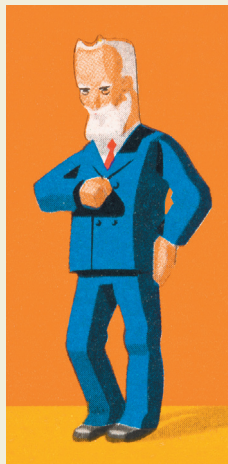


SHAW 20
FESTIVAL 23

NOËL COWARD'S BLITHE SPIRIT



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I WAS TALKING TO A FRIEND OF THE SHAW THE OTHER DAY:

TC: So, Shaw Friend, how do you pick which shows you see?

SF: *The first thing I do is to look for the hidden gems I would never get to see anywhere else...*

TC: ...by Bernard Shaw, for example...

SF: *True enough, these days.*

TC: All right, then what?

SF: *Well, I always book for the musical, because I know that a Shaw production will always take the piece seriously, like a play set to music.*

TC: Nicely put.

SF: *Thanks. Then, of course, the famous classics. It's surprising how often I realize "You know, I've never seen that play!" And even if I have, I know The Shaw will blow the dust off it.*



TC: So what you're saying is, you basically book for everything?

SF: *Well, I do have a Season Pass.*

TC: Of course you do. But if you could only pick one play?

SF: *Ah – then it has to be the play and the author that no one has ever heard of.*

TC: A bit counterintuitive...

SF: *Not at all. I think to myself, "Hang on, if TC has programmed this play, knowing full well that it will only get an audience if it is amazing – well, then it probably is."*

TC: May I quote you on that?

TIM CARROLL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FESTIVAL THEATRE MAHABHARATA • GYPSY • Noël Coward's BLITHE SPIRIT • THE AMEN CORNER ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE PRINCE CASPIAN • ON THE RAZZLE • VILLAGE WOOING • THE SHADOW OF A DOUBT JACKIE MAXWELL STUDIO THEATRE THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD • THE APPLE CART • THE CLEARING OUTDOORS @ THE SHAW MOTHER, DAUGHTER • THE GAME OF LOVE AND CHANCE • A GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING – ONE ACT – IN CONCERT • A SHORT HISTORY OF NIAGARA HOLIDAY SEASON Lerner and Loewe's BRIGADOON • A CHRISTMAS CAROL



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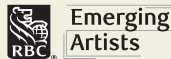
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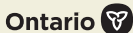
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BERNARD SHAW, *THE APPLE CART*



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Tim Dodson

Photo by Ken Rowe.

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SHAW 20
FESTIVAL 23

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SHAW 20 FESTIVAL 23

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NOËL COWARD'S

BLITHE SPIRIT

with DAVID ADAMS, DAMIEN ATKINS,
JULIA COURSE, KATHERINE GAUTHIER, DEBORAH HAY,
DONNA SOARES and JENNY L. WRIGHT

Directed by MIKE PAYETTE

Set and costumes designed by JAMES LAVOIE

Lighting designed by KEVIN LAMOTTE

Original music and sound designed by TROY SLOCUM

First presented by HM Tennent Ltd and John C. Wilson at the Opera House, Manchester on June 16, 1941 (the following week the company played at Leeds); subsequently presented at the Piccadilly Theatre, London on July 2, 1941, transferred to the St James's Theatre on March 23, 1942 and then to the Duchess Theatre on October 6, 1942 (1,997 performances).

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HUMMEL
P R O P E R T I E S

FRONT COVER: DONNA SOARES, DAMIEN ATKINS, AND
JULIA COURSE, PHOTO BY ANDREW LUSZTYK / KEY GORDON.

DAMIEN ATKINS AS CHARLES
AND JULIA COURSE AS ELVIRA.



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HUMMEL
PROPERTIES

The Cast

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Dr Bradman	DAVID ADAMS
Charles	DAMIEN ATKINS
Elvira	JULIA COURSE
Edith	KATHERINE GAUTHIER
Madame Arcati	DEBORAH HAY
Ruth	DONNA SOARES
Mrs Bradman	JENNY L. WRIGHT

The action of the play takes place in the living room of Charles Condomine's house in Kent.

ACT I: Scene 1 - Before dinner on a summer evening.

Scene 2 - After dinner.

ACT II: Scene 1 - The next morning.

Scene 2 - Late the following afternoon.

INTERMISSION

Scene 3 - Early evening. A few days later.

ACT III: Scene 1 - After dinner. A few days later.

Scene 2 - Several hours later.

Stage Manager	MARTINE BELAND
Assistant Stage Manager	ASHLEY IRELAND
Production Stage Manager	MEREDITH MACDONALD
Assistant Director	JAMIE DUNSDON
Assistant Designer	ROSE TAVORMINA
Assistant Lighting Designer	NICK ANDISON
Fight Director	JOHN STEAD
Movement Coach	ALEXIS MILLIGAN
Voice and Dialect Coach	JENNIFER TOOHEY

Special thanks to Felsen Tailoring.

Additional Properties assistance provided by Whitney Braybrook-Byl and Carol Lewis.

UNDERSTUDIES

DAVID ALAN ANDERSON, Dr Bradman; KATHERINE GAUTHIER, Elvira;
KATE HENNIG, Mrs Bradman; ALLAN LOUIS, Charles; AMANDA LUNDGREN, Edith;
RYANN MYERS, Ruth; JENNY L. WRIGHT, Madame Arcati;
MEREDITH MACDONALD, Stage Manager; THÉA PEL, Assistant Stage Manager

Running time is approximately 3 hours and 5 minutes including one intermission



DAMIEN ATKINS AS CHARLES, JULIA COURSE AS ELVIRA AND DONNA SOARES AS RUTH; DEBORAH HAY AS MADAME ARCATI AND DAMIEN ATKINS AS CHARLES. OPPOSITE: DEBORAH HAY AS MADAME ARCATI; KATHERINE GAUTHIER AS EDITH.

Director's Note

BY MIKE PAYETTE

There is more than one meaning to everything we say or do – of course, that's what makes humanity unique. That nuance in our interpretative ability invites a spectacular lens to immerse ourselves in a lauded text with fresh perspectives that relate to the here and now. We enter into the Condomines' home – operatic in scale – with the knowledge that outside of the opulence, the formality and protocol of the classes, and the questioning of belief or not, there is much bubbling beneath the surface. These characters are seeking value and worth; navigating what they say with what they mean, and how they feel with what they hide.

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

It's fascinating that even in that depth of the human condition, there are also moments of humour and laughter to protect us.

We welcome you to this story of a man hiding in plain sight. To a couple who are trying to connect and who make every attempt to find peace within their relationship when they may be craving something or someone else. That is our touchstone. And as we often do when we seek guidance or inspiration – Charles looks to a vessel, in this case, Madame Arcati, who can channel the other side whether those around believe in her or not. But we can assume, once those energies are conjured, they can have unrelenting force. It's up to us all and these characters to listen when our subconscious speaks louder than we could even imagine.

I'm thrilled to share this story with you as you discover what is said versus unsaid, and what is seen versus unseen in the annals of this home; especially within how our heroes become the product of their environment. It's an invitation that I hope encourages you to re-discover this celebrated piece, and as you embrace the theatrical and *spiritual* magic of these wonderful artistic minds, enjoy a healthy spook or two.

Bon spectacle!



A 1950 SÉANCE IN COPENHAGEN, WITH THE MEDIUM BORGE MICHAELSON, WHO HAS BEEN KNOCKED TO THE FLOOR WHILE ROPES WHIRL AROUND HIM (MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY; THE LIBRARY AT HOLLAND HOUSE SURVIVED A GERMAN AIR RAID IN 1940 THAT DESTROYED THE REST OF THE BUILDING. OPPOSITE: BRITISH MEDIUM JACK WEBBER LEVITATES A TABLE IN 1939 (MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY).



"A Hasty Kind of Genius"

BY BOB HETHERINGTON

Reinventing the dead is one thing theatre and spiritualism share. They both involve the suspension of disbelief and the creation of illusions. SIMON FEATHERSTONE, SOCIAL HISTORIAN

In 1911, Violet Coward attended a public séance at the London Coliseum by the famed American medium Anna Eva Fay, who had invited audience members to pose questions that she promised to answer by channelling the dead. Violet's eleven-year-old son, Noël, was beginning his stage career after a daily newspaper had run an audition notice for a "talented boy" to appear in a play called *The Goldfish*. The family's finances were shaky, so the extra income was welcome, but Violet was doubting she had done the right thing by pushing him onto the stage so young. She decided to ask the opinion of Fay and those in the afterlife. The answer was unequivocal: "Keep him where he is! He is a great talent and will have a wonderful career!" So young Noël's theatre career was founded on advice from the deceased, delivered by a medium who may have been every bit as delusional about her gifts as *Blithe Spirit*'s medium, Madame Arcati.

The prediction, however, was spot on. Upon meeting him, T.E. Lawrence wrote that Coward was "a hasty kind of genius." He went on to become one of the most

successful playwrights, actors and composers of the twentieth century – a celebrity everyone knew, or claimed to know, recognized in all the best circles as The Master. With *Blithe Spirit* theatre and spiritualism met head-on.

When Coward wrote it, the need to believe in an afterlife was strong in a world that was being touched daily by horrendous death. On opening night, the audience walked across planks laid over the debris from a recent air raid to enter the theatre. Margaret Rutherford, who played the spiritualist Madame Arcati on stage and on screen, was herself a believer and initially refused the role because she saw the play as an attack on spiritualism. The producer Binkie Beaumont eventually persuaded her, but Rutherford always insisted that *Blithe Spirit* had to be taken absolutely seriously. "I regard this as a very serious play," she said, "almost a tragedy." His "light comedy about death" (as Coward put it) would eventually go on to run longer than the war that inspired it.

The daily hardships and mounting losses from World War II impacted every aspect of British life by 1941, and much needed escape took many forms. Like Jazz, the spiritualist movement had its start in America, but would soon spread to Europe, and was enjoying a great revival between the wars. The belief that the dead were eager to communicate with the living had already helped Ouija board sales surge since the 1920s. Hollywood films such as



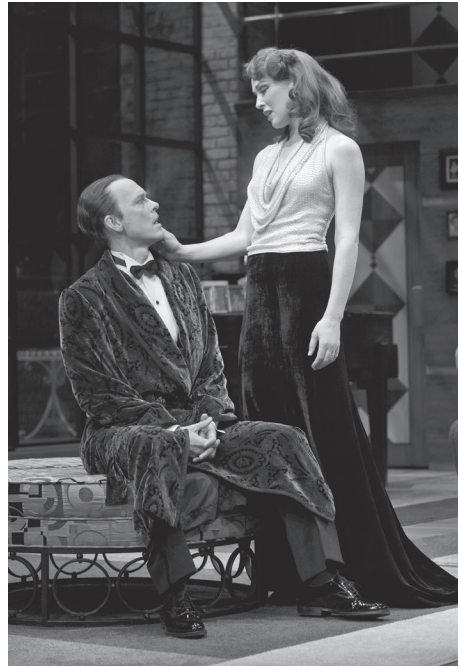
Topper and *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* made returning ghosts a popular subject for comedy. Coward correctly surmised that a comedy about death would resonate among audiences who were, in real life, carrying on in a city under constant threat of bombs. In 1941, the German Blitzkrieg regularly assaulted London with arsenals of bombs: buildings collapsed, and lives were lost in an unimaginable nightmare. "I shall be forever grateful," said Coward, "for the almost psychic gift that enabled me to write *Blithe Spirit* during the darkest days of the war."

Blithe Spirit is one of the four or five Noël Coward plays that has endured, along with *Private Lives*, *Hay Fever*, *Design for Living* and *Present Laughter*. *Private Lives*, its rival in the revival sweepstakes, written in 1929 (in four days, while Coward was recovering from the flu in Shanghai) is an eternal statement about the inexorable impossibility of heterosexual relationships. Its two lovers/antagonists are doomed to go on ranting and raving and reconciling, marrying and divorcing, forevermore. In *Blithe Spirit* (written twelve years later, over six days) a solution is found. A man who is overtaken by women – in this case, two – is liberated only when he decides to rid himself of both. As much as a Noël Coward play can ever be about big issues, *Blithe Spirit* is about the past coming to live with you. The play continues the playwright's fascination with the disruptive force of sexual passion.

It must also be said that Coward's treatment of female characters can be particularly problematic for contemporary sensibilities. His male characters tend to have an unsettling disdain for women that is no longer fashionable or amusing. "Certain women should be struck regularly, like gongs," says Elyot in *Private Lives*, though the gong you hear is really the "Me, Too" alarm sounding.

The consecration of Coward in his lifetime as something more than just a crowd-pleaser came when Laurence Olivier invited him to direct *Hay Fever* for the company of the National Theatre in 1966. The decision not only to revive the play but also to ask the author to direct it showed an awareness that there was a style here to be mastered, as with Chekhov and Brecht, before there could be any thought of outgrowing it – but then in 1930 Coward had cast Olivier as the first Victor Prynne in *Private Lives*, giving him a crash course in the brutal discipline that light comedy requires. Here the Director of the National Theatre was repaying a debt.

Sometimes mistaken as a literary cousin to Oscar Wilde (whom he described as "a tiresome affected sod"), Coward did not share Wilde's taste for elegance as an end in itself. He





specialized in profound superficiality. Despite plot ideas about cocaine addiction, a *ménage à trois* and serial adultery, Coward desperately wanted to be liked by the same audiences he was upsetting. His characters are very proper on the surface, but underneath, the litany of jealousy among them runs deep. As *New Yorker* critic John Lahr notes: “Only when Coward is frivolous does he become in any sense profound.” But it also reveals that, just like his signature dry martini, Coward bruises easily. “Wit ought to be a glorious treat like caviar,” the Master wrote. “Never spread it about like marmalade.”

Coward said he wanted *Blithe Spirit* to be superficial. Yet psychological truths and ironies, and powerful eroticism underscore surface repartee. As the playwright wrote in his earlier one-act *Shadow Play* to describe the tension needed between emotional content and timing: “Small talk, small talk, with a lot of other thoughts going on behind.” It is no wonder of all the



modern British playwrights, Harold Pinter would be attracted to Coward’s plays – the tension underneath a terse line is a hallmark of both dramatists.

English cultural history between the world wars is, in some extremely large part, Noël Coward. “He put himself into the narrative the English tell themselves about their struggles, their suffering, their triumphs,” John Lahr would write. Near the end of his life, when he was mostly known for his boffo Las Vegas appearances seated in a rattan peacock chair and wearing a velvet smoking jacket, Mr Coward was interviewed on ABC-TV:

DICK CAVETT: You’re, you...what is the word when one has such terrific, prolific qualities? NOËL COWARD: Talent.

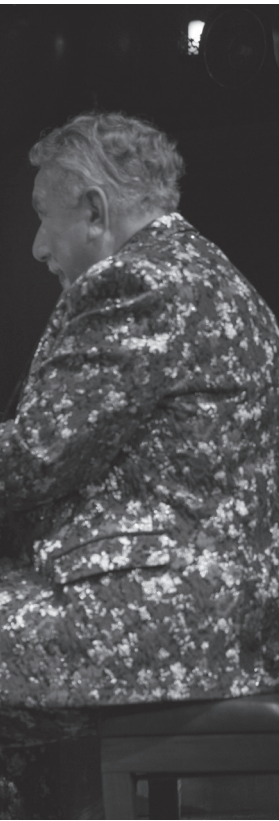
If you listen closely, you can probably hear him with Ruth and Elvira chortling over this in the hereafter.

BOB HETHERINGTON IS A THEATRE DIRECTOR AND PROFESSOR EMERITUS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS, WHO IS ALSO AN EDITORIAL ASSISTANT AND FREQUENT ESSAYIST AT THE SHAW FESTIVAL. HIS RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS INCLUDE *ON THE RAZZLE* (2023), *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST* (2022), *DAMN YANKEES* (2022), *CHARLEY’S AUNT* (2021), *ROPE* (2019) AND *HENRY V* (2018).

COWARD AT THE SHAW, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: STEVEN SUTCLIFFE AS GARRY ESSENDINE AND MOYA O’CONNELL AS JOANNA LYPPHATT IN *PRESENT LAUGHTER*, 2012; FIONA REID AS AMANDA PRYNNE AND CHRISTOPHER NEWTON AS ELYOT CHASE IN *PRIVATE LIVES*, 1984; NICOLE UNDERHAY AS GILDA AND GRAEME SOMERVILLE AS OTTO IN *DESIGN FOR LIVING*, 2006.



Blithe Spirit, 2023



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JENNY L. WRIGHT AS MRS BRADMAN, DAMIEN ATKINS AS CHARLES, DEBORAH HAY AS MADAME ARCATI, DONNA SOARES AS RUTH AND DAVID ADAMS AS DR BRADMAN; DONNA SOARES AS RUTH AND DAMIEN ATKINS AS CHARLES; JULIA COURSE AS ELVIRA AND DONNA SOARES AS RUTH; KATHERINE GAUTHIER AS EDITH; DAMIEN ATKINS AS CHARLES AND JULIA COURSE AS ELVIRA.



*“And now tell me: shall I rise
from the dead, and come back
to you a living woman?”*

BERNARD SHAW, *SAINTE JOAN*



OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DAMIEN ATKINS AS CHARLES; DEBORAH HAY AS MADAME ARCATI; DEBORAH HAY AS MADAME ARCATI AND KATHERINE GAUTHIER AS EDITH; DONNA SOARES AS RUTH AND JULIA COURSE AS ELVIRA.

THIS PAGE: A SCENE FROM ACT II; DONNA SOARES AS RUTH AND DAVID ADAMS AS DR BRADMAN; JENNY L. WRIGHT AS MRS BRADMAN.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JACKIE BURROUGHS IN SHAW'S 1979 PRODUCTION (PHOTO BY ROBERT C. RAGSDALE); LENORE CORBETT, CLIFTON WEBB, AND PEGGY WOOD IN THE ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION, 1941 (NYPL / VANDAMM); SARAH ORENSTEIN AND DAVID SCHURMANN IN SHAW'S 1993 PRODUCTION (PHOTO BY DAVID COOPER); JUDITH IVEY, GERALDINE PAGE, NICOLA CAVENDISH AND PATRICIA CONOLLY THE 1987 BROADWAY REVIVAL (NYPL / MARTHA SWOPE); MARGARET HALL, LAWRENCE KEITH, LOUISE TROY, BEATRICE LILLIE, AND EDWARD WOODWARD IN THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION OF THE MUSICAL *HIGH SPIRITS*, 1964 (NYPL / FRIEDMAN-ABELES).

Production History



Noël Coward's *Blithe Spirit* was first produced at the Piccadilly Theatre in London in 1941 in a production which set the record for non-musical plays in the West End not surpassed until *The Mousetrap*. Since then, there has been a wealth of fine productions. On January 14, 1956 Coward directed a live American television adaptation, in which he also starred as Charles, with Claudette Colbert, Lauren Bacall and Mildred Natwick as Madame Arcati.

A Broadway revival on March 31, 1987, directed by Brian Murray, starred Richard Chamberlain, Judith Ivey, Blythe Danner and Geraldine Page as Madame Arcati. Page, who received a Tony Award nomination for Best Actress, died of a heart attack during the run. Another Broadway revival in 2009 was directed by Michael Blakemore, with Rupert Everett, and Angela Lansbury as Madame Arcati. Blakemore and Lansbury took the production to the West End in 2014, and then toured North America.



The musical *High Spirits* in 1964, starring Tammy Grimes as Elvira, earning eight Tony nominations, including one for Coward's direction. The ensemble included "Ronnie Walken," who went on to movie fame as Christopher Walken.

Brian Bedford played Charles at the Stratford Festival in 1982 opposite Carole Shelley as Elvira and Tammy Grimes as Madame Arcati; and in 2013 directed Ben Carlson, Sara Topham and Seana McKenna there.

This is the third production at The Shaw. It was the first full-length Coward play done at the Festival in 1979 with Leslie Yeo directing Jackie Burroughs as Elvira; in 1993 Susan Cox directed David Schurmann as Charles, Sarah Orenstein as Elvira, Diane D'Aquila as Ruth and Jennifer Phipps as Madame Arcati.

Noël Coward's *Blithe Spirit* has twice been adapted for the cinema. A 1945 film was directed by David Lean, and starred Rex Harrison and Margaret Rutherford as Madame Arcati. The most recent film version in 2020 was directed by Edward Hall, with Dan Stevens and Judi Dench as Madame Arcati.



The Author

NOËL COWARD (1899-1973) entertained theatregoers for over half a century as an actor, playwright, director, composer and singer. He is best known for the witty and sophisticated comedies of manners written from the 1920s through the early '40s, which delighted and sometimes shocked audiences with their satiric portrayals of the English leisured classes between the wars. In addition to writing, performing in and directing many of his plays, Coward composed the music and lyrics for numerous songs made popular in hit revues and musicals.

Coward was born at Teddington, South London, just before the last Christmas of the 1800s – hence the name Noël. A child actor, he made his first stage appearance in 1911 in a fairy play called *The Goldfish*. Coward appeared in London as the lost boy Slightly in *Peter Pan*, and toured in *Charley's Aunt*.

With *The Vortex* in 1924, Coward began to gain critical acclaim and personal celebrity. In 1925, four additional Coward productions were running simultaneously in London: *Hay Fever*, *Fallen Angels*, *Easy Virtue* and *On with the Dance*. Coward ended the decade with his most popular musical play, *Bitter Sweet* (1929). For the next decade he enjoyed enormous popularity, with such hits as *Private Lives* (1930), *Cavalcade* (1931), *Design for Living* (1933), *Tonight at 8:30* (1936) and *Blithe Spirit* (1941). Several of his plays were also adapted by Hollywood, with *Calvacade* (1933) winning three Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

Coward travelled extensively during World War II, working as a spy for British Intelligence and entertaining Allied troops, opening new plays such as *Present Laughter* and *This Happy Breed* (both in 1942), and several films, including *Blithe Spirit*, *Brief Encounters* (both 1945) and the patriotic *In Which We Serve* (1942), which won a special Academy Award. In the 1950s, as his plays became less fashionable, Coward reinvented himself as a cabaret star. In 1955, he made a triumphant appearance at Wilber Clark's Desert Inn, Las Vegas, which led to three live CBS television specials, including *Together With Music* with Mary Martin.

He produced three volumes of autobiography: *Present Indicative* (1937), *Future Indefinite* (1954) and *Past Conditional* (published posthumously). Coward was knighted in 1970, and died at his home in Jamaica in 1973.



NOËL COWARD AS CHARLES WITH LAUREN BACALL AS ELVIRA AND CLAUDETTE COLBERT AS RUTH IN A 1956 TV PRODUCTION OF *BLITHE SPIRIT* (MPTVIMAGES.COM).

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VISIT WWW.NOELCOWARD.COM AND CELEBRATE HIS EXTRAORDINARY LIFE AND SOME OF THE MOST FAMOUS AND BELOVED PLAYS AND SONGS EVER WRITTEN.

For full biographical information about our cast and creative team, please visit shawfest.com/ensemble.

MIKE PAYETTE Director

SHAW 2023: Director for *Blithe Spirit*. Born and raised in Montreal, Quebec, and now Toronto-based, I've been fortunate to live the impact of theatre from a very young age. Being transported by stories that include and encourage me to investigate other worlds, guided me towards establishing a multi-hyphenated artistic practice. Mentorship was invaluable during my youth and it's a personal mission to ensure paths to give back to the community; offering inspiration and support for young-in-craft practitioners to discover and celebrate their unique voice. I love working within the national scope (including tours of Lorena Gale's *Angelique* and the Canadian premiere of Tarell Alvin McCraney's *Choir Boy*) and with companies across Canada that underline the richness of theatre. I'm grateful to my family, and the Shaw team, particularly to the Tims, Kimberley and Jeff, for continually seeking ways to make my Shaw debut over the years. It's been a pleasure immersing myself in this wonderful, dynamic community of art-makers.

JAMES LAVOIE Set and Costume Designer

SHAW 2023: Set and costume designer for *Blithe Spirit*. The first memory I have of going to the theatre was in the early '90s, I had begged my mom to pull me out of school and take me to a matinee of a touring production of *The Phantom of the Opera* at the National Arts Centre. My little mind was blown by the drama and the spectacle of it all. Looking back now, I'm able to see how the work I do today connects back to this moment. With every show I design, I am always striving to spark even a fraction of the awe that I remember feeling that afternoon, sitting next to my mother in the theatre.

KEVIN LAMOTTE Lighting Designer

SHAW 2023: Lighting designer for *Blithe Spirit*, *Mahabharata*, *The Playboy of the Western World* and *The Clearing*. One of my earliest experiences in theatre was watching *Cyrano de Bergerac* here at the Shaw Festival in 1982. I was considering a career in the arts, and possibly theatre design, which all seemed like a long shot as a teenager. The set and costumes by Cameron Porteous, as well as the lighting design by Robert Thomson, were so inspiring at the time. The design of the show has remained with me. In 1988, I returned to the Shaw Festival as a lighting designer and had the privilege of working with Artistic Director, Christopher Newton. He said, "I put creative people together and point them in the right direction", but

he did a great deal more. Christopher's passion for all aspects of theatre and the arts continue to inspire. Memories of him and his work keep me pointed in the right direction!



MIKE PAYETTE

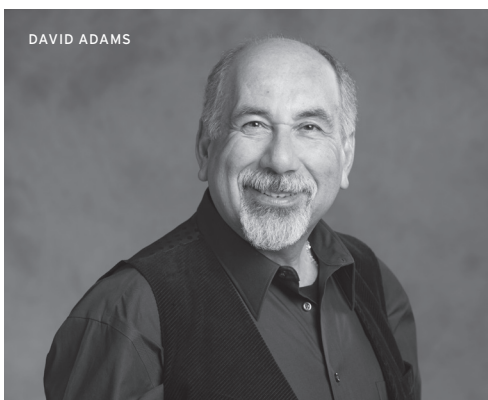


JAMES LAVOIE



KEVIN LAMOTTE

TROY SLOCUM Composer / Sound Designer
SHAW 2023: Composer/sound designer for *Blithe Spirit*. I hail from Montreal and have had a lifelong obsession with hip-hop music. I started out as a DJ, and many years ago I was asked by Peter Hinton to do my first sound design for a play called *girls! girls! girls!* by Greg MacArthur. Since then, I've created the original music and/or sound design for over fifty productions; two favourites are the NAC Indigenous Theatre production of Kevin Loring's *Little Red Warrior and His Lawyer* and *The Lamentable Tragedy of Sal Capone* by Omari Newton. I'm also really proud to have created the sound design for the NFB documentary feature, *True North: Inside the Rise of Toronto Basketball* and *Grey Roads*, which premiered at Hot Docs 2021. I've been teaching and mentoring students in the Production Design and Technical Arts program at NTS for over ten years.



DAVID ADAMS Dr Bradman
SHAW 2023: *Blithe Spirit* and *Village Wooing*; 7th season. I will always be grateful to my English Honours Professor, Errol Durbach, for encouraging me to audition for Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, when he wisely stated that, "dramatic literature is meant to be performed, not just studied academically!" I landed my first role and watched in wonder as guest artist Alan Scarfe, as Faustus, strutted and fretted every night on-stage. I wanted to emulate the power and freedom of expression that so captivated me. I was also inspired at the time by Christopher Newton's Vancouver Playhouse Company of actors and watched in awe the artistry and genius of seminal productions of *King Lear*, *Travesties*, *Oedipus*, *Equus*, and so on. Subsequently, I was fortunate to be directed by Newton on several occasions and am eternally grateful for his mentorship and support.



DAMIEN ATKINS Charles
SHAW 2023: *Blithe Spirit* and *The Shadow of a Doubt*; playwright/adaptor for *Prince Caspian*; 6th season. Near the end of my first season at the Stratford Festival, I did a reading of a new play I was working on: *Good Mother*. Seana McKenna read the leading part. It was fun, and we had jolly cocktails afterwards – I remember that much! The artistic director of the Festival at that time, Richard Monette, heard about the play and asked me to do another reading. I thought he was just being nice, so I ignored the request. Exasperated, he asked again. And so we did *another* reading, with Richard attending hours after having a root canal. Months later, he pulled me aside to tell me he'd programmed the play, to be directed by Miles Potter, for the following season. That production was lovely, but the real (and lasting) gift that Seana, Richard and Miles gave me was taking me seriously as a young artist.



JULIA COURSE Elvira
SHAW 2023: *Blithe Spirit* and *Village Wooing*; 14th season. My first theatre experience was on my seventh birthday. I memorized the box office phone number for *The Phantom of the Opera* and begged my parents to take me. My dad bought *Phantom*-shaped wine gums, and I can still remember the dress I wore. It was all very exciting and, as I watched the show, I knew that's what I wanted to do. But, it wasn't until my high school drama class that I truly fell in love with playing pretend. Our teacher,



KATHERINE GAUTHIER



Debra McLaughlan, inspired in us curiosity and creativity. She became a mentor and dear friend, and still inspires the way I approach my theatre work.

KATHERINE GAUTHIER Edith

SHAW 2023: *Blithe Spirit* and *The Shadow of a Doubt*; 5th season. When you grow up with siblings as formidable as mine, you spend a lot of time in awe. When I was seven, my sister Patricia auditioned for a local play in Kingston, directed by the “Great Peter Hinton”. Did I know who Peter was at the time? No, but I heard he was “brilliant” and “fun”: I wanted in. You can imagine my disappointment that I was “too young to audition”. While my sister went to rehearsals, I would create

monologues alone in my bedroom (a recurring one was about my love being sent off to war), singing “On My Own” with the earnestness of a six-year-old who feels her emotions very strongly. Decades later, I’m in my own Peter Hinton-Davis show (and Mike Payette too!) working with the best of the best and feeling awfully lucky.



DEBORAH HAY

DEBORAH HAY

Madame Arcati
SHAW 2023: *Blithe Spirit* and *The Game of Love and Chance*; 10th season. A performing troupe came to our town when I was a child. There was a sad clown at the centre of it all and when I watched him, I felt like laughing and crying at the same time. I’ve never forgotten him; he somehow let a small kid know that life is both those things, happy and sad, hilarious and tragic, and that

there is comfort in gathering in a room together to laugh and cry. So many people have been my teachers, especially other actors. Actors fall down and get back up, over and over, dancing with their fragile selves, learning to be brave.



JULIA COURSE

DONNA SOARES (陸明慧) Ruth

SHAW 2023: *Blithe Spirit* and *Village Wooing*; 3rd season. I am from Vancouver: the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the x̱m̱əθḵʷəy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and Seł̱ íłwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. The characters that I play this season fight for love, understanding, and connection in a world that doesn’t make sense to them. Their environments shift and they are thrust into new realities. They are outsiders who question how systems are arranged. I can relate to these women and perhaps you can, too. May they teach us to strive for poetry, say what we think, and play with our cards on the table.

JENNY L. WRIGHT Mrs Bradman SHAW 2023: *Bliethe Spirit* and *The Game of Love and Chance*; 27th season. Thank you for coming to this special place, where stories have been shared for millennia. I am here because of Christopher Newton. In my younger days, through a variety of circumstances that led from community theatre in Montreal to a chance audition for the Shaw Festival, I met the late, great thespian. He was very kind, and I was shocked to find myself hired as an apprentice for the 1996 season. I can't begin to list all the things I learned from Chris, but his voice still rings in my mind: "Actors think in quarter seconds...don't think-speak." One favourite memory is of him directing *Peter Pan*. I flew through the air as Tinkerbell. Until I was grounded because I was pregnant. Newton kept me on for the rest of that 2001 season, nonetheless. The following year he babysat for me.



MARTINE BELAND

Stage Manager
SHAW 2023: Stage manager for *Bliethe Spirit* and *The Game of Love and Chance*; 1st season. I began my career as an apprentice at Shaw Festival back in 1982-1984. I was an apprentice to the Production Manager, and the following year an apprentice stage manager. I was told to get some experience and come back. Forty years later, I'm back! When I'm not working, I call Mascouche, Quebec my home. Some of my favourite gigs were touring across Canada with Canada's Ballet Jørgen and stage managing the Asian Games in Qatar, and, of course, the twelve years I was at Stratford Festival. I feel blessed to have a career in stage management where I get to meet and work with some amazing people.



ASHLEY IRELAND

Assistant Stage Manager
SHAW 2023: Assistant stage manager for *Bliethe Spirit*, *Mahabharata* and *The Game of Love and Chance*; 6th season. When I was a little girl, my Nana would take my sister and me to the theatre. Whether it was a large-scale production in Toronto or a small community theatre production I didn't know the difference, it was always so thrilling. On one of these occasions, while reading through a programme, we saw that my sister and I could volunteer backstage as crew members. Having no idea what we were getting into, my sister convinced me to sign up with her. Nervously we were assigned our off-stage roles and I quickly fell in love. As cast members, props and set pieces whirled around me backstage, I realized that this is where I had to be.



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