



THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG

HIGH SCHOOL EDITION

BY HENRY LEWIS,
JONATHAN SAYER
& HENRY SHIELDS



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG (HIGH SCHOOL EDITION)
Copyright © 2022, Mischief Worldwide Ltd.

THE PLAY THAT GOES
WRONG
GOES WRONG®, THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG®, MISCHIEF®
and MISCHIEF THEATRE® are trademarks and registered trademarks of Mischief
Worldwide Ltd. www.MischiefComedy.com.

All Rights Reserved

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG (HIGH SCHOOL EDITION) is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), or stored in any retrieval system in any way (electronic or mechanical) without written permission of the publisher.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG (HIGH SCHOOL EDITION) are controlled exclusively by Dramatists Play Service, 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. **No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of Dramatists Play Service and paying the requisite fee.**

All other rights, including without limitation motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to the appropriate person or entity indicated at www.MischiefComedy.com.

Additional copyright information concerning the West End and Broadway productions of THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG is included at the back of this volume.

NOTE ON BILLING

Anyone receiving permission to produce THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG (HIGH SCHOOL EDITION) is required to give credit to the Authors as sole and exclusive Authors of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. Please see your production license for font size and typeface requirements.

Be advised that there may be additional credits required in all programs and promotional material. Such language will be listed under the “Additional Billing” section of production licenses. It is the licensee’s responsibility to ensure any and all required billing is included in the requisite places, per the terms of the license.

SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS/RECORDINGS

Dramatists Play Service neither holds the rights to nor grants permission to use any songs or recordings mentioned in the Play. Permission for performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in this Play is not included in our license agreement. The permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained for any such use. For any songs and/or recordings mentioned in the Play, other songs, arrangements, or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted.

INTRODUCTION

We're so delighted that *The Play That Goes Wrong* is now available to high schools, and we hope teachers and students alike enjoy reading the play and getting it up on its feet.

Although performing this show requires technical precision and rehearsal, the main thing we want to encourage is that you have fun working on or studying this play. Comedy is always at its best when created in a room full of laughter and explored in a space where everyone is able to express themselves freely. So stay truthful, support one another, and make sure you have a good time as you get to know the characters and the wonderful world of the Cornley Drama Society. Good luck making Mischief.

—Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer & Henry Shields

CHARACTERS

*As with any play-within-a-play, you have the complication of the characters of the actors doing the play-within-the-play and the characters within the play-within-the-play. To make it a little simpler, the names are laid out below in two lists: firstly the members of the Cornley Drama Society who are putting on the play, and secondly the characters of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. The text always uses the actors' names rather than the characters' names.*

MEMBERS OF THE CORNLEY DRAMA SOCIETY

(in order of appearance)

ANNIE is the company's stage manager. American accent. (F)

STAGE CREW (6–8), the Cornley Drama Society stage crew. (M/F)

TREVOR (or TAYLOR, if female) is the company's lighting and sound operator. American accent. (M/F)

CHRIS (short for Christine, if female) is the head of the drama society, directed the play and plays Inspector Carter. (M/F)

JONATHAN plays Charles Haversham. (M)

ROBERT (or RACHEL, if female) plays Thomas Colley Moore (or Mary Colley Moore). (M/F)

DENNIS (or DENISE, if female) plays Perkins. (M/F)

MAX plays Cecil Haversham and Arthur the Gardener. (M)

SANDRA plays Florence Colley Moore. (F)

*The action takes place on the opening night of the Cornley Drama Society's production of *The Murder at Haversham Manor* by Susie H. K. Brideswell. Present day.*

CHARACTERS IN *THE MURDER AT HAVERSHAM MANOR*
(in order of appearance)

CHARLES HAVERSHAM, the deceased. (M)

THOMAS (or MARY) COLLEYMOORE, Charles' old school friend. (M/F)

PERKINS, Charles' butler (or maid). (M/F)

CECIL HAVERSHAM, Charles' brother. (M)

FLORENCE COLLEYMOORE, Charles' fiancée and Thomas'/ Mary's sister. (F)

INSPECTOR CARTER, an esteemed local inspector. (M/F)

ARTHUR THE GARDENER, the gardener at Haversham Manor. (M)

The action takes place in Charles' private rooms at Haversham Manor on the evening of Charles and Florence's engagement party. Winter 1922.

SCRIPT NOTE

The stage direction "vamp" indicates improvised dialogue or action.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The preshow and interval activity should be subtle, incidental and not draw the full attention of the audience. The show should not feel like it's begun until Trevor/Taylor addresses the whole audience.

A crucial thing to remember when performing this piece is to tell the story of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. That is what the actors of Cornley are setting out to do and as such should be what the cast of *The Play That Goes Wrong* are setting out to do. The characters of the actors you will no doubt work on in detail, but their temperaments and flaws should shine through the cracks in their performances and not suffocate the action. Always try to tell the murder mystery story and play the *Haversham Manor* characters. Without that solid structure to support the comedy, the show will unravel.

Everything in the show must of course be played for truth and not for laughs or parody. For Cornley this show is not a comedy, it's a serious play, and it is so important to them all that it goes well, so when it goes wrong it hurts.

We've also found it useful to remember that the actors of the Cornley Drama Society are not bad actors but the victims of unfortunate circumstance. The comedy comes from their unwavering endeavour to continue, their bad choices in trying to get out of the situations they find themselves in and their optimistic belief that their luck will change.

The same is true of the set, costumes, lighting, sound and all other elements of the production. Everything that goes wrong should be a choice, and everything that doesn't go wrong should go perfectly or (in the case of the physical production) look perfect. The better the production looks, the more of a journey there is to the complete destruction that occurs in the later stages of the play.

In essence it is vital everyone works to present "the play that goes wrong," not "the play that's being done badly."

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG

ACT ONE

The setting is the private rooms of Charles Haversham, a young, wealthy man of the period. The room is a wing of "Haversham Manor."

There is a fireplace s. r. with a picture of a King Charles spaniel hanging above it. Two swords hang s. r. of the fireplace on a flat, and a coal scuttle stands s. l. of the fireplace. There is a large window (open into the room) in the centre of the stage with red velvet curtains closed over it and a grandfather clock to the left of it, with the time set to five o'clock. There is a door in between the fireplace and window. A large heraldic shield hangs above the door, and a jacket hook and barometer hang on either side of it. Next to the clock flat is a bookcase packed with books (rotates) and s. l. of that is a blank flat. There is a door to the study on the s. l. side of the blank flat.

A chaise longue littered with cushions stands d.s. l.; a small table stands d.s. r. with a telephone and a vase on it. d.s. l. of the study door is another small table set with a tray of glasses.

Set apart from the stage is a tech box complete with computer, faders and littered with empty drinks cans, etc. The tech box is visible to the audience and is where Trevor/Taylor will be seen operating lights and sound for the show.

Dramatic house music plays.

PRESHOW ACTIVITY:

As the audience enters, Trevor/Taylor is finishing off hammering the set into place.

Two members of stage crew are searching the theatre for a missing Duran Duran CD and for Winston, a dog needed for later in the show.*

Chris greets members of the audience as they arrive, in his/her best tuxedo.

Annie is by the fireplace, trying to stick a mantelpiece above it and trying to stick an old journal to the mantelpiece. She enlists the help of an audience member and gets them to hold the mantelpiece in place before disappearing offstage. Trevor/Taylor appears and commandeers the audience member to sweep the stage. As they start sweeping, the head of the broom falls off. Annie reappears and brings the audience member back to help with the mantelpiece. She sends them to get her tool kit. The mantelpiece is eventually stuck in position over the fireplace and the audience member is sent back to their seat.

Trevor/Taylor comes to D.S. C. Annie scuttles off.

TREVOR/TAYLOR. Good evening, ladies and gentle—

The mantelpiece falls off the wall. Annie emerges from the wing.

ANNIE. *(To the audience member.)* You said that was fine.

TREVOR/TAYLOR. *(Aside to Annie.)* Just leave it, leave it.

Annie and stagehands start to try and repair the mantelpiece. Trevor/Taylor address the audience.

Okay, welcome to *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. Can I kindly request that all your cell phones and other electronic devices are switched off and please note that photography of any kind is strictly prohibited. Also if anyone finds a Duran Duran** CD box set anywhere in the auditorium, that is a personal item and I want that

* If music by a different band is used on pages 45 and 77, adjust this activity appropriately.

** If music by a different band is used on pages 45 and 77, change “Duran Duran” appropriately.

back. Please drop it at my tech box at the end of the show. Enjoy the performance.

House and stage lights go down. Trevor/Taylor exits s. l.

(On his/her radio but broadcast to the whole theatre.) Alright, can we prepare for lights up on Act One, note for the cast Winston is still missing, we need to find him before the guard dog scene—

CHRIS. Trevor! Trevor!/Taylor! Taylor!

TREVOR/TAYLOR. *(Still over the speakers.)* —we need him back in his cage as soon as possible. What's Annie doing onstage? Get her off so Chris can do his/her stupid speech—*oop!*

Trevor's/Taylor's microphone cuts off. Annie and stagehands haven't finished repairing the mantelpiece. Chris enters from the s. r. wing in the darkness.

CHRIS. Leave it. Just leave it.

ANNIE. You need it...

CHRIS. We don't have time.

Annie hurries off into the wings, taking the mantelpiece and tool kit with her. Spotlight comes up on Chris, cutting off his/her head.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and...

Chris steps forward into the spotlight.

...welcome to the Cornley Drama Society's presentation of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*. Please allow me to introduce myself; I am Chris (*Chris short for Christine if female.*), the director, and I would like to personally welcome you to what will be my directorial debut and my first production as head of the drama society.

Firstly, I would like to apologise to those of you involved in our little box office mix-up. I do hope the six hundred and seventeen (*Change house size as appropriate.*) of you affected will enjoy our little murder mystery just as much as you would have enjoyed *Hamilton*. (*Change to a name of a show playing at a theatre nearby.*)

We are particularly excited to present this play because, for the first time in the society's history, we've managed to find a play that fits the number of society members perfectly. If we're honest a lack of members has sometimes hampered past productions, such as last

year's Chekhov play... *Two Sisters*. Last Christmas' *The Lion and the Wardrobe*. Or indeed our summer musical, *Cat*.

Of course, this will be the first time the society has been able to stage a play of this scale and we are thrilled. It's no secret we usually have to contend with a small budget, as was evident in our recent production of Roald Dahl's classic *James and the Peach*. Of course during the run of that particular show the peach we had went off, and we were forced to present a hastily devised alternative entitled *James! Where's Your Peach?*

Anyway, on to the main event, which I am confident will be our best show yet! So, ladies and gentlemen, without any further ado, please put your hands together—

If the audience starts to clap too early, Chris can say “not yet.”

—for Susie H. K. Brideswell's thrilling whodunit—*The Murder at Haversham Manor*.

Chris exits into the s. r. wing. Spotlight down. Trevor/Taylor takes up his/her position in the tech box. Darkness. Music.

Jonathan (playing Charles Haversham) enters through the darkness from the s. r. wing. He trips and falls over. The lights suddenly come up on Jonathan on the floor. He freezes. The lights go out again. Jonathan takes up his position: dead on the chaise longue, with his arm outstretched onto the floor. The lights come up again just before he's fully in position.

Knocking at the s. r. door. Robert/Rachel (playing Thomas/Mary Colley Moore) and Dennis/Denise (playing Perkins the Butler/Maid) can be heard behind it.

ROBERT/RACHEL. (Off.) Charley! Are you ready? We're all waiting downstairs to raise a glass to your engagement. Charley?

Robert/Rachel knocks on the door.

Come along now, Charley, you've been in there for hours now. If I didn't know better I'd say you were having second thoughts about the wedding. (Chuckles.) Charley? Hang it all, Charley, if you won't come out, we'll come in.

He/She tries handle.

Damn it, he's locked the door. Hand me those keys, Perkins.

DENNIS/DENISE. (*Off.*) Here they are Mr./Miss Colley Moore.

ROBERT/RACHEL. (*Off.*) Thank you, Perkins. Let's get this door open. We're coming in, Charley! We're coming in!

Robert/Rachel tries to open the door, but it won't budge. Dennis/Denise and Robert/Rachel hammer on the door to try and open it.

(*Still off.*) There we are. We're in.

Robert/Rachel and Dennis/Denise dart around the side of the set to enter.

But what's this? Charles, unconscious?

DENNIS/DENISE. Asleep surely, Mr./Miss Colley Moore.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Damn it, Perkins, I hope so.

DENNIS/DENISE. I'll take his pulse.

Dennis/Denise takes Jonathan's pulse on his forehead. Jonathan slowly tilts his head to move Dennis'/Denise's fingers down onto his neck.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Blast! I knew something must have been wrong, it's not like Charles to disappear like this.

DENNIS/DENISE. Sir/Ma'am, he's dead!

Lights snap to red. Dramatic musical spike. Lights snap back to the general state.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Damn it, Perkins, he can't be! He's my oldest friend.

DENNIS/DENISE. He's not breathing, sir/ma'am, and there's no hint of a heartbeat.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Well I'm dumbfounded. He was right as—

Robert/Rachel crosses in front of the chaise longue, treading on Jonathan's outstretched hand.

—rain an hour ago.

DENNIS/DENISE. I don't understand. He can't be dead. He was as fit as a fiddle. It doesn't make sense.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Of course it makes sense. He's been murdered!

*Lights snap to red again. The same dramatic musical spike.
Lights snap back to the general state.*

Good God. Where's Florence?

DENNIS/DENISE. She's in the dining room, sir/ma'am. Shall I fetch her?

ROBERT/RACHEL. At once, Perkins, and quickly.

DENNIS/DENISE. But she's bound to have one of her hysterical episodes.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Charles! Dead! What a horror.

Robert/Rachel crosses the stage and steps on Jonathan's hand again. He/She removes his jacket/her shawl.

But do you think it was murder, Perkins?

Robert/Rachel hangs the jacket/shawl up on a hook on the wall.

Or do you think perhaps—

The hook holding the jacket/shawl falls to the floor.

—it was suicide?

Lights snap to red. Dramatic musical spike. Lights snap back to the general state.

DENNIS/DENISE. Suicide? Mr. Haversham? Not possible! Never was there a man with more zest for life than Charles Haversham. He was young, rich and soon to be married. Why on earth would he commit suicide?

ROBERT/RACHEL. But why on earth would anybody want to murder him? Charles was such a gentle fellow.

DENNIS/DENISE. Generous, kind, a true... (*Reads a word written on his/her hand.*) philanthropist. (*Pronounced "phill-an-throp-ist."*) He never had an enemy in his life.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Until today, it seems.

DENNIS/DENISE. Shall I telephone the police, sir/ma'am?

ROBERT/RACHEL. The police? They wouldn't make it out here for days in this snowstorm.

Robert/Rachel opens the curtains to reveal falling paper snowflakes.

No.

Robert/Rachel closes the curtains again.

I'll telephone Inspector Carter, he/she lives just the other side of the village.

He/She picks up receiver.

He'll/She'll be here in next to no time. Hand me the phone, Perkins.

Robert/Rachel realises he/she already has the receiver.

Thank you, Perkins.

Dennis/Denise sits on Jonathan.

Good evening. Give me Inspector Carter... I know it's late... Damn it, I don't care about the weather. There's been a murder. Someone murdered Charles Haversham!

Lights change to red. A musical spike plays again. The lights shift back to the general state but the music continues. It cuts out briefly.

That's right.

The music continues. Dennis/Denise keeps trying to get up, thinking the spike will stop, and repeatedly sits back down on Jonathan until he pushes him/her off.

That's right!

TREVOR/TAYLOR. (*Over the speakers.*) Sound effect error on cue four.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Thank you.

He/She hangs up.

He's/She's on his/her way.

DENNIS/DENISE. Inspector Carter?

ROBERT/RACHEL. They say he's/she's the best damn inspector in the district, he'll/she'll crack this case and quick.

Robert/Rachel crosses the stage, stepping on Jonathan's hand again.

DENNIS/DENISE. Very good, sir/ma'am, and what shall I do?

ROBERT/RACHEL. Lock every door, man./Lock every door.

Robert/Rachel crosses the stage again. Dennis/Denise follows.

Jonathan sharply moves his hand out of the way of Robert's/Rachel's foot. Once Robert/Rachel has passed, Jonathan replaces his hand. Dennis/Denise treads on it as he/she follows Robert/Rachel past the chaise longue.

Not a soul gets out of Haversham Manor until the killer is found.

DENNIS/DENISE. At once, sir/ma'am.

ROBERT/RACHEL. ...And assemble everyone in here.

DENNIS/DENISE. Right away, sir/ma'am.

Dennis/Denise goes to leave through the s. r. door, but it still won't budge.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Good God! Charles Haversham murdered at his own engagement party!

Robert/Rachel sees Dennis/Denise stuck onstage and repeats his/her line to stall.

Good God! Charles Haversham murdered at his own engagement party! What a grim, grim night.

He/She turns sharply to the door.

Florence!

We hear a bang as Sandra tries to get in through the s. r. door.

SANDRA. (*Off.*) Charley! No! I can't believe what I'm seeing.

Robert/Rachel goes to try and open the door. Sandra appears in the window, holding apart the curtains.

My God, he looks so frail lying there. His skin is cold to the touch.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Don't touch him, Florence.

SANDRA. I must!

ROBERT/RACHEL. You mustn't!

SANDRA. You controlling brute/fiend, unhand me!

Robert/Rachel pretends to release Sandra's hand.

Oh, who could do such a thing? The night of our engagement party. Cecil, quick! Your brother's dead.

DENNIS/DENISE. This way, Mr. Haversham.

MAX. (*Off.*) I'm coming, Miss Colley Moore!

We hear three loud bangs on the door. On the third, the door

suddenly bursts open, revealing Max, Annie and members of stage crew who had all been attempting to open it.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Get out, you idiots.

They all quickly run off.

MAX. My brother? Dead? It can't be!

Sandra now enters through the door.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Calm yourself, Cecil. Pour him a stiff drink, Perkins.

DENNIS/DENISE. Right away, sir/ma'am. Charles always kept his scotch right there on the side table.

MAX. You know my brother had the finest collection of scotch in all the county.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Don't you think I know that, Cecil? He was my best friend.

MAX. Well he was my brother, Thomas/Mary.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Hang it all, Charley dead.

SANDRA. My fiancé dead, I can't bear it.

ROBERT/RACHEL. You aren't to leave my sight this evening, Florence.

Dennis/Denise goes to the D.S. L. table and produces the full bottle of scotch.

DENNIS/DENISE. Oh my God! He's drunk the whole bottle, sir/ma'am. There's not a drop left.

Realizing his/her mistake, he/she goes to the coal scuttle and empties the bottle into it.

There's not a drop left!

The bottle is now empty.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Hang it all, there's another on the table.

Dennis/Denise produces the empty bottle he/she should have got the first time.

DENNIS/DENISE. Yes, sir/ma'am, of course you're right, this one's full.

Dennis/Denise puts the bottle onto the tray of short glasses

on the D.S. L. table and carries the tray past the window. As Dennis/Denise passes the window, Annie/Stagehand leans through and exchanges the empty bottle for a full plastic bottle labeled "PAINT THINNER" with a large flammable symbol on it. Dennis/Denise doesn't see the switch.

ROBERT/RACHEL. This is horrifying, I mean who on earth would have a motivation to murder Charles Haversham?

SANDRA. I can't imagine!

MAX. It's madness! My brother was a good man. Who would kill him? I'm in shock, Thomas/Mary.

ROBERT/RACHEL. As am I, Cecil. As am I.

MAX. My brother, murdered in his own home! This is unthinkable!

SANDRA. This is more than my nerves can take. I simply can't stand it. Thomas/Mary, I think I'm becoming hysterical!

ROBERT/RACHEL. No, Florence! Not another one of your episodes. Calm yourself. Here, take one of your pills.

MAX. Oh Florence, this is unbearable.

Sandra begins to scream and pound Jonathan's chest. Jonathan flinches.

Thomas/Mary, I feel I shall pass out.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Perkins! Pour that man a stiff drink!

Dennis/Denise arrives at D.S. R. and offers a glass to Max.

MAX. Thank you, Perkins.

ROBERT/RACHEL. There, there, Florence, well done, deep breaths.

Dennis/Denise pours the paint thinner into Max's glass. Sandra becomes calmer.

SANDRA. This is terrible, just a week after our engagement.

MAX. Well here's to a good brother.

Max raises his glass and drinks the paint thinner. He quickly spits it back out.

That's the best whiskey I've ever tasted.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Have another, to calm your nerves.

MAX. Make it a double!

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!



Thank you for reading this free sample.

Continue reading to see what happens in Act Two, or
visit our website to purchase the full text.

www.dramatists.com

ACT TWO

Dramatic house music plays.

The house lights fade; shouting is heard behind the tabs. Chris emerges from under the tabs. A spotlight comes up on him/her.

CHRIS. Good evening again, ladies and gentlemen, I hope you have enjoyed the break, we will be resuming this evening's performance momentarily I am assured. I... I must say I'm delighted to see that so many of you have returned for the second act.

Obviously I would be lying if I said the first act went entirely as rehearsed, there were one or two minor snags, which you may or may not have picked up on. But they are snags that you would expect to see in any production. And this certainly hasn't been the worst first act Cornley Drama Society has seen by some stretch.

Chris gives a hollow laugh.

Just last year due to a casting error Cornley Drama Society had to present *Snow White and the Seven Tall Broad Gentlemen*. Anyway—

Chris is interrupted by Trevor's/Taylor's voice over his/her radio.

TREVOR/TAYLOR. (*Over radio.*) ...No, it's going quite badly to be honest.

CHRIS. Before we begin again—

TREVOR/TAYLOR. (*Over radio.*) Yeah, she's still unconscious and we still can't find the dog—

CHRIS. Trevor/Taylor! Before we resume the production one word of health and safety administration: Could I please ask anyone who consumed any of the salted nuts available during the intermission to please seek medical help immediately.

And now I present to you the concluding act of *The Murder at Haversham Manor*.

Chris exits s. r. Spotlight out. Music. The tabs fly out, revealing

chaos as Annie, Max, Robert/Rachel, Dennis/Denise, Jonathan and the stage crew all rehang the picture, barometer, curtains, etc. They see the audience. Chris enters from the s. r. wing. He/She gestures offstage and the house tabs fly back in.

Beat. The house tabs fly back out, revealing Robert/Rachel, Dennis/Denise, Chris and Annie in their positions from the end of Act One. Jonathan, Max and the stage crew have gone. All wall hangings are back in position. *Beat.*

DENNIS/DENISE. No one could—

All wall hangings crash down to the floor. The cast clear everything into the wings.

No one could have killed him, except for the people who are in this room.

CHRIS. Good God, you're right, it's one of us!

All gasp.

ANNIE. (*Reads from her script.*) This is a disaster.

ROBERT/RACHEL. And it's not over yet! Two murders on one night at Haversham Manor, what a grizzly evening.

ANNIE. Frightful brother/sister, frightful.

DENNIS/DENISE. And look, Mr./Miss Colleymoore, the snowstorm outside is building.

Max/Stagehand appears in the window and throws snow out.

ROBERT/RACHEL. If we're not careful we'll be snowed into this slaughterhouse. We must discover the guilty person.

CHRIS. Indeed. The gunshots were heard coming from the library. I shall investigate the room. All of you remain here.

Chris exits through the s. r. door. As he/she opens it, Jonathan is revealed standing in the doorway ready to go on. He swiftly moves out of view.

ROBERT/RACHEL. This whole business is a disgrace. Now let us remind ourselves of what we know.

DENNIS/DENISE. We know that Charles Haversham was found murdered here, in his own private rooms, on the night of his engagement party.

ROBERT/RACHEL. We know that his fiancée was involved in an affair with his own brother, Cecil. How could my sister behave in such a way?

ANNIE. Not now, Thomas/Mary. We know that he too was murdered on the same eve, in cold blood.

DENNIS/DENISE. The only thing we don't know is who the murderer is.

ANNIE. Oh, the tension in this house is...

Annie trips up and drops her script on the floor. The pages of her script go everywhere. Annie tries to pick up the papers, but they are all out of order.

Oh, the tension in this house is. Oh, the tension in thi... oh it... oh, it's tense.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Florence. How do you feel now?

ANNIE. (*Ad-libs, brightly.*) I'm good.

ROBERT/RACHEL. That's dreadful.

ANNIE. (*Ad-libs.*) Oh dreadful, yes, I want to die!

ROBERT/RACHEL. That's the spirit, Florence.

DENNIS/DENISE. But now, Miss Colleymoore, I must ask you an important question. Where were you when the murder was committed?

Dennis/Denise mimes the line to her. He/She points down and mimes drinking a cup of tea. Annie misinterprets.

ANNIE. On the floor with a moustache.

ROBERT/RACHEL. That makes perfect sense. So was I.

Annie reads off the wrong page of the script.

ANNIE. Kiss me a thousand times, I'm yours!

ROBERT/RACHEL. Of course, Florence, that's what brothers/sisters are for.

DENNIS/DENISE. This is a disaster! And already it's midnight.

Trevor/Taylor plays a loud clock chime twelve times.

That was most—

Trevor/Taylor hits the chime again. He/She sees he/she has confused Dennis/Denise and stops.

...that was most—

Trevor/Taylor hits the chime again and laughs to him/herself.

TREVOR/TAYLOR. *(To Dennis/Denise.)* Sorry, go on.

DENNIS/DENISE. That w—

Trevor/Taylor hits the chime again. Chris opens the study door.

CHRIS. *Trevor/Taylor!*

Chris closes the study door.

DENNIS/DENISE. That was most ominous. *(Pronounced “omoo-noose.”)*

ROBERT/RACHEL. Ominous indeed.

Chris enters from study, holding a gun.

CHRIS. Colleymoore/Miss Colleymoore, I must speak with you privately.

ROBERT/RACHEL. At once, Inspector.

Other actors stay on even though they should have exited.

CHRIS. I must speak with you, Thomas/Mary.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Of course, Carter.

CHRIS. Are you sitting comfortably?

ROBERT/RACHEL. Most comfortably, Inspector.

CHRIS. Before we speak, I must check that no one else is in earshot.

ROBERT/RACHEL. No one else is here, Inspector.

Actors scatter, realizing they should have left.

CHRIS. Very well. Colleymoore/Miss Colleymoore, I have found the weapon that was used to kill Cecil Haversham.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Good Lord, where was it?

CHRIS. In the library, lying on the table. Muzzle warm and the barrel still smoking.

ROBERT/RACHEL. Someone killed Cecil with this?

CHRIS. Yes, less than half an hour ago.

ROBERT/RACHEL. But who?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!



Thank you for reading this free sample.

To purchase the full text, or to obtain
performance rights, please visit

www.dramatists.com

DIRECTOR'S MANUAL

Greetings fellow artists and educators! The notes and comments below are from the pilot version of this edition, from the directors, actors, and student technicians of The Woodlands High School in The Woodlands, Texas. With a show this technically demanding and so dependent on timing, we went through A LOT of trial and error to figure out how to bring this show from Broadway/the West End to high school theaters. Hopefully these notes can give you ideas on how to make your show amazing!

If you ever have any questions about how we did something or just want to pick our brains, do not hesitate to reach out. We can email, phone chat or Zoom with you to help out. We loved this rehearsal process, loved this show and we think it is the perfect way to bring joy and laughter to your students and audiences.

Sincerely,

Matthew Peters (mtpeters@conroeisd.net) and Heather Collins (hdcollins@conroeisd.net)

The Woodlands High School Theater

www.twhstheater.com

General Notes

1. A show within a show is always a challenge for any company. The best piece of advice we received from the authors of the show was that for the actors of the Cornley Drama Society this is a drama and a serious play. Just like any show that you have produced, you want it to go as well as possible. The same is true for all the Cornley actors. Do not play for the laughs, but instead let the unfortunate circumstances (the things that are going wrong), and how the actors react to them, be the comedy. When things go wrong for them, it hurts. Keep this in the back of your mind when blocking and rehearsing for the show. I had this on a Post-it Note on the front of my script so that I would always see it before rehearsal!

2. When auditioning for the show, we would encourage you to do some improv games with your students. This show is based on comedic timing and was created by an improv troupe, Mischief. Those actors who can understand improv comedy will excel at a show like this!

3. HAVE FUN! This is a challenging show but don't forget to have fun with it and let your actors/technicians play. If your cast and crew are having fun, this show will be one you will never forget!

Rehearsals/Performance Notes

1. We would start every rehearsal with the basic diction and energy warm-ups, but we encourage bringing in some improv warm-ups. This will help with that reaction timing needed for a show like this.

2. Get off book as quickly as possible! This show is dependent on actors making eye contact and interacting with each other. The quicker your actors can do that, the stronger your comedic timing and moments will be.

3. Take a few rehearsals to talk about what brought the character to the Cornley Drama Society, their acting experience, and the relationships to one another. Another note from the authors is to think of this as a junior college company. Figure out the hierarchy of the company, who has been there the longest, personal relationships, and what do they want out of this performance and acting company. This helped us immensely in determining how the actor would react with a specific scene partner and when things go wrong.

4. Another solid note we received from the authors of the show is that every actor in Cornley has a performer flaw. When things go wrong, that flaw is magnified and we see the cracks in their performance and the actor, rather than the character. Think about those stereotypical actor flaws and start there. Find the flaw in each Cornley member and this will help when rehearsing the show.

5. Before every show we would have a gag/fight call; I would encourage you to do the same. It helped keep it fresh for actors and technicians and caught any issues from the set being constantly beat up. See the end of this manual for an example. After the gag/fight call we would then do hair, makeup, and costumes.

Technical Notes

1. Your technicians are essential to make things go "wrong." The sets and props become a character of their own, and your technicians are important for that to happen. We had two technicians who would come onstage to help when needed and would also help

Additional Copyright Information

The right to recreate the West End and Broadway productions of THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG and/or to promote a production on the basis that it is a version of those productions is expressly reserved to the owners of the copyright and trademark-protected contributions to those productions and their advertising, specifically:

Directions © 2013 Mark Bell & Mischief Theatre Ltd.

Set Design © 2013 Nigel Hook

Lighting Design © 2013 Ric Mountjoy

Costume Design © 2013 Roberto Surace

Sound Design © 2013 Andy Johnson

Original Compositions © 2013 Rob Falconer

THE PLAY THAT GOES
WRONG

Falling G Logo™ © 2013 Mischief Worldwide Ltd.

and any incorporation of material elements of such contributions in a production given under a Dramatists Play Service licence and without a separate licence to incorporate such contributions is a breach of this licence and of copyright law.

Advertising and promotion of a production given under this licence in a way which suggests to the public a connection with or that the production concerned is a version of the West End and/or Broadway production by incorporating the Falling G Logo or other material elements of those productions' publicity which may reasonably be expected to create this suggestion in the public mind is a breach of trade mark and/or other applicable law.

All such breaches are strictly forbidden.

If in doubt as to whether what you intend to do may be a breach of the above provisions, you must contact the Play Service before disseminating the doubtful matters to the public in advertising or production.

**Notice to Professional Licensees Interested in Presenting a
Version of the Tony® Award-winning Broadway and West End
Production of the Play**

Without prejudice to the above notice, the above rights and digital and physical resources to realise the contributions are available on a basis to suit a wide variety of production capabilities of professional licensees of the Play upon application to Mischief Worldwide Ltd. at www.MischiefComedy.com.