MEDIA RELEASE
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Jungle Theater Opens 20th Anniversary Season with Noël Coward’s BLITHE SPIRIT

(Minneapolis, MN) – The Jungle Theater opens its milestone anniversary season with the timeless wit of Noël Coward, whose work will grace the Jungle stage for the first time in the company’s 20 years. BLITHE SPIRIT, directed by Associate Artistic Director Joel Sass, opens February 12 and runs through March 28.

Written in 1941 for British theater-goers who had endured the Blitz during World War II, the comedy begins when novelist Charles Condomine (Michael Booth) and his wife Ruth (Amy McDonald) invite a local psychic to conduct a séance at their dinner party, fully believing her to be a harmless fraud. Instead, Madame Arcati (Wendy Lehr) successfully conjures the ghost of Charles’ annoying and temperamental first wife, Elvira (Kate Eifrig), who decides not to honor the vow “‘til death do us part.” Elvira then settles in to haunt the house—and her spouse—in this sophisticated comedy evoking the glamour of the 1940s.

“In selecting the plays for the Jungle’s 20th Anniversary season, [Artistic Director] Bain Boehlke and I wanted to showcase work by some of the best mid-20th century playwrights, and Noël Coward’s wonderfully written comedy fits in perfectly,” said Sass. “Audiences are in for a real treat with a brilliant cast headed by local icon Wendy Lehr as Madame Arcati—one of the truly enduring all-time great comic roles.”

Blithe Spirit will also introduce three new actors to the Jungle stage: Kirby Bennett and Sam Landman will portray the Condomines' neighbors, Dr. and Mrs. Bradman, and Georgina Stoyles, who will play the neurotic maid Edith.
Noël 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.” He translated that glamour into his stage characters as well—but Sass is adamant that the “upper crust” that populates *Blithe Spirit* will exhibit some deliciously bad behavior.

Sass continued, “Noël’s characters are like expensive bottles of champagne that have been given a good shaking. On the exterior, all elegance and sophistication, but full of seething emotions, ready to pop their corks once they get their feathers ruffled.”

The Jungle’s creative team includes Barry Browning (lighting), Kalere Peyton (costumes), Joel Sass (set), Andrew Mayer (sound), and John Novak (properties).

**About the Jungle Theater and its 20th Anniversary Season**

The Jungle’s 20th anniversary season celebrates and pays homage to the plays and playwrights that helped shape the Jungle’s first two decades. Over the past 20 years, the Jungle has had a substantial impact on the Twin Cities theater scene, establishing a reputation for excellence that stems from a commitment to high artistic standards and the contributions of many respected and celebrated local artists. A flagship example of the transformative power of the performing arts, the Jungle plays a continuing and vital role in the Lyn-Lake neighborhood’s economic, social and cultural development.

**Ticket Information**

*Blithe Spirit* opens Friday, February 12 and closes March 28 at the Jungle Theater, 2951 Lyndale Ave. So., Minneapolis. Performances are Tuesdays ($20) and Wednesdays ($25) at 7:30 p.m.; Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. ($30); Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. ($35); Sundays at 2 p.m. ($30); and Sundays at 7:30 p.m. ($25). Senior, student and group discounts are also available, and half-price rush tickets are available every night of the week 30 minutes prior to the performance for $10 off the regular price. Tickets are available at (612) 822-7063 or online at www.jungletheater.com

**Calendar Information**

*Blithe Spirit*  
Noël Coward  
Directed and Designed by Joel Sass

When English novelist Charles Condomine hires an eccentric medium to perform a séance at his house party in order to gather material for his next book, she winds up accidentally conjuring the ghost of his first wife, Elvira, who is out to seek revenge on Charles and his new wife.

**Dates**

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<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Press Opening</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Audio-Described</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>Closes</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>March</td>
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MICHAEL BOOTH (Charles Condomine) last appeared at the Jungle in SHIPWRECKED! as Louis de Rougemont. He has also appeared in numerous Guthrie productions including The Two Gentlemen of Verona, A View from the Bridge, 1776, Lost in Yonkers, The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, Night of the Iguana, Da, The Three Sisters, Mrs. Warren's Profession, Amadeus, Romeo and Juliet, Summer and Smoke, Molly Sweeney (tour) and A Christmas Carol (9 productions since 1998). Other theater credits include Park Square, St. Louis Rep, Cleveland Playhouse, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Berkshire Playhouse, MN Shakespeare Project, MN Fringe Festival, Huldufolk.

AMY MCDONALD (Ruth Condomine) has appeared at the Jungle in Rabbit Hole, Orange Flower Water, and The Pavilion. Locally, she has performed at The Illusion Theater, The History Theater, Mixed Blood, The Guthrie, Hidden Theater, the Cricket, Old Log Theater, the Playwrights’ Center, and Thirst Theater. In regional theaters, she has performed at Indiana Rep, The Sacramento Theater Company, Pennsylvania Center Stage, the Woodstock Theater Festival, the Caldwell Theater, Williamstown Theater Festival and Second Stage. Television credits include Guiding Light and As the World Turns and the film Joe Somebody. She holds an MFA from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts.

KATE EIFRIG (Elvira Condomine) last appeared at the Jungle in Recent Tragic Events. She has worked together with Joel Sass on Pericles, and the IVEY Award-winning one-woman show Nine Parts of Desire, both at the Guthrie, where she also recently played former First Lady Laura Bush in the world premiere of TINY Kushner. Kate has acted on many other Twin Cities stages, including Park Square, Ten Thousand Things, the Ordway and Eye of the Storm.

WENDY LEHR (Madam Arcati) is best known in the Twin Cities for her long association with Children’s Theater Company. She was a member of the Resident Acting Ensemble from 1966-1986 and Associate Artistic Director and Director of Education from 1990-1998. She has been seen on many stages locally—The Jungle Theater (A Delicate Balance, Bone Dry, House of Blue Leaves, The Gin Game), The Guthrie Theater (A Christmas Carol), Theatre de la Jeune Lune (Lulu, Lettice and Lovage), Park Square Theatre (Mary Stuart, Noises Off!), The Great American History Theater and Chanhassen Dinner Theaters. Regionally, she has performed with the Arizona Theater Company, Lyric Opera Cleveland, Seaside Music Theater (FL), and Kansas City Repertory Theater. She has also directed productions for numerous companies including Park Square, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts and SteppingStone Theater.

SAM L. LANDMAN (Dr. Bradman) last worked with Joel Sass in Park Square’s production of Noises Off. Most recently, he was in the 2009 MN Fringe Festival play Buyer’s Remorse. He’s also appeared in numerous productions for theatre companies during their formative years: Girl Friday’s An Empty Plate At the Café Du Grand Boeuf, Our Town and The Skin of Our Teeth. Walking Shadow’s Caligula (which garnered him a “Best Supporting Actor of 2009” nod from Lavender magazine) and The American Pilot. He’s also worked at Theatre In the Round (Loot and Much Ado About Nothing), History Theatre (Axel & His Dog and Fireball) and Troupe America (How To Talk Minnesotan and A Closer Walk With Patsy Cline). His main focus is writing at this point, having started a comedy duo with Matthew Glover called Pommelhorse.

KIRBY BENNETT (Mrs. Bradman) is making her Jungle Theater debut. She has appeared at numerous local and regional theatres including productions at Park Square Theatre: The Left Hand Singing, The Triumph of Love, Noises Off!, The Last Night of Ballyhoo, and The Women; History Theatre: Peace Crimes; Yellow Tree Theatre: Sylvia; Minnesota Jewish Theatre: Chaim’s Love Song, The Triangle Factory Fire Project, The Magic Dreidels and Hanukkah Lights in the Big Sky; Paul Bunyan Playhouse: Twelfth Night, Steel Magnolias, and Bus Stop; and the Mary Worth Theatre Company: 16 Spells to Charm the Beast and The History of the Devil. Kirby is the founder of Girl Friday Productions, for which she produced and performed in their acclaimed productions of Thornton Wilder’s The Skin of Our Teeth in 2009 and Our Town (“Pioneer Press” Top Ten List for 2007).
GEORGINA STOYLES (Edith) is happy to be making her first appearance at the Jungle Theater. She was most recently seen as Sally Talley in Talley’s Folly at the New Court Theater, where she also appeared in Educating Rita and Godspell. Other regional credits include: Shakespeare’s Lovers & Fighters, Comedy of Errors and Romeo & Juliet at Nashville Shakespeare Festival; The Entertainer at Illinois Theatre Center; Playboy of the Western World at Steppenwolf Theatre and Long Wharf Theatre; King Lear and A Midsummer Night’s Dream at Ft. Worth Shakespeare in the Park; two seasons of A Christmas Carol at The Goodman Theatre; Macbeth at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre; The Mill on the Floss at Vitalist Theatre; Saved at Profiles Theatre; Charlie & the Chocolate Factory with ECT at the Athenaeum Theatre; A Night in the Ukraine and The Lion Who Wouldn’t at Callaway Gardens Soap Box Theatre; and The Cricket on the Hearth, All’s Well that Ends Well, The Two Noble Kinsmen, and Romeo & Juliet with The Shakespeare Project.