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Blithe Spirit (Modern Plays)



Synopsis

We've stood up - we've lain down - we've concentrated. We've sat interminably while that tiresome old woman recited extremely unflattering verses at us. We've endured five sÃfÂ©ances - we've watched her fling herself in and out of trances until we're dizzy, and at the end of it all we find ourselves exactly where we were at the beginning. Researching for his new novel, Charles Condomine invites the implausible medium Madame Arcati to his house for a sÃfÂ©ance. Whilst consumed in a trance, Madame Arcati unwittingly summons the ghost of Charles's dead wife, Elvira. Appearing only to Charles, Elvira soon makes a play to reclaim her husband, much to the chagrin of Charles's new wife, Ruth. One husband, two feuding wives and a whisper of mischief in the air - who will win in Coward's unworldly comedy? Written in 1941, *Blithe Spirit* remained the longest-running comedy in the history of the British theatre for three decades thereafter. Dealing with relationships on both sides of the grave, it is an enduring classic. A new edition of Coward's classic play published to coincide with the 2014 new West End revival at the Gielgud Theatre, starring Angela Lansberry as Madame Arcati.

Book Information

Series: Modern Plays

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama; Reprint edition (April 8, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1472589475

ISBN-13: 978-1472589477

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.3 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #594,337 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #193 in Ã Â Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Play & Scriptwriting #237 in Ã Â Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Theater > Playwriting #272 in Ã Â Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Theater > Broadway & Musicals

Customer Reviews

The wide-set eyes flash, the fingers fly like knitting needles, the teeth bulge and the cheeks quiver to comic effect. It is like being in a pre-war Lagonda and watching the old dashboard dials dance into life. This play . . . holds up well when played in a properly blithe spirit. * Daily Mail * . . . one of

Noel Coward's most inventive comedies . . . It is a comedy that still startles and delights. Coward wrote it in the darkest days of the Second World War and in the circumstances its determinedly frivolous attitude to morality seems downright heroic. * Daily Telegraph * As Coward liked to say, what's so wrong with mere entertainment? * Sunday Times * . . . Noel Coward's eternal comedy classic. * Jewish Chronicle *

This classic comedy is set in the charming country home of Charles Condomine, a re-married widower. A witty and convivial evening party among friends is transformed when a séance conjures the ghost of Elvira, Charles' first wife, who delights in wreaking havoc among the living. An enchanting Coward comedy! --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

Was necessary for my costume design class. We rendered watercolor costumes for an upcoming school production. Although not exactly my style, the writer had a good knack for detailing the environment through written expression.

very raggedy. falling apart when I received it. pages were written on in big letters

i love this play and when I need a play for my directing class I knew what play to do. Fun great play

Noel Coward was one of the drollest writers the stage has ever produced. His ability to write smart, extremely verbal and witty characters is almost as fun to read as it is to witness in performance. "Blithe Spirit" is one of Coward's more famous pieces, and the premise is clever and intriguing. In brief, a successful writer has a séance in his home in order to observe a Madame for research for his latest novel. The séance results in his dead wife (Elvira) returning from the grave, and only he can see her. This causes problems with the current (very much alive) wife Ruth. This play is a comedy, and the dialogue is fast and furious. I could not help but observe as I read it, and saw it in performance in an excellent production at the Stratford Festival, that the arguments between the character of Ruth and her husband are some of the best moments in the piece. Their conversations are quick, biting, comical and sometimes so subtly mean spirited that it is a delight to read. The whole play is well paced and fun, but Coward really excels in the moments when just two characters share the stage and for whatever reason they are not happy with each other. A personal favorite for me is the character of Ruth, who in the hands of a weak actress becomes shrill and one note. But if you pay

attention she is not written that way, and some of the text's best moments belong to her. Noel Coward is a throwback to a time we imagine was more witty and urbane. It probably wasn't, but it is fun to imagine it was so.

The story is wonderful and has been re-imagined many times over the years to greater and lesser degrees of success. It is a treat to sit down with a comedy of this sort and just enjoy its beauty.

One can't help but laugh from beginning to end. Yet the argument is very sombre, and could have been the argument of the most grim drama of a German playwright. It's the wit of Coward, his genius of combining the petty ridiculous with the dramatic that makes this drama just perfect. Coward's practical views on the supernatural are absolutely irresistible. A must for the occult believer and for the skeptic as well!

Edit: My review refers to the L.A. Theaterworks production. I've seen many productions of this play on film, stage and radio and this is, far and away, the best production ever. A different, more English tone takes this production a million miles away from the well known film version and, charming though Rex Harrison et al are, this is all the better for being different. Ian Ogilvy shines as the misogynistic Charles who carries a torch for his first wife despite his best efforts. Rosalind Ayres is fine as the slighted Ruth, playing it with a wonderful, indignant tone. But the undisputed star of the show is Judy Geeson who plays the mischevious Elvira with such wonderful drawling tones it's a delight to listen to her. I only wish we heard the word 'beastly' more in conversation! Of my many audio books, this is absolutely my favourite but wonderful as it is, I'm just sorry that this was radio and not stage or screen. What a fabulous production it would have been.

A comedy for 2 males and 5 females. While studying the occult a writer hires a medium who contacts his first wife during a seance. The first wife not only will not leave but decides she now wants the writer to join her.

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