



Smithsonian Associates

## Noël Coward, Master of All

*Dr. Rachel Franklin*

Thursday, November 14, 2024 – 6:45 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. ET

*'I'm an enormously talented man, and there's no use pretending that I'm not.'*

*'His wit punctures the world's pomposities. His melodies haunt the world's memories.'* Cary Grant

Enigmatic, supremely sophisticated, and dazzling funny, few bestrode the hazardous canyon between patriotism and satire with more brilliance than **Sir Noël Peirce Coward, aka Noel Coward.**

Nicknamed "The Master" by adoring friends, colleagues and disciples alike, Coward achieved wild success in every area of entertainment he touched, from composing, writing, directing, acting, cabaret performance, even painting. At one point he was the highest paid writer in the world. He was both flamboyant and deeply private, forthright and ingeniously witty. Throughout his six decade career he cultivated an international image of himself as the embodiment of English manners and refinement, and he had a profound effect on how the British saw themselves as a nation.

Dr. Rachel Franklin leads us on a joyful 90-minute excursion through some fabulous Cowardly classics including his stage play *Blithe Spirit*, songs such as *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*, and movies that include *In Which We Serve* and *The Italian Job*.

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### Works discussed; media used

Coward and Cavett

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qT6SCcVHRgk>

“Present Laughter” written 1939, scene with Donald Sinden and Julian Fellowes, 1981

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMmRDTljAHs>

“Don’t Put Your Daughter on the Stage, Mrs. Worthington” composed 1935

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEGVX2kXmbA>

“The Vortex”, written 1924, this broadcast 1967  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg-II4YiXsg>

“Mad Dogs and Englishmen” composed 1931  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkEd3WgR8qw>

“Why Do the Wrong People Travel” composed 1961  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_QWfgykZXaY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QWfgykZXaY)

“Blithe Spirit” written 1941. Coward, Bacall, Colbert, Natwick, etc, live on-air, 1956  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbkchgmDYgQ>

Coward on acting, with Michael Macowen, 1966  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxQCupMdTQE>

“In Which We Serve” 1942, Coward, Richard Attenborough, Celia Johnson etc  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOeg3GGI7AY>

“Brief Encounter” 1945, Celia Johnson, Trevor Howard, etc  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LguRis\\_h1qc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LguRis_h1qc)

Coward and Mary Martin, “Together With Music” 1955  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ei-MmuLn3MU>

David Niven quotes Noel Coward  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkvWemhtfQY>

“The Italian Job” with Michael Caine, 1969  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9srV97h9WaM>

“Nina” composed 1944  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnD8\\_2jaqA4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnD8_2jaqA4)