



Note from the Describers:

In order to describe 'The Play That Goes Wrong', we actually need to describe a different, fictional play staged by a different, fictional theatre company. The following pre-show notes will introduce you to this play-within-the-play, an old-fashioned mystery titled 'The Murder at Haversham Manor'. A play whose cast and crew will be trying extremely hard to get it right!

Audio Description Pre-Show Notes: "The Murder at Haversham Manor"

Prepare for an evening of intrigue, betrayal, and shocking plot twists in the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society's production of 'The Murder at Haversham Manor'!

The Venue

This play will be staged in the Drama Theatre, one of the Opera House's smaller theatres which is located in the Western Foyer on the ground floor of the Sydney Opera House. The Western Foyer is shared between the Playhouse, Studio, and Drama Theatres.

Stretching along one side of the narrow space is a long wall with many large glass windows and doors leading outside to the paved Forecourt and the water's edge.

Along the opposite wall of the Foyer are the entrance doors to these theatres, as well as a Bar and Café, a Box Office counter to collect tickets from, and a Cloak Room counter where you can leave any coats or bags for the duration of the performance. There are toilets at either end of the Foyer, including an accessible option at both locations.

The Drama Theatre is entered from the back and has about 540 seats arranged in 19 straight, continuous rows sloping down toward the stage. The concrete walls are painted black, the floor is carpeted in a deep blue, and the chairs are made of a white birch wood with orange upholstery.

The Set

This classic murder mystery takes place on a snowy winter's night in the 1920s. It is set inside Haversham Manor, a large English mansion.

The stage is split into three areas, making up the private rooms of Charles Haversham. The largest is the lounge room, filling the left half of the stage. On the right is the library, and directly above this is the study, on a mezzanine level held up by a circular pillar. There are no internal walls separating these three rooms. This makes it feel like one big, open space and allows actors to move easily from one room to another, as well as see and interact with each other from different parts of the house.

The Lounge Room

The lounge has a double-height ceiling. Its walls, spanning the back left half of the stage, are decorated in three horizontal sections. The top section is a white plaster border with three-dimensional ribbons and bows carved out, like a sculpted marble frieze. A thin green and cream border splits the top from the middle section, which is a green and white floral/botanical design in a repeating pattern that comes down to about shoulder height. The bottom section of the wall is wooden panelling.

There is an arched window in the centre wall of the room covered with lush, red velvet curtains. The curtains have gold accents, and are pleated and gathered in the centre to make them flow elegantly down the window. To the right of the window is a large wooden grandfather clock. It has a white clock-face with black roman numerals and two black pointed hands. Underneath the clock-face, there is a large wooden door that can be used to access inside the clock's wooden frame. The clock is so tall that a person would be able to fit through this door and stand up inside the frame.

To the left of the window is the door into the lounge room. When the door is opened, we catch glimpses of a mansion hallway, and the backstage area behind. Above the door is a red wooden shield with the Havisham Manor crest: a letter H and a ship's anchor in the middle, an eagle and a griffin on the sides, and a skull down the bottom. On the wall to the left of the door is a barometer, and on the wall to the right of the door is the funnel of a voice-pipe that can be used to communicate with people in different parts of the house.

Next to the door, on the far-left wall of the lounge room, is a white marble fireplace decorated with green marble panels. There are decorative swords on either side of the fireplace, and a portrait of a brown and white cocker spaniel above.

In between the fireplace and the door are a set of three fire pokers and metal bucket.

In the centre of the lounge room is an ornate red rug and a green leather chaise longue with gold fringe around the base and four red velvet cushions matching the curtains.

To the left of the chaise longue, in front of the fireplace, is a small wooden table with a bunch of red roses in a glass vase and a black old-style dial up telephone on top.

A metal chandelier hangs from the ceiling with 8 cone-shaped light bulbs arranged in a round.

The Library

The library is to the right of the lounge room and below the study. Its back wall has the same wooden panelling as in the lounge room, but going up the whole wall. The right-hand wall has rows and rows of bookshelves from floor to ceiling, broken up in the middle by two ornate stained-glass doors. Behind these doors is an elevator, connecting the library to the study above.

On the wall to the right of the elevator is a small wooden hook to hang up coats or jackets.

At the front of the library is a small wooden table with a tray of whiskey glasses on top.

The Study

The Study is located a level above the lounge room and library. Its wooden mezzanine floor is raised to the same height as the top of the grandfather clock.

The study walls have a red swirly patterned wallpaper. The study also has two large circular windows, one on each wall, bordered with the same red velvet curtain fabric as the lounge room window.

A matching set of elevator doors sits directly above the one in the library. To the left of these elevator doors is another normal door leading out to a staircase. A globe on a circular wheeled frame sits in between these doors. The top of the globe opens to reveal a bar trolley in disguise.

There is a small wooden desk and chair against the back wall, facing away from the audience, and a potted tree in the corner.

The Cast, Characters, and Crew

The Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society is a small amateur theatre company comprised of six actors and four crew members.

The cast will become the posh occupants of Haversham Manor, who find themselves caught up in a ghastly murder mystery. They must look for clues and unravel a web of deception to find the true culprit. They will soon discover that the people closest to them may not be as they seem - can anyone be trusted?

Charles Haversham – Played by Jonathan

Jonathan is a young actor in his late 20s or early 30s. He is tall with an average build, fair skin, and short dark hair. He will be playing the role of Charles Haversham, the wealthy young owner of Haversham Manor whose dead body is discovered unexpectedly at the beginning of the play.

Charles wears a casual but luxurious-looking suit, including a smoking jacket made of a velvety purple jacquard fabric with a floral pattern woven into it. Under this he wears a crisp white shirt which is open at the collar to reveal a burgundy silk cravat at his neck. He also wears smart black trousers and black patent leather shoes. His dark brown hair is parted on one side and slicked back away from his face using a pomade that gives it a slightly reflective sheen. This hairstyle also emphasises his prominent widow's peak.

For most of the play, Charles is dead. However, his presence is still felt very keenly onstage. His limp, lifeless corpse looms large over the other occupants of the manor – to some, a constant reminder of a tragic loss, and to others, an accusation of their guilt.

Thomas Colleymoore – Played by Robert

Robert is an actor in his late 30s. He is very tall with a stocky build, fair skin, and brown hair. He will be playing Thomas Colleymoore, Charles Haversham's oldest and closest friend.

Thomas is dressed for shooting or golfing in the English countryside, wearing a matching 3-piece suit in mustard-yellow tweed with a dainty black houndstooth pattern. His trousers are baggy, ballooning out above the knee. A pair of long, dark-coloured golf socks are pulled up to completely encase the bottom of each trouser leg below the knee. The inside thighs of the trousers are lined with patches of a plainer light-yellow material. On his feet are a pair of brown leather brogues.

The front of his waistcoat, made of the same yellow houndstooth tweed as the trousers, has 4 small pockets with buttoned flaps. Under the waistcoat, Thomas wears a light-coloured button-up shirt with the sleeves rolled up to the elbow. It is unbuttoned at the collar to reveal an emerald-green silk cravat. On top of all this, he wears a mustard-yellow tweed suit jacket.

Thomas wears his short brown hair combed back from his face in a pompadour-style quiff. He also has a well-groomed boxed beard and moustache.

Thomas Colley Moore is a larger-than-life English gentleman. He walks about the room with a swagger, making large, dramatic gestures.

Perkins the Butler – Played by Dennis

Dennis is a young actor in his early 20s, with an average height, slim build, and fair skin. With his short, dark hair slicked back and coloured with broad streaks of grey, his eyebrows tinted grey, and a weedy-looking moustache pencilled above his top lip, he will be playing the much older Perkins, loyal butler at Haversham Manor.

Perkins wears a posh butler's uniform: dark grey pinstriped trousers and black leather shoes, a cream double-breasted waistcoat over a crisp white shirt and black and white striped tie, and a black morning jacket with long coattails at the back. He is also wearing a pair of Union Jack socks.

Perkins is a timid fellow, but very kind-hearted and polite. When he stands and walks, he often keeps his left arm tucked behind his back, a gesture of formality.

Cecil Haversham – Played by Max

Max is a young actor in his early to mid-20s. He is average height with a slim build, fair skin, and dark hair. He will be playing Cecil Haversham, Charles' brother.

Cecil is dressed as if he might be the member of a sporting club at a posh English university. Over a crisp white shirt with a blue, red, and white striped tie, he wears a knitted white cricket vest with blue bands around the waist and in a plunging V-shape around the neckline. On top of this is a light blue blazer with white trim and thin vertical white and red stripes. The Haversham family crest has been embroidered in a red shield on the left breast pocket. The inside of the blazer is lined with a rainbow checkered fabric. Cecil also wears white trousers and glossy black and white leather brogues.

Cecil wears his short dark hair parted in the middle and flattened down onto his head with pomade. This slick hairstyle causes his ears to stick out more prominently from his head. He has the faintest shadow of stubble on his jawline.

Even though he might be up to no good, Cecil Haversham exudes a boyish charm. He is an earnest, good-natured gentleman, full of youthful enthusiasm. You might just catch the odd mischievous glimmer in his eye, or the hint of a cheeky grin at the corners of his mouth.

In the second half of the play, Max will also don a pair of bushy mutton-chop sideburns to become Arthur, the Gardener at Haversham Manor. Arthur's outfit is rustic and a bit shabby compared to the opulent interiors of the manor. His dark green trousers are well-worn, tattered in some places, and his black leather boots are scuffed. He also wears a dull green woollen waistcoat with a dull green neckerchief tied loosely around his neck, and a dull green canvas jacket.

When we first meet Arthur, he is wearing gardening gloves and carrying a large aluminium watering can, and will be joined by his guard dog Winston on a chain leash.

[Florence Colley Moore – Played by Sandra](#)

Sandra is an actress in her late 20s or early 30s. She is average height and slender, and has fair skin. She will be playing the flirtatious Florence Colley Moore, Thomas' sister and Charles' fiancée.

Florence is a stereotypical 1920s flapper. She has a very short, straight black bob with a bedazzled black headband worn across her forehead.

She wears a sleeveless, mid-length red silk evening dress. A form-fitting bodice flares out from a low waistline into a swishy skirt made from overlapping layers of silk cut into varying sizes, so that the bottom of the skirt looks playfully ragged. She also wears beige stockings and strappy black flapper heels.

Florence uses her feminine wiles to get what she wants. Bright red lipstick highlights pouting lips. Rouge accentuates her rosy cheeks, and a dark beauty spot has been drawn on above her left cheekbone. Dark eyeshadow and mascara emphasise a sultry gaze. Always aware that people might be looking at her, she will often strike a stereotypically demure pose: one leg popped daintily out to the side, toe pointed, with her matching arm held parallel in a graceful downward angle, and the opposite arm held up against her torso with her hand

resting lightly on the top of her chest. When she is not posing in this manner, she is probably leaning seductively against the nearest person, wall, or item of furniture.

Inspector Carter – Played by Chris

Chris is a tall, lean man in his 40s, with fair skin and brown hair. He is the head of the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society and the director for this production of 'The Murder at Haversham Manor'. He will also be playing Inspector Carter, the esteemed local detective who arrives to investigate the mysterious murder.

His short brown hair is slightly curly, and he has a very bushy moustache. He often wears a stern expression on his face, his brow creased into a frown.

The inspector wears a brown waistcoat over a white shirt and light-coloured tie, with matching brown trousers, brown leather shoes, and a long brown trench coat. When he first arrives, he is carrying a brown leather satchel.

Annie – Stage Manager

Annie, a young woman in her 20s or 30s, is the Stage Manager for the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society. Despite her quirky dress sense, she is actually quite shy and prefers to stay hidden backstage. We may still get a few glimpses of her as she works behind-the-scenes to manage the set pieces and props during the play.

Annie is short with an average build and light olive skin. She wears her dark brown hair tied up into two little space buns on the top of her head, any stray hairs held in place by a couple of hairclips decorated with small pink hearts.

She will be wearing a long-sleeved, stripey pink shirt layered underneath a black t-shirt from a previous Cornley production of the musical 'Cat' (the original musical, 'Cats', had to be modified that season to accommodate the Drama Society's small numbers.) On top of this, she wears a pair of dark navy-blue overalls that are covered in paint smudges, and a small black belt bag with several small rolls of different-coloured electrical tape strung together on the strap. She also wears a colourful and sparkly pair of sneakers with the words "GAME OVER" written in big white letters on the bottom of each sole.

Annie also works with a small team of two stage crew, who may also be spotted from time to time during the play. They both wear black jeans, black sandshoes, and black Cornley-branded t-shirts, with black utility belts around their waists.

Trevor – Lighting and Sound Technician

Trevor, a Māori man in his 30s or 40s, is the Lighting and Sound Technician for the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society. For this play, the tech desk where he will be working has been installed in a raised alcove set into the wall on the right-hand side of the auditorium. The side of this alcove that faces the audience is open apart from a railing.

Trevor is tall and muscular, with light brown skin. He has a traditional Māori design tattooed on his right arm from his shoulder down to his elbow. His black hair is tied back into a small man bun, and he has a close-cropped boxed beard and moustache.

He will be wearing ripped black skinny jeans with a black studded belt, black shoes, and a black sleeveless tank top that exposes his very muscly arms. His name is printed in white capital letters over the left breast of the tank top, and the words “The Murder at Haversham Manor” are printed in white on the back along with a drawing of an old manor house. He will also be wearing a silver chain necklace, and a black bandana tied around his right wrist.