



Pictured are Cindi Heimberg, Stuart Pepper and Pat Clopton (in the back) in Cultural Park Theatre Company's production of *Blithe Spirit*.

Blithe Spirit next up on Cultural Park stage

By Michael Moran

Blithe Spirit, Noel

Coward's classic comedy, is next up on Cultural Park Theater's 2010-11 season schedule. The comic play was first seen in London in 1941 and set a record for consecutive performances of a non-musical British play. It did well on Broadway that same year and today is a regular part of most community theater schedules in this country. *Blithe Spirit* was revived on Broadway in 2009 in a production that starred Angela Lansbury.

The comedy centers on socialite Charles Condomine, a successful novelist who wants to learn about the occult for his next writing project. He arranges for an eccentric medium, Madame Arcati, to hold a seance at his home. During the session, she inadvertently summons Charles' first wife, Elvira, who has been dead for seven years. Madame Arcati leaves after the seance, unaware that she has summoned Elvira.

Only Charles can see and hear his departed wife while his second wife, Ruth, does not believe that Elvira's ghost exists. Elvira makes continued efforts to disrupt Charles' current marriage and finally sabotages his car in hopes of killing him so that he will join her in the spirit world. However, it is Ruth who drives off in the car and is killed, only to return as a ghost. Now the two spirits turn Charles' home into an uproar and you'll have to see for yourself the ghostly occurrences that take place on stage during the confronta-



tion between Elvira and Ruth.

Blithe Spirit will run for two weekends, Dec. 3-5 and Dec. 9-12, with two shows each on the Dec. 4 and 11. The comedy is in the capable directing hands of two Lee County theater veterans, both of whom are making their Cultural Park

Theater debut. Michelle Hamstra and Rebecca Carden are teachers at Challenger Middle School and are active at the Creative Theater Workshop in Fort Myers. We're very glad they're on board. The duo has pulled together a first-rate cast for their production which includes the following actors: Charles played by Stu Pepper and Madame Arcati played by Betty Follett. Patricia Clapton plays Elvira while Cindi Heimberg plays Ruth. Rounding out the cast will be John Brothers, Sherylyn Price and Rebecca Shea.

"This is a comedy that will leave the audience in stitches," say Michelle and Rebecca. "If you can imagine a funny play about death, this is the one."

Noel Coward hoped that *Blithe Spirit* would take British minds off World War II and he succeeded, given the comedy's record-setting run. If you're looking to escape any woes you're currently facing or just want to laugh, this is the production to see. Call the theater for tickets (239-772-5862) and check out our website at culturalparktheater.com.

Michael Moran is executive director of the Cultural Park Theatre Company.

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Coward comedy comes to Cultural Park Theatre

'Blithe Spirit' begins with show tonight

By JEN CALANTONE • jcalantone@news-press.com • December 3, 2010

With weeks of rehearsal behind them, the cast and crew of "Blithe Spirit" is preparing to fill Cultural Park Theatre with British comedy.

The show, which will run Dec. 3 through Dec. 12, was written by Noel Coward, and premiered in London in 1941.

"It's the story of a widowed guy, Charles, who is newly married," said Michael Moran, executive director of Cultural Park Theater. "A psychic conjured up the spirit of his dead wife - and she's not too fond of the new wife."

Some madness ensues following the paranormal discovery, and the show finishes with a "surprise ending," Moran said.

"It's just an extremely, extremely, funny, funny production with the things that go on," he said.

Local actors make up the cast of seven, with auditioners coming from all parts of the area from Naples to Charlotte County, Moran said. Most are from Cape Coral and Fort Myers, he said.

This is co-director Michelle Hamstra's first time directing a show at this venue, Moran said. She is working with Rachel Carden, Moran said.

Both she and Carden teach at Challenger Middle School, Hamstra said. They also started the Creative Theater Workshop in Fort Myers.

"We always work together," Hamstra said.

The actors had two months to memorize their lines and within two days before opening, they had 11 rehearsals, Hamstra said.

"This experience is definitely a blessing," she said. "I'm so used to working with kids, but it's nice to be working with adult actors."

Actor Stuart Pepper, who plays the lead male role of Charles, said he is excited to be working with a

talented group.

"I play a Woody Allen type of character," Pepper said. "It's very dry British humor, but it's not Monty Python or John Cleese."

Following the show's closing, Cultural Park will have a holiday music revue called "Christmas Around The World," from Dec. 16 to 19.



