

***Blithe Spirit* by Noel Coward**

****All roles are open to any race or ethnicity.****

Thank you for your interest in auditioning for a First City Players production!

If you've auditioned for us before, welcome back!

If this is your first time auditioning at First City Players, we're thrilled to have you! We've been around now for over 60 years, and we wouldn't have lasted so long without new people, new talent, and new voices.

Whether you're a veteran performer who just moved to the island or you've never been on stage before but really want to try, we'd like to encourage you to audition for shows at FCP.

We're aware that auditioning can be an overwhelming experience, even if you've done it a hundred times before. We've put this information packet together for you to help you learn a little more about the play, the characters you will be reading for, and to give you some idea of what to expect during auditions.

Please read over the character list and director's comments, and pay attention to any specific audition requirements for this show. Then review any script sides provided. You will also need to fill out and submit an audition form.

Break a leg!

WELCOME

This production is part of our Mainstage Season of shows. Shows run for two weekends, with a final dress rehearsal being open to audiences on "Pay-What-You-Can" night on a Thursday, opening the next night on Friday, and the first weekend running Friday through Sunday. The second (and closing) weekend is Friday and Saturday only.

ABOUT OUR AUDITIONS

First City Players auditions are open, and we want to encourage diversity—we try our best to discourage directors from pre-casting roles. Unless specified in the character list, roles are open to all races and ethnicities. Know what you're auditioning for. Do a little research on the play and characters. Audition sides are included in this packet, as well as a character breakdown to give you some idea for which roles you'd like to audition. Audition requirements and formats may vary from show to show. Some directors prefer "closed" auditions where actors wait in a separate room until called. Some like to have every actor in the room. Some prefer monologues, or cold readings, or need you to sing. This audition packet should give you an idea of what you can expect. We know that it can be disappointing not to get a part. We always have more people audition than we have roles for, and there are many factors that directors have to weigh when casting. We encourage you to audition often—just because you weren't right for one role doesn't mean that you won't be perfect for another. We look forward to seeing you on stage. Break a leg!

IMPORTANT DATES

Actors must be able to commit to attending all dress rehearsals and performances.

DECEMBER AUDITIONS: Wednesday & Thursday December 4 & 5 at 6:30 pm at the First City Players office located at 335 Main Street

If you are unable to attend the scheduled audition times, contact elizabeth@firstcityplayers.org

REHEARSAL PERIOD

REHEARSALS – Mon-Sat, between 6:30 and 9:00 pm, though final schedule days and times may vary depending on cast schedules and availability.

TECH WEEK – February 25-March 5: Tech runs & Dress rehearsals.

PERFORMANCES – March 6-14: Thurs (“Pay-What-You-Can” night opening week only), Fri, Sat shows at 7:30pm. Sun matinee at 2:30pm.

Call times are usually 1.5 hours before curtain.

ABOUT THE PLAY

Novelist Charles Condomine finds himself haunted, quite literally, by the ghost of his late first wife, Elvira. Clever, persistent, and keenly aware of Charles’ flaws, Elvira is summoned by the eccentric and whimsical Madame Arcati, a self-proclaimed “happy medium.” Now Charles must contend with keeping his current wife, Ruth, happy while clashing with someone only he can see and hear. Noel Coward’s *Blithe Spirit* explores loss and love with a tongue firmly planted in cheek. This is a supernatural comedy of errors that will keep the audiences on their toes.

CHARACTERS

CHARLES CONDOMINE (M, 40s) An esteemed writer and reformed reprobate who is determined to be witty at all costs. Tries in vain to save his current marriage while being haunted by his first. This role will require a minimal amount of physical comedy.

RUTH CONDOMINE (F, 30s) Charles’ 2nd wife. Very insecure and jealous of Charles’ 1st marriage. Her hospitality is strained by the arrival of an unexpected guest. This role will require special theatrical makeup.

ELVIRA CONDOMINE (F, 30s-40s) Charles’ “ex”-wife. Feckless, irresponsible, and morally unstable. Nevertheless she is the afterlife of the party. This role will require special theatrical makeup.

MADAME ARCATI (F, 50s-60s) Psychic, oracle, seer into the other world, a master of the spiritual arts...or the local kook. This role will require a minimal amount of physical comedy.

DR. GEORGE BRADMAN (M, 40s-50s) The local physician and friend of the Condomines. Only truly believes in the physical and what he can see.

MRS. VIOLET BRADMAN (F, 40s-50s) As in the name, the Doctor’s wife. Not quite as dismissive of the spiritual as her husband. Can be a bit flighty.

EDITH (F, flexible age) The Condomine’s Cockney maid. Her seeming ineptitude at her job masks some hidden depths. This role will require a moderate amount of physical comedy.

AUDITION INSTRUCTIONS

Auditions will consist of readings from the script sides provided. You may be asked to read for roles you are not necessarily auditioning for. Sides should not be memorized.

Regarding Accents: This show is British and we would like to see your best attempts at a British accent. If it is impeding you, we will ask you to drop it on your second read. If you need special accommodations for auditions (i.e. unable to attend audition dates, disability accommodations, etc.), please contact the director, Elizabeth Nelson at elizabeth@firstcityplayers.org

SIDE ONE (Charles & Elvira)

CHARLES. Is it cold — being a ghost?

ELVIRA. No — I don't think so.

CHARLES. What happens if I touch you?

ELVIRA. I doubt if you can. Do you want to?

CHARLES. (Sitting at the left end of the sofa.) Oh, Elvira... (He buries his face in his hands.)

ELVIRA. (Moving to the left arm of the sofa.) What is it, darling?

CHARLES. I really do feel strange, seeing you again.

ELVIRA. (Moving to right below the sofa and round above it again to the left arm.) That's better. CHARLES. (Looking up.) What's better? ELVIRA. Your voice was kinder.

CHARLES. Was I ever unkind to you when you were alive?

ELVIRA. Often. CHARLES. Oh, how can you! I'm sure that's an exaggeration. ELVIRA. Not at all. You were an absolute pig that time we went to Cornwall and stayed in that awful hotel. You hit me with a billiard cue.

CHARLES. Only very, very gently.

ELVIRA. I loved you very much.

CHARLES. I loved you too... (He puts out his hand to her and then draws it away.) No, I can't touch you. Isn't that horrible?

ELVIRA. Perhaps it's as well if I'm going to stay for any length of time. (She sits on the left arm of the sofa.)

CHARLES. I suppose I shall wake up eventually..but I feel strangely peaceful now.

ELVIRA. That's right. Put your head back.

CHARLES. (Doing so.) Like that?

ELVIRA. (Stroking his hair.) Can you feel anything?

CHARLES. Only a very little breeze through my hair...

ELVIRA. Well, that's better than nothing.

CHARLES. (Drowsily.) I suppose if I'm really out of my mind they'll put me in an asylum.

ELVIRA. Don't worry about that - just relax.

CHARLES. (Very drowsily indeed.) Poor Ruth.

ELVIRA. (Gently and sweetly.) To hell with Ruth.

SIDE TWO (Charles & Ruth)

RUTH. It's no use trying to impress me with your routine amorous exploits... (She crosses upstage center.)

CHARLES. The only woman in my whole life who's ever attempted to dominate me is you. You've been at it for years.

RUTH. That is completely untrue.

CHARLES. Oh no, it isn't. You boss me and bully me and order me about. You don't even allow me to have an hallucination if I want to.

RUTH. (Coming to CHARLES, about the sofa.) Charles, alcohol will ruin your whole life if you allow it to get hold on you, you know.

CHARLES. (Rising and coming upstage above the chair to face RUTH.) Once and for all, Ruth, I would like you to understand that what happened last night was nothing whatever to do with alcohol. You've very adroitly rationalized the whole affair to your own satisfaction, but your deductions are based on complete fallacy. I am willing to grant you that it was an aberration, some sort of odd psychic delusion brought on by suggestion of hypnosis. I was stone cold sober from first to last and extremely upset into the bargain.

RUTH. You were upset indeed? What about me?

CHARLES. You behaved with a stolid, obtuse lack of comprehension that frankly shocked me!

RUTH. I consider that I was remarkably patient. I shall know better next time.

CHARLES. Instead of putting out a gentle comradely hand to guide me, you shouted staccato orders at me like a sergeant major.

RUTH. You seem to forget that you gratuitously insulted me.

CHARLES. I did not.

RUTH. You called me a guttersnipe. You told me to shut up. And when I quietly suggested that we should go up to bed you said, with the most disgusting leer, that it was an immoral suggestion.

CHARLES. (Exasperated.) I was talking to Elvira!

RUTH. If you were I can only say that it conjures up a fragrant picture of your first marriage.

CHARLES. My first marriage was perfectly charming and I think it's in the worst possible taste for you to sneer at it.

RUTH. I am not nearly so interested in your first marriage as you think I am. It's your second marriage that is absorbing me at the moment. It seems to me to be on the rocks.

CHARLES. Only because you persist in taking up this ridiculous attitude.

RUTH. My attitude is that of any normal woman whose husband gets drunk and hurls abuse at her.

CHARLES. (Crossing to the fireplace below the sofa. Shouting.) I was not drunk!

RUTH. Be quiet. They'll hear you in the kitchen.

CHARLES. I don't care if they hear me in the Folkestone Town Hall. I was not drunk!

SIDE THREE (Madame Arcati & Ruth)

MADAME ARCATI. Facts first — explanations afterwards.

RUTH. It's the facts that are difficult to explain. They're so fantastic.

MADAME ARCATI. Facts very often are. Take creative talent, for instance, how do you account for that? Look at Shakespeare and Michelangelo! Try to explain Mozart snatching sounds out of the air and putting them down on paper when he was practically a baby — facts — plain facts. I know it's the fashion nowadays to ascribe it all to glands, but my reply to that is fiddlededee.

RUTH. Yes, I'm sure you're quite right.

MADAME ARCATI. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Mrs. Condomine.

RUTH. There certainly are.

MADAME ARCATI. Come now — take the plunge — out with it. You've heard strange noises in the night, no doubt. Boards creaking — doors slamming — subdued moaning in the passages. Is that it?

RUTH. No — I'm afraid it isn't.

MADAME ARCATI. No sudden gusts of cold wind, I hope?

RUTH. No, it's worse than that.

MADAME ARCATI. I'm all attention.

RUTH. (With an effort.) I know it sounds idiotic, but the other night — during the séance — something happened —

MADAME ARCATI. I knew it! Probably a poltergeist; they're enormously cunning, you know; they sometimes lie doggo for days.

RUTH. You know that my husband was married before?

MADAME ARCATI. Yes, I have heard it mentioned.

RUTH. His first wife, Elvira, died comparatively young.

MADAME ARCATI. (Sharply.) Where?

RUTH. Here — in this house — in this very room.

MADAME ARCATI. (Whistling:) Whew! I'm beginning to see daylight.

RUTH. She was convalescing after pneumonia and one evening she started to laugh helplessly at one of the B.B.C. musical programmes and died of a heart attack:

MADAME ARCATI. And she materialized the other evening — after I had gone?

RUTH. Not to me, but to my husband.

(MADAME ARCATI rises, crosses upstage left, then across to the fire below the sofa and to the windows again, above the sofa.)

MADAME ARCATI. (Impulsively.) Capital! Capital! Oh, but — that's splendid!

SIDE FOUR (Mrs. Bradman & Ruth)

MRS. BRADMAN. I do sympathize with you, really I do. It's really been quite a chapter of accidents, hasn't it?

RUTH. It certainly has.

MRS. BRADMAN. That happens sometimes, you know. Everything seems to go wrong at once. Exactly as though there were some evil forces at work. (RUTH comes down to the gramophone.) I remember once when George and I went away for a fortnight's holiday, not long after we were married, we were dogged by bad luck from beginning to end. The weather was vile — George sprained his ankle — I caught a cold and had to stay in bed for two days - and to crown everything the lamp fell over in the sitting room and set fire to the treatise George had written on hyperplasia of the abdominal glands.

RUTH. (Absently.) How dreadful! (She wanders upstage a little.)

MRS. BRADMAN. He had to write it all over again, every single word.

RUTH. You're sure you wouldn't like a cocktail or some sherry or anything?

MRS. BRADMAN. No, thank you — really not. George will be down in a minute and we've got to go like lightning. We were supposed to be at the Wilmots' at seven and it's nearly that now.

RUTH. (Coming away from the window.) I think I'll have a little sherry. I feel I need it. (She moves upstage right to the drinks table and pours out sherry.)

MRS. BRADMAN. Don't worry about your husband's arm, Mrs. Condomine. I'm sure it's only a sprain.

RUTH. It's not his arm I'm worried about.

MRS. BRADMAN. And I'm sure Edith will be up and about again in a few days.

RUTH. My cook gave notice this morning. (She comes down to the fireplace.)

MRS. BRADMAN. Well, really! Servants are awful, aren't they? Not a shred of gratitude. At the first sign of trouble they run out on you - like rats leaving a sinking ship.

RUTH. I can't feel that your simile was entirely fortunate, Mrs. Bradman.

MRS. BRADMAN. (Flustered.) Oh, I didn't mean that, really I didn't!

SIDE FIVE (Charles, Dr. Bradman, Ruth, Elvira)

CHARLES. Is this damned sling really essential?

DR. BRADMAN. It's a wise precaution. It will prevent you using your left hand except when it's really necessary.

CHARLES. I had intended to drive into Folkestone this evening.

DR. BRADMAN. It would be much better if you didn't.

CHARLES. It's extremely inconvenient.

RUTH. You can easily wait and go tomorrow, Charles.

ELVIRA. I can't stand another of those dreary evenings at home, Charles. It'll drive me dotty. And I haven't seen a movie for seven years.

CHARLES. (Crossing below MRS. BRADMAN to the right of ELVIRA.) Let me be the first to congratulate you. DR. BRADMAN. (Kindly.) What's that, old man?

RUTH. (With intense meaning) Charles, dear, try to be sensible, I implore you!

CHARLES. Sorry - I forgot.

DR. BRADMAN. You can drive the car if you promise to go very slowly and carefully. Your gear change is on the right, isn't it?

CHARLES. Yes.

DR. BRADMAN. Well, use your left hand as little as possible.

CHARLES. All right.

RUTH. You'd much better stay at home.

DR. BRADMAN. Couldn't you drive him in?

RUTH. (Stiffly.) I'm afraid not. I have lots to do in the house, and there's Edith to be attended to.

DR. BRADMAN. Well, I'll leave you to fight it out among yourselves. (To CHARLES.) But remember, if you do insist on going — carefully does it. The roads are very slippery anyhow.

SIDE SIX (Charles, Edith, Madame Arcati, Ruth, Elvira)

MADAME ARCATI. Whom do you see in this room, child

EDITH. Oh dear...

MADAME ARCATI. Answer, please.

EDITH. (Falteringly.) You, Madame — (She stops.)

MADAME ARCATI. Go on.

EDITH. The master.

MADAME ARCATI. Anyone else?

EDITH. Oh, no, Madame...

MADAME ARCATI. (Inflexibly.) Look again.

EDITH. (Imploringly, to CHARLES.) I don't understand, sir — I —

MADAME ARCATI. Come, child - don't beat about the bush. Look again. (ELVIRA moves across to the fireplace below the sofa, almost as though she were being pulled.

(Ruth follows. Both stand at the fire. ELVIRA upstage. EDITH follows them with her eyes.)

RUTH. Do concentrate, Elvira, and keep still.

ELVIRA. I can't...

MADAME ARCATI. Do you see anyone else now?

EDITH. (Slyly.) Oh, no, Madame.

MADAME ARCATI. She's lying.

EDITH. Oh, Madame!

MADAME ARCATI. They always do.

CHARLES. They?

MADAME ARCATI. (Sharply.) Where are they now?

EDITH. By the fireplace - oh!

CHARLES. She can see them - do you mean she can see them?

MADAME ARCATI. Probably not very clearly - but enough —

EDITH. (Bursting into tears.) Let me go! I haven't done nothing nor seen nobody! Let me go back to bed!

MADAME ARCATI. Give her a sandwich. (CHARLES goes to the table and gets a sandwich for EDITH.)

EDITH. (Drawing away.) I don't want a sandwich. I want to get back to bed!

CHARLES. (Handing EDITH the plate.) Here, Edith.

MADAME ARCATI. Nonsense! A big healthy girl like you saying no to a delicious sandwich! I never heard of such a thing! Sit down! (MADAME ARCATI brings EDITH to the right arm of the chair. CHARLES is left of her. MADAME ARCATI is in front of her:)

EDITH. (To CHARLES.) Please, sir, I...

CHARLES. Please do as Madame Arcati says, Edith.

EDITH. (Sitting down on the arm of the armchair and sniffing.) I haven't done nothing wrong.

CHARLES. It's all right - nobody said you had.

RUTH. If she's been the cause of all this unpleasantness I'll give her a week's notice tomorrow.

ELVIRA. You may not be here tomorrow.

MADAME ARCATI. Look at me, Edith. (EDITH obediently does so.) Cuckoo - cuckoo - cuckoo - !

EDITH. (Jumping;) Oh dear - what's the matter with her? Is she barmy?