

Elithe Spirit

By: Noel Coward

Play no. 240

Opening show: 01/02/1969

Translated by: Jacob Shabtai

Directed by: Gerald Harper

Set and Costumes by : Adrian Vaux

Lightning by : Faiwel Har

The Cast

Edith (a maid): Yael Ophir

Rcuth: Tova Pardo

Charles: Shlomo Bar-Shavit

Dr. Bradman: Ari Kutai

Madame Arkati: Tamar Robbins

Elvira: Miriam Zohar

The Play

The action of the play takes place in the home of Ruth and Charles Kondomine. Charles, who is writer by profession, married Ruth after his first wife, Elvira, died of pneumonia while still young and full of life. Charles has told Ruth that Elvira was an enchanting and capricious woman, who was spiritually empty but physically very attractive.

In order to obtain background information for a book, Charles invites Madam Arkati, a professional medium to conduct a séance in his house. His only purpose is to familiarize himself with the atmosphere, language and method of operation of a séance. He regards "spiritualism" with utter disbelief, as do the other participants of the séance.

The séance, however, scores an unexpected success when the ethereal spirit of Elvira appears from the "other world" and materializes in their home. To make matters worse, Elvira's spirit is seen only by Charles. All the others, including Madam Arkati cannot see or hear her. Charles is perplexed by this, as are all, those about him, and even begins to doubt his own sanity.

Charles' behaviour during and after the séance, that is, his firm claim that he sees Elvira in the house, disrupts his relation with Ruth and creates an atmosphere of strife and contention. He desperately attempts to convince his wife that Elvira's presence is real, and not a product of his imagination or an insolent invention on his part. It is hope that once she is convinced of this fact, the three of them will be able to live together under one roof, if not from friendship, than at least out of mutual understanding.

Ruth, however, remains unconvinced. She is inclined to believe that the entire matter of Elvira is connected with Charles' heavy drinking on the evening of the séance. Later on she becomes suspicious that he is plotting against her.

And finally, she comes to believe that he has actually gone mad. It is only after a great deal of further effort that Charles manages to convince Ruth that Elvira does exist and is in their home.

Charles now hopes that everything will quickly fall into place. But his close relationship with Elvira and their good times together, arouse jealousy and anger in Ruth. Without his knowledge, she calls Madam Arkati and demands that she get rid of Elvira and rescue Charles from this intolerate situation, of which she was the cause. The medium claims that it is beyond her ability and the two women part in anger.

Meanwhile, many strange accidents befall the occupants of the house. Ruth believes that it is all the treacherous work of Elvira, who wants to kill Charles, because if he dies he will be hers and hers alone forever. She informs Charles of her suspicions and convinces him of their truth. The fear of death strikes him, and he joins Ruth in her desire to be rid of Elvira.

They decide to act without delay. Ruth takes the car in which Charles and Elvira were about to go out for the evening, to summon Madam Arkati again. It seems that Ruth's suspicions were correct, because the car which had been "treated" by Elvira, simply falls apart on the road, and Ruth goes to the "other world" instead of Charles.

Charles is now left alone, with his first wife as a materialized ghost and his second wife as an ethereal spirit. It seems that Charles has no choice but to accept these sorry facts. In the midst of all this Madam Arkati appears. The situation which she unintentionally brought on the Kondomine family has disturbed her peace of mind and given her pangs of con science. She has given the matter further though, and she now feels that she has found a way to return Elvira to the "other world". At any rate, she suggests a try.

Charles rejects all her proposals. He is against further experiments. At this point, Elvira insists upon being returned to the "other world", as she is disappointed in Charles' attitude towards her and is not at all willing to suffer any more nonsense in that house.

Charles gladly agrees to her request after their bad relations, marked by bitterness and hatred. Madam Arkati goes into action, but to her great surprise and disappointment, causes the ghost of Ruth to appear and materialize in the house.

The two women now join forces against Charles. Everyone, he as well as they, would like to be rid of each other. Madam Arkati's numerous attempts only create havoc, however. In the end she finally succeeds in getting rid of the two women. They both disappear and turn into ethereal spirit again.

Charles feels freer and happier than ever before in his life. Madam Arkati, however, urges him to quickly leave the house, because in spite of her wonderful success, who knows?