



PHOTO BY PATRICK WEBB

Madame Arcati (Karen Martin, center) links hands with socialite Charles (David Sweeney) and his second wife, Ruth (Katrina Godderz, left), as she attempts to contact the spirit world in a scene from "Blithe Spirit" at the Coaster Theatre. Mayhem ensues after a séance conjures up the ghost of Charles' first wife.

## Noël Coward's classic comedy 'Blithe Spirit' opens at The Coaster Theatre

By PATRICK WEBB  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Actors don't usually accept roles and then leave on vacation just after rehearsals begin.

But for Karen Martin, who plays the medium, Madame Arcati, in the Coaster Theatre production of "Blithe Spirit," it helped in her preparation.

Martin was cast by director Edward James, then flew to England on a long-planned trip — taking her script to learn her dialogue.

"I was on a train, and I heard this women talking," Martin said. "It turned out she was a professional actress, so I asked her how to say some of my lines. We ended up reading them together. It was lovely to spend a little time with her."

### IF YOU GO

"Blithe Spirit," a comedy by Noël Coward

The Coaster Theatre, Cannon Beach

Opens 7:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 22

Performances, Sept. 22 through Oct. 28

Fridays and Saturdays: 7:30 p.m.

Sundays, Oct 1 and Oct. 15: 3 p.m.

Tickets: \$20 or \$25, call (503) 436-1242 or log on to [coastertheatre.com/box-office](http://coastertheatre.com/box-office)

Box office is open 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday to Saturday; performance days, 1 p.m. to curtain time.

Martin's refined British accent can be heard in the comedy, which opens 7:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 22, and runs through Saturday, Oct. 28, with Friday and Saturday evening shows and a couple of Sunday matinees.

"Blithe Spirit" tells the story of a socialite



"What holds our interest is the joy of language, and the battle of language." — Edward James, director, 'Blithe Spirit'

writer (played by Coaster regular David Sweeney) who invites a spiritualist to stage a séance to provide material for a book on the occult.

However, she conjures up the spirit of his dead wife, Elvira (Ellen Jensen), who is

determined to spoil his happiness with his second wife, Ruth (Katrina Godderz). Comedy ensues, in part because Ruth cannot see Elvira. To tell more would spoil any surprises for first-time attendees, but it must be said the comedy does have a dark side.

The director, James, is an Astoria native who returned to his hometown about 10 years ago. He had a professional acting/directing career that took him all over the country, including New York. He moved to Portland some 20 years ago and credits the box-office success of a production of "Blithe Spirit," in which he starred, with keeping his Jupiter Theater troupe afloat in its first season.

The play is often staged in community theater, in part because it has three strong female roles. To prepare a fresh interpretation, James watched video of Italian and Mexican versions, which accentuate the argumentative exchanges between the characters and highlight the ghost's appearances.

An Anglophile, he hopes author Noël Coward's witty use of words will excite his cast and entertain the audience.