



MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until Sunday, 15 June 2008

WEST END AND BROADWAY SMASH-HIT COMING TO SYDNEY

Direct from triumphant seasons in the West End and Broadway, a brilliant new adaptation of the classic spy thriller **The 39 Steps** will open for a strictly limited season at **The Playhouse, Sydney Opera House** from **31 July 2008** with an all-Australian cast.

The play, which is based on **Hitchcock's** famous 1935 film of the novel by **John Buchan**, has been inventively, and hilariously, recreated for the stage by the UK's **Patrick Barlow** (playwright) and **Maria Aitken** (director). It has been a hit since premiering in London last year, winning an Olivier Award for Best New Comedy. The Broadway season has garnered six Tony Award® nominations, including Best Play and Best Direction of a Play.

"Hugely entertaining. Clever, witty and ingenious." **Sunday Times**

"Hilarious. A celebration and a parody." **The Daily Express**

Delightful...The morphing of *The 39 Steps*, the early Hitchcock spine-tingler into a tour de farce..." **New York Times**

The epic tale of **The 39 Steps** follows the incredible adventures of Richard Hannay, an all-action hero with a stiff upper lip and a miraculous habit of getting himself out of sticky situations. Hannay is a recurring character in Buchan's thrillers and was modelled on a heroic young army officer the author met during WW1. That officer later became Field-Marshal Lord Ironside of Archangel.

The play revolves around an innocent man (Hannay) who learns too much about a dangerous spy ring. He witnesses a murder before being pursued across Scotland, after which he returns to London to foil the villain's dastardly plans.

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The 39 Steps, along with *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *The Lady Vanishes*, were the films that finally brought the British Hitchcock to the attention of Hollywood. He departed for the U.S. in the late 1930s and never looked back, becoming one of those rare “money” directors whose name alone on a marquee was enough to attract huge audiences.

The 139 roles in **The 39 Steps** are performed incredibly by just four actors, who certainly earn their money in an evening of fast-paced fun and thrilling action, with staging that conjures up trains, bi-planes, the world-famous Forth Railway Bridge and the London Palladium. The Sydney cast comprises **Mark Pegler** as Hannay, **Helen Christinson** as Pamela, **Jo Turner** as Clown 1 and **Russell Fletcher** as Clown 2.

Director Maria Aitken is one of the U.K.’s most versatile and accomplished artists - an actress who has played leading roles in the West End, for the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company; a TV producer and presenter, who had her own chat show *Private Lives* on the BBC; an author of two books, “A Girdle Round The Earth” and “Style: Acting in High Comedy”; a teacher for acting schools such as the Juilliard in New York, the Yale School of Drama and The London Actors’ Centre; and a director of numerous stage productions throughout the UK and the U.S.

The Sydney season of this West End and Broadway smash-hit is presented by the original West End producer Edward Snape, in association with Australian producers Liza McLean and Andrew Kay.

“Theatrical tomfoolery to die for. Uproariously jolly and splendidly inventive.” **The Guardian**

“Fast-paced, resourceful and attractively tongue-in-cheek.” **The Independent**

THE 39 STEPS

Playhouse Theatre, Sydney Opera House

Previews: 31 July to 5 August

Opening Night: Wednesday, 6 August at 8pm

Performance Times: Tuesday - 6.30pm
Wednesday to Saturday - 8pm
Saturday - 4pm
Sunday - 3pm & 6.30pm

Prices: \$34.90 to \$79.90

Tickets: SOH Box Office
(02) 9250 7777
sydneyoperahouse.com

or

Ticketmaster
136 100
Groups (02) 8512 9020

or

Showbiz
www.showbiz.com.au

Media enquiries: Peter Bridges, Bridges PR
T: 0417 390 180 E: bridges@bridgespr.com