIATURES and DARK TOURISTS (with Malia Johnston).

Eden was an engineer on Michael Parmenter's Retrospective Tour and in 2006 he composed original work for Parmenter as part of a project arising from his 2005 Creative New Zealand Arts Fellowship. Eden has also designed sound for short films by Touch Compass Dance Trust, Atamira Dance Collective and Curve Dance Collective. He is the singer and composer for the rock group Motocade.

JOHN BUCHAN

When John Buchan died in 1940 he had just completed five and a half years as Governor-General of Canada. His previous occupations had seen him as a journalist, a politician, a diplomat, the director of a publishing house and a barrister. Five years before his death he had been raised to the peerage, as the 1st Baron Tweedsmuir of Elsfield, PC, GCMG, GCVO, CH; Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Dominion of Canada. Whilst on this job, a tribe of Canadian Indians had made him an honorary chief of their tribe, with the sobriquet "Teller of Tales".



STEPS, PRESTER JOHN, GREENMANTLE and THE ISLAND OF SHEEP through historical romances, to biographies such as MONTROSE and SIR WALTER SCOTT. In his day, Buchan was as famous and well-loved as any modern celebrity; his own son learnt of his father's death not directly, but by seeing newspaper posters in the street. The editor of The Times later informed his widow that neither he nor any other member of staff had ever before seen so many tributes to a single non-royal personality.

John Buchan was born on 26 August 1875 in Perth, Scotland. His father was a clergyman in the Free Church of Scotland and his mother was the

daughter of a moorland sheep farmer. Through his parents, the young John and his brothers and sister led a dual life of urban bustle and moorland peace. Their father held posts in several different churches in succession. From Perth, the family moved to Pathhead, Fife, with its coal-pits, blacking works, linoleum factory and railway lines, and then Glasgow, near the working-class Gorbals area with its tenements, warehouses and factories. Holidays, however, were spent in the pastoral calm of the Upper Tweed and Tweedsmuir area. According to Buchan, "by the time I had come to 16 years, I had swum in every pool in Tweed for mile

up and down, climbed every hill, fished in every burn".

John Buchan finished his education at the Universities of Glasgow and Oxford. He also began to publish his fiction whilst there. After leaving university he was called to the bar; followed by a stint in South Africa as secretary to Lord Milner, the high commissioner there.

Returning to England, Buchan spent a few years as a barrister specialising in tax cases, before joining Thomas Nelson & Sons, the publishers, in Edinburgh in 1906. The following year he moved to London to work in the firm's office. During his time at Nelson's, Buchan helped bring writers such as Joseph Conrad and H G Wells to public attention. It was also during this time that he first began to suffer from the duodenal troubles, that in 1914, led to enforced rest. With nothing to occupy his sudden increase in leisure hours, Buchan began work on his most famous novel, THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS.

When World War I broke out, he suggested that Nelson's should publish a history of the war, and set about this task with gusto. In addition to his writing, he conducted lectures on the course of the war, made visits to the British Expeditionary Force in Flanders and France and even served as a special correspondent from the front for The Times, before filling the post



of Director of Information responsible to the Prime Minister. This was the beginning of a long career in diplomatic and political service, which lasted until his death.

After the war he returned to Nelson's as a director, whilst also earning a directorship at Reuters and being appointed Director of Information at the new, somewhat Orwellian-sounding Ministry of Information. He also moved out of London, to Elsfield Manor in the Cotswolds, near Oxford. Here he and his wife could entertain, and scholars, politicians and wits would often descend on Elsfield for afternoon tea. He was bestowed with accolades and honours throughout the rest of his career: member of the Scottish Universities, in 1927; a Companion of Honour in 1932; High Commissioner of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1933; Honorary DCL from Oxford University in 1943; and, Governor-General of Canada in 1935. His last days were spent in Canada and travelling. His novel, THE ISLAND OF SHEEP, published in 1936,

describes Richard Hannay's retirement to the countryside and subsequent re-emergence for one last challenge; a fitting end to a famous literary hero. Buchan's last significant task before his death was to sign Canada's declaration of war against Germany. He died on 11 February 1940 from a cerebral thrombosis. The world he left was very different from the one he was born into. Thankfully his books, written in moments of spare time throughout his busy career, help recreate something of the life that he led, albeit from a romanticised, adventurous point of view.



To millions, however, he was simply John Buchan whose name appeared on the covers of over fifty books – books that ranged from adventure stories such as THE THIRTY-NINE

THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS ON THE SILVER SCREEN

John Buchan's classic novel THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS has been consistently popular ever since it was first published in 1915, and thus it comes as no surprise to learn that it soon attracted the attention of film-makers keen to transport that literary success to the big screen. In fact to date there have been not one but three separate films of THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS. Strangely enough, not one of them can be regarded as a faithful reproduction of the book, although the latest, made in 1978, comes reasonably close. Instead each has opted to take the basic premise of the story – that of an innocent man who learns too much about a dangerous spy ring and is then pursued across Scotland, before returning to London to foil the villain's dastardly plans – and build their own narrative on top of it. The first, and most famous, of the three film offerings has to be the classic 1935 black and white version directed by the legendary Alfred Hitchcock. The film bears hardly any resemblance to Buchan's original story, but this does not detract in the least from its quality. Many regard it as one of Hitchcock's best films.

It is certainly amongst his most influential works. One result of his radical reworking of the story is that the film has nothing at all to do with steps, thirty-nine or otherwise. As George Perry once said "such is the zest of the Hitchcock plot that the original point of the title was totally forgotten, and half a line had to be added at the end by way of explanation."

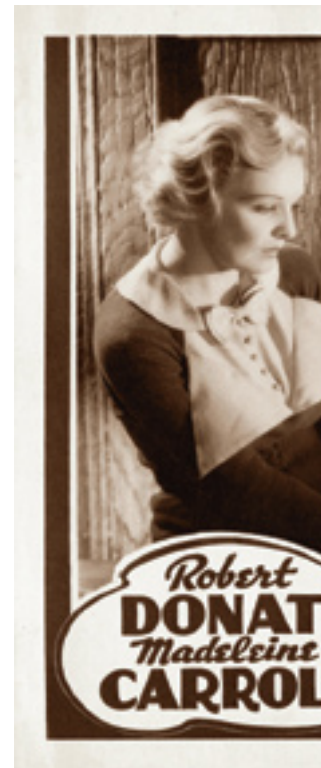
The film stars thirties idol Robert Donat as the protagonist Richard Hannay, who learns too much about the plans of a spy ring and is chased across Scotland. Here the resemblance between book and film ends, however, as Hitchcock delivers an exhilarating comedy thriller. Whilst the book is set in vast, panoramic Highland locations, Hitchcock keeps his film virtually studio-bound. The film is memorable for many excellent performances – Peggy Ashcroft and John Laurie as the married couple encountered by Hannay; Madeleine Carroll as Pamela, the love-interest who is handcuffed to Hannay by the villains, thus both hindering and yet aiding his flight; and Wylie Watson as Mr Memory, the stage performer who holds the key to the spy ring's plans. The film features many of Hitchcock's trademark set-piece scenes, including the aforementioned handcuff sequence, one of the



most influential and famous sequences in the thriller genre. The scenes are given added colour when one learns that Hitchcock thought nothing of actually handcuffing his two big stars together on set to get them used to scenes together. Naturally, he then left the set.

John Buchan was happy to let his story be filmed, and having seen the finished movie proclaimed it to be a better story than his own.

What he would have made of the second version of THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS is, however, unclear. Made in 1959, Ralph Thomas's remake is one of those rare cinematic instances that prove that a good story and big stars do not guarantee a great film. Thomas's film is more or less an exact scene-by-scene remake of Hitchcock's movie, except that it was filmed in glorious Eastmancolor. Perhaps the producers assumed that using colour would automatically make the film superior. What resulted was a flat, dull thriller which missed every opportunity of evoking suspense or atmosphere. And yet the story was the same and it had



its own big stars – Kenneth More and Tania Elg – in the lead roles. It was, according to Halliwell's Film Guide "a manual on how not to make a thriller."

One interesting result of the two films is that in effect the title THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS now referred to two different stories. Those familiar only with the book knew one story, whilst generations of film-goers who had seen either of the two films had their own idea of the story. Would the third, and to date most recent version emulate the first two? Or would



it return to the original story as written by Buchan?

In fact it did a combination of both. Don Sharp's 1978 version is certainly the most faithful to the book. Unlike the others it is set in the correct period and features most of the characters as described. However it also contains some bizarre and incongruous scenes, such as a runaway wheelchair and the famous climax which sees Hannay hanging precariously off the hands of Big Ben in an attempt to prevent a rather big bomb from exploding and starting World War 1 (of course, we know that he need not have bothered). This scene has no counterpart in the book. Ironically it is the one scene which many modern viewers associate with THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS, so it certainly



worked. Robert Powell also made a good Hannay, so much so that he was asked to play the character again in the late eighties, in a television spin-off series simply called HANNAY.

The question that remains then is, what exactly were the thirty-nine steps in the various film versions? The book makes it clear that the phrase refers to the number of steps from the villain's cliff-top lair to the sea at low tide. Hitchcock ignored this and used the phrase as the code name for the spy ring (in the book they were called the Black Stone), whilst the 1978 version introduced us to the thirty-nine steps of Big Ben.

THE
THIRTY-NINE
STEPS
IN REHEARSAL



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(Auckland Festival 2009)

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**ASIAN TALES™:
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for Asian Performing Arts
Feb 11 – Feb 21

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SILO THEATRE

Auckland

LIFE IS A DREAM

By Pedro Calderon
De La Barca
Mar 14 – Apr 10
The Herald Theatre
(Auckland Festival 2009)

Rosaura is a woman disguised as a man. Segismundo is a Prince, who believes he's a slave. The country is in chaos, ruled by a King who would rather sacrifice his own son to feed his own hunger for power.

BACK STORY

**By Oliver Driver &
Ensemble**
Mar 19 – Apr 11
The Herald Theatre
(Auckland Festival 2009)

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Palmerston North

TURBINE

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Mar 21 – Apr 11

Based on the current proposed Makara wind turbines, TURBINE gives this controversial debate a balanced airing. SEEyD's new production is a compelling environmental, political, romantic comedy which is extremely relevant to the Manawatu community.

BATS THEATRE

Wellington

**THE RODWELL
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By Sally Rodwell
Feb 28 – Mar 7

An energising blast of humour lightly singed with satire enlivens these flamboyant portrayals of Sally Rodwell's trio characters - Rhonda Gonne, Stella Strange and Charity Cartwright.

CIRCA THEATRE

Wellington

ROCK 'N' ROLL

By Tom Stoppard
Feb 28 – Mar 28

This sweeping and passionate play spans two countries, three generations and more than two decades, at the end of which, love remains; and so does rock 'n' roll.

DOWNSTAGE THEATRE

Wellington

MY BRILLIANT DIVORCE

By Geraldine Aron
Mar 26 – Apr 11

Starring Ginette McDonald. This is a wittily observant, aching funny and heart-wrenchingly real comedy that explores what life is like for Angela, recently dumped by her husband.

COURT THEATRE

Christchurch

HONOUR

By Joanna Murray-Smith
Feb 21 – Mar 21

When Honor married George she left her successful writing career to be a supportive wife and mother. After more than three decades of marriage life, George leaves Honor for an ambitious young journalist.

FORTUNE THEATRE

Dunedin

DUETS

By Peter Quilter
Feb 20 – Mar 14

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