

ABOUT THE PLAY

Alfred Hitchcock's The 39 Steps had a highly successful, Tony Award-winning three-year run at the Roundabout, Cort, and Helen Hayes Theatres, as well as Off Broadway at the New World Stages. This theatrical staging of the famous 1935 Alfred Hitchcock film set in London and Scotland blends the film masterpiece with the juicy spy novel it's based upon, and throws in a big splash of Monty Python for an intriguing, riotous, thrilling comedy. Can a notorious fugitive and a spellbound femme fatale on the run north by northwest to the remote Scottish highlands save Britain from the den of devious spies known as "The 39 Steps"?

A company of four actors typically play all of the roles. All actors must be able to create many different characters and utilize many dialects. Transitions from character to character are seamless with no makeup, minimal costume changes and set pieces. The clowns play their multiple roles like a vaudeville team, in music hall style, enjoying themselves as they make their quick changes and letting the audience see that enjoyment. This will be a highly physical show for all actors cast.

Auditioning actors should make bold choices and run with them. The show relies on gutsy acting, impeccable timing and full-throttle physicality. All actors need to throw themselves completely into roles, and change identities and dialects quickly. Actors of any gender or ethnicity are welcome to audition.

AVAILABLE ROLES

Richard Hannay

(Male, any ethnicity, 30s – 50s)

A dashing leading man entangled in the adventure of a lifetime, as he becomes a fugitive on the run to save his own life and foil the spy ring trying to silence him. British dialect required.

Annabella/Pamela/Margaret

(Female, 20s – 40s)

Strong stage presence, comedic timing, multiple dialects. Annabella Schmidt is an exotic German secret agent in dire need of Hannay's help. Pamela, a British woman, is lured into Hannay's adventure but is skeptical of his claims of innocence. Margaret is Crofter's young Scottish wife who dreams of life and adventure in the city.

The combined role of Annabella/Pamela is precast. There is some possibility, but no guarantee, that a separate actor (any ethnicity) could play the role of Margaret.

Clown 1 and Clown 2

(Any age/gender/ethnicity – possibility but no guarantee of casting a third and fourth)

Versatile, creative, and playful actors with excellent verbal and physical comic timing, and a great sense of the genre of the film. Must be adept with learning multiple dialects to play multiple roles, including:

- Professor Jordan: A mysterious man who may hold the key to learning what and who "The 39 Steps" are, he is in actuality a German villain masquerading as English nobility.
- Crofter: A deeply jealous and suspicious Scottish farmer who houses Hannay for a night while Hannay is on the run
- Mr. Memory: A stage performer with the ability to recall thousands of facts on command
- Approximately 130 other heroes, villains, men, women and inanimate objects

WHAT TO PREPARE

No monologues will be seen for this audition. All actors will work from the same scene (at the end of this announcement). All actors should be familiar with the scene prior to the audition. A group of four to six actors will work on the audition scene together—to give each other ideas, feedback, comic bits, etc, as they would in a short rehearsal. Pairs of actors will then perform the scene. Actors are advised that their audition begins from the time they enter the audition space: the director will be looking specifically for individual comic talent, as well as the ability to work rapidly, comically and easily with other actors in the audition, and flexibility to take notes and direction. Each actor's objective is to find and/or create as much humor in the scene performance as possible, while making good sense of the story at the same time.

In addition, please be prepared to read the following sentences aloud:

I think it is high time that he made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life.

with these dialects:

- British
- Cockney
- Scottish
- German

This paragraph doesn't need to be memorized. Perfection with these dialects is not expected—just your best attempt. The IDEA website at the University of Kansas at Lawrence is an excellent resource if you don't know what these dialects sound like, or if you need a refresher. Have fun with these, and don't be afraid to exaggerate the dialects for comic effect.

**SCENE TWO:
COCKNEY MUSIC HALL, LONDON**

COMPERE

Thank you ladies and gentlemen. And now with your kind attention I have the immense honour and privilege to presentin' to you one of the most remarkable men ever in the whole world. Mr. Memory!!!

Every day Mr. Memory commits to memory fifty new facts and remembers every one of them! Facts from history and from geography, from newspapers and scientific books. In fact, more facts is in his brain than is possible to conceive!

Settle down now please. I will also mention that before retirin' Mr. Memory has kindly consented to leaving his entire brain to the British Museum for scientific purposes. Thank you.

(MEMORY bows.)

MEMORY

Thankoo. I will now place myself in a state of mental readiness for this evenin's performance and clear my inner bein' of all exentrinsic and supernumerary material.

(Drum roll.)

COMPERE

Now then are you ready for the questions Mr. Memory?

MEMORY

Quite ready for the questions, thankoo.

COMPERE

Thankoo.

MEMORY

Thankoo.

COMPERE

Now then ladies and gents. First question please. Come on now please— Pardon, sir? What was that, sir? Who won the Cup in 1926? (To MR MEMORY) Who won the Cup in 1926?

MEMORY

Who won the Cup in 1926? The Tottenham Hotspurs won the Cup in 1926 defeatin' the Arsenal Gunners by five goals to nil in the presence of His Majesty King George the Fifth. Am I right, sir?

COMPERE

Quite right, Mr. Memory!!

MEMORY

Thankoo!

(Applause)

COMPERE

Thankoo. Next question please! (Finds someone else) What was Napoleon's horse called?

MEMORY

What was Napoleon's horse called? Napoleon's horse was called Bellerophon, what he rode for the final time at Waterloo, June 15th eighteen-fifteen! Am I right, sir?

COMPERE

Quite right, Mr. Memory!!

MEMORY

Thankoo!

(Applause)

COMPERE

Thankoo. What was that, sir? How old's Mae West? How old's Mae West, Mr. Memory?

MEMORY

Well, I know sir—but I never tell a lady's age!

(He finds this very amusing)

COMPERE

Very good, Mr. Memory!

MEMORY

Thankoo.

COMPERE

Thankoo. Now then—a serious question please. Who was that? Yes, sir? How far is Winnipeg from Montreal? Ah, a gentleman from Canada! You're welcome, sir! How far is Winnipeg from Montreal, Mr. Memory?

MEMORY

Winnipeg from Montreal sir? Winnipeg from Montreal? One thousand four hundred and fifty-four miles. Am I right, sir?

COMPERE

Quite right!

MEMORY

Thankoo sir!!!

COMPERE

Thankoo sir!

(Gunshot)

COMPERE

Calm down, Ladies and Gents! Calm down, PLEASE!

(MR MEMORY hasn't gotten over the gunshot. He is in shock. He runs up and down the stage.)

MEMORY

What was Napoleon's horse called? Winnipeg. What defeated King George the Fifth by five goals to nil. Am I right, sir?

COMPERE

Very good, Mr. Memory.

MEMORY

Next question please!

COMPERE

That's enough Mr. M!

MEMORY

Beg pardon sir?

COMPERE

(Into the pit)

Play man, play!!

MEMORY

I know sir but I never tell a lady's—

COMPERE

That was Mr. Memory!

MEMORY

Thankoo!!

COMPERE

Don't forget his name now!

MEMORY

Thankoo! Thankoo!

COMPERE

Mr. Memory!

MEMORY

Thankoo!

COMPERE

Thankoo!

(COMPERE pushes him off)