

BLITHE SPIRIT

BY NOËL COWARD

10 NOV - 12 DEC

2026



PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES



Sir Noel Coward 1899-1973

Noël Coward was a performer, playwright, screen writer, composer, lyricist, director and wit; according to critic Cyril Connolly "one of the most talented and prodigiously successful people the world has ever known." Noël Coward virtually invented the concept of Englishness for the 20th century; he was defined by his Englishness as much as he defined it. He grew up in genteel poverty. His father went out of business as a piano salesman, so his mother had to operate a boarding house. She was an enthusiastic supporter of Noel's theatrical ambition. He was on the stage by the age of six and acted in his first professional London production at age twelve. Coward modestly suggested that all he had was "a talent to amuse" but the expression and achievements of that talent fill thousands of pages online. One example of the success he enjoyed in his lifetime is the fact that in 1955 he was being paid forty thousand dollars a week to perform his cabaret act. It had been a hit in London, the Sunday Times observing, "His personality almost persuaded his audiences that he could sing." Coward wrote several plays before the first that would become considered a masterpiece. This was *Hay Fever* (1923) which he wrote in three days. In 1924 The Vortex, in which he starred, made it clear he was a major playwright and actor. *Hay Fever*, Private Lives, Design for Living, *Present Laughter*, and *Blithe Spirit* are always being performed somewhere in the world. In 2006, London's Albery Theatre was refurbished and renamed the Noël Coward Theatre.

Blithe Spirit described by the author as "an improbable farce in three acts" was produced and published in 1941 and often regarded as Coward's best work. This play, about a man whose domestic life is disturbed by the jealous ghost of his first wife, shows Coward's humour at its ripest. The title of the play is taken from Shelley's poem To a Skylark, ("Hail to thee, blithe Spirit! / Bird thou never wert"). Coward wrote the entire play in just six days in 1941 during the height of World War II, later remarking: "I will ever be grateful for the almost psychic gift that enabled me to write *Blithe Spirit* in... one of the darkest years of the war."

"For six days I worked from eight to one each morning and from two to seven each afternoon. On Friday evening, the play was finished and, disdaining archness and false modesty, I will admit that I knew it was witty, I knew it was well constructed, and I also knew that it would be a success".
The play was first seen in the West End in 1941 and ran for 1,997 performances, a new record for a non-musical play in London. It also did well on Broadway later that year, running for 657 performances. The play was adapted for the cinema in 1945; a second film version followed in 2020.

After the first performance in Manchester the reviewer in The Manchester Guardian thought the mixture of farce and impending tragedy "An odd mixture and not untouched by genius of a sort". Of the 1976 revival Irving Wardle of The Times said: "Stylistically, it is Coward's masterpiece: his most complete success in imposing his own view of things on the brute facts of existence".

Helen Tonkin, Literary Manager

CREATIVES

Director Rosane McNamara
Set Design Tom Bannerman
Costume Designers Deb Mulhall/Helen Kohlhagen
Lighting/Sound Designer Michael Schell
Assistant Director Emily Saint Smith

CAST

Dr Bradman Simon Bolton
Charles Condamine Mike Booth
Mrs Bradman Gina Cohen
Elvira Condamine Daisy Cousens
Edith Brigid Jeffries
Ruth Condamine Michela Noonan
Madame Arcati Emily Weare

PRODUCTION TEAM & CREW

Stage Manager Casey Davison
Assist. Stage Manager Red Addis
Operator Ricci Costa
Venue Technician Bora Celebi
Technical Assistant Sana Olow
Set Construction Crew Tom Bannerman, Rodger Wishart, David Marshall Martin

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Please note: this production contains mildly flashing lights and adult themes.

Running time: 2 hrs and 25mins with a 20 min interval.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Gadigal, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.



BIOGRAPHIES



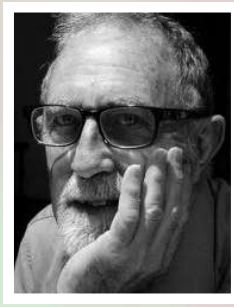
ROSANE MCNAMARA DIRECTOR

Rosane has Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English and Drama and she studied acting at the Ensemble Theatre with Hayes Gordon.

As Actor: *Hard Times* (New Theatre); *Pride & Prejudice* (Ensemble Rep); *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Voices Theatre).

As Director: *A Man for All Seasons*, *The Chapel Perilous*, *King Lear*, *Oh What a Lovely War Mate*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, *Hay Fever*, *The Clean House*, *Broadway Bound*, *The Spook* (New Theatre); *The Crucible* (Ensemble Rep); *Prelude to a Kiss* (Belvoir Downstairs); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Voices Theatre).

She has also stage/production managed and operated lights/sound on many productions.



TOM BANNERMAN SET DESIGNER

Tom's attraction to set-design began while a senior student at Balgowlah Boys H.S. in 1970/71. His first design, for Shaw's *Saint Joan*, won a state award, thus prompting a long and unbroken fascination with the practice. In 1977, he was invited by John Bell to design Sydney's premiere of Williamson's *The Club* (Nimrod). His set was acclaimed and the production itself exceeded all expectations, touring NSW before crossing the globe to London's Hampstead Theatre, then transferring for its ultimate season at the Old Vic.

As Set Designer: *Ink*, *Hangmen*, *Fighting*, *In the Next Room*, *The Frogs*, *Present Laughter*, *Perfect Arrangement* (New Theatre); *Isolde and Tristan* (Sport for Jove); *Eight Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography*, *Mark Colvin's Kidney* (Mullumbimby's Drill Hall).
As Associate Set Designer: *The Flea* (New Theatre).

Tom's New Theatre debut as a Set Designer was in 1980 with, *We Can't Pay, We Won't Pay*, directed by Jock Levy. Since then, he has designed 85 sets for the theatre, drawn by its enduring Inner-West ethos.

His academic credentials include a MA in Theatre Studies (UNSW).



DEBORAH MULHALL COSTUME DESIGNER

Deborah has been in theatre for over 5 decades. She has studied at UNSW, Cambridge University, NIDA and La Mama International; and has qualifications and international experience across a diverse range of roles including writing, directing, production and design. Having directed, designed and produced over 40 plays and musicals, Deborah is committed to new work. A core belief is that when the work isn't new, a new approach should be envisioned. Art is not art if it is done as it always has been done.
As Director: Staged public reading of *An Independent Woman* (Seaborn,

Broughton & Walford Foundation anniversary celebrations); *Hangmen*, *The Lovely Bones*, *Pygmalion*, *Lieutenant of Inishmore* (New Theatre)
As Designer: *Present Laughter*, *The Lovely Bones*, *Pygmalion*, *Lieutenant of Inishmore* (New Theatre).
Deborah has also written more than 10 published plays, which have been performed internationally. *Cry, Wolf* ran for eight weeks Off-Broadway and has been optioned for film. Other works are scheduled for performance in Victoria and Queensland in 2027.



HELEN KOHLHAGEN COSTUME DESIGNERS

Helen has been a dedicated contributor to Sydney's non-professional theatre community for decades, with experience spanning performance, design, and arts management.

Her involvement in theatre began in high school with a production of *The Wiz*, sparking a passion that has grown into a lifelong commitment to the stage. Over the years, Helen has worked across many aspects of theatre, ultimately building a strong reputation as a costume designer with a particular focus on contemporary productions. She has costumed a wide range of actors and characters, with standout credits including *Shadowlands* and *Angles in America* for Phoenix Theatre Productions and *The Night Heron*, directed by Helen Tonkin. Her other design credits include *The Talented Mr Ripley*, *Hotel Sorrento*, and *Twelve Angry Men*, demonstrating both versatility and a keen eye for character and storytelling.

Since 2014, Helen has been an active member of Genesian Theatre, one of Sydney's longest-running theatre companies. Her work with the company includes costume design for productions such as *Hotel Sorrento*, *What Santa Does the Other Days of the Year*, *Four Flat Whites in Italy* and *Strangers on a Train*.

More recently, Helen contributed to Lane Cove Theatre Company's *After Dinner*. She also continues to seek out new creative opportunities and is preparing to costume *The Gazebo* for Guild Theatre. Helen also co-designing costumes with Deborah Mulhall for *Blythe Spirit* at New Theatre, bringing her experience, creativity, and enthusiasm to the production.

MICHAEL SCHELL LIGHTING/SOUND DESIGNER

Having first become involved with New Theatre in 1977, Michael marks his 392nd lighting design with this production, his 64th for the company.

As Lighting Designer: *The Pirates of Pal Mal*, *All My Sons*, *Colonial Experience*, *The Matchgirls*, *Indians*, *First Class Women*, *Henry 1V Part 1*, *Macbeth*, *Cloud 9*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *The Chapel Perilous*, *The Wild Duck*, *The Woman in the Window*, *The Voysey Inheritance*, *Angels in America*, *The Lovely Bones*, *The Spook*, *Chimerica*, *Jellyfish*, *The Ballad of Maria Marten*, and *The Front Page*.

Michael has also designed sound for 222 productions, 13 of which have been for New Theatre, including *Blithe Spirit*.



EMILY SAINT SMITH ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Emily is an actor, director, marketer, writer and props enthusiast. She has a Bachelor's degree in Theatre Studies from QUT, where she undertook a number of electives in Directing and Producing. In 2026, she launched PromoMyShow – a marketing agency specialising in promotional support for independent theatre companies and live performance. She is also the Marketing Manager for Sport for Jove.

As Director: *The Lady Vanishes* (Genesian Theatre); *Don't <Blank> The Messenger* (Short and Sweet 2025).

As Assistant Director: *A Succulent Chinese Musical?!* (At Your Service Productions); *Steel Magnolias* (Genesian Theatre).

As Stage Manager: *Perfect Arrangement* (New Theatre).

As Actor: Margaret Craddock: *Murdered to Death* (Genesian Theatre); Mrs Gudgeon: *The Hollow* (Genesian Theatre); Simone Stride : *Jekyll & Hyde the Musical* (Lane Cove Theatre Company).





SIMON BOLTON DR BRADMAN

Simon trained as an actor at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and performed in stage, film, TV and Radio productions in the UK. This included a national tour and west end run in Cheek by Jowl's production of *Macbeth*, and several leading roles in rep theatre productions. A particular highlight was performing in the successful revival of Noel Coward's *Easy Virtue* which transferred from the King"s Head to the Garrick Theatre.

Opportunities in drama education led to him mixing performing, directing/ devising and teaching for several years. Since migrating to Australia in the the mid 90's Simon has focused on a full-time career in education with occasional forays back into performance - notably playing baddy Johnny Rock in the independent feature *All About E*. Simon recently enjoyed returning to the stage for the New Theatre production of Jame's Graham's *Ink*.



MIKE BOOTH CHARLES CONDAMINE

Mike Booth is a Sydney-based actor, playwright and director, and the founder of Sydney Actors Playhouse. He trained at the NIDA Playwrights Studio, Atlantic Theater Company in New York, School at Steppenwolf in Chicago, and the Impulse Company in London.

As Actor: *Mauritius* (Sydney Actors Playhouse); *Timon of Athens* (Sport for Jove); *Uncle Vanya* (Her Productions); *Posh, The Children's Hour* (Old Fitzroy); *Romeo and Juliet* (Civic Theatre Newcastle).

As Director: *An Intervention* (TAP Gallery); *Mauritius* (TAP Gallery); *Thirty-Three* (Old Fitzroy); *Our Country's Good* (Darlinghurst Theatre).

Screen credits include: *NCIS: Sydney* (Paramount+); *Home and Away* (Seven Network); *Wonderland* (Network Ten).

Mike has also written several plays and screenplays, and co-wrote and co-directed the short film *The Hitch*, which screened at film festivals internationally.



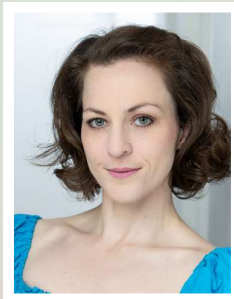
GINA COHEN MRS BRADMAN

Gina Cohen is a performer and drama teacher who has a passion for theatre education. Originally from Adelaide, she trained at the University of Adelaide (Hons Drama) before finding her way across the to the east to complete her graduate studies in Education.

As Actor: *The Laramie Project*, *Off the Record*, *The Other End of the Afternoon* (New Theatre); *Mask*, *Prick*, *Two Psychics Meet on Tinder*, *The Last Radio Show*, *One Night Stan*, *Sauerkraut* (writer/performer) (Short and Sweet Sydney); *Abandoned Wench!* (writer/performer) *The Chairs* (Sydney Fringe Festival); *Wolf Lullaby* (Woodstock).

As Director: *Spicy*, *The End is Nighy*, *Dating through the Decades* (Short and Sweet Sydney).

Screen credits include: *Sometimes You're Eating Grapes* (CIMP Entertainment).

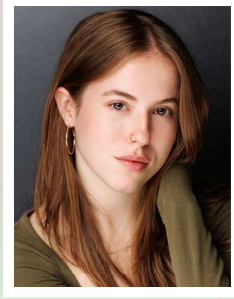


DAISY COUSENS ELVIRA CONDAMINE

Daisy has been performing from a young age and studied Musical Theatre at the Australian Institute of Music. She also has an extensive background in cabaret and Victorian music hall.

As Actor: Standby Mrs White/Yvette/Cook in *Cluedo* (Crossroads Live), Ensemble in *Goblin* (Workshop, Roz Packer Theatre), Bellomy in *The Fantasticks* (Exclaim Theatre Company), Ensemble/Understudy Beggar Woman in *Sweeney Todd*, Ensemble in *Summer Rain* (New Theatre), Elizabeth in *If/Then*, Lady Teazle in *The School For Scandal* (Lane Cove Theatre Company), Marcy Park in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Brisbane Arts Theatre), Ensemble in *Hello Dolly!* (Squabbalogic).

Screen/other credits include: *NSW Premier's Christmas Concerts Tour* (2017), *Rule Britannia With Jane Rutter* (The Concourse), *News24*, ABC's *QandA* and *Hack Live*, and Channel 10's *The Project*.



BRIGID JEFFRIES EDITH

Brigid Jeffries is a Sydney-based actor who has been in the performing arts scene for nearly all her life. She graduated from Newtown Performing Arts High School in 2024, and in the following year graduated from NIDA having completing the 2025 Diploma of Stage and Screen Performance.

As Actor: Scout (Jean Louise): *To Kill a Mocking Bird* (Genesian Theatre), Student Ensemble: *2025 DSSP Showcase* (NIDA).

Screen credits include: *She's Hot, Chronically Cancelled* (AFTRS student projects), *Canary* (AIE student short film), and *Where the Water Lies Still* (UTS Capstone Graduation short film)

Brigid will be playing the part of Carol in an upcoming performance of *Oleanna* by David Mamet in the new year.



MICHELA NOONAN RUTH CONDAMINE

At 15, Michela made her stage debut as Juliet in ATYP's *Romeo and Juliet*. Since then, she has worked extensively as an actress in both Australia and Italy. Her film and television credits include *Roar*, *The Code*, *Farscape*, *Devil's Playground*, *Two Step*, *Ruvido*, *Water Rats*, *Wildside*, *Spellbinder*, *The Sugar Factory*, *All Saints*, *Apnea*, and *Allegro non troppo*.

She has lived and worked in Rome, where she filmed *Il destino ha quattro zampe* at the iconic Cinecittà studios. Michela received an AFI (AACTA) nomination for Best Actress for her role in the Australian feature *Strange Fits of Passion*, and was awarded Best Actress at the Gallio Film Festival for the Italian feature *Quore*.

As actor: Hetty: *Present Laughter*, Jenny Gosper: *Off the Record* (New Theatre). Aurora: *How He Lied to Her Husband* (Bittersweet Productions) Mrs. Erlynne: *Lady Windermere's Fan* (Genesian Theatre)

Michela also works as a lawyer.



EMILY WEARE MADAME ARCATI

WAAPA-trained actor Emily has enjoyed an extensive career across stage and screen, working with a wide range of theatre companies throughout Australia.

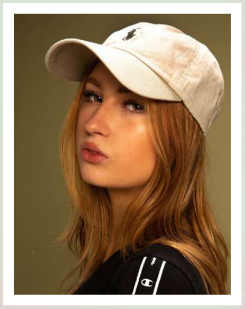
Her theatre credits include *The Real Thing*, *August: Osage County*, *Angry Fags*, *Ink* and *Present Laughter* (New Theatre); *A Very Very Very Dark Matter* (Stoneraven Theatre); *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* (Sydney Shakespeare Co.); *The Dysfunchsonalz*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *The Unscrupulous Murderer*, *The Frail Man* and *Fit to Be Tied* (Darlinghurst Theatre); *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Comedy of Errors* (Shakespeare on the Green); *Twelfth Night* (Coogee Arts Festival and State Theatre Company, WA); *Redheads* (Old Fitzroy); *Live Acts Onstage* (Griffin Theatre Co.); *Fallen Angels* (Tap Gallery and Belvoir Downstairs); *The Graduate* (Really Useful Co.); and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (HVTC and Australian Shakespeare Co.).

Other theatre credits include *Money and Friends*, *Sons of Cain* and *Travellers* (HVTC); *Laundry and Bourbon* (Underground Productions); *On the Verge* and *Daisy Bates and the Dancer* (State Theatre Company, WA); *Cox 4* and *A Woman in Mind* (Perth Theatre Co.); and *Noel and Gertie* (Dress Circle Productions).

Her screen credits include *A Waltz Through the Hills*, *Zucker*, *Deadly* and *Pink Balloons*. She also played Grace in the ABC sitcom *After the Beep* and has appeared in guest roles across several Australian television series.

Alongside her performing career, Emily works as a drama teacher, director and acting tutor. She has been a proud member of Equity since 1983.





CASEY DAVISON STAGE MANAGER

Originally from Newcastle upon Tyne, Casey relocated to Sydney this year after graduating from Northumbria University in 2024 with a Bachelor of Arts in Film & Television Production.

Her background in performing arts and passion for theatre sit alongside her work on several short film projects and with film festivals across Sydney and the UK.



RED ADDIS ASSIST. STAGE MANAGER

Red is a media, performance and internet artist currently based in Gadigal Country. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania by 3 bad-ass mothers. Addis is a graduate of SUNY Purchase with a bachelor's degree in both New Media and Media Studies. They work across many mediums and spaces; film/video, theatre, puppetry, performance, and ritual. Their practice usually revolves around community, love, magic and wandering.

As Associate Stage Manager: *Afterglow* (Griffin Theatre)

As Production Assistant: *And Just Like That S3* (HBO Max), *Daredevil: Born Again S1* (Marvel).

As Puppet Apprentice: *Spring Pageant 2025* (Bread and Puppet Theater).

As Co-Director: Young Media Artists Retreat (Griffis Sculpture Park).

As Intimacy Coordinator: *Fruitless in the Farmland* (Cherry Stem Studios), *The Moth* (SUNY Purchase), *Arlene* (SUNY Purchase).



RICCI COSTA OPERATOR

Ricci has been involved in stage management and tech operating for over a decade.

As Stage Manager: *Collaborators*, *The Clean House*, *Marat/Sade* (New Theatre).

As Lighting/Sound Operator: *The Day of the Triffids*, *Stage Kiss*, *A Lie of the Mind*, *Stags and Hens*, *Front Page* (New Theatre); *The Maids* (Meraki Theatre); *Angels in America*, *Woyzeck* (Actors Centre Australia).



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Michael O'Brien



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