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'THE 39 STEPS'

By Wilfred M. Phillips Jr.

The adaptation play by Patrick Barlow based on the 1935 Alfred Hitchcock film, 'The 39 Steps', opened Friday, June 22, 2018, at the beautiful International City Theater (ICT) in downtown Long Beach. This hilarious wonderfully acted and cleverly produced play will have you laughing continuously while you're trying to figure out the mystery that unfolds throughout the entire performance.

The fun begins during the late thirties with a bored Richard Hannay (37) played by Eric Wentz who is sitting in his London flat and decides to go to the theater to suppress his boredom. He meets a strange lady who eventually ends up in his London flat and is later murdered there. The authorities accuse innocent Hannay of the murder. Hannay goes on the run from the police and from spies who want him dead. The play becomes fast paced with multiple scenes and props as Hannay is arrested and escapes from the police and endangerments. The imaginable stage props contain fog and sound effects that lets your imagination run wild as he endures several characters and encounters. Thrilling scenes are added into the play from other Hitchcock movies such as Vertigo, Psycho, and North by Northwest. The most comical chase scene occurs when Hannay is running away from the bungling police and awkward spies, which is displayed on a shadowed scrim of Hitchcock's facial profile. The inimitable, mysterious voice of the famous Alfred Hitchcock announces the fifteen minute intermission.

Throughout the performance, the four virtuosic cast members (Bo Foxworth, Louis Lotorto, Ashley Morton and Eric Wentz) play a variety of laughable characters. The various set designs, costumes, makeup, wigs and language imitations definitely portray the 1930's. Surprising and suspenseful events provide the audience with anticipation and barrels of laughter. After Hannay is released and cleared of all charges, he returns to his London flat and reminisces about his adventure with the police and spies.

In my opinion, the play is extremely enjoyable and entertaining and is so far the best plays of the season at ITC. If you are a lover of any of Hitchcock films, I guarantee you'll enjoy the performance.

I give this award winning play five stars for pure theatrical entertainment.

"The 39 Steps." is currently performing through July 8, 2018, at The International City Theatre in the Long Beach Performing Arts Center in downtown Long Beach, 330 E. Seaside Way.

For show times, ticket information, and reservations go to www.InternationalCityTheatre.org. or call 562-436-4610.