

PLAYBILL

WESTMINSTER THEATRE

MURDER'S IN THE HEIR

NOVEMBER 5-7, 2026



WESTMINSTER CHRISTIAN ACADEMY'S
PRODUCTION OF

MURDER'S IN THE HEIR

NOVEMBER 5-7, 7 P.M.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We are delighted you've joined us tonight for *Murder's in the Heir* by Billy St. John. This marks the third murder mystery I've directed at WCA, following Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* and *Murder on the Orient Express*. While all three share the conventions of the murder mystery, this play takes a decidedly different approach. The previous productions were dramatic in tone, with moments of humor and levity; *Murder's in the Heir*, by contrast, is a full-fledged farce. St. John takes familiar murder mystery tropes and exaggerates them for comic effect, with plenty of twists, absurdity, and opportunities for audience participation.

I won't pretend there's some profound moral lesson to be gleaned from tonight's performance. This play is meant to be silly, fun, and interactive, and I hope you'll simply sit back and enjoy it.

That said, if there's one thing I've come to appreciate through this process, it's that the value of a production isn't found solely in the final product, but also in the work it takes to get there. Putting on a play requires time, effort, patience, and perseverance. Over these past 10 weeks, this group of students has forged friendships, faced challenges, overcome obstacles, and shared plenty of both laughs and hard days along the way. I'm grateful to the Lord for His presence throughout it all, and I'm incredibly proud of these students and the work they've put into this production.

As you watch, keep an eye on the characters and the clues. You never know what might matter later. And remember, this is a comedy, so don't take it too seriously. Sit back, relax, enjoy the fun, and **be sure to turn in your ballot at intermission!**

Thank you for supporting WCA Theatre. We're glad you're here!

— Jim Butz, Director

SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to Mike Rohlfs for creating our promotional trailer and taking the cast headshots. Thank you to Amy Roff for her graphic design work on our poster. Thank you to Teresa Ingram, who is so diligent and faithful in handling our ticketing process. Thank you to all of our volunteers for being generous with their time, with a special thank you to Michelle Mason, who went above and beyond to help serve this production. Thank you to Quentin Cockerham and Dianne Mueller for being so good and faithful at what they do. Thank you to McKenna Noble and Ruby Flores, who served as Stage Managers, which is a time-consuming and often thankless endeavor.

SYNOPSIS

Turn the game Clue into a play, and you have *Murder's in the Heir*, a fast-paced, hilarious whodunit set in the Starkweather family mansion. The tyrannical billionaire Simon Starkweather has gathered his heirs and employees to hear the reading of his will, and nearly everyone in the room has the weapon, the opportunity, and the motive for murder. When the lights go out, a crime is committed, and with Detective Mike Davis's help, the family races to uncover the culprit. Old grudges, secret schemes, and suspicious behavior come to light, and soon everyone is a suspect. This is no ordinary mystery, because you get to be the detective! Watch closely, follow the clues, and cast your secret ballot at intermission, because the audience decides who actually did it. In the Starkweather family, you can't trust anyone, especially the ones smiling at you!

SCENES

ACT ONE

Scene 1 Starkweather Mansion, A Stormy November Night

Scene 2 Midnight

— 15 Minute Intermission —

ACT TWO

Scene 1 The Rest of the Night

CAST

(In order of appearance)

Gene Culppepper	Joshua Speed
Nancy Pollard.....	Lyla Townsley
Miss Withers.....	Leighton Plotzke
Mrs. Trent.....	Aria Johnson
Rufus Jones.....	Cutler Fricke
Bensonhurst.....	Parker Sutherell
Minerva Walker.....	Norah Mosley
Fiona Starkweather.....	Bright Pfuetze
Jordan Starkweather.....	Will Havens
Paula Thompson.....	Evie Bubenik
Kathy Collins.....	Anna Mason
Lois Van Zandt.....	Ava Erickson
Mike Davis.....	Josiah Butz
Simon Starkweather/Simon III.....	Jameson Roam

USHERS

Noah Chappeau, Gabe Hoevet, Caleb Ranheim

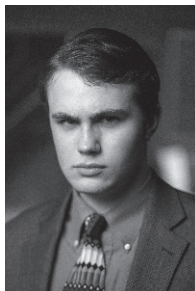
THE DREAMERS

Director	Jim Butz
Technical Director.....	Quentin Cockerham
Costume/Props Designer.....	Dianne Mueller
Stage Manager.....	Mckenna Noble
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Ruby Flores
Lighting Designer.....	Will Erickson
Sound Board Op.....	Emery Noble
Mic Board Op.....	Taylor Mueller
Mic Assistant.....	Eliana DeSantis
Backstage Crew.....	Josiah Stovall
Costume and Props Crew.....	Beritt Arndt, Emma McDade
Hair and Makeup.....	Camryn Cunningham, Gwyneth McKinley

CAST BIOS



Evie Bubenik (Paula Thompson), senior (finally), is slightly terrified but also extremely FIRED UP to bring this character to life in this year's fall play. Her most treasured Westminster role is Fairy Mae in *The Curious Savage*, but you may also have caught her in *Matilda*, *Hello, Dolly!*, and *The Secret Garden*. She would like to thank her family and friends for their overwhelming support and to acknowledge her gratitude to Mr. Butz and the rest of the Westminster Theatre staff for their expertise and hard work. Enjoy this awesomely thrilling murder mystery! She promises it's not that scary. Vote for Paula!



Josiah Butz (Mike Davis), sophomore, is excited to continue his WCA Theatre career in *Murder's in the Heir*. This marks Josiah's 11th WCA show, with previous roles including Bruce in *Matilda the Musical Jr.*, Shrek in *Shrek the Musical Jr.*, and Ben Weatherstaff in *The Secret Garden*. Josiah is also a member of Beyond the Curtain and appeared in their latest production, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, as Gangster #2. Josiah would like to extend his sincere thanks to his fellow castmates, the crew, and, of course, his family for their guidance, encouragement, and dedication throughout the rehearsal process. He hopes you enjoy watching the show as much as he enjoys performing it!



Ava Erickson (Lois Van Zandt), junior, is thrilled to be a part of her first Westminster production. She has loved theatre since she was five years old, and some of her favorite roles include Lucy (*You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*), Marilla (*Anne of Green Gables*), Taylor (*High School Musical*), Alice (*The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*), and Urleen (*Footloose*). She would like to thank Mr. Butz for this amazing opportunity, and the cast and crew for their hard work and dedication. Lastly, she would like to thank her family and friends for their support throughout the rehearsal process, and she hopes you enjoy the show!



Cutler Fricke (Rufus Jones), senior, is bursting with joy at the opportunity to perform in Westminster's production of *Murder's in the Heir*. You might have seen him in previous shows such as *The Curious Savage* (Hannibal), *The Summoning of Everyman* (Goods/Five Senses), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Snug the Joiner). He is beyond thankful for his family, his fellow cast members, the teachers who have provided him with a platform to express himself, and, of course, Jesus. He hopes you have a killer time tonight and enjoy the show. Vote for Rufus!



Will Havens (Jordan Starkweather), senior, is wild with excitement to participate in this wonderful show, his seventh at Westminster. He hopes to excite and elate the audience, young and old. He would like to thank Mr. Butz for taking the show seriously and pushing him to become a better actor, thank God for the breath in his lungs and the opportunity to perform, and thank his family for buying a whole row of seats! Love y'all!



Aria Johnson (Mrs. Trent), senior, is overjoyed to be in her eighth production at Westminster. Some of her favorite shows she has been a part of are *Matilda Jr.* and *The Secret Garden*. She also participates in Westminster's chapel band and improv team. Aria would like to thank her parents for motivating her to continue in theatre and for always encouraging her at home. She would also like to thank Mr. Butz for trusting her with this role and giving constructive feedback to help her grow. Finally, Aria would like to thank the Lord for giving her this opportunity with such wonderful friends.



Anna Mason (Kathy Collins), junior, is thankful for the opportunity to perform in this year's fall production. Some of her favorite productions at Westminster include *The Curious Savage* (Lily Belle) and *Hello, Dolly!* (Dance Ensemble). Anna would like to thank the cast and crew for all of their hard work, Mr. Butz for directing the show, Miss Dianne for putting together the amazing costumes, and Mr. Cockerham for designing the beautiful set. Lastly, Anna would like to thank her friends for keeping her spirits high and her parents for their unending support. Colossians 3:23.



Norah Mosley (Minerva Walker), sophomore, is so excited to perform in this show. You may have seen her in Westminster's production of *Shrek Jr.* as the Dragon. She also appeared in *The Stinky Cheese Man* and *Matilda Jr.* Norah would like to thank her parents for all their support and prayers. She would also like to thank the cast and crew for making this such an enjoyable show and for all the memories along the way. Lastly, she would like to thank Mr. Butz for teaching her so much throughout the show. Norah is so happy to be a part of this performance and can't wait for you to see it. Also, you should vote for Minerva! She'd be a scary good murderer.



Bright Pfuetze (Fiona Starkweather), sophomore, is so excited to be in Westminster's *Murder's in the Heir*. You might have seen her as Matilda in *Matilda Jr.*, the Queen in *The Stinky Cheese Man*, Player 8 in *Dare to Dream Jr.*, and an ensemble member in *The Secret Garden*. Bright would like to thank the Lord for giving her this opportunity, Mr. Butz for helping her improve her acting skills, the stage managers for all the time they sacrificed for our show, and her parents for their support and the sacrifices they made to give her opportunities like this, as well as for the time they spent watching *The Golden Girls* with her to help her prepare for her role. She is so excited for you to see this show, so sit back, relax, and vote for Fiona!



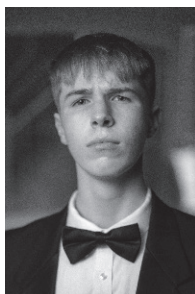
Leighton Plotzke (Miss Withers), sophomore, is thrilled to return to the Westminster stage in this year's fall production. Leighton is an active participant in youth theater and studies voice with Lisa Christine Studios. Favorite past roles include Regina George (*Mean Girls Jr.*), Gabriella (*High School Musical*), Morticia (*The Addams Family*), and Fairy Godmother (*Cinderella*). She is grateful to Mr. Butz and the WCA team for the opportunity to continue doing what she loves here at Westminster.



Jameson Roam (Simon Starkweather/Simon III), senior, is positively pumped to take on both roles in this comedic and absurd murder mystery. If you're a regular Westminster show-goer, you may have seen Jameson in *The Jungle Book*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, *The Music Man* and *Hello, Dolly!* He is very thankful for the opportunity to work with such amazing castmates (plus two stellar stage managers), and he can't express enough gratitude to the teachers who have worked tirelessly to make this production excellent: Mr. Cockerham, Miss Dianne, and Mr. Butz. Jameson would also like to thank his family for their unconditional love and support and, most importantly, God for reminding him who he is and to whose glory he performs.



Joshua Speed (Gene Culpepper), senior, is ecstatic to perform in this wonderful production of *Murder's in the Heir*. You may have seen him previously in *The Secret Garden* (Dr. Craven), *The Curious Savage* (Jeffery Meredith), *Little Women* (Laurie), *Hello, Dolly!*, and *The Music Man*. He would like to thank Mr. Butz for the opportunity to be in this wonderful production. He would also like to thank God and his parents. He hopes you all enjoy the show!



Parker Sutherland (Bensonhurst), sophomore, is absolutely thrilled to be a part of Westminster's production of *Murder's in the Heir*. He has been in past Westminster productions such as *Shrek Jr.* (Captain of the Guards), and you may also have seen him in *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*. He would like to thank his family for supporting him throughout this show and bringing him to rehearsals, the amazing theatre community at Westminster, and this incredible cast for being so welcoming. He hopes you enjoy the show and vote for Bensonhurst!



Lyla Townsley (Nancy Pollard), sophomore, is thrilled to be performing in her fifth WCA production. You may have seen Lyla as an ensemble member in *Matilda Jr.*, Teen Fiona in *Shrek Jr.*, the Red Hen in *The Stinky Cheese Man*, or, most recently, a Dreamer in *The Secret Garden*. Lyla would like to thank Mr. Butz for helping her grow and improve in her acting; Mr. Cockerham for building the gorgeous set; Miss Dianne for the amazing costumes; the two extraordinary stage managers for their support and the amount of work they put into this play; her parents for their encouragement and sacrifices; and, most of all, our Lord for providing her with this incredible opportunity. Lyla has loved being a part of this show and the relationships that have come from it.

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2026-27 THEATRE ARTS AT WESTMINSTER CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

BY BILLY ST. JOHN
NOVEMBER 5-7



MURDER'S IN THE HEIR

BY LEN JENKIN
JANUARY 22-23

RAMONA QUIMBY

ONCE UPON A MATTRESS

MUSIC BY MARY RODGERS
BOOK BY JAY THOMPSON, DEAN FULLER AND MARSHALL BARER
APRIL 22-24

OLIVER!

BY LIONEL BART

JUNE 2027

WESTMINSTER SUMMER
PLAYERS PRESENTS



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