

WU?@therep

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG

BY HENRY LEWIS, JONATHAN SAYER AND
HENRY SHIELDS

DIRECTED BY MELISSA RAIN ANDERSON

CONTENTS

- 2 The 411
- 3 A/S/L & HTH
- 4 FYI
- 6 B4U
- 7 RBTL, IRL
- 8 F2F



The Rep REPERTORY
..... THEATRE
ST. LOUIS



ARTS
EDUCATION
COUNCIL

Shaping a Vibrant Arts Community For All
KeepArtHappening.org



Missouri Arts Council
The State of the Arts



ART WORKS.
arts.gov



the 11

At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some things are worth slowing down

for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together WU? @ THE REP—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (A/S/L), a plot summary (FYI), biographical information (F2F), historical context (B4U), and other bits and pieces (HTH). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means IRL, anyway.

CU@therep!



The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials accessible to students and easy for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, www.repstl.org, for additional information including activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information. Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom.

NEATO!

As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

HOW TO BE THE BEST AUDIENCE EVER!

TAKE YOUR SEAT

An usher will seat your class as a group, and often we have a full house with no seats to spare, so be sure to stick with your school until you have been shown your section in the theatre.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Before the performance begins, be sure to turn off your cell phone and watch alarms. If you need to talk or text during intermission, don't forget to click off before the show resumes.

BREAK TIME

This performance includes an intermission, at which time you can visit the restrooms in the lobby. Intermission is only 15 minutes though, so hurry back to your seat.

SNACK TIME

There is no food or drink permitted inside the theatre, so make sure you finish your snacks in the lobby before you enter the house.

NOW HEAR THIS

Just as you can see and hear the actors, they can see and hear you. Any talking, even whispering, can be heard by those around you and those onstage, so please wait until the show is over to chat.

NO PAPARAZZI PLEASE

The theatre is a camera-free zone. Flash photography interrupts the action onstage and is prohibited by Actors' Equity Association rules. You can sneak a peek at production photos on The Rep's website at repstl.org.

TAKE A BOW

Let the actors know you respect their work by responding to the curtain call at the end of the performance. Show your appreciation for a job well done through applause.

THANKS FOR BEING A GREAT AUDIENCE!

REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Director of Education
Associate Director of Education
Education Programs Associate

Marsha Coplon
Sarah Brandt
Brian Coats

A/S/L

The Characters of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*

CHARLES HAVERSHAM is found dead during his engagement party at the beginning of the play.

THOMAS COLLEYMOORE, an old school friend of Charles, finds him dead and suspects murder, setting the events of the play in motion.

Thomas's sister, **FLORENCE COLLEYMOORE**, has just gotten engaged to Charles, but she also harbors a

secret that could make her a suspect in his murder investigation.

CECIL HAVERSHAM, the dim-witted younger brother of Charles, had a tempestuous relationship with his brother, causing concern for the others.

The long-time butler of Haversham Manor, **PERKINS**, is desperate to solve the murder of his employer and friend.

INSPECTOR CARTER is brought in to investigate the mysterious circumstances of Charles Haversham's death.

ARTHUR THE GARDENER left Haversham Manor before the party, but provides some important insight into the crime.

The Characters of *The Play That Goes Wrong*

JONATHAN HARRIS, a working model, plays Charles Haversham.

CHRIS BEAN is the hard-working head of the Cornley Drama Society who also directs and appears in the performance of *The Murder at Haversham Manor* as Inspector Carter.

ROBERT GROVE is a three-year member of the Cornley Drama Society and highly serious actor playing Thomas Colleymoore.

Perkins is played by **DENNIS TYME**.

MAX BENNETT, a human geography and crime major at Cornley University, pulls double-duty as Cecil Haversham and Arthur the Gardener

The role of Florence Colleymoore is played by **SANDRA WILKINSON**, a long-time member of the Cornley Drama Society.

The company's stage manager, **ANNIE TWILLOIL**, also built the set for the performance.

TREVOR WATSON, the company's lighting and sound operator, is only working with the Drama Society for a course credit.

HH

PHILANTHROPIST: a person who seeks to promote the welfare of others, especially by the generous donation of money to good causes

FACADE: an outward appearance that is maintained to conceal a less pleasant or creditable reality

MELANCHOLY: a feeling of pensive sadness, typically with no obvious cause

VINTAGE: a period of origin or manufacture

ENQUIRIES: an official investigation

MOROSE: sullen and ill-tempered

CADAVER: a corpse

DISCREPANCY: an inconsistency, or a lack of similarity between two or more facts.

PARRY: to ward off an attack with a countermove

BENEFICIARY: an heir or inheritor

CONSTITUTION: a person's physical state with regard to health and strength

POPPYCOCK: nonsense

EMBEZZLE: to steal (often money belonging to a person or organization for which one works)

PERPETRATOR: a person who carries out a criminal act

CONFOUND: a dated term used to express anger or annoyance

FRAUDULENT: something obtained by criminal deception

AVARICE: extreme greed for wealth

CUCKOLD: used to describe a man whose wife or partner has been sexually unfaithful



SPOILER ALERT!

This synopsis contains spoilers about the story of the show. If you wish to be completely surprised by what you see on stage, you may want to wait until after the play to read this article.

Before the show even begins, the set is falling apart. Annie, the stage manager, and Trevor, the sound and lighting operator, are roaming around fixing things. There seems to be a dog missing, as well as Trevor's favorite Duran Duran CD. Finally, it is show time. Chris Bean, the head of the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society and director of tonight's performance of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*, appears onstage to welcome the audience. He mentions the Drama Society's "illustrious" production history, and makes it clear that this production, his directorial debut, will be the best society show yet.

The play begins and right from the start, there are problems. Jonathan, the actor playing the deceased Charles Haversham, trips on his entrance and appears very much not-dead on stage. As the other actors prepare to enter, they realize the door is jammed, and they cannot get in. The characters of Thomas Colley Moore and Perkins finally enter. Thomas tells Perkins to fetch Florence, Charles Haversham's fiancée. All throughout this, there are mistakes: actors forget their lines, props are not where they are supposed to be, parts of the set are missing or falling down. Thomas Colley Moore decides to bring in Inspector Carter, who he is sure will be able to get to the manor through the snowstorm (indicated by light bits of paper falling past the window).

Florence Colley Moore finally arrives, but cannot get through the door. Instead, she attempts to perform her scene through the window. Haversham's brother Cecil arrives and, with the help of the stage manager Annie, manages to get the door open. During the following conversation, Cecil reveals that he and his brother had a tense relationship, and that his brother Charles was a jealous and paranoid man. Cecil believes, unlike Thomas, that his brother may have committed suicide. The revelation of Charles Haversham's last journal entry also calls into question Florence's

feelings for her now-dead fiancée, as Charles doubted whether she really loved him at all.

Inspector Carter, played by Chris, finally enters. He plans to do a full inspection of the body and the process of removing it from the room begins. Perkins and Thomas attempt to lift Charles from the chaise where he was found dead, but they cannot. Instead they roll him over, where he drops face-first onto the stretcher resting on the floor. When Perkins and Thomas attempt to lift Charles, the canvas stretcher rips. The two exit, pretending to carry the body out of the room. Inspector Carter follows. Suddenly, Jonathan, the actor playing Charles, rises from the floor and tries to exit the scene.

Cecil and Florence are the only two left in the room. Alone, they reveal to the audience that they are having an affair. More calamity ensues as the plot progresses, including incorrect props, missed cues, and a real fire onstage—at one point, Jonathan, having made his way upstairs, falls from the upper level of the set to the lower level during a coughing fit. However, the actors push on. Inspector Carter begins his investigation by questioning Perkins first. Then, he questions Florence. Near the end of her interrogation, Robert (playing Thomas) bursts into the room. Sandra (playing Florence) happens to be standing by the door at the time. It hits her and she collapses on the floor, unconscious. Suddenly, Robert, Chris, and Max (playing Cecil) are forced to try to finish the scene with an unconscious castmate. Robert exits, leaving Inspector Carter to question Cecil. During their scene, Robert and Jonathan attempt to remove the unconscious Sandra from the room by hoisting her through the window like a rag doll.

The chaotic murder investigation continues. Inspector Carter exits after revealing to Cecil that he knows about the affair. Thomas Colley Moore receives a call from his accountants, who inform him that 9,000 pounds have been stolen from his savings

SPOILER ALERT!

This synopsis contains spoilers about the story of the show. If you wish to be completely surprised by what you see on stage, you may want to wait until after the play to read this article.

account. Cecil tells Thomas about the affair and Thomas, overprotective of his sister, fights him. Cecil exits and Thomas follows. From offstage, there is the sound of multiple gunshots. Inspector Carter returns and then Florence returns - only this time, it's the stage manager Annie wearing Florence's dress and reading from a script. Cecil re-enters the room and collapses, dead, on the chaise, with three bullet wounds in his back. The first act ends with Perkins, Florence, and Inspector Carter realizing that Charles Haversham's murderer must still be in the house with them.

At the top of Act Two, Chris once again appears onstage to address the audience, assuring them that this "certainly hasn't been the worst first act Cornley University has seen by some stretch." The action begins and Inspector Carter leaves the room to investigate the gunshots that happened offstage. Annie, who is still filling in for Sandra and reading from the script, trips and scatters all the pages, losing her place and causing confusion in the scene. Arthur the Gardener, played by Max (who also played Cecil), arrives. Although he was supposed to have left the grounds hours before, the snowstorm forced him to stay. During the scene, Max runs into the pillar supporting the upper level of the set and knocks it over, causing the entire second floor to tilt dangerously. Arthur the Gardener reveals a handkerchief that he discovered on the grounds, which was used to hold cyanide—the weapon used in the murder of Charles Haversham. The handkerchief features the initials F.C., leading everyone to conclude that Florence killed Charles.

Inspector Carter returns with Thomas Colley Moore and learns of this new evidence. As the madness progresses, Annie (playing Florence) is knocked unconscious. Sandra, now conscious, suddenly reappears in her underwear (as Annie is wearing her costume). However, she does not remain conscious for long, as she is knocked out by the door to the grandfather clock. Trevor, who appears from

inside the clock, is forced to read the role of Florence. Moments later, Trevor falls under the tilted upper level. The props and furniture from above come crashing down on top of him. Sandra, who had been stuffed inside the clock after falling unconscious, is suddenly conscious again, but she is stuck in the clock.

Fingers point everywhere in the murder investigation of Charles Haversham. Stage manager Annie rises once again and takes advantage of Sandra's imprisonment in the clock to resume her role. For the rest of the play, the two women fight over who gets to play Florence. Perkins, the butler, reveals that he knows who killed Charles Haversham: Inspector Carter. It turns out that the inspector was embezzling police money and Charles found out. The inspector pulls a gun on Perkins, but not before Charles Haversham himself bursts through the door! He never drank the poisoned drink that the inspector had left for him. Inspector Carter reveals that he had an accomplice working with him the entire time: Thomas Colley Moore! It is then revealed that the inspector was going to double-cross his accomplice; he stole the 9,000 pounds from Thomas's account and was going to use it to run away. In revenge, Thomas shoots Inspector Carter (or he tries to, but the gun doesn't fire).

As the play ends, all of the walls fall down, revealing the crew working backstage. In the final moments, Charles Haversham offers a glass of poisoned sherry to Thomas, who drinks it willingly. Thomas Colley Moore dies, and Charles Haversham states, "Let us hope we never again see a murder at Haversham Manor."

BU THE ART OF MAKING THEATRE

Theatre is an art form that's been around for an incredibly long time—so long that it's difficult to think of when it actually began. Storytelling is an instinctive way to pass on experiences from generation to generation, so it seems only natural that humankind would dramatize events by acting them out.

Civilizations began to perform stories as a form of tradition and ceremony, whether it was to tell an entertaining tale of the ancient gods or to summon a plentiful crop season. Through rehearsals for these rituals, which often involved masks and costumes, theatre was born. Many consider Ancient Greece the birthplace of theatre as a popular art form. In Athens, performers wearing costumes and masks would sing ancient hymns called dithyrambs in honor of the god Dionysus. Another development in the sixth century BC was when the city's ruler Pisistratus established a series of public festivals, one of which, the City Dionysia, also honored Dionysus by featuring competitions in music, singing, dance and poetry. According to tradition, one of the festival's participants, a poet named Thespis, performed for audiences by not just reciting his poetry but acting out the characters as well. Considered by many to be the world's first actor, Thespis' story is how we developed the modern term "thespian."

IN ANCIENT GREECE, THERE WERE THREE MAIN GENRES OF DRAMA:

COMEDY

The first comedic plays mostly were satirical in nature and mocked leaders in the community for arrogance and foolishness. Some of the first comedy playwrights included:

- Aristophanes, who penned the famous works *Lysistrata* and *The Acharnians*.
- Menander, who wrote comedies that resemble today's modern sitcoms as they were mostly about ordinary people. Unfortunately only one of his works, *Dyskolos* (translated as *The Grouch* or *The Curmudgeon*), survives in its full length today.

TRAGEDY

The most popular and prevalent genre at the time was tragedy, which dealt with themes of love and loss, and the tempestuous relationships between humanity and the gods. The popularity of this genre is due to what Aristotle originally referred to as "catharsis," the cleansing of painful emotions, such as pity and fear, by witnessing that there can be nobility in suffering. There were three famous tragedians of classical Athens:

- Aeschylus, considered the father of Greek tragedy, who penned several plays that still survive today, including *The Persians* and *Oresteia*.
- Sophocles, who wrote the famous Theban Plays: *Oedipus the King* (also known by its Latin title *Oedipus Rex*), *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone*, which tell the story of the city Thebes during the rule of the fictional King Oedipus.
- Euripides, who wrote *The Trojan Trilogy*, of which only *The Trojan Women* survives, as well as two other plays about the roles of women including *The Phoenician Women* and *The Bacchae*.

SATYR

These short plays were performed in between the acts of tragedies as a break from the seriousness and to lighten the mood. They often made fun of the characters' predicaments. Referred to as tragicomic or comedy dramas, these mini-plays often featured mythical half-human, half-goat beings.

MODERN THEATRE

We may have entered the digital age where you can watch a movie or TV show on your phone, but there's still something about theatre that resonates in a way no other medium can. Watching a live performance is a unique experience that feels grand and intimate at the same time, and it's currently experiencing a resurgence in popularity. Recent television shows like *Glee*, *Smash*, and *Rise* that feature theatrical performances are popping up, and modern Broadway shows geared towards a younger, hipper audience, such as *Book of Mormon*, *Waitress* and *Hamilton*, have become wildly popular. Broadway has also sought success with adaptations of famous films, including *Mean Girls*, *Frozen*, *Aladdin*, *Shrek*, *Legally Blonde*, *Pretty Woman* and more.

Theatre remains an electrifying art form for actors, artists and the audience. It's very likely why several film actors are finding their way to the stage despite the pay cut, as Broadway actor Terrence Mann once put it: "Movies will make you famous. Television will make you rich. But theatre will make you good." Musicians like Sara Bareilles, Cyndi Lauper, Sting, Dolly Parton, and Elton John have all found success writing Broadway musicals. Film and television actors like Daniel Radcliffe, Denzel Washington, Laurie Metcalf, and Andrew Garfield have become staples of Broadway productions.

Considering it's been around since the ancient times, there's no question theatre certainly has staying power!

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

As Melissa Rain Anderson, the director of *The Play That Goes Wrong*, wrote in her program note, “the need to tell the story is essential for these characters. They take their roles and their objectives seriously.” For the characters in this play, they will do whatever it takes to get to the end of the show, each for their own personal reason. Oftentimes, this means moving past moments that would stop a normal cast of people in its tracks, such as the entire upper level of a set falling down. Instead, these characters do whatever it takes to keep moving forward, even when sometimes it feels like they are only going backwards. Nowhere will you find stronger support for the old adage “the show must go on.” And indeed, it does.

JEALOUSY

Jealousy becomes an important plot point in both *The Play That Goes Wrong* and *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. For the play within the play, jealousy becomes a strong contender for why Charles Haversham was murdered. His brother, Cecil, states that they had a tempestuous relationship due to jealousy of one another, which leads Cecil to become a suspect in the case. Even more clearly, jealousy is an

important part of the actor’s motivations during the performance, particularly Sandra and Annie. As the two fight over who gets to play the role of Florence, they become violent and unemotional towards each other in their desire to claim the role. Luckily, this is a comedy, so none of the violence is too horrific not to laugh at!

A PLAY WITHIN A PLAY

Metafiction is when works of literature use self-reference as a distinguishing factor. It is quite a popular tool that writers use to explore themes more fully. When used in conjunction with farce, it allows the playwright to heighten the comedic effect. *The Play That Goes Wrong* is structurally a play within a play, but it is completely reliant on the audience to understand the structure of theatre. On one level, you have the play that is being performed: *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. On another level, you have the scripted nonsense of *The Play That Goes Wrong*. But then, you have a third level: you as an audience member are actually watching the performance of a play, which in itself has the ability to go completely wrong in an unplanned and unscripted way entirely due to the nature of live theatre. It allows for the possibility of actual mishaps and mistakes, which become impossible to sort out while watching the show.

IRL FARCE & PHYSICAL COMEDY

Comedy is a cherished genre, as everyone loves to laugh. But did you know comedy is an incredibly diverse art? There’s parody, spoof, improvisational, observational, satirical, ironic—the list goes on and on. One of the most popular comedy forms, evident in *The Play That Goes Wrong* is farce, which tells its story by using highly exaggerated plots and characters.

TYPICAL ELEMENTS OF A FARCE:

- A highly incomprehensible plot containing a series of random, or loosely related events (i.e. the climatic scene featuring characters being trapped in a lion’s den or a hot air balloon). The audience is encouraged not to pay too much heed to following every plot twist (as there are quite a few); rather they should just sit back and be entertained by the crazy goings-on.
- Stock characters who display stereotypical personality traits (i.e. the cranky old man, the dim-witted ingénue, the erratic diva, the charming playboy, etc). One of the earliest examples of farce comedy is the *Atellan Farce* in Ancient Rome, which was a collection of wacky comedies that featured stock characters, including the clown, the glutton, and the Harlequin or comic servant.

- Exaggerated physicality expressed by the actors through either sight gags, buffoonish dancing or—shamefully—usually one of the main characters getting physically hurt in a giggle-inducing manner (think *The Three Stooges* or *Home Alone*).

It is perhaps farce’s universal silliness that makes it so appealing throughout time and across cultures. Japan literally got in on the act around the 14th century with its Ky gen plays, which, like Greece’s Satyr performances, were comedic intermission interludes to the solemn Noh plays. Farce was also quite popular among English literature’s most prominent luminaries, including Geoffrey Chaucer who featured many farcical elements in his *The Canterbury Tales*, and William Shakespeare in his plays *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of Shrew*. Farce’s popularity exploded stateside during the 1930s in the form of screwball comedies, including *It Happened One Night*, *His Girl Friday*, *Some Like It Hot* and *The Seven Year Itch*. You’re probably more familiar with farce in modern television shows like *Arrested Development* or later seasons of *Seinfeld*.

Can you think of other farces you’ve seen? Do you enjoy farce or do you prefer your laughs from another type of comedy?



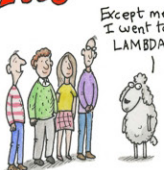
MISCHIEF THEATRE

The Play That Goes Wrong was created by an ensemble of thespians (actors, writers, directors) known as the Mischief Theatre Company. Together, they have created many works of comedy that have appeared in London and New York. Take a look below at their history and accomplishments.

THE STORY OF




2008



Except me I went to LAMBDA

MISCHIEF THEATRE FORMED BY FORMER STUDENTS OF LAMDA DRAMA SCHOOL.

2009




'LIGHTS! CAMERA! IMPROVISE' UNLEASHED ON LONDON FRINGE

So, what did you think?

AT ONE GIG THE CAST OUTNUMBER THE AUDIENCE.

2010




MISCHIEF GOES TO THE EDINBURGH FRINGE AND WINS TNC BEST IMPROV AWARD.

We're a captive audience!

THEY ALSO PERFORM IN A SCOTTISH PRISON!

2011




'LIGHTS! CAMERA! IMPROVISE! PLAYS LONDON, MANCHESTER AND EDINBURGH.

I hope your spells are better than your spelling

MISCHIEF ALSO PRESENTS A NEWLY WRITTEN COMEDY 'MAGIC'

2012




1ST INTERNATIONAL GIG IN POLAND WHERE THEY PERFORM IN A WARDROBE.

Still, it's bigger than our rehearsal space.

THEY ALSO WROTE THEIR 1ST FULLY SCRIPTED PLAY 'THE MURDER BEFORE CHRISTMAS'.


2013



THE MURDER BEFORE CHRISTMAS' ADAPTED AS 'THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG'

OPENING NIGHT WAS ABOVE A PUB!


2014



'PETER PAN GOES WRONG' FINISHES ITS RUN AT THE PLEASANCE AND TOURS U.K. WARDROBE!!!


THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG OPENS AT THE DUCHESS IN SEPTEMBER AFTER SELL-OUT TOUR.

2015




'THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG' ESTABLISHES ITSELF AS A LONG RUNNER IN THE WEST END COLLECTING THE OLIVIER AWARD FOR BEST NEW COMEDY, THE WHAT'S ON STAGE AWARD FOR BEST NEW COMEDY, AND THE BROADWAY WORLD AWARD FOR BEST NEW PLAY.

2015 (AGAIN)




THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG IS ON THE ROYAL VARIETY SHOW IN FRONT OF PRINCE HARRY.

2015 (A GOOD YEAR)




'PETER PAN GOES WRONG' HAS A CHRISTMAS SEASON IN THE WEST END AT THE APOLLO.

2016




MARCH 2016 MISCHIEF OPEN THE COMEDY ABOUT A BANK ROBBERY AT THE CRITERION THEATRE IN THE WEST END.

2016



Is this on?... Is this on?... Can somebody tell me when we've started?... CHRISTMAS THAT GOES WRONG, BBC RADIO 2, CHRISTMAS DAY FEATURING MATT LUCAS.


2016



Either I have Tintinus or Tinkerbell is wildly overacting


PETER PAN GOES WRONG AIRS ON BBC 1 ON NEW YEAR'S EVE WITH GUEST DAVID SUCHET.

2017




THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG OPENS ON BROADWAY.

2017



TPTGW WINS BROADWAY.COM AUDIENCE CHOICE AWARD AND THE THEATRE FANS CHOICE AWARD.


2017



OK, which one of you actors has been chewing my scenery?

NIGEL HOOK WINS A TONY FOR THE SET DESIGN FOR TPTGW ON BROADWAY.


2017



WE DEMAND THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG.

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG IS PLAYING IN EVERY CONTINENT EXCEPT ANTARCTICA

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK:
@MischiefComedy
mischieftheatre.co.uk



...and another thing...

CARTOON BY HARRY VENNING
www.harryvenning.co.uk

<https://mischieftheatre.co.uk/about/history/>