

January 2012

## Marti Maraden: Directing *The 39 Steps*

**M**arti Maraden is one of Canada's most sought-after directors; having worked with the Stratford Shakespeare Festival for eighteen seasons, and being appointed artistic director of the National Arts Centre English theatre, her career has spanned genres, countries, and genres. We are thrilled to have her join us directing *The 39 Steps* for her Globe theatre debut.

**GT:** You were given the opportunity to choose any production to direct at Globe Theatre. What attracted you to *The 39 Steps*?

**MM:** It was extraordinary to be offered a choice and extraordinarily difficult to choose from such terrific options! But as a confirmed lover of mysteries (I'm reading Norwegian crime fiction writer Jo Nesbø now) and lifetime admirer of Hitchcock, *The 39 Steps* was irresistible. I had already watched the film several times and own a collection of the early films. Also, though I have never seen this play version of the movie, having heard about it and read it I knew it would be tremendous fun for me and the cast.

**GT:** The roles are incredibly demanding on the performers – how did you choose actors and what did you see in them that made you confident they would excel?

**MM:** I auditioned several superb actors for the show. Virtually the whole cast I have chosen had expressed interest in being in the production because they knew about the play

and wanted to do something that would be so giddy and adventurous. I was looking for actors who not only have a wonderful sense of the 1930's film noir quality of the piece and terrific comic sensibilities, but also have the amazing versatility the roles require. Andrea Runge plays three distinctly different women, and Randy Hughson and Gareth Potter play more roles than any of us can count – often playing three or four different characters on one page of the script! And David Leyshon may be playing one character throughout but he never leaves the stage for more than a few seconds!

**GT:** How are you going to direct a breathless show like *The 39 Steps* in-the-round? Are there any specific challenges you foresee?

**MM:** Directing this play in-the-round is a major challenge but an exciting one. A designer friend who did a proscenium version of the play asked our designer John Pennoyer how on earth we would do the "shadow puppet chase"? The answer is: we won't! We'll invent something else instead! It is difficult to conceal certain surprising moments when some members of the audience may see things we'd rather they didn't! I will rely heavily on our superb lighting designer Louise Guinand. But where one piece of stage business becomes undoable, a different solution arises. Having worked on several thrust stages I am used to and I enjoy this kind of problem solving.



**GT:** *The 39 Steps* is a send up of the classic spy-action genre. What are you planning on using as your inspiration?

**MM:** As to inspiration for this unique send-up of the classic spy-action genre, I remember as a child my brother and sister and I loved trains. We used to go "down the valley" to wave at the trainmen in the red caboose at the back of the train. They always waved back at us. We'd then run home and construct our own train out of dining room chairs and old sheets. To my mind this is quintessential theatre. Make-believe and a few sticks of furniture can transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. It is that sense of play and belief and transformation that is at the heart of this giddy adventure.

*Marti Maraden will be returning to Globe Theatre in the summer of 2012 to teach at the Globe Theatre Conservatory - Actor Training Program.*

