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REVIEW: Troupe revives 'Blithe Spirit' in grand form

Noel Coward's World War II-era comedy "Blithe Spirit" brings a temperamental, fickle ghost into the British drawing room of a writer and his befuddled current wife. The confusing results get explored by the Cape Ann Theatre Collaborative, onstage at the Gorton Theatre through April 10.

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Lauren Ashly Suchecki (as Elvira), and Marc St. Pierre (as Charles) star in the Cape Ann Theatre Collaborative's 'Blithe Spirit' through April 10. Wicked Local Staff Photo / David Sokol



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By Keith Powers / Correspondent

Posted Apr. 2, 2016 at 12:38 PM

GLOUCESTER By Keith Powers / Correspondent

Posted Apr. 2, 2016 at 12:38 PM

GLOUCESTER

If you go...

WHAT: CAT Collaborative's "Blithe Spirit"

WHERE: Gorton Theatre, 267 East Main St., Gloucester

WHEN: through April 10

Visit eatrecollaborative.com

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World War II-era comedy "Blithe Spirit" brings a temperamental, fickle ghost into the British drawing room of a writer and his befuddled current wife. The confusing results get explored by the Cape Ann Theatre Collaborative, onstage at the Gorton Theatre through next weekend.

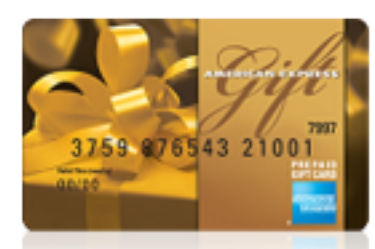
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Lauren Ashly Suchecki (as Elvira), and Marc St. Pierre (as Charles) star in the Cape Ann Theatre Collaborative's 'Blithe Spirit' through April 10. Wicked Local Staff Photo / David Coward's



Coward's urbane, chatty comedy was intended to liven the spirits of bombed-out London during the Blitz. It did. With a record-setting run in the West End, and subsequent successes onstage in New York and through the following decades in film and television, "Blithe Spirit" has held the boards.

Charles Condomine (a spot-on typecasting for Marc St. Pierre) writes novels. While researching the next book, he decides to hold a seance, and write about a murderous medium. So at a dinner party for his friends Doctor (Ben Reed) and Mrs. Bradman (Sheryl Reed), he and his current wife Ruth (Elinor Teele) invite a seer, Madame Arcati (Carolyn Aliskevicz), to liven the proceedings and give him some inside dope on the workings and lingo of the occult.

Everyone treats the seance with skepticism, but out of nowhere Elvira (Lauren Ashly Suchecki) appears, summoned from the dead by the enthusiastic medium. Only Charles can see and

hear her, and that, obviously, creates some problems for his current marriage. But not really for Charles, who, apart from being abused by the dueling spouses, seems to enjoy the company of his ex.

The solution is long in coming, and involves a maid (Jessie Sorrells) who seems at first to be a comic cypher in all the action.

Pauline Miceli directs the troupe, who have all mastered Coward's talky script. The sheer volume of witty, educated dialogue threatens to collapse the comedy, but these players have it all internalized.

The play runs long, and the humor, which was probably much more immediate in 1941, doesn't really unfold until the mostly invisible Elvira shows up. From there, physical comedy takes its place alongside the antic exchanges among the characters, and the action livens up.

Despite the many scenes where the dialogue now seems dated, the acting, alert and even frisky at times, holds "Blithe Spirit" together. St. Pierre stays at the center of the storm, and does a terrific job, adding much to his part with silent facial gags and other physical manifestations.

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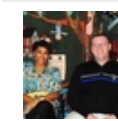
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1:15 pm

Town Hall

"Madama Butterfly" showing

7:00 pm

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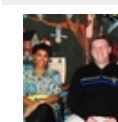
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