Agatha Christie mystery opens tonight in Raton

By Tim Keller Special to The Chronicle-

News One of Agatha Christie's most popular murder mysteries arrives at Raton's Shuler Theater tonight in the form of a full-length play presented by Raton Community Theater, a program of the Santa Fe School for the Performing Arts.

"Ten Little Indians," also widely known as "And Then There Were None," plays tonight and Saturday at 7 p.m., with a Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. General admission tickets are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and \$5 for students.

An emotional highlight for many area theatergoers will be Bill Fegan's swan song performance. At 84, the Shuler Theater impresario figures he's memorized about as many lines as he can; he's hanging up an acting career that first arrived in Raton 48 years ago with a 1963 Shuler Theater performance. He's been at the Shuler, with only brief interruptions, ever since.

Fegan portrays General MacKenzie in this weekend's whodunit murder mystery, a story which began as a serialized novel in the Saturday Evening Post in 1939 and went on to



Agatha Christie kills the characters off in rapid succession in her whodunit mystery "Ten Little Indians." From left are Joe Zink, Brenda Ferri, Clint Henson, Janese Little, Desiree Martinez and Mark Jansen.

be Agatha Christie's alltime biggest seller with more than 100 million copies sold. In 1943, Christie herself adapted the novel into the stage play. Through

a history too convoluted to unravel here, the yarn's two titles have been used so interchangeably that the playbill for the Raton production is headed, "Agatha Christie's 'And Then There

Known As 'Ten Little Indians'" Try putting that in a headline.

Christie's story, which has been compared to a game of "Clue," involves a group of people who have each accepted an invitation

to an island mansion only to discover themselves stranded there as, one by one, they are mysteriously killed off through various means.

It seems there is some reason in each of their pasts that has resulted in their invitation to the island.

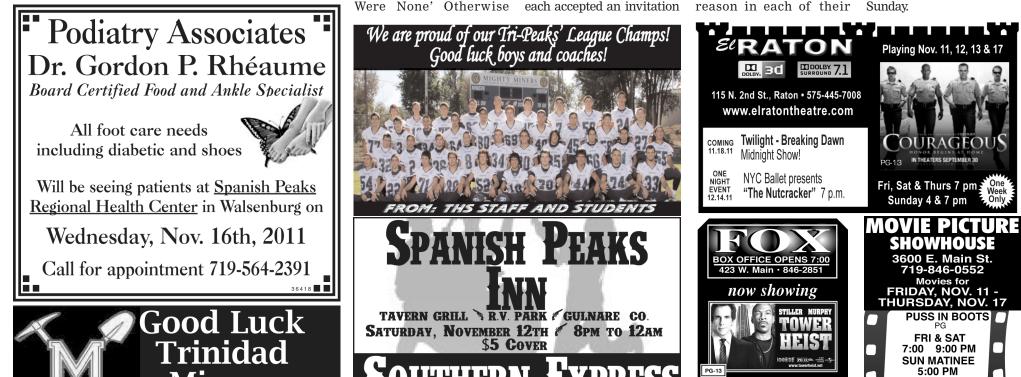
As usual, Christie's characters are well developed, each having a past that is revealed as characters die and the mystery deepens. Who will be the last guest standing? How many unexpected twists will precede that moment?

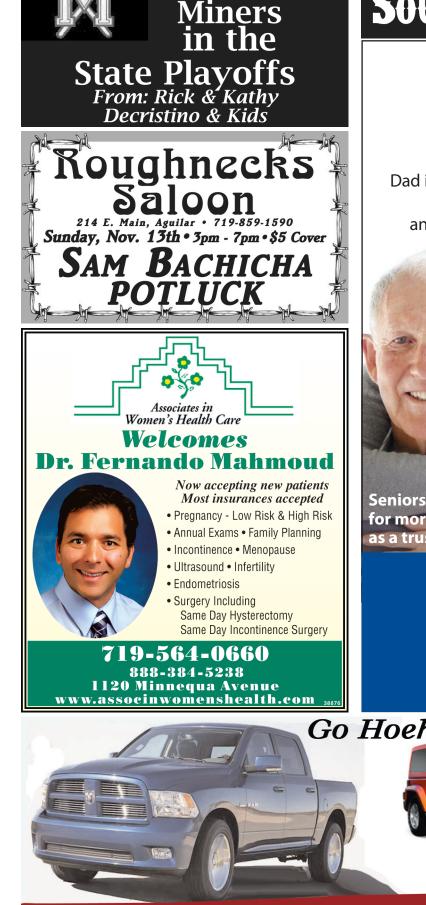
Many of the cast of 11 are well-known to Raton audiences, while others cast by director Gail Dixon-Willden are new to the Shuler stage.

Joining Fegan will be Mark Jansen and Desiree Martinez as Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, Brenda Ferri as Vera Claythorne, Clint Henson as Philip Lombard, Joe Zink as William Blore, and Michael Porter as Sir Lawrence Wargrave. Kathryn Engel will appear as Emily Brent, Joshua Anthony Alcorn as Marston, and Jeffery Redlick as Narracott. Returning to the stage after an absence of 25 years, Janese Little will play Dr. Armstrong.

Which character lasts to the end? No one's telling, but there will be plenty of people filing into the Shuler Theater tonight to find out. If they're honorable, they won't give away the surprise ending to others coming Saturday night or Sunday.

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