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### Blithe Spirit, 1956

Montana State University (Missoula, Mont.). Montana Masquers (Theater group)

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BLITHE

SPIRIT

Simpkins Little Theatre  
Montana State University  
February 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 1956

Fifty-First Season

## MONTANA MASQUERS

present

NOEL COWARD'S

# *Blithe Spirit*

LEROY W. HINZE, Director

CLEMEN M. PECK, Designer and Technical Director

## CAST

In Order of Appearance

Edith .....	Heather McLeod
Ruth .....	Marjorie Edmondson
Charles .....	Theron DeJarnett
Mrs. Bradman .....	Myrna Jo Black
Dr. Bradman .....	Doug Giebel
Madame Arcati .....	Whitney Hines
Elvira .....	Dolores Vaage

The action of the play passes in the living-room of Charles Condomine's house in Kent

## SCENES

### Act I

- Scene 1 Before dinner on a summer evening.
- Scene 2 After dinner.

Ten minute intermission

### Act II

- Scene 1 The next morning.
- Scene 2 Late the following afternoon.
- Scene 3 Early evening. A few days later.

Ten minute intermission

### Act III

- Scene 1 After dinner. A few days later.
- Scene 2 Several hours later.

BLITHE SPIRIT is produced by permission of Samuel French.

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant to the Director .....	Tempie Brown
Stage Manager .....	Bruce Cusker
Electricians .....	Patricia Irwin, Richard Howell
Costume Mistress .....	Janet Whittle
Property Mistresses .....	Marilyn Strickfaden, Sheila Sullivan
Makeup .....	Craig Crowley
Stage Crew .....	George Arnold, Edward Brodniak, Silver Chord, Bruce Cusker, Nancy Ettinger, Edward Gron, Robert Higham, Dan Hoffman, Patricia Irwin, Arlene Malouf, Earl Marshall, Leslie Mills, James Myhre, Norman Nelson, DiAnne Stephens, Marilyn Strickfaden, Sheila Sullivan, William Veseth, Janet Whittle.
Publicity .....	Doug Giebel
Box Office Manager .....	Marilyn Strickfaden
Box Office Staff .....	Inez Myers, Marilyn Pyle
House Manager .....	DiAnne Stephens
Ushers .....	Spurs
Theatre Secretary .....	Marilyn Strickfaden

Elvira's costume by Jeanene Schilling

Ruth's ghost costume by Arlene Malouf

Montana Masquer patrons are reminded that any gifts they may be able to make toward the costume and property departments will be gratefully received. Our production staff will call for such gifts; names and addresses of those caring to contribute clothing or furnishings may be left in the box office in this building. If you will telephone 9-2331, Drama Department, we will call for contributions.

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

THEATRE-IN-THE-ROUND.....March 1, 2, 3 — Stage of Simpkins Little Theatre  
"The Browning Version," "The Twelve Pound Look," "Rising of the Moon"  
The Drama Department

THE FIFTH SEASON.....March 14-17 — Simpkins Little Theatre  
Missoula Community Theatre

A SERAPH INTERCEDES.....April 17-21 — Simpkins Little Theatre  
Premiere production of a new play by Carroll O'Connor  
Montana Masquers

ARMS AND THE MAN.....May 2-5 — Simpkins Little Theatre  
Missoula Community Theatre

CAROUSEL.....May 16, 17, 20, 21 — Student Union Theatre  
All School Show

## COWARD DRAWS THE SHADES

At the end of a week's work, Noel Coward turned out *Blithe Spirit*. "I will admit that I knew it was witty," he said. "I knew it was well constructed, and I also knew that it would be a success." There spoke a confident man whose judgment of himself was based upon a record of successes as playwright, scenarist, song writer, poet, short-story writer, novelist, autobiographer. Add, also, singer, dancer and actor. His esteemed place in the world of entertainment had been secured by *Private Lives*, *Cavalcade*, "I'll See You Again," and *Present Indicative*. If anyone doubted his position, Coward could cite the record: the Class of '36 at Princeton voted him the greatest of playwrights, Shakespeare trailing by twenty-eight votes.

*Blithe Spirit* was the success its author foretold. After a tryout at Manchester 16 June 1941, the play had a run of 1997 performances in London and 657 in New York. Later it met with equal success as a motion picture and as a telecast. Part of its success has been gained through the performances of excellent casts: in London Fay Compton (Ruth), Cecil Parker (Charles), Kay Hammond (Elvira), and Margaret Rutherford (Madame Arcati); in New York Peggy Wood, Clifton Webb, Leonora Corbett, and Mildred Natwick. The recent television production starred Coward as Charles. *Blithe Spirit* has won further popular acclaim because it is typical of the comedies of manners Coward has turned out with ease and, occasionally, with skill. Here are to be found the usual domestic quarrels, general invective, and farcical activity all garnished with sophisticated wit. But the play has one ingredient that separates it from the typical: Madame Arcati, surely a worthy companion for Mrs. Malaprop and Miss Prism.

The English are proud of their ghosts, and their pride has inspired some authors to record eerie experiences in chilling chronicles; others have delightfully spoofed the spooks. Coward, himself, about a decade before *Blithe Spirit* populates one of the stately homes of England with a baby in the guest wing who crouches by the grate. The babe was walled up in 1428. In the play, Coward has it both ways. Ghosts there are for they materialize, but spiritual spirits they are not. What else can be expected from a middle class medium?

For the most part, Coward's ether-orb romp is good theatre. "If his play lacks body," cautions John Mason Brown, "remember that it deals with shades."

Vedder M. Gilbert