Blithe Spirit

by Noël Coward
3rd - 12th October 2019

Coward wrote this supernatural comedy in 1941 to cheer up wartime Britain and it has been entertaining audiences ever since. The play set a long-run record of 1,997 performances in the West End not broken until 1957 by *The Mousetrap*.

Set in Kent, the play has successful novelist Charles Condomine invite eccentric medium Madame Arcati to the coastal villa he shares with his second wife Ruth in order to conduct a séance as research for his new book. Events do not unfold as expected when the ghost of his first wife Elvira is called back from the spirit world.

During over 35 years' membership of Medway Little Theatre, and having appeared in more productions than I care to remember, this is now my second time in the director's chair, having cut my teeth on Alan Ayckbourn's *Relatively Speaking* last year.

Noël Coward has always been a favourite playwright of mine, and I couldn't turn down the opportunity to direct *Blithe Spirit* when asked. I have been delighted to be joined by Amanda Sharpe-Conroy as assistant director, whose contribution has been invaluable, and of course my talented cast, who have worked so hard in bringing this Coward favourite to life... My thanks to you all! My thanks also go to those unsung heroes behind the scenes and front of house without whom putting on this play would not be possible.

Thank you for your continued support of Medway Little Theatre, and I wish you a pleasant evening.

Chris Loft, Director

He enjoyed further success with songs including *Mad About the Boy*, *Mrs Worthington* and *Mad Dogs and Englishmen* all of which featured in his famous cabaret acts at Las Vegas in the 1950s.

This evening's play is one of his most-performed worldwide by amateurs and professionals alike. *Blithe Spirit* opened at the Manchester Opera House in June 1941 and then moved to the West End, opening at the Piccadilly Theatre in July.

There have been dozens of revivals of *Blithe Spirit*, most recently the 2014 production at the Gielgud Theatre with Angela Lansbury as Arcati. This summer a production at the Theatre Royal Bath with Jennifer Saunders as Arcati had a successful run and is to tour the UK before transferring to the Duke of York's Theatre in March 2020.

Coward's films included the wartime classic *In Which We Serve*, *Our Man in Havana*, *Boom!* and his last, in 1969, *The Italian Job*. He was knighted in 1970.

Coward had a particular love of our very own county with homes at various times near New Romney, in St Margaret's Bay and latterly Goldenhurst Farm in Aldington, near Ashford, which is now owned by, and the home of, Julian Clary.

He also loved Jamaica and had an estate there called Firefly where he died of heart failure. He is buried on the estate overlooking the beautiful north coast of the island.

Paul Tomkies

Medway Little Theatre Needs You!

Our theatre produces several shows a year and we always welcome new members, whether they are interested in acting, stage managing, set building, working lights and sound, or any of the dozens of other jobs needed to produce live theatre. If you are interested in moving from seat to stage, please ask our front of house team or bar staff for information on how to join, or just turn up at one of our social nights, held every Tuesday evening in between show runs. The next one will be on Tuesday 15th October.

This amateur production of *Blithe Spirit*
is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Ltd.
a Concord Theatricals company

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medway little theatre

Blithe Spirit
a supernatural comedy
by Noël Coward

3rd - 12th October
Doors 7pm
Show 7.30pm

256 High Street, Rochester   01634 400322   www.mlt.org.uk

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