

*An improbable farce
in two acts*

Blithe Spirit

By Noel Coward

This amateur production of "Blithe Spirit" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd.
www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

24 – 27 July 2023 at 8.00pm

25th and 27th July at 3.00pm

The Minack Theatre Trust CIO Porthcurno, Penzance TR19 9JU

Information & Tickets: +44 (0) 1736 810 181

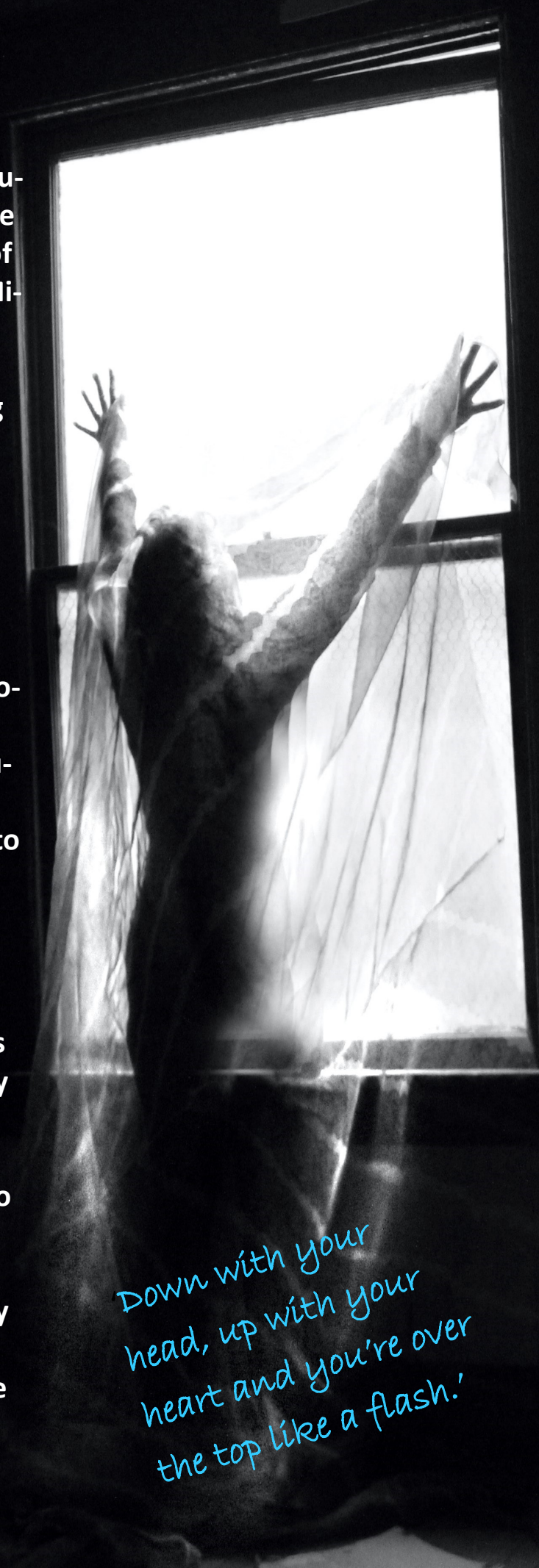
Blithe Spirit and Noel Coward

Noel Coward (1899-1973) was a leading figure in the theatre for most of his lifetime. He appeared in numerous plays, musicals, revues and films throughout his life and in older age took on the iconic role of Mr Bridger in *The Italian Job* alongside Michael Caine. Despite having little formal schooling, he became one of the most prolific playwrights of his day completing fifty plays over a very long career. The short play *Still Life* was adapted by him into the famous film *Brief Encounter*, directed by David Lean and starring Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson.

His partnership with Gertrude Lawrence was legendary, they appeared on stage together as lovers in countless plays, musicals and revues. But they were not a couple. Noel was gay, a fact not publicly acknowledged until after his death, due to the prevailing attitudes of the time. He was knighted in 1970 and spent his final years in the Caribbean.

Blithe Spirit was written in 1941, right in the middle of the War. But the play seeks to escape from the developing turmoil by laughing at the story of a fake medium and the haunting of Charles Condomine (originally played by Noel himself) by two past wives. It provided light relief at a difficult time, as it still does today. Our version is set in 1935, in a world defiantly jolly and excessively bright, despite the storm clouds on the horizon. We do hope you will appreciate the parallels with 2023.

Enjoy.



Down with your
head, up with your
heart and you're over
the top like a flash.'

'I know it's the fashion nowadays to ascribe it all to glands, but my reply to that is fiddlesticks.'

Director's Notes

Welcome everyone to our version of *Blithe Spirit*. I am sure you will enjoy this interpretation, brought to you by Ilkley Playhouse. As a company, we have been privileged to appear here at Minack on numerous occasions since 1975, twice winning the Minack Trophy. For this version of *Blithe Spirit*, we set the Condomine's elegant home on the Cornish coast, not far from Land's End (sound familiar?).



Charles enjoys a peaceful setting for his writing and the small local village is not far away. Dr and Mrs Bradman are resident in the village, as is the eccentric medium Madame Arcati. The twisting coastal road which leads to the house will prove the undoing of one of our characters.

Blithe Spirit is still a classic standard, having been revived just recently with Jennifer Saunders in the role of Arcati. We are delighted to welcome Helen Clarke to play this role. She joins the Arcati club which includes Margaret Rutherford, Peggy Mount, Alison Steadman, Elizabeth Spriggs and many more actors of renown.

Jamesine Cundell Walker.

Cast

Charles

James Willstrop

Ruth

Amanda Ashby

Elvira

Lisa Debney

Madame Arcati

Helen Clarke

Edith

Rachel Warren

Dr Bradman

Paul Chewins

Mrs Bradman

Nicky Burrows

*'Time is the reef upon which all our frail
mystic ships are wrecked.'*



Crew

Director

Jamesine Cundell Walker

Stage Manager

Chris Cundell

ASMs

Phil Marston

Cari Marston

Chris Winstanley

Melanie Winstanley

Lighting and Sound

Richard Stageman

Paul Chattwood

Alison McDermott

Costumes

Rosie Bond

Kath Potts



*Heigho, heigho,
to work we go!*

The play takes place in the living room of the Condomine's House, close to Land's End in Cornwall. The year is 1935.

Scene One

Before dinner on a summer's evening

Scene Two

After dinner

Scene Three

The next morning

Interval

Scene Four

Late the following afternoon

Scene Five

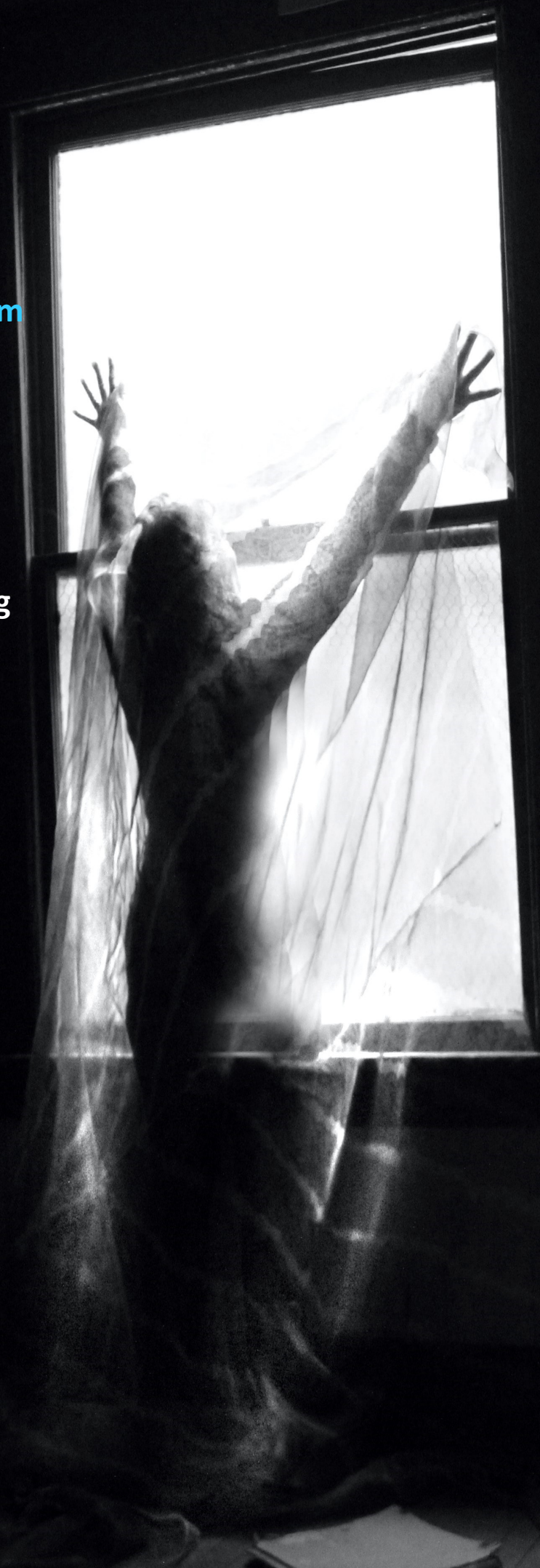
Early evening, a few days later

Scene Six

After dinner, a few days later

Scene Seven

Several hours later



Production shots courtesy
of Sarah Ford.

