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## Blithe Spirit: an inside look at the scenic design process

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*Blithe Spirit: An Inside Look at the Scenic Design Process*

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Departmental Honors Thesis

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Department of Theatre

Examination Date: 03/28/2024

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## **Introduction**

### Purpose of Scenic Design

Through careful consideration of the set, lighting, sound, and other elements, theatre designers have the power to transport viewers to different time periods, locations, and emotional states. By manipulating visual and auditory cues, designers can influence perception and guide audience interpretation of the narrative. Set design, which is my area of interest, helps flesh out the world of the play and create an environment for the actors to explore. The set designer acts as an interior architect, coming up with the design itself and making the drafting to inform the carpenters. After that, they often assist in the creation of the set and props through painting and other artistic means. Creating a world that is visually interesting and true to the story, without distracting from the story itself or the actors telling it, is a fine line theatre designers must walk to be successful. I believe incorporating dynamic scenic design into a show is important for establishing mood and atmosphere. In my opinion, a strong design will be immersive, drawing the audience further into the world of the play and helping develop the exposition of the story.

To establish mood and atmosphere appropriately, the scenic designer must carefully choose artistic elements such as color, texture, shape, and form. The overall mood of a piece becomes clear through close reading of the text. Some shows are meant to entertain, some to make the audience cry, some to make the viewer question the world around them. All these narratives will evoke different emotions. By selecting elements best befitting the show, theatre artists can create an atmosphere that best reflects the mood. Creating an immersive set with the appropriate atmosphere will bring the audience into the world of the story and support the actors in their exploration of that world. The set can also establish background for the plot and the characters, allowing audiences to further grasp the overarching themes of a narrative.

## My Personal Interest and Development as a Designer

The world of theatre opened itself up to me at the ripe old age of 16. Unbeknownst to me, deciding to take Introduction to Theatre as my fine arts class credit in high school would have a ripple effect on my life I could not have imagined. Growing up, I never considered myself a creative person because visual arts did not “come naturally” to me, so I wrote those hobbies off for those with natural talent like my younger sister. Thanks to the encouragement of said sister, though, I found myself sitting in that Introduction to Theatre class in my junior year of high school, learning that there was much more to theatre than meets the eye. With my sister’s support I learned all theatre has to offer, and with my love of a great story, it was not long before I was completely enthralled with the world behind the grand drape.

Even with my newfound interest in theatre, it still took me a while to find my creative footing. My skills were much more rooted in leadership, organization, and communication, so I quickly found myself on the theatrical management side of things. Being backstage at first and then eventually working my way up the production ladder taught me a lot about how all the pieces of a theatrical production fit together like a puzzle.

Collaboration is the aspect of theatre I love first and foremost. Every actor, designer, and director who is part of a production makes that iteration of the piece unique, which is why audiences can laugh and cry at the same shows over and over again. Another reason why I love theatre as a tool is its ability to evoke empathy. Studying theatre history shows just how powerful and political theatre is. When theatre artists have an audience captive with a story, they can have the ability to change their minds and their hearts. Through storytelling, actors bring characters to life on stage, allowing audiences to connect with their struggles, triumphs, and emotions. This connection fosters understanding and compassion among individuals from different backgrounds

or perspectives. By witnessing the experiences of others through theatre, both artists and audiences are more likely to question their own biases and prejudices. These aspects and capabilities of theatre are what motivate me to create.

As I continued studying theatre in college, I found a passion for design that outshone my interest in management. Envisioning the environment of a show allows me to express my ideas and art in new ways, bolstered by meticulous research and planning. The fast-cycling nature of theatre means that I am always entertained by new challenges. The opportunity to work with new collaborators fosters my inspiration. When I had the opportunity to work on UTC's production of *Blithe Spirit*, I jumped at the chance to learn more about the inner workings of the design process.

### History of *Blithe Spirit*

*Blithe Spirit*, written by Noël Coward, made its debut on London's West End and Broadway in 1941. The three-act farce follows novelist Charles Condomine, who invites a medium to his house to host a seance as research for his next book. The medium, Madame Arcati, accidentally summons the spirit of Charles' deceased first wife, Elvira. Chaos ensues as Elvira wreaks havoc on Charles' marriage to his second wife, Ruth. The enduring popularity of this play comes from Coward's quippy dialogue and jokes.

The play was an instant hit in London with audiences and critics alike, running for nearly 2,000 performances and solidifying Coward's reputation as a great playwright. *Blithe Spirit* also enjoyed success on Broadway, where it ran for nearly 650 performances and won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Foreign Play ("Award Winning Play Scripts in Waldo Library: New York Drama Critics' Circle Award Winners 1935-1950"). The show was revived in

both Europe and America several times, and two separate movies were produced based on the script (Henderson).

Though some of the humor gets missed by contemporary audiences, the show exists as a snapshot of comedy post-World War II as Europe reckoned with immense destruction and devastation. For our theatre department's purposes, *Blithe Spirit*'s small cast and comedic nature made the show ideal for our first show of the 2023-2024 season.

### **Pre – Production Process**

We began initial design meetings for *Blithe Spirit* at the end of the Spring 2023 semester. These meetings were attended by director Steve Ray, lighting designer and technical director Alex Miller-Long, costume designer Andrew Haueter, head scenic designer Emma Hoffbauer and me, assistant scenic designer.

Prior to the first meeting we all read the script several times to gain a sense of what the show is about and what it requires. For most theatre artists, the first read-through is for enjoyment. I find experiencing the show without immediately analyzing it allows me to identify key elements and themes. What is the experience that the story is trying to convey? What emotions does the plot bring forth in the characters, and in turn, what emotions are pulled out of you? To me it is essential to remember that most people viewing the show are only going to see it once, and depending on the show, most audience members are probably unfamiliar with the source material. Unlike those of us who are part of the process, who will read the script and see the show develop over time, the audience responds to the show after one viewing. Therefore, gleaned what is essential to the story allows me to communicate those elements effectively.

To me, theatrical design is where creativity and practicality meet, and as a designer I think I must factor in both to create a strong set design. The bulk of a design is arguably the drafting, set pieces, dressing, and other scenic elements. However, a strong design will also consider the atmosphere and mood of the piece the theatre artists are trying to represent. For me, this requires an initial read-through to feel the show out firsthand before getting into the more detailed elements of the design. The first read through also allows me to see what elements might get lost or what may be confusing to help the audience understand the show to the fullest. The second, third, and following read-throughs are for that purpose; to identify the needs of the show pragmatically. Each designer creates a script breakdown where they list the needs of the show pertaining to their respective fields. In our case as scenic designers, this meant labeling the location, furniture, and properties needs in an easily accessible way. Emma and I both created spreadsheets which we later merged to list those needs. My breakdown is shown in image 1 below.

Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward						
PAGE	ACT/SCENE	LOCATION	CHARACTERS	NEEDS	NOTES	QUESTIONS
1	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	Edith	A large tray of cocktail things		
1	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	Edith	Drinks table		
1	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	N/A	Piano		
2	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	N/A	Fireplace		
2	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	N/A	Window	Needs to be functional so charcters can open it and come through it	
2	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	N/A	Sofa		
2	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	Edith	Ice bucket		
2	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	Edith, Charles	Charles' cigarette case	Mentioned on page 2, brought in on page 3	Cigarettes smokable?
3	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	Charles, Ruth	2 dry martinis		Consumable?
6	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	N/A	Armchair		
6	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	N/A	Bell	Must be loud enough for actors and audience to hear	
7	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	N/A	Pouffe		
8	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	Charles	Cocktail		Consumable?
Act	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	Madame Arcati	Bike	Mentioned but not necessairly seen	Does it need to be seen?
9	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	Madame Arcati	Bush	Mentioned but not necessairly seen	Does it need to be seen?
10	Act 1/Scene 1	Living room	Madame Arcati, Charles	Dry martini	Must be refillable	Consumable?
12	Act 1/Scene 2	Dining room	All		Characters enter but might not need to be seen fully	Does it need to be seen?
12	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Ruth, Mrs. Bradman, Madame Arcati	Coffee		
14	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Edith	Tray of drinks	Enough for each character	
14	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Ruth	Coffee cup, vase	On table	
14	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Ruth	Cigarette box and ash tray		
14	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Charles, Mr. Bradman	Cigars		Smokeable?
15	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	N/A	Gramophone	Needs to be functional	
17	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	All	Séance table	Must fit all the characters	How will the table shake and fall over?
17	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Madame Arcati	Records	One needs to play the song 'Always'	
19	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Madame Arcati	Piano stool		
22	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Madame Arcati, Ruth	Brandy and a glass for it		Consumable?
23	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Charles	Cigarette and lighter		Smokeable?
26	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Ruth	Cigarette and lighter		Smokeable?
26	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Charles	Whiskey and soda	Glass must be breakable	Consumable?
27	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Charles, Ruth	Brandy and a glass for it		Consumable?
28	Act 1/Scene 2	Living room	Charles, Ruth	Brandy and a glass for it		Consumable?
32	Act 2/Scene 1	Living room	N/A	Breakfast table		
32	Act 2/Scene 1	Living room	Ruth	The Times' newspaper		
32	Act 2/Scene 1	Living room	Edith	Bacon, eggs, and toast		Consumable?
34	Act 2/Scene 1	Living room	Charles	Cigarette		Smokeable?
39	Act 2/Scene 1	Living room	Elvira	Gray roses, zinnias, and a vase	"The roses are as grey as the rest of her [Elvira]"	
42	Act 2/Scene 1	Living room	Elvira	Bowl of pansies		How will the bowl float in the air/be moved?
42	Act 2/Scene 1	Living room	Elvira	Chair	Must be light	How will the chair float?
43	Act 2/Scene 2	Living room	Elvira	Vase	Must be breakable	
44	Act 2/Scene 2	Living room	Ruth, Madame Arcati	Tea and tea set		Consumable?
46	Act 2/Scene 2	Living room	Madame Arcati	Notebook and bag		
49	Act 2/Scene 2	Living room	Ruth	Cigarette and ashtray		
54	Act 2/Scene 3	Living room	Ruth	Sherry		
62	Act 2/Scene 3	Living room	Charles	Telephone		
63	Act 3/Scene 1	Living room	Charles	Coffee, cigarette, novel		Consumable?
63	Act 3/Scene 1	Living room	N/A	Reading lamp		
65	Act 3/Scene 1	Living room	Madame Arcati	Piece of paper, bag	Formula copied out of <i>Witchcraft and its Byways</i>	
71	Act 3/Scene 1	Living room/dining room	Madame Arcati	Salt and pepper		Consumable?
77	Act 3/Scene 2	Living room	Madame Arcati	Notebook and bag		
78	Act 3/Scene 2	Living room	Madame Arcati	Sandwich		Consumable?
78	Act 3/Scene 2	Living room	Charles	Whiskey and soda		Consumable?
79	Act 3/Scene 2	Living room	Charles, Madame Arcati	Crystal (ball?)	May have been mentioned previously but I missed it	
80	Act 3/Scene 2	Living room	Madame Arcati	A bunch of garlic and birch branches		
85	Act 3/Scene 2	Living room	Madame Arcati	Sandwich		Consumable?
85	Act 3/Scene 2	Living room	N/A	Vase	Must be able to break	How will it break?
85	Act 3/Scene 2	Living room	N/A	Picture	Must be able to fall	How will it fall?
85	Act 3/Scene 2	Living room	N/A	Clock	Clock strikes 18	

Image 1



Later, we broke down This spreadsheet would later be broken down further into different documents, namely the props list and research book, to focus on specific aspects of the design rather than just having this master list. This initial list helped us have a starting place for the design.

### Preliminary Research

When creating any sort of design for theatre, I find research is essential. Everything in design is a choice – regardless of how small or insignificant something may seem. In my opinion, an effective design will have strong research to back up the choices made. This requires the designer to complete both historical and conceptual research which later stems into the finer details such as color, texture, and specific architectural details.

In the case of *Blithe Spirit*, a play set in 1940s England, there was plenty of fodder for specific historical research. After reading through the script several times and identifying the needs of the show, Emma and I cultivated a large swath of inspirational research. I appreciated that both of us did this work on our own at first because it allowed us to have unique ideas when we met prior to the first design meeting. Together, after bringing our respective research images, we came up with a general idea of what elements, colors, furniture, décor that we wanted to have in the design.

Initially, Emma and I envisioned an English cottage – cluttered, colorful, and homely. We came up with some images and colors leaning towards this idea, but upon talking with our director, Steve, he made strong points for the house to be grander. From his point of view, the cottage-style makes sense with Charles' second wife, Ruth, in mind. Her “shabby-chic” designs are criticized by Elvira, the first wife, bringing up an important point – the house first belonged

to her, not Ruth. Therefore, the majority of the set itself should be indicative of Elvira's taste, and the set dressing and décor can be tailored to Ruth's style. Merging Elvira's grandeur and Ruth's domestic sensibilities creates a world that is both welcoming and imposing.

This then leads us to questions specific to the play's time period. The show is set in 1940s England, so there are several points to consider. The house should be largely decorated in Elvira's style; this brings up trends from the 1930s. Then one must also consider British and European culture regarding their homes and furniture. Unlike the ever-changing décor styles and desire to "keep up with the Jones'" we see in America, those across the pond pass on estates and heirloom pieces for generations. The way a home looks on the inside, particularly big design elements such as the walls, floors, and molding, rarely changes significantly. Having this understanding is key to creating an accurate depiction of the world. Simply looking at the prescribed time period without keeping these factors in mind would tempt me to only research the 1940s. Though a set cultivated from that research would certainly look antique to us, it would, ironically, be modern for its time.

After taking Steve's thoughts regarding era into consideration, Emma plated<sup>1</sup> our newly adjusted research, which we then presented to the rest of the design team. These plates are found in images 2 and 3. After concurring with the other designers and Steve about what should inspire the set, Emma and I moved forward with our ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> Plated – arranged images on a large document (typically 11x17") to display research for other the director and other designers



UTC  
1C

SCENIC DESIGN: EMMA LAINE HOFFBAUER  
ASST. DESIGN: ABBY GRACEY  
DIRECTOR: STEVE RAY  
PRODUCTION: UTC THEATRE FALL 2022

## INITIAL INSPIRATIONS

## BL|THE SP|RT



UTC  
1C

SCENIC DESIGN: EMMA LAINE HOFFBAUER  
ASST. DESIGN: ABBY GRACEY  
DIRECTOR: STEVE RAY  
PRODUCTION: UTC THEATRE FALL 2022

## ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

## BL|THE SP|RT





UTC  
1c

SCENIC DESIGN: EMMA LAINE HOFFBAUER  
ASST. DESIGN: ABBY GRACEY  
DIRECTOR: STEVE RAY  
PRODUCTION: UTC THEATRE FALL 2022

FURNITURE

BL|THE SP|RT

Image 3

### Initial Fireplace Research and Renderings

My personal contribution to the sketching, design, and drafting was the fireplace prominently featured in the set. Emma gave me the dimensions needed, but the rest of the design was up to me. In our preliminary research we saw a myriad of potential designs, all of which a fireplace was central to. Some were grand, eye-catching pieces, while others blended in

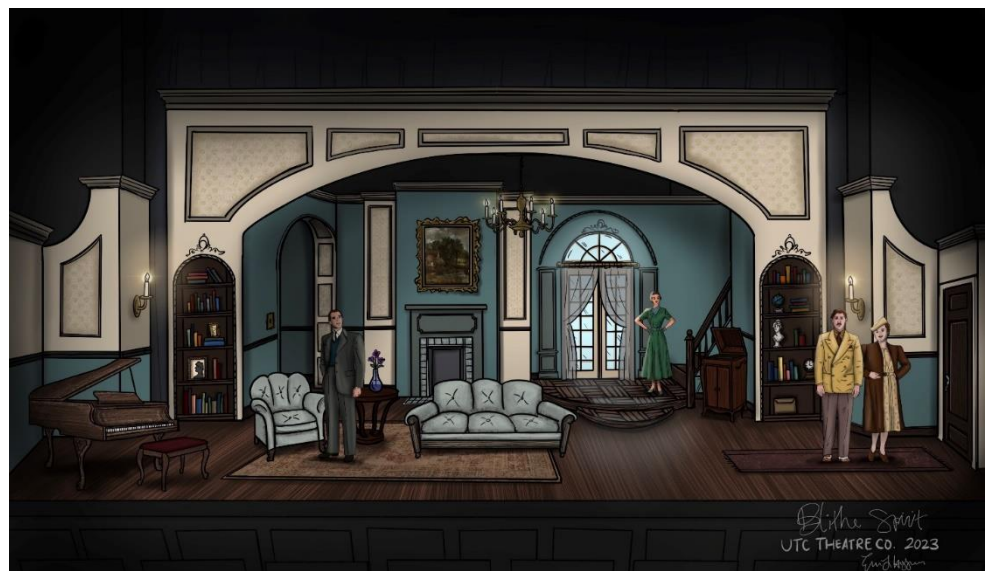
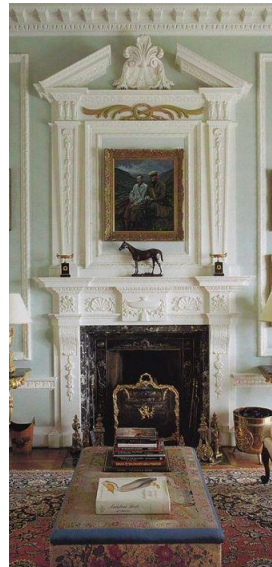


Image 4

seamlessly with paneling and wallpaper. Emma did a few initial renderings of the set, leaving a general fireplace so I knew where it would fit in the set. Through her renderings I was able to glean what the rest of the design might look like, particularly focusing on the colors and textures used. The first drawing is pictured in image 4, produced in April.

When looking at the research, I was personally taken with tiles surrounding the firebox, which adds texture. Emma originally played with the idea of making the fireplace a darker version of the wall color, but I knew I wanted the majority of the fireplace to be wood, matching the wood floors and adding contrast to the wall. However, I experimented with several possible designs, combining various elements Emma had included to see what would best tie everything together. I personally used SketchUp to create my renderings because working on my computer comes more naturally to me. I prefer digital modelling because I can easily be accurate in my measurements. Though tedious, being exact from the beginning allows me to truly visualize what I am designing. It also helps me later on once I move to drafting, as I can often copy and paste measurements I have already determined during this part of the process. Some examples of my specific fireplace research that inspired my design can be found below.

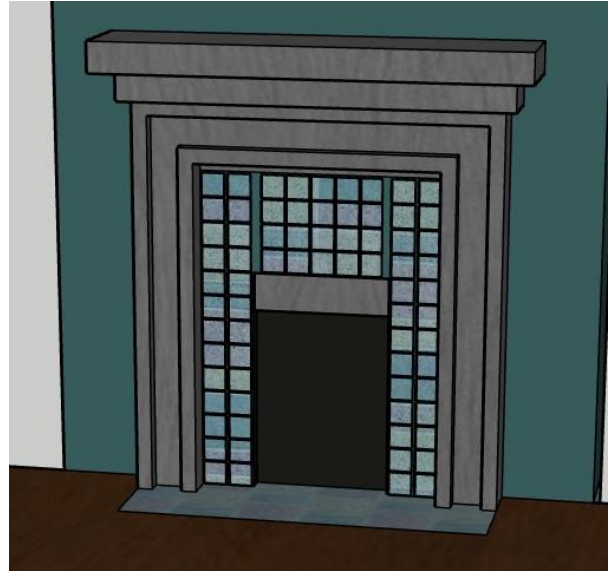




This research helped me ascertain certain elements of the fireplace I wanted to include. Columns, corbels, and appliques were prevalent in all of my examples. Some fireplaces also had grander hearths, another element I later included to add diversity to my design. The grate found in my research contributed to our decision to include one in our set as well, though it was not until tech week<sup>2</sup> that this was added.



*Image 8*



*Image 5*



*Image 7*



*Image 6*

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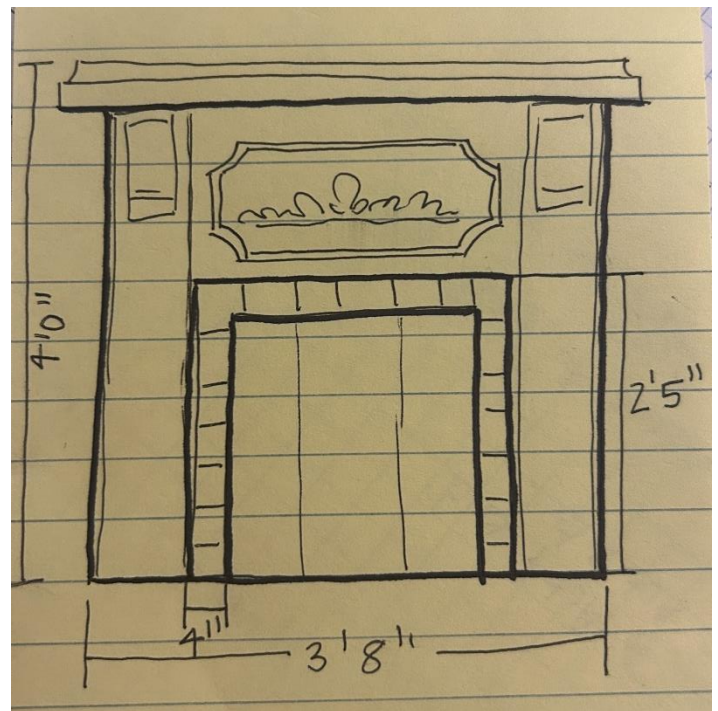
<sup>2</sup> Tech week – the week right before a production opens. This is when all technical elements of a show, such as lighting, sound, costumes, and scenery, are fully incorporated into the production the actors have been rehearsing separately. This is when designers, technicians, and performers work out any issues and finish anything that has not been completed, fully preparing the show to go up the following week.

I created four models for the fireplace, which are in images 5-8 above. I ended up using the fourth model in image 8 as my main design. For me, the combination of the dark wood used in the floors, juxtaposed against the tiles surrounding the firebox and marble of the hearth, creates a piece that is visually interesting and true to the world. However, even though I was following the dimensions given, the director determined the fireplace was disproportionate. Once again, this is why being accurate from the get-go is key; had I been more generalized, we would have realized the awkwardness of the model later in the process. Steve then gave us the new measurements, leading me to shrink the overall height.

### Fireplace Revisions and Final Model

A quick sketch of the adjustments, seen in image 9 allowed me to visualize the new proportions of the fireplace.

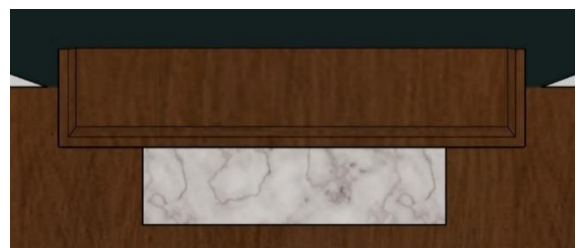
In shrinking the height, I adjusted the space between the firebox and mantel, as well as how many tiles were placed. I added a column base known as a plinth to the area bordering the firebox, which gave the composition of the fireplace a more eye-catching look. I kept the corbels and appliques I put in my first model. I then adjusted my model in SketchUp, finalizing what the design would look like in real life and what I would be drafting. See images 10 – 13 below.



*Image 9*



*Image 11*



*Image 10*



Image 13



Image 12

### Fireplace Drafting

*Blithe Spirit* was a pretty large set to draft. Emma, being the head scenic designer, drafted the majority of the design. However, it was up to me to draft the fireplace. This was an interesting challenge for me because even though I have drafted theoretical sets before, I have never drafted something that was actually going to be built. This meant my work had to be scrupulously accurate and easy to understand for everyone involved. Emma and Alex, our technical director, work in the computer-aided drafting program Vectorworks, so that is the software I used as well. Thankfully I knew I would be using that program, so I took Emma's scenic design class in preparation for this project the year before. I learned the basics of Vectorworks through that class, which helped significantly when working over the summer on the drafting for *Blithe Spirit*. Something else that helped me to be meticulous and accurate was my own personal experience working in the scene shop throughout college. As one of the people actually building sets throughout school, I learned that good, clear drafting is essential for efficiency and ease. Keeping my foundational skills and experience in mind, I carefully created my drafting, which is pictured in image 14 below.



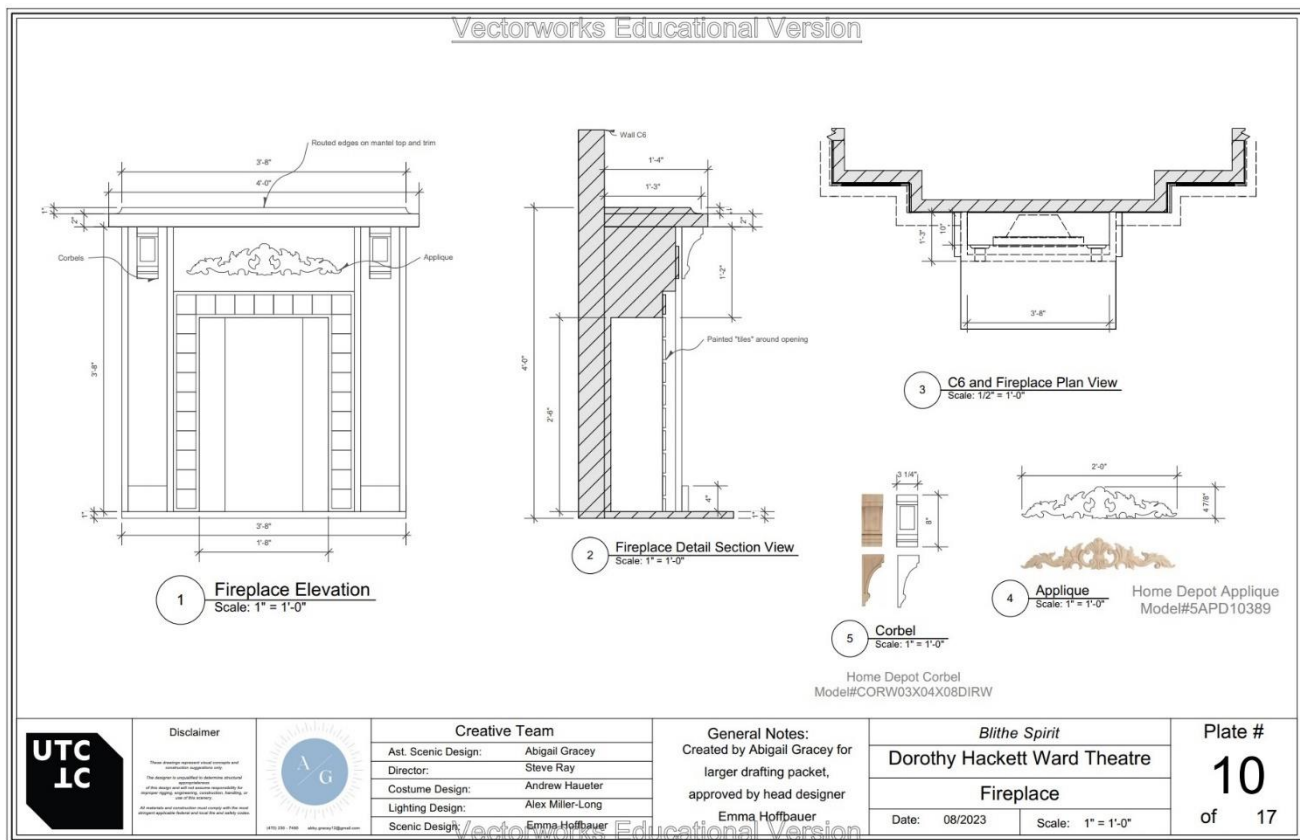


Image 14

For me, learning drafting and design programs is very much like learning a new language. You learn the basic tools that help you create sentences, general vocabulary, and helpful phrases to get by. But the true learning of the language comes through lived experience and situations you find yourself in that require new, specific vocabulary and grammar. Each show we work on has individual needs that teach us new ways of thinking and problem solving.

For *Blithe Spirit*, the most challenging part of the drafting for me was understanding my section<sup>3</sup> view. Elevations<sup>4</sup> and plan<sup>5</sup> views are relatively easy for me to grasp, but the fireplace in particular confused me because of the hole in the middle where the firebox is. I had to go back and forth with Emma several times before I understood what we are “cutting through” and what

<sup>3</sup> Section view – a view which shows interior construction of a set/set piece by slicing the design in half. This view is marked by crossed lines known as hatching on the drafting plate.

<sup>4</sup> Elevation view – a head-on front view of a set/set piece.

<sup>5</sup> Plan view – a top-down or “birds-eye view” of a set/set piece.

needed to be hatched<sup>6</sup> in my drafting. I also learned how to draft small, detailed pieces such as the corbels and applique used. I enjoyed doing that because I never knew how designers could be so precise using a drafting program based in vectors rather than pixels. Online I found the actual corbels and applique we would use. I then inserted the item image from the store website into Vectorworks and traced the drafting over it. This gave me drafting that not only mirrored what the corbels and applique looked like but also gave me an accurate sense of proportion and placement on the fireplace. Every show has individual needs that require us to learn new techniques. I know that I have barely scratched the surface of Vectorworks, especially considering I have only used the 2D capabilities, but I look forward to learning more in my future projects.

### Properties List and Book

Using the overall scenic breakdown Emma and I created in image 1 early in the process, we identified what properties the show required. This properties list was created in Excel where each prop could be identified with specific notes. It was up to me to come up with the props research book based on the props list, in which we would gather inspiration for each item. Though the process was admittedly tedious given that we had over 80 pieces of props and set dressing to find, I appreciate being precise and intentional in every aspect of a design. The props book was also helpful because it allowed us to delegate finding these items to my peers by providing specific visuals. This book and the accompanying list have been condensed and can be found in appendices A and B for reference.

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<sup>6</sup> Hatching – crossed lines on drafting plates which indicate a piece has been “cut through” to show the inner workings of the item.

Once we had the props book at our disposal, we began shopping and gathering items. Steve, Emma, and I searched through several antique stores over the summer in addition to scouring the internet and Facebook Marketplace. Once we went back to school in the fall, we searched our various props storage rooms for the rest.

There were several consumables used throughout the show, namely the alcohol the characters drink and cigarettes they smoke. Since our school had limitations on what kind of fake cigarette we could use, me and several other students made “cigarettes” out of paper, glue, and powdered sugar. In my opinion they were effective for this show because it took place on a proscenium stage where the space is less intimate. It was a great experience learning how to make the props and deal with consumables.

## **Production Process**

### Production Work

Once we returned to school in Fall of 2023 we quickly began working on the set for *Blithe Spirit*. My assigned shop for production work was Paint and Props, which meant working directly with Emma on a near-daily basis. This was convenient for both of us, I believe, because I gained lots of hands-on experience while also helping Emma with my knowledge of the design and what needed to be done. Emma



*Image 15*

would determine what we needed to work on each day, and often times would delegate tasks to

me that I would complete with the help of my fellow students. This included projects such as painting the set, finding props, organizing items, and touching up details as the process went on. I personally took on some of the projects that required a bit more skill than some of the underclassmen had, simply due to me being a senior and having a few years on them. This included hand-mixing colors for scumbling<sup>7</sup> the fireplace “tiles”, carefully rolling paint on stencils to create wallpaper, spattering walls, and more. Some process pictures are included in images 15 – 17.



*Image 16*



*Image 17*

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<sup>7</sup> Scumble(ing) – a paint technique used to place multiple colors on top of each other without fully mixing them together, allowing both to shine through.

## Technical Week

Tech week began at the end of September. Each night I would be in attendance with Emma. There I would take notes as the two of us and our director, Steve, would notice scenic elements that needed to be finished or addressed. We would also add any notes left by the stage manager on the rehearsal reports sent out. Then the next day in the shop we would go through the list and check things off as we completed them. As stressful as tech week is for everyone and how intimidating the to-do list becomes, it was immensely satisfying to see the design become more and more complete. An example of what our lists looked like can be found in image 18.

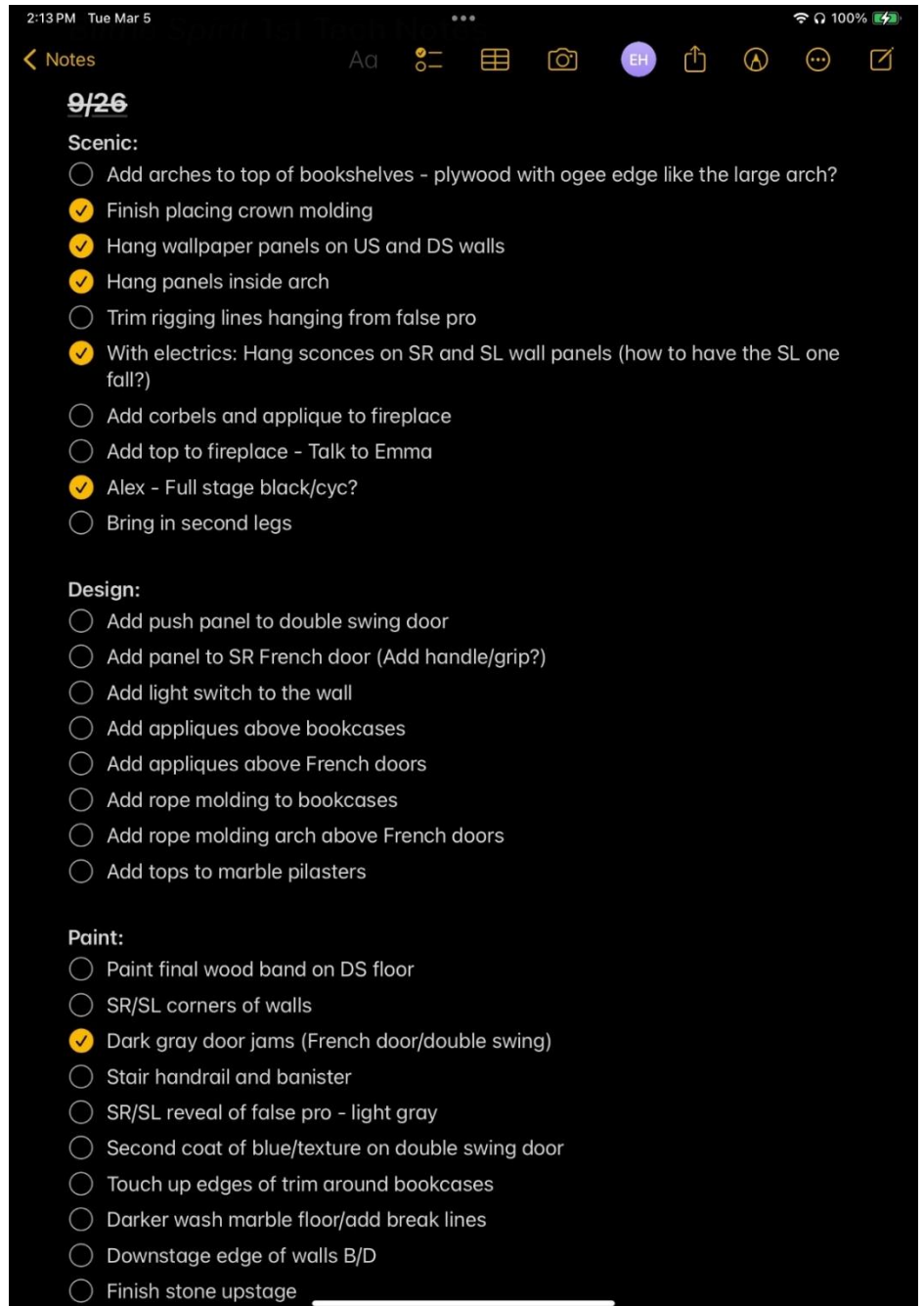


Image 18



## Final Production Photos

*Blithe Spirit* opened at the beginning of October and ran for six performances. Production photos are in images 19 – 21 below.



*Image 20*



*Image 19*



*Image 21*

## Reflection and Analysis

Getting to work on *Blithe Spirit* was a wonderful learning experience. I have made several theoretical designs over the years in my classes, but this was the first time my work actually made it onstage. Even though we as theatre artists love to work on different pieces, that also means not every show will be our favorite. Luckily for me, I got to participate in a production that I actually enjoyed and cultivated a world I would not mind being in myself. Seeing the show develop over months of effort was very rewarding because I knew just how much was going on behind the scenes.

The opportunity to attend design meetings throughout the process taught me how to engage with my mentors through meaningful discussion and critique. Taking the script analysis and research me and Emma conducted and translating that into practical paperwork showed me how to best facilitate communication between design team and shop crew. Working on both the design team and on the production crew allowed me to identify issues and deal with them pragmatically. Developing my fireplace design and drafting the piece helped me become more efficient in Vectorworks and in the shop. Creating documents such as the props research book and using them in the shop taught me how to be clear and concise so I could delegate tasks to my peers more easily. When attending technical rehearsals, I learned how to respond to scenic problems promptly and effectively while also taking imposing deadlines into consideration. Finally seeing the show come to fruition and actors engage in the world we created has only further cemented my love of scenic design and the power that it holds. I look forward to continuing my education through further schooling and professional work as I continue my journey as a theatre artist.

## Appendix A

### Properties List

#### *Blithe Spirit* Prop List

Venue: Ward Theatre					Director: Steve Ray	
Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer					Asst. Designer: Abby Gracey	
Prop #	Act/Scene	Pg. #	Classification	Prop	Qty.	Description
		(Reference)	(Color code)	(name)	(# of props)	(location, paint, function, special needs, who uses it?)
1	Act 1/Scene 1	1	Hand props	Cocktail Tray	1	Carried in by Edith at top of show, must be easy to carry and small enough to set on drinks table
2	Act 1/Scene 1	1	Furniture	Drink Cart/Table	1	Small table, ore drink cart on wheels? that can fit the drinks tray
3	Act 1/Scene 1	1	Furniture	Piano	1	Baby grand piano, probably not played during the show
4	Act 1/Scene 1	1	Practicals	Chandelier	1	Hanging crystal chandelier
5	Act 1/Scene 1	1	Practicals	Wall Sconces	2	Practical sconces on DS walls
6	Act 1/Scene 1	1	Set Dressing	Curtains	2	Full-length window curtains, sheer and lightweight
7	Act 1/Scene 1	2	Furniture	Fireplace Mantel	1	Mantel on fireplace, used for display of props and set-dressing
8	Act 1/Scene 1	2	Furniture	Sofa	1	Antique, possibly neutral color upholstery and carved wood, can it match the armchair?
9	Act 1/Scene 1	2	Hand props	Ice bucket	1	Brought in by Edith
10	Act 1/Scene 1	2	Hand props	Charles' cigarette case	1	1940's men's cigarette case
11	Act 1/Scene 1	2	Consumables	Dry martinis	#	"gin and vermouth" water in 2 containers, drunk by Charles, Ruth, The Bradmans and Arcati
12	Act 1/Scene 1	2	Consumables	Martini glasses	6	Martini glasses
13	Act 1/Scene 1	2	Hand props	Olives or Lemon twist	few	Martini garnish
14	Act 1/Scene 1	2	Hand props	Cigarette box	1	vintage (wooden?) cigarette box from 1940's
15	Act 1/Scene 1	2	Consumables	Cigarettes - Ruth	#	women's slim cigarettes - on holder?
16	Act 1/Scene 1	6	Furniture	Armchair	1	Victorian style? Possibly matches Sofa
17	Act 1/Scene 1	6	Hand props	Bell	1	Might just be a sound cue instead
18	Act 1/Scene 1	7	Furniture	Pouffe / Ottoman	1	Small pouffe stool or ottoman for a person to sit?
19	Act 1/Scene 1	8	Set Dressing	Cocktail liquor bottle	#	on the bar cart, gin/vodka/whiskey
20	Act 1/Scene 1	8	Hand props	Glasses - various cocktail	#	on the bar cart, misc. kinds of glassware for actors to drink out of
21	Act 1/Scene 1	10	Furniture	Side Chair	1	Decorative side chair near the back wall or proscenium?
22	Act 1/Scene 2	12	Hand props	Coffee cups	3	Drank by Madame Arcati, Ruth, Mrs. Bradman
23	Act 1/Scene 2	12	Consumables	Tea or dark liquid "Coffee"	#	Coffee for the women drinking out of coffee cups
24	Act 1/Scene 2	14	Consumables	Tray & drink glasses	6	Same tray from top of show? 6 matching glasses/cups
25	Act 1/Scene 2	14	Set Dressing	Rug - Large Area	1	Large area rug - 10x12?
26	Act 1/Scene 2	14	Furniture	Coffee table	1	Small rectangular wooden coffee table
27	Act 1/Scene 2	14	Set Dressing	Vase	1	Decorative vase (with flowers inside?), on the coffee or side table
28	Act 1/Scene 2	14	Hand props	Ashtray	1	Decorative 1940's ashtray
29	Act 1/Scene 2	14	Consumables	Cigars	2	Used by Charles and Mr. Bradman, smokeable?
30	Act 1/Scene 2	15	Furniture	Side Table	1	Small side table - mistaken for the séance table, by the piano or against a wall?
31	Act 1/Scene 2	15	Furniture	Gramophone	1	Electric gramophone table and record rack
32	Act 1/Scene 2	17, 32	Furniture	Séance/Breakfast table / 2 chairs	3	Small round table, with a fold down leaf? to use for séance and 2 matching chairs, set for breakfast later
33	Act 1/Scene 2	17	Set Dressing	Rug - Circle	1	Round or accent rug, under the side table?
34	Act 1/Scene 2	17	Set Dressing	1940s Records in Sleeves	#	Records in the gramophone cabinet
35	Act 1/Scene 2	17	Hand props	Brahms and Rachmaninoff records	2	Records for Brahms and Rachmaninoff music, named by Arcati specifically
36	Act 1/Scene 2	17	Hand props	Loose records	#	One of the records needs to be <i>Always by Irving Berlin</i>
37	Act 1/Scene 2	18	Furniture	Piano stool	1	Round piano stool, used by Madame Arcati
38	Act 1/Scene 2	18	Set Dressing	Light switch	1	Light switch panel on the archway wall, "functional" switch for Arcati
39	Act 1/Scene 2	22, 27	Consumables	Tea? for Brandy liquor	1	for Arcati after the trance, in a glass from the cart, also for Charles after seeing Elvira
40	Act 1/Scene 2	23, 34	Consumables	Cigarettes - Charles	1	Men's cigarettes 1940's
41	Act 1/Scene 2	26	Consumables	Whiskey and soda drink & glass	1	Glass is dropped on the carpet, breakable?
42	Act 1/Scene 2	26	Set Dressing	Fireplace grating and tools	2	Cast iron or metal fireplace grate and tools holder
43	Act 1/Scene 2	26	Set Dressing	Fire and logs	1	Fire in the fireplace - lighting effect in logs?
44	Act 2/Scene 1	32	Set Dressing	Breakfast setting	#	Empty plate and glass, and silverware (Ruth has already eaten), glass and silverware for Charles
45	Act 2/Scene 1	32	Hand props	The Times' newspaper	1	Read by Ruth, 1940's newspaper, multiple pages
46	Act 2/Scene 1	32	Hand props	Bacon, eggs, toast	2	Brought in by Edith, plate with fake breakfast, never eaten by Charles
47	Act 1/Scene 1	36	Hand props	Tray	1	Tray for Edith to clear dishes
48	Act 2/Scene 1	37	Set Dressing	Tablecloth	1	Maybe lace or embroidered linen? tablecloth set for breakfast, folded by Ruth
49	Act 2/Scene 1	39	Furniture	Writing desk / hall table	1	Antique wooden desk or hall table, possibly with a chair
50	Act 2/Scene 1	39	Set Dressing	Bouquet of gray roses	1	"The roses are as grey as the rest of her (Elvira)"
51	Act 2/Scene 1	39	Set Dressing	Vase of zinnias (or other flowers)	1	On the side table or desk
52	Act 2/Scene 1	42	Hand props	Bowl of pansies	1	Decorative bowl of arranged flowers, on the mantelpiece
53	Act 2/Scene 2	43	Set Dressing	"Expensive" Vase	1	Breakable, by Elvira end of Act 2/Scene 2
54	Act 2/Scene 2	44	Hand props	China tea set on tray	1	Set on the coffee table - Tea pot and tea cups, sugar cubes
55	Act 2/Scene 2	44	Consumables	Tea in tea pot	#	consumed by Ruth and Arcati
56	Act 2/Scene 2	44	Hand props	Tray of tea sandwiches	1	Tray or plate of various tea sandwiches
57	Act 2/Scene 2	44, 78	Consumables	Cucumber sandwich	#	Edible cucumber sandwiches
58	Act 2/Scene 1	46	Costumes	Bag / purse	1	for Madame Arcati, shoulder bag?
59	Act 2/Scene 2	46	Hand props	Notebook and pen	1	Used by Madame Arcati
60	Act 2/Scene 2	49	Consumables	Cigarette and ashtray	1	Used by Ruth
61	Act 2/Scene 3	54	Hand props	Bottle of Sherry	1	on the drink cart, used by Ruth
62	Act 2/Scene 3	56	Costumes	Arm sling	1	For Charles' sprained arm
63	Act 2/Scene 3	60	Set Dressing	Table Centre	1	"hideous" Ruth has been "sewing away at it" present for Ruth's mother



64	Act 2/Scene 3	60	Set Dressing	Piano shawl	1	"awful" "sent to us from Burma" crochet or lace runner to drape over piano
65	Act 2/Scene 3	62	Hand props	Telephone	1	1930's rotary phone, on one of the tables, by the door?
66	Act 3/Scene 1	63	Costumes	Mourning band	1	Arm band of mourning for Charles
67	Act 3/Scene 1	63	Hand props	Novel	1	Used by Charles
68	Act 3/Scene 1	63	Practicals	Reading/ side lamp	1 or 2	On one of the side tables, decorative practical lamp
69	Act 3/Scene 1	65	Hand props	Piece of paper	1	Formula copied out of <i>Witchcraft and its Byways</i> , used by Madame Arcati
70	Act 3/Scene 1	71	Hand props	Salt and pepper	1	From the dining room
71	Act 3/Scene 1	77	Costumes	Glasses	1	Madame Arcati's from her bag
72	Act 3/Scene 1	72	Set Dressing	Snapdragon flowers	#	in a vase
73	Act 3/Scene 2	75	Hand props	plate of sandwiches	1	fake sandwiches on the table
74	Act 3/Scene 2	75	Set Dressing	Birch branches and evergreens	#	strewn around the room
75	Act 3/Scene 2	75	Set Dressing	Playing cards	1	1 pack of vintage playing cards
76	Act 3/Scene 2	75	Set Dressing	Ouija board	1	on the table
77	Act 3/Scene 2	75	Set Dressing	Empty beer mugs	2	on the table, messy
78	Act 3/Scene 2	78	Consumables	Whiskey and soda drink	1	
79	Act 3/Scene 2	79	Hand props	Crystal ball	1	Crystal ball used by Charles and Madame Arcati
80	Act 3/Scene 2	80	Hand props	Bunches of garlic	1	Used by Madame Arcati
81	Act 3/Scene 2	85	Set Dressing	Breakable vase or bust	1	Needs to fall off the mantelpiece and break
82	Act 3/Scene 2	85	Set Dressing	Picture Frame(s)	#	Frames on walls, various sizes
83	Act 3/Scene 2	85	Set Dressing	Mantel Clock or Grandfather clock	1	Clock strikes 16, sound effect
84			Set Dressing	Books	#	For the in-set bookshelves- old books, vintage
85			Set Dressing	Knick-nacks	#	Candlesticks, statues, etc various vintage knick-nacks for the bookshelves
86				Coat rack		
87				Small pocket notebook for Charles		

## Appendix B

### Properties Book

This book has been condensed with four pages placed onto one to save space.

Blithe Spirit Props Book

1

1. Cocktail tray — Carried in by Edith, must be small enough to set on drinks table



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

Blithe Spirit Props Book

2

2. Drinks cart/table



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

Blithe Spirit Props Book

3

3. Piano



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

Blithe Spirit Props Book

4

4. Chandelier



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

5. Wall sconces



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

7. Fireplace mantel



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

6. Curtains



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

8. Sofa



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

9. Ice bucket - Brought in by Edith



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

9. Dry martinis - "gin and vermouth" water, need #, drank by Charles, Ruth, the Bradmans, and Arcati



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

10. Charles' cigarette case



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

12. Martini glasses - 6 needed



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey



13. Olives or lemon twists — a few



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

14. Cigarette box



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

15. Cigarettes — Ruth



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

16. Armchair



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

## 17. Bell



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

## 18. Pouffe/Ottoman



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

## 19. Cocktail liquor bottle



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

## 20. Various cocktail glasses



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

21. Side chair



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

23. Tea/dark liquid for "coffee"



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

22. Coffee cups



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

24. Tray of drinks— Brought in by Edith, with enough drinks for 5, tray could be the same as #1?



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey



25. Rug – Large area



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

26. Coffee table



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

27. Vase



Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

28. Ashtray



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey



29. Cigars —Smoked by Charles and Mr. Bradman



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

31. Gramophone



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

30. Side Table



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

32. Breakfast table/2 chairs



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

33. Rug – circle



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

34. 1940s records in sleeves



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

35. Brahms and Rachmaninoff records



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

36. Loose records – one needs to be *Always* by Irving Berlin



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

37. Piano stool



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

38. Light switch



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

39. "Brandy" and a glass for it



Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

40. Cigarette and lighter – Charles



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey



41. Whiskey and soda—Glass must be breakable



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

43. Fire and logs



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

42. Fireplace grating and tools



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

44. Breakfast setting—Just one for Charles



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

## 45. The Times' Newspaper



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

## 35. Bacon, eggs, and toast –Not consumable, 2 plates needed



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

## 47. Tray



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

## 48. Tablecloth



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

49. Writing desk/hall table



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

50. Grey roses



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

51. Zinnias and a vase— Must blend in with Elvira



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

52. Bowl of Pansies — Must be light enough to float



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey



53. "Expensive" vase — Must be breakable, see #27

54. China set on tray



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

55. Tea in tea pot



56. Tray of tea sandwiches



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

57. Cucumber sandwiches – Must be edible



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

58. Bag/purse



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

59. Notebook and pen



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

60. Cigarette and ashtray – See #28/40

Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey



61. Bottle of sherry



62. Arm sling



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

63. Table centre – "hideous" ?

64. Piano shawl



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer: Abigail Gracey

65. Telephone— Used by Charles, telephone rings so must be functional/make noise

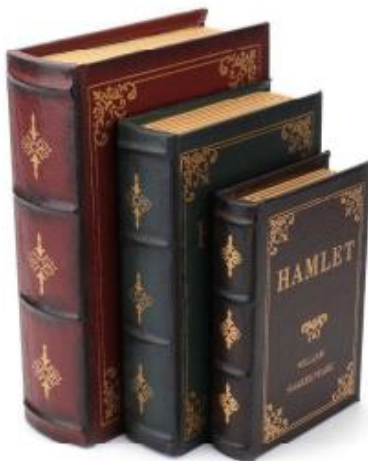


Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

66. Mourning band —talk to costumes

67. Novel —Used by Charles



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

68. Reading/side lamp



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer



Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

69. Piece of paper — Used by Madame Arcati, see #42 (paper from notebook and bag mentioned), formula on paper copied out of *Witchcraft and its Byways*

70. Salt and pepper



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

71. Glasses — see costumes

72. Snapdragon flowers



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

73. Sandwiches - Fake



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

75. Playing cards- 1 pack vintage



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

74. Birch branches



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

76. Ouija board



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey



77. Empty beer mugs



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

79. Crystal ball



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

78. Whiskey and soda drink – See #41

Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

80. Bunches of garlic



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

81. Vase – See #20, must be breakable

82. Picture – Must be able to fall, what size?

83. Clock – Strikes 16



Scenic Designer: Emma Hoffbauer

Assistant Scenic Designer : Abigail Gracey

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