



## **Saint Viator Students Tackle Agatha Christie's Bestselling Mystery Novel, "And Then There Were None"**

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Ciara Collins, Andy Gusmano and Danny Wolfe rehearse a scene from "And Then There Were None."

Saint Viator sophomore **Tim Ackerlund** has performed in musicals at Schaumburg's Prairie Center for the Arts and last spring made his high school debut. Now he gets the chance to realize the dream of any actor --- and do a death scene.

Ackerlund and 20 of his classmates open at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in Agatha Christie's famous whodunit, "And Then There Were None." Shows continue at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and at 1 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets are \$5.

"I play Anthony Marston," says Ackerlund, sporting an ascot and practicing his best British accent. "I'm a rich, n'er do well, who is the first one to die."

This is the first time the school has mounted a mystery murder, and the first time they've staged a play in the fall. But with Saint Viator's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary coming up next year, school officials say they are shaking things up.

"The kids are having a blast with a good, old-fashioned murder mystery," says Director Kate Costello. "Christie is a master of dialogue and character development.

"Throw in a good bit of humor and a little romance," she adds, "and you realize why the works of Agatha Christie remain so popular today."

The play revolves around 10 people drawn to a guest house on a desolate island. Once there, each are accused of a crime for which they were never punished, and eerily the story begins to parallel the nursery rhyme "Ten Little Soldier Boys."

After realizing that there is no way off the island, and that the murderer is one of them, the remaining guests try to solve the mystery before the final verse, "And then there were none."

Cast members include: **Kevin Anderson, Katy Augustyn, Madison Blakeman, Josh Butz, Katie Cascino, Ciara Collins, George Cwiak, Liz Freda, Andy Gusmano, Brian Hansen, Tyler Harris, Matt Filstead, Peter Glinos, Mary Kate McAlpine, Jack Nuelle, George Theotokatos, Stephanie Trovato, Allison Vitale, David Vitale, Kim Whalen and Danny Wolfe.**

But unlike many Agatha Christie mysteries, there is no Miss Marple or Hercule Poirot to solve the crime. The audience has to figure it out.

"There are a lot of lines, but they give you a chance to develop your character," says junior Danny Wolfe of Arlington Heights, who plays the role of Gen. MacKenzie, a retired World War I war hero. "But once you get into your character, you have to stay in character."

And that means, stay within the British accent.

“I’m realizing my wildest dream,” says senior Jack Nuelle of Mount Prospect, “to speak on stage --- with an English accent.”

All of the 21 actors in the show have worked to hone their accents, calling each other ‘chums’ at school and practicing it at home.

“I keep imagining ‘Mary Poppins,’ and then I get right into it,” Ackerlund says.

Creating the look of an English cottage, circa the late 1930s, was a bit of a challenge for students in the tech crew. But they worked with art teacher Matt Gruenfeld to create such key props as a bear's head and 10 soldier boys, which tie into the haunting nursery rhyme.

Lighting also plays a key role in the production, creating candles being blown out and re-lit, and casting a sky which goes from a sunny day, to a storm, and ultimately to “a pretty mackerel sky,” as the proper English characters describes it.