

ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Artists Rep's not-holiday, holiday show

Blithe Spirit

Noël Coward's otherworldly classic is perfect family fare

WHO: Artists Repertory Theatre

WHAT: Mainstage production of *Blithe Spirit* by Noël Coward

WHEN: November 25 – December 28, 2014 | **Opening Night is Saturday, Nov. 29**

WHERE: Artists Repertory Theatre – Morrison Stage, 1515 Morrison St. Portland, OR 97205

TICKETS: \$25-\$55; Students, under 25 tickets \$25

- Preview performances: Wednesday-Friday, Nov. 25, 26 and 28. No show Nov. 27
- Pay-What-You-Can preview performance: Tuesday, Nov. 25
- Regular run: Wednesday-Sunday at 7:30pm; Sundays at 2pm; Wednesday, Dec. 10 @ 11am and Saturday, Dec. 20 @ 2pm
- Buy tickets: 503.241.1278 or www.artistsrep.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – October 22, 2014. Artists Rep will present Noël Coward's elegantly comedic classic, *Blithe Spirit*, this holiday season. This production is directed by Christopher Liam Moore, an Oregon Shakespeare Festival company member, who directed our 2013 hit comedy *Red Herring*, and who recently returned from a stint on Broadway with the Tony Award-winning *All the Way*. *Blithe Spirit* starts previews November 25 and has already been EXTENDED through December 28.

ABOUT THE PLAY

A mischievous supernatural farce, *Blithe Spirit* invokes hilarity perfect for escaping the yuletide madness. This comedic masterpiece will haunt Artists Rep's holiday season with ghosts who are decidedly not Dickensian, ill-fated séances and delightful trickery abound. Alongside fellow Artists Rep Resident Artists and favorites, Vana O'Brien takes on a role she was born to play as Madame Arcati, the eccentric clairvoyant who inadvertently summons the titular spirit from the beyond. Suitable for ages 8 and up.

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Blithe Spirit was first produced on the West End in June 1941. The show was a sensation, breaking all previous records for a non-musical on the West End stage with 1,997 performances. It went on to run for four consecutive years, transferring to Broadway in November 1941. In the '70s and '80s, the show saw several notable revivals, including one at The Globe starring Patrick Cargill, Phyllis Calver, Amanda Reiss and Beryle Reid, one at the National Theatre directed by Harold Pinter, and one on Broadway for which Geraldine Page received a Tony Award nomination for her portrayal of Madame Arcati. In 2002, *Blithe Spirit* was given a short production at the Bay Street Theatre in New York that featured Twiggy as Elvira. Angela Lansbury starred in a Broadway revival in 2009 directed by Michael Blakemore. Lansbury won her fifth Tony Award for her performance as Madame Arcati. Amazingly, at age 88, Lansbury reprised her role in March 2014 on the West End in a production of *Blithe Spirit*, again directed by Blakemore, alongside Charles Edwards (recently seen on screen in *Downton Abbey* and *Philomena*) as Charles Condomine.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Born in 1899, Noël Coward was an English playwright, actor and composer best known for his highly polished comedies of manners. At 11, he made his professional stage debut and continued to act regularly throughout his adolescent and teenaged years. By the age of 24, he had written three plays between his various acting engagements. *The Vortex*, which he wrote in an effort to give himself “a whacking good part” to play, was an immediate hit. From there, he took London theatre by storm, writing and starring in his own stylish, durable comedies of manners throughout the 1920s. Come the end of the 1930s, Coward had perfected his style and public image as a sophisticated romantic lead – or, as biographer Sheridan Moreley punned, “the playboy of the West End world.” Along with *Blithe Spirit*, Coward is famous for such works as *Hay Fever*, *Private Lives* and *Present Laughter*. He also composed hundreds of songs, in addition to musical theatre works, poetry, several volumes of short stories, the novel *Pomp and Circumstance*, and a three-volume autobiography. He was knighted in 1969 and died in Jamaica in 1973, his last words being, “I’ll see you in the morning.” Over the years, Artists Rep has presented Coward’s *Present Laughter* and *Design for Living*.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Christopher Liam Moore is very proud to return to Artists Rep after making his debut here with *Red Herring* in the 2012/13 season. He recently appeared in the Tony Award-winning *All The Way* on Broadway opposite Bryan Cranston. For the past five years, he has been a director and actor at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. His directing efforts there include *The Very Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Iowa*, *August: Osage County*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other theatre credits include productions at Berkeley Rep, South Coast Rep, Yale Rep, Mark Taper Forum, Guthrie Theatre, Arena Stage, Long Wharf Theatre and the American Repertory Theatre. Film and television credits include *Judging Amy*, *Friends*, *Star Trek: Voyager*, *Third Rock from the Sun*, and being a series regular on *Ten Items or Less*. He is a proud founding member of the L.A.-based Cornerstone Theater Company where he spent 20 years as an actor and director.

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CAST

Vana O'Brien*^ – Madame Arcati
Val Landrum*^ – Edith
Jill Van Velzer* – Ruth
Michael Mendelson*^ – Charles
Allen Nause*^ – Dr. Bradman
JoAnn Johnson*^ – Mrs. Bradman
Sara Hennessy* – Elvira

CREATIVE TEAM

Christopher Liam Moore – Director
Alan Schwanke – Scenic Designer
Nancy Hills – Costume Designer
Kristeen Willis Crosser^ – Lighting Designer
Rodolfo Ortega^ – Composer/Sound Designer
Natalie Rae Heikkinen – Props Designer
Mary McDonald Lewis^ – Voice & Text Director
Carol Ann Wohlmutter* – Production Stage Manager

** Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers
^ Artists Rep Resident Artist*

ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

Portland's premiere mid-size regional theatre company is led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodriguez and Managing Director Sarah Horton. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. For the 2014/15 season Artists Rep will offer eight bold and entertaining plays written by internationally acclaimed playwrights, and guided by esteemed directors. Artists Rep productions will feature the work of a core group of accomplished Resident Artists, each with a shared history and a shorthand for collaboration, working alongside guest artists from Portland and beyond.

Artists Rep's mission is to engage diverse audiences in fresh, thought-provoking and intimate theatre. We are committed to world-class acting, directing, design and stagecraft that support new playwriting and aspire to embody great literature, moving audiences to truly feel — to *experience* — storytelling in a way that only the best live theatre can.

The 2014/15 Artists Repertory Theatre season is presented by Ronni Lacroute/WillaKenzie Estate. Our season media sponsors are The Oregonian and KINK. Other season support comes from the Regional Arts Culture Council, The Oregon Community Foundation, the Collins Foundation, the Harold and Arlene Schnitzer CARE Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, The James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation and Rafati's Catering.

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