mentioning how his fishing line can be used to move objects. "Watch the actors, but also watch the walls and the bookshelf."

Ghostly fog and mist and some eerie green lights are among the visual effects.

"There's a ton of sound cues, too, including Irving Berlin on the record player," Tauber said.

A clairvoyant, comedic play

The play features a socialite-writer played by Barry Sears who invites a clairvoyant, Madame Arcati, to his house to conduct a séance, hoping to gather material for his next book. Rose Power, a stalwart Peninsula Players character actor, plays the eccentric medium, a role made famous in the 1945 movie version by Margaret Rutherford.

But that actress wasn't the one Power had in mind when she began rehearsing.

"Angela Lansbury also played it and I originally thought I would be 'channeling' her but what came out was Carol Burnett," she said. "But this is fun."

The comedy happens when the spirit of the writer's first wife, Elvira, is conjured up — but only he can see or hear her. Kiki Warner plays Elvira and Kathy Warnert plays his second wife, Ruth, who becomes puzzled by her husband's odd behavior.

The play is a popular choice for theater groups, in part, because it offers four strong female characters. The fourth is the family housekeeper, played by Dixie Wood, who plays a key role in the mayhem, though to say more would spoil the plot.

Also in the cast are Patrick Buckley and Rachel Lake as a couple who are amused to be invited to the séance.

Buckley, who appeared in the troupe's last three shows, doubles as assistant director for the first time.

"He has great ideas for the show and really helps me," said Tauber, a former professional backstage designer who retired from California to the Long Beach Peninsula.

The troupe originally planned to stage the behind-the-scenes theater comedy "Noises Off," but switched gears after too few attended the auditions.

Tauber chose the new script because he likes the work of Noel Coward and other British comedies and had directed Sears, Warnert, Power and Buckley in "Black Comedy," in November.

Future shows

The Players completed a run of the Gilbert & Sullivan operetta "HMS Pinafore" earlier this year.

Tauber said auditions will take place in August for radio plays, "Frankenstein" and "Dracula," plus "Marionettes, Inc." by Ray Bradbury, to be staged in September.

"We would like to get to the point where we are doing something monthly to give people a choice and some place to go," he said. cw

Patrick Webb photos

ABOVE: Rose Power plays the strong-willed Madame Arcati who conducts a crucial séance and gazes into her crystal ball in the Peninsula Players' production of Noel Coward's "Blithe Spirit" LEFT: As the action in the Peninsula Players' production of "Blithe Spirit" becomes more complex, the family housekeeper, played by Dixie Wood, reacts with horror as she sees two long-playing records apparently hovering in thin air, because only the audience — and one character — can see the ghost of Elvira, played by Kiki Warner.