

**BY NOEL COWARD**  
**Directed by David Abrams**

# Plithe Spirit



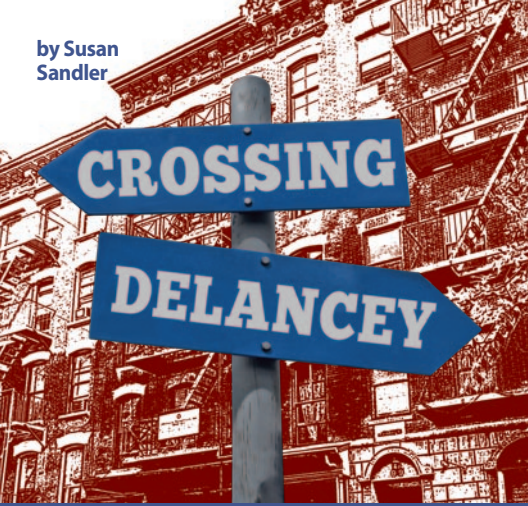
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by Susan Sandler



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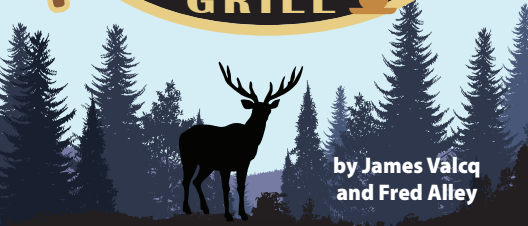
Blithe Spirit

by Noel Coward



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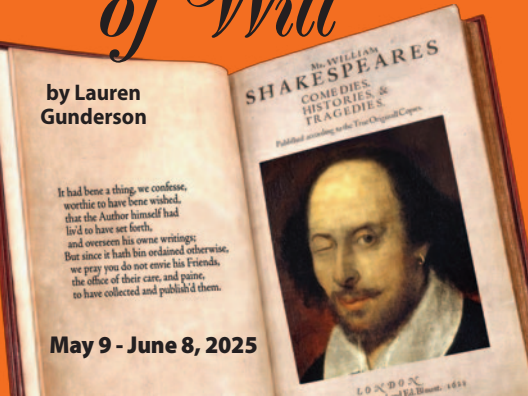
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## From the Executive Producer

There are different kinds of delight we experience at live theater. Two kinds of delight have stood out to me as we begin the 2024-2025 season at RVP. One is seeing the positive impact live theater has on our lives. Grandparents, parents, siblings, children and friends come to The Barn to see loved ones perform. They witness not-often-seen qualities in the performances.

A teenager told her parent performing on stage that she loved how much laughter there was in the performance and how she would love to feel that laughter at home. The actor brought that laughter and joy back from The Barn to their family.

Another young audience member approached Tamar Cohn (who played Bubbie in *Crossing Delancey*) with tears in her eyes saying how much Bubbie reminded her of her own grandmother. The delight our artists bring to the stage is being returned to our families and community.

Another kind of delight I've experienced at RVP is hearing the human voice - unamplified and unenhanced by technology. As AI replaces the human voice elsewhere, live theater may be one of the last places we connect with and are moved by real human voices. The human voice reveals the complexity of stories and informs in unexpected and beautiful ways depths of the dramatic action like no other. Remember: AI can't laugh (at least not yet).

Thank you for joining us tonight! We strive to make Ross Valley Players' Barn Theater the most delightful, comfortable, affordable and human live theater in the San Francisco Bay Area - a home for artists and audiences alike. We hope that by delighting you with *Blithe Spirit*, you'll bring family and friends, become a subscriber, and make RVP your theater home!

Welcome to The Barn!  
Steve Price



RVP GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES OUR SUPPORTERS



# Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward

Place: The living room of Charles Condomine's house.  
There will be two intermissions

## CAST

(Order of appearance)  
Edith Lizzy Bies  
Ruth Condomine Jessica Powell\*  
Charles Condomine Malcolm Rodgers  
Dr. Bradman Robert Molossi  
Mrs. Bradman Amy Dietz  
Madame Arcati Tori Truss  
Elvira Condomine Ashley Garlick\*  
Cook Piper Gilmore

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Director David Abrams  
Stage Manager Sophie Gilmore  
Assistant Stage Manager Piper Gilmore  
Assistant Stage Manager Katherine Rupers  
Producer Steven Price  
Sound Design Bruce Vieira  
Set Design Tom O'Brien  
Costume Design Valera Coble  
Lighting Design Frank Sarubbi  
Intimacy Design Heather Ondersma  
Scenic Artist and Properties Design Dhyanis  
Master Builder Michael Walraven  
Dialect Coach Danielle Levin  
Special Effects Nathan Abrams  
Understudies Doug Epps, Marissa Hinckley-Barnes,  
Bethe Jensen  
Photographer Robin Jackson  
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\*Appears through the courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. *Blithe Spirit* is presented by special arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.

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# Director's Bio

**David Abrams** (*Director*) is grateful and thrilled to direct *Blithe Spirit* here at Ross Valley Players. David is the founding artistic director of Birdbath Theatres and has acted and directed with Birdbath, receiving a TBA acting award for his performance as *Richard II* and a Critic's Circle nomination for his direction of *Uncle Vanya*. David received an MFA in acting from the



## Director's Notes

My late mother-in-law, Dana, drew me to *Blithe Spirit*. When it came time to choose a show for RVP, my dazzling wife, theatre artist Zoë Swenson-Graham, had just given birth to our first child. The unrealizable desire to share that joy with Dana was in the air when Zoë jokingly quoted her late

mother, "Why don't you do something fun, like *Blithe Spirit*? People like to laugh!" It's easy to dismiss a comedy as mere entertainment, and I have found the desire to do something meaningful or "important" can sometimes turn out to be a blind spot. After working on *The Glass Menagerie* last year, new fatherhood and a world climate

of conflict and many challenges facing us, I loved the idea of doing a comedy. *Blithe Spirit* premiered in 1941 during World War II and closed in 1946 after the war had ended. This play ran for almost 2,000 performances in London, setting a new record for a non-musical. Noel Coward wrote *Blithe Spirit* from Wales shortly after his London flat and office were destroyed in the Blitz by



Noel Coward

necessarily intuitive for a British farce, and changed the setting from the 1930s to the 1950s. It seems to me that it may be necessary to laugh at the worst parts of ourselves in order to appeal to the "better angels of our nature". I hope our production makes these things available to our audiences of 2024.

We may not be able to achieve a lasting world peace with this production, but spending our time together watching a play as our planet hurtles through space is a mad and beautiful thing. Beyond that, this play is for Dana, Zoë, and all the people who would love a good haunt from those they miss.

I believe Coward tapped into something of real use for his audiences of that time. In order for a comedy to succeed in circumstances like that, I think it must speak to something of the human condition. Following that thought, our production has drawn from many comedic traditions, not



American Repertory Theatre at Harvard University. David would like to thank his wife Zoë and family for being amazing and supportive. He's a lucky bug.



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# THE CAST



**Lizzy Bies** (*Edith*) was last seen on the RVP stage as Millie Owens in *Picnic*, a role which earned them a nomination for Best Supporting Actor at the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle. Lizzy recently graduated with an Acting Certificate from Santa Rosa Junior College, where they performed as the title character in *Orlando*. Over the summer, they studied Shakespearean and Jacobean theater at the London Academy for Music and Dramatic Art, performing in *As You Like It* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. When not on stage, Lizzy loves to read, write, and play with their dog.



**Amy Dietz** (*Mrs. Bradman*). Amy's mother says she was singing before she could talk. Since then, Amy has delighted in being on the stage. Her latter years and debatable maturity have led her to do so in (mainly) socially acceptable spaces. She's thrilled that Ross Valley Players is allowing her to play on their stage again and is incredibly grateful for the support of the cast and crew. Favorite past shows include *Pride and Prejudice* (RVP), *Romeo and Juliet* (Curtain Theater), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Theater At Large), *Sweeney Todd* (NTC), *Rent* (MMTC), and *Hair: In Concert* (Mountain Play). For Dad, always.



**Ashley Garlick** (*Elvira Condomine*) is thrilled to make her Ross Valley Players debut as the ghost with the most: Elvira. Most recently she played Christine Colgate in San Jose Stage's *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. Other favorite roles include Carole King in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Woodminster Summer Musicals); Yitzhak in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, Jess in *Grand Horizons*, and Janet in *The Rocky Horror Show* (San Jose Stage Company); Babe in *The Pajama Game* (42nd Street Moon); Darlene in *The Great American Trailer Park Christmas Musical* (Sierra Repertory Theatre); and Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* (Lucky Penny Productions). She is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.



**Robert Molossi** (*Dr. Bradman*) attended San Francisco State University and lived, performed, and studied in New York City. RVP credits include the School Principal in *The Government Inspector* by Nikolai Gogol; Mr. Paravicini in Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*; Jemy in *Incidents in the Wicked Life of Moll Flanders*; and William Gillette/Sherlock Holmes in *The Game's Afoot*. Robert enjoyed playing Malcolm Drake in Charles Busch's *Red Scare on Sunset* at the New Conservatory Theater, and Eugene in Boxcar Theater's *Speakeasy*. Robert is very pleased to be working with David Abrams and the talented cast and production team of *Blithe Spirit*.

**Jessica Powell** (*Ruth Condomine*) is grateful for the opportunity to join the sterling cast, director, crew, and designers of this witty work. Recent roles include Adam, et al. in *As You Like It* (CalShakes) and Lear in *King Lear* (SF Shakespeare). Other favorites: *Coriolanus*, *A Conversation with Georgia O'Keeffe*, *Doubt*, *Mary Stuart*, *Uncanny Valley*, *Copenhagen*, *Other Desert Cities*, *My Fair Lady*, *On Golden Pond*; *Angels in America*, *Mame*, *All My Sons*, *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, *The Humans*, *Ice Glen*, *The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek*; *The Wizard of Oz*, *Oklahoma!*, *Richard II*, *Macbeth*. Tell the stories!



**Malcolm Rodgers** (*Charles Condomine*) is an actor and scenic designer based in Marin County. Recent roles at RVP include Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, Clarence in *It's a Wonderful Life*, and Mr. Grossman in *These Shining Lives*. Other Bay Area credits include Mr. Pendleton in *Choirboy* at Shotgun Players, Clown 2 in *The 39 Steps* and Iago in *Othello* at SPARC Livermore, and Michael in *How to Transcend a Happy Marriage* at Custom Made. Malcolm studied performance and design at SFSU and received his acting conservatory training at PCPA. He is married to Actor/Director Mary Ann Rodgers.



**Tori Truss** (*Madame Arcati*) recently played Rose in Lucy Kirkwood's *The Children* at Mendocino Theatre Company. At RVP, she was last seen as Flo in *Picnic*. Favorite North Bay roles include Linda Loman in *Death of a Salesman* with Daniel Benzali (6th Street Playhouse), Ruella in *Communicating Doors*, Chickabiddie in Shaw's *Misalliance* (College of Marin), and Mrs. Boyle in *The Mousetrap* (RVP). Tori is a professor emerita at Sonoma State University, Theater Arts & Dance Department and a former K-8 drama teacher. She also directs plays and adapts literature for young performers. She is delighted to return to RVP.



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# Backstage Bios

**Sophie Gilmore** (*Stage Manager*) is excited to take part in *Blithe Spirit*, her first show with Ross Valley Players. Sophie has previous experience stage managing productions with College of Marin, having taken part in *As You Like It*, *A Doll's House*, *Everybody* and *The Firework Maker's Daughter*. She also dabbles in operatic stage management, working with San Diego Opera in their rendition of *Madama Butterfly* and their upcoming productions of *Salome* and *La traviata*. To round out her days, she works as a Guest Artist at Tamalpais High School, mentoring students in production and stage management in hopes of inspiring young artists to pursue their career goals.

**Piper Gilmore** (*Cook/Assistant Stage Manager*) plays the cook and serves as the Assistant Stage Manager for *Blithe Spirit*. She has experience working on shows at College of Marin and is very excited to assist in her first RVP production.

**Bruce Vieira** (*Sound Design*) has designed sound for many productions in Marin County over the past several years including, *The Bat* (SFBATCC nomination), *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, and *Into the Woods* (SFBATCC nomination), all at the Novato Theater Company. At the Ross

Valley Players he designed sound for *Chapter Two*, *The Miser* (which he also directed), *Deathtrap* (SFBATCC nomination) and others. He has provided sound effects for *The Mountain Play* for the last six seasons. Bruce has also acted in the Mountain Play as Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Daddy Warbucks in *Annie* and The Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*.

**Tom O'Brien** (*Set Design*) is pleased to be back with Ross Valley Players for this production. Tom has designed sets for theatre and still photography for many years. Located in San Francisco, he has had great opportunities working with very talented theatre groups. Some of the productions he has been involved in are *Ageless* for Quantum Dragon Theatre, *The Drowsy Chaperone* for Diego Rivera Theatre, *How I Learned to Drive* for Custom Made Theatre, and *The Children's Hour* at RVP, just to mention a few. For more info, go to [twoproduction.com](http://twoproduction.com)

**Valera Coble** (*Costume Design*). Valera recently designed costumes for RVP's *The Book Club Play* and *Crossing Delancey* and will be sticking around for the entire season! Also a company member with Berkeley-based Shotgun Players since 1999, her nearly 50 Shotgun design credits



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# Backstage Bios

include *Macbeth*, *The Forest War*, *The Death of Meyerhold*, *The Watson Intelligence*, *Dry Land* and *Yerma*. Valera's work has also been seen at local theaters, including Aurora Theatre Company, Magic Theatre, Center Repertory Company, San Francisco Playhouse, Crowded Fire, Town Hall Theatre and Word for Word. She is the recipient of multiple SFBATCC awards and has enjoyed instructing and mentoring design students in many capacities, including the theater departments at Saint Mary's College, Orinda and Lick Wilmerding High School, SF and for the fellowship program at Shotgun Players. Outside of theater, she works with private clients on residential interior design and organizing projects.

**Frank Sarubbi** (*Lighting Design*). *Blithe Spirit* marks Frank's 13th lighting assignment for RVP. Frank acquired his love for lighting design in 1966 in Mr. Witt's drama class at San Francisco's Lincoln High School. Frank won the 2012 SFBATCC lighting design award for NTC's production of *Noises Off*. In 2014, Frank was nominated again for lighting Marin On Stage & Curtain Theater's production of *Return to the Forbidden Planet* which won Best Entire Production from SFBATCC. In 2015, he was nominated for NTC's *Into the Woods*. 2016 brought another nomination for lighting design for NTC's production of *4000 Miles*. In 2023, he won SFBATCC lighting design award for the Ross

Valley Players' production of *Native Gardens*. It's been a pleasure working with this cast and crew of *Blithe Spirit*.

**Heather Ondersma** (*Intimacy Design*). Heather's credits include *The Book Club Play* (Ross Valley Players, dir. Mary Ann Rogers), *Rent* (Dix Hills Performing Arts Center, dir. Adam Pascal), *Angels in America* (Oakland Theater Project, dir. Michael Moran), *Cinderella*, *Rent* and *In the Heights* (Berkeley Playhouse), *Fun Home*, *The Sound of Music* (Korsa Musical Theater). Film (selected): *Chimera* (dir. Steve Pink, with Pauline Chalamet) and *Companion* (New Line Cinema with Jack Quaid, Sophie Thatcher, Rupert Friend). Member of Lincoln Center Directors' Lab, treasurer of the National Society of Intimacy Professionals, organizing team member for the International Conference of Intimacy Coordinators—Berlin 2024. @heatherondersma

**Dhyanis** (*Scenic Artist and Properties Design*) was introduced to the Barn Theatre in 1986 and has served many roles here and at other Bay Area theatres, including Head Costumer and Designer, Scenic Artist, Choreographer and Prop Designer. She is currently assistant to the set designer at College of Marin. She designs and produces her own line of dance costumes and clothing, teaches belly dance and is a Grief Coach. Past credits at the Mountain Play

include Costume Designer for *The King and I* (1987), *South Pacific* (1988), *Brigadoon* (1989), and *Anything Goes* (1990). She also served as Scenic Artist on the Mountain up to and including *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). Awards for costuming include Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (*Follies*, 1994), four Shellies (Contra Costa Civic Light Opera musicals) and a Solano College Award for *Elephant Man* (1995).

**Danielle Levin** (*Dialect Coach*) is a dialect coach and actor in the Bay Area and is delighted to return to The Barn after coaching the RVP productions of *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Jersey Lily*, *Picnic*, and *Pride and Prejudice*. Other coaching engagements include San Francisco Playhouse's productions of *Follies*, *Born in East Berlin*, and *The Daughters*, and Shotgun Players' *Blasted* and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. As an actor, Danielle has been seen at Marin Theatre Company, Shotgun Players, Crowded Fire, TheatreWorks, and SF Playhouse. She is a company member of Playground SF and the Actors' Reading Collective (ARC) and received her MFA in Dramatic Art from UC Davis.

**Nathan Abrams** (*Special Effects*). Maker, tinkerer, designer. Nathan is excited to be working on the spooky-fun parts of the play, along with the rest of the cast and crew! Previous theater work includes technical work for *Uncle Vanya* and *Richard II* (Birdbath Theater).

**Doug Epps** (*Understudy*) most recently appeared in the role of Pierre in 1986's production of *Really Rosie* with the Reno Little Theater.

**Marissa Hinckley-Barnes** (*Understudy*) was drawn from Wisconsin to the San Francisco Bay Area to work with the San Francisco Mime Troupe in 2018. Since then, Marissa has performed with Douglas Morrison Theatre, Ross Valley Players, The Moonrisers, Lyric Opera of San Jose, Landmark Musical

Theatre, Contra Costa Musical Theater, and Inferno Theater. Beyond the theater, Marissa enjoys her full-time job as a middle school teacher in an Autism Focuses Special Day Class.

**Bethe Jensen** (*Understudy*) is thrilled to be in her first production with RVP. A native of Marin, Bethe studied theatre at College of Marin, San Francisco City College, and Jean Shelton School of Acting. She has performed in several Mountain Plays and *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* while at COM. Most recently she was The Historian in NTC's *Spamalot*. Favorite roles include Queen Agravaïn (*Once Upon a Mattress*), Queen of Hearts (*Alice in Wonderland*) and Mary Poppins with North Bay Rep. Bethe was an original member of Keyhole Mystery Theatre, performing original musical, comedy, murder mysteries at restaurants in the Bay Area.

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## RMD! QCD! Don't forget RVP!

**That's our cheer at the end of this year!**

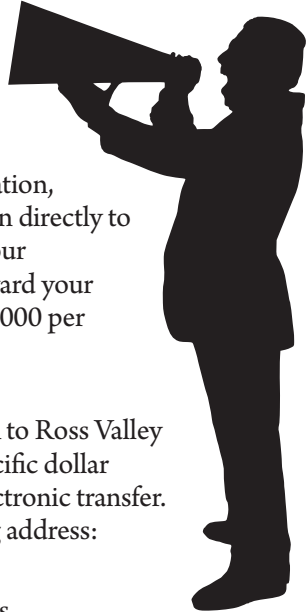
If you are 70½ or older, you can make a tax-free donation, that is—a QCD or Qualified Charitable Distribution directly to Ross Valley Players or other qualified charities from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) that counts toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), up to \$105,000 per individual, or \$210,000 per couple, in 2024.

**It's a tax-savvy way to keep live theater alive!**

The distribution must be made directly from your IRA to Ross Valley Players. Instruct your plan administrator to send a specific dollar amount directly to Ross Valley Players by check or electronic transfer. RVP's Federal Tax ID Number is 94-2763339. Mailing address: Ross Valley Players, P.O. Box 886, Ross, CA 94957.

Check with your financial advisor if you have questions.

**Team IRS or Team RVP? Who are you rooting for?**



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