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WICA 2013-14 Theatre Series: *Blithe Spirit* A Comic Play by Noël Coward

Langley, WA, October 3, 2013— **Whidbey Island Center for the Arts** opens the 2013-14 Theatre Series with a ghostly comedy, *Blithe Spirit*, on Friday, October 11. Written by Noël Coward and directed by Phil Jordan, the production will run through October 26—just in time to get in the Halloween “spirit!”

Blithe Spirit was first seen in the West End of London in 1941, creating a new long-run record for non-musical British plays of 1,997 performances. The play concerns the socialite and novelist, Charles Condomine who invites the eccentric clairvoyant, Madame Arcati, to his house to conduct a séance, hoping to gather material for his next book. At the séance, she inadvertently summons Charles's first wife, Elvira, who has been dead for seven years. Madame Arcati leaves after the séance, unaware that she has summoned Elvira. Only Charles can see or hear Elvira, and his second wife, Ruth, does not believe that Elvira exists until a floating vase is handed to her out of thin air. The ghostly Elvira makes continued, and increasingly desperate, efforts to disrupt Charles's current marriage. She finally sabotages his car in the hope of killing him so that he will join her in the spirit world, but it is Ruth rather than Charles who drives off and is killed.

Ruth's ghost immediately comes back for revenge on Elvira, and though Charles cannot at first see Ruth, he can see that Elvira is being chased and tormented, and his house is in uproar. He calls Madame Arcati back to exorcise both of the spirits, but instead of banishing them, she materialises Ruth. With both his dead wives now fully visible, and neither of them in the best of tempers, Charles, together with Madame Arcati, goes through séance after séance and spell after spell to try to exorcise them, and at last Madame Arcati succeeds. Charles is left seemingly in peace, but Madame Arcati, hinting that the ghosts may still be around unseen, warns him that he should go far away as soon as possible. Charles leaves at once, and the unseen ghosts throw things and destroy the room as soon as he has gone.

Blithe Spirit's fabulous cast includes Miles Harrison as Charles Condomine, Savannah Randall as Ruth Condomine, Kathryn Lynn as Elivra, Gwen Jones as Madame Arcati, Dwight Zehm as Dr. George Bradman, Susan Hanson as Mrs. Bradman, and Kathy Stanley as Edith.

“Putting heart aside, Coward constructed a highly efficient laugh machine, sheathed in the satiny sophistication his audiences expected of him.” Ben Brantley, *The New York Times*.

Blithe Spirit was the 2009 Drama Desk Award Winner, Outstanding Revival.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Sir Noël Peirce Coward (1899-1973) was an English playwright, composer, director, actor and singer, known for his wit, flamboyance, and what Time magazine called "a sense of personal style, a combination of cheek and chic, pose and poise." Born in Teddington, a suburb of London, Mr. Coward attended a dance academy in London as a child, making his professional stage debut at the age of eleven. As a teenager he was introduced into the high society in which most of his plays would be set. Mr. Coward achieved enduring success as a playwright, publishing more than 50 plays from his teens onwards. Many of his works, such as *Hay Fever*, *Private Lives*, *Design for Living*, *Present Laughter* and *Blithe Spirit*, have remained in the regular theatre repertoire. Mr. Coward's stage and film acting and directing career spanned six decades, during which he starred in many of his own works. At the outbreak of World War II, Mr. Coward volunteered for war work, running the British propaganda office in Paris. He also worked with the Secret Service, seeking to use his influence to persuade the American public and government to help Britain. Mr. Coward won an Academy Honorary Award in 1943 for his naval film drama, *In Which We Serve*, and was knighted in 1969. In the 1950s he achieved fresh success as a cabaret performer, performing his own songs, such as "Mad Dogs and Englishmen", "London Pride" and "I Went to a Marvellous Party." His plays and songs achieved new popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, and his work and style continue to influence popular culture.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Phil Jordan has acted and directed in theaters across the west and midwest since 1975. He was seen on the WICA stage last season as Walter Flood in *Becky's New Car* and as Reg in *The Norman Conquests*. His directing credits include Friedrich Durrenmatt's, *The Visit* at the Plymouth Arts Festival in Seattle, Susan Glaspell's *Suppressed Desires* for Ace Productions in Bellingham, and Booth Tarkington's, *The Trysting Place* at the Masquer Theater in Missoula, Montana.

He is excited to be bringing Noel Coward's ghostly masterpiece to the Whidbey Island Center for the Arts.

WICA – *BLITHE SPIRIT* - FACT SHEET

WHAT: Whidbey Island Center for the Arts presents Noel Coward's, *Blithe Spirit*, a delightfully satirical comedy about ghosts, though the play explains love and marriage more than it explores the afterlife.

WHERE: **Whidbey Island Center for the Arts**, 565 Camano Avenue, Langley, Washington 98260

WHEN: October 11– 26, 2013, Friday – 7:30 PM Saturday, 2:00 PM Sunday
Performance schedule as follows:
Fri, 10/11/13, 7:30 PM;
Sat, 10/12/13, 7:30 PM;
Sun 10/13/13, 2:00 PM;
Fri, 10/18/13, 7:30 PM;
Sat, 10/19/13, 7:30 PM;
Sun 10/20/13, 2:00 PM;
Fri, 10/25/13, 7:30 PM;
Sat, 10/26/13, 7:30 PM

TICKETS: \$15 Youth/Matinee, Senior/Military \$18, Adults \$22
WICA Ticket Office (360) 221- 8268 or (800) 638-7631or tickets.wicaonline.com

SHORT DESCRIPTION: **WICA 2013-14 THEATRE SERIES PLAY, *BLITHE SPIRIT*** - The play, by Noel Coward and directed by Phil Jordan, concerns a novelist, Charles who invites the eccentric clairvoyant, Madame Arcati, to his house to conduct a séance. She inadvertently summons Charles' first wife, Elvira, who has been dead for seven years. The Madame leaves after the séance, unaware that she has summoned Elvira. Only Charles can see or hear Elvira, and his second wife, Ruth, does not believe that Elvira exists. The ghostly Elvira makes continued, and increasingly desperate, efforts to disrupt Charles' current marriage. She finally sabotages his car in the hope of killing him so that he will join her in the spirit world, but it is Ruth rather than Charles who is killed, now Charles has two playful spirits on his hands. *Blithe Spirit* runs October 11-26, 2013. WICA Ticket Office (360) 221- 8268 or (800) 638-7631 or wicaonline.com.