You’ve known Bill Kenwright for a while, is it nice to be part of one of his productions again?
Yes, it really is. I wanted to do an Agatha Christie because I kept seeing the posters and it looked sumptuous, it looked good and I actually really like her stuff. I think we’ve tried a couple of years for me to be in one – there was talk of me doing *Black Coffee* but that didn’t work out for whatever reasons – and it only just worked out this time! It’s the best play that I’ve read of hers and I really wanted to be in it.

So what attracted you to the part of Doctor Armstrong?
I was asked to read it with Doctor Armstrong in mind. And what was appealing about it was that it’s not a part you’d usually associate with me; the nervy and guileful, full of neurosis, ex-alcoholic – that really appealed to me. It’s a chance to show that I have a sensitive side. So even though it’s not the biggest part I’ve played, by any means, I’m really drawn to that sort of troubled character and I think it’s good for me to have people seeing me do that.

It’s the world’s and Christie’s best-selling thriller – why do you think that is?
Well, I couldn’t get a copy first of all, because it was sold out! Both Waterstones in Oxford Street and Teddington, which shows its popularity, especially as this was just before Christmas. But when I read it, it grips you from the start. The chapters are very short and you get a description of everybody.

It starts off with Vera Claythorne and she’s on the train, and then it goes to Blore on the train, then Armstrong driving his Morris across Salisbury Plain, so you get a little profile of all these characters. And they don’t know each other – it’s not like they’re going to a wonderful party, they don’t know why they’re going. Christie describes them all getting on the boat together to get to the island, and there’s this immediate tension because they don’t know why any of them are there: they’re not talking to each other because they’re not excited; they’re a bit puzzled.

I’ve also been to Burgh Island, so I could picture it. I just think it’s just a brilliant piece of writing and it’s not until the end of the novel when the story finishes, and you think, well, we don’t know who’s done it. And then there’s a little bit at the end and you think, wow! Clever stuff, Christie was just a genius.
**How have you prepared for your role, are you basing him on anyone?**
No, I didn’t really, but I did *The Woman in Black* years ago in town and towards the end of the play my character becomes a complete wreck, he has a breakdown almost, on stage – as Doctor Armstrong does. So I remembered those feelings and I think as you get older, you’ve got a bit more emotion in you anyway because of stuff that’s happened. And I felt very sorry for him. He’s a got a past where he’s actually killed somebody on the operating table, so his murder he’d done – and it was, he killed her – is worse than anybody else’s in the play, because he’s a professional man and this person came to him to be saved and he killed this woman because he had a drink problem. And it’s absolutely tormented him all his life. So it wasn’t really hard to picture him, or feel him.

**Did you know any of you cast mates before?**
I worked with Susie (Penhaligon), last year we did *All Creatures Great and Small*. She used my dog Charlie as Tricky Woo, so we bonded that way and became great mates. Frazer Hines I’ve known since I was seven years old. I used to do *Junior Showtime* in Studio 3 at Yorkshire Television and they were doing *Emmerdale Farm* in Studio 4, so during tea breaks and lunch breaks, he’d pop round and look at our show, and we as kids would say, look, that’s Joe Sugden! He was a big star! But we’ve never worked together. We lived in Yorkshire at the same time, we used to do personal appearances and things together, but we never did anything professionally. So when I saw his name on the bill, I couldn’t believe it! And he couldn’t believe it either, because when you’ve known somebody so long but your paths have never really crossed, it’s great. And we’ve got a similar sense of humour and he’s just such a good bloke.

**It’s an eight-month tour of the UK – what are the nicest things about being on the road?**
The highlights are – every week is different. Every opening night is different, almost like your first night because you’ve got a new audience from that area, you’ve got a new stage to get to know, it’s a new theatre with different history and you’ve also got local press in – and if the papers hate it, that’ll affect business for the rest of the week. So you can’t get complacent!

Whereas in the West End, it’s fantastic, but you’re going in the same dressing room night after night, you’re parking your car in the same place or getting the same tube. Having done six months in the West End, it does become a little bit routine. But with touring, you’re discovering new places. Yeah, sometimes it gets tiring and you want to stay at home a bit longer but you can’t because you’ve got to travel on Sundays, but every week is a new venue, a new theatre and every Monday night is like a first night.

**A lot of people - especially those of us who grew up in the 80s - will know you more for *Blue Peter*; do you still get recognised for it?**
I still get recognised today, and I think that’s because we were getting seven million viewers in our peak time, October to March, and that’s because there was less on telly; we didn’t have Sky, there were four channels. We also had a cross-section of audience watching us, because it was just before the six o’clock news, so grandparents, kids and parents watching us. That show, no matter what else I do, will always be with me. It’s a badge, you’ve got it and you were a part of history.

**Tickets for *And Then There Were None* are on sale now!** You can book yours by calling the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre Box Office on (01483) 44 00 00 or by visiting the website at [www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk](http://www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk)