

Takes '39 Steps' in Long Beach

BY F. KATHLEEN FOLEY

The essentials: This is Patrick Barlow's ingenious, tongue-in-cheek adaptation of John Buchan's 1915 novel and Alfred Hitchcock's 1935 comical thriller. It centers on ill-fated Richard Hannay, an unlikely hero forced to turn fugitive when a mysterious woman is murdered in his apartment. Handcuffed to a beautiful but reluctant accomplice, Hannay must outwit a nefarious spy ring to prevent critical secrets from being sent out of the country.

Why this? Four performers play some 150 characters — a tour-de-force opportunity for the cast. A West End smash, the play transferred to Broadway in 2008, where it was honored with the Drama Desk Award for unique theatrical experience.

The show requires split-second timing in performances as well as the technical elements. International City Theatre, a reliable company with a seasoned cast spearheaded by Bo Foxworth and Louis Lortorto, should be well up to the challenge.

Details: International City Theatre at the Long Beach Performing Arts Center, 330 E. Seaside Way. 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays; ends July 8. \$47-\$49. (562) 436-4610. www.InternationalCityTheatre.org