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| **THE BRIDGE THEATER** **(A Division of the Arts & Recreation Commission of Whitehall)**  **6 North Williams Street** **Whitehall NY 12887****518/499-22435****CONTACT:****Martin P. Kelly** **518/477-6965** **PRESS RELEASE:****WHITEHALL’S BRIDGE THEATER CELEBRATES 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR****WHITEHALL, NY-- A re-created 19th century picnic grove will be the site of a Bridge Theater celebration of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War beginning at noon, Saturday, August 24.** **The theatrical re-creation, open to the public, will take up all the parade floor of the former Whitehall Armory, renamed the Whitehall Athletic Club when Greg Gross, a New Jersey insurance broker, purchased the 110-year old structure in 2010. Location is Poultney (Route 4) and Williams Streets, Whitehall, NY****Produced and directed by Martin P. Kelly for the Bridge Theater, the celebration will be presented as a mid-Civil War picnic at which Abraham Lincoln re-enactor Phil Jessen of Hartford in Washington County, will appear following the picnic lunch prepared by the Athletic Club's staff for all attendees.** **During lunch, the audience will be serenaded by the 77th Regiment** **Balladeers, a group of a dozen musicians and singers who are also** **Civil War re-enactors. This troupe appears a good six months a year at such events throughout the northeast, and earlier this summer appeared at the Gettysburg battlefield.** **Following lunch, Lance Inguire, President of the Friends of the NYS** **Military Museum at Saratoga, and the Balladeers will welcome President Lincoln.****Jessen as Lincoln will discuss his arrival in Washington as** **President, and the lead up to the Civil War, while relating the purpose of his Emancipation Proclamation. He will conclude with the deliverance of his Gettysburg Address as given in 1863 shortly after the famed battle.** **Following President Lincoln's appearance, Lance Ingmire will introduce actors from the Bridge Theater company who will present letters from Civil War soldiers who were Whitehall residents, in dramatic form with musical background by The 77th Regiment Balladeers. Lance Inguire will conclude the afternoon's official program with a Power Point demonstration of photographs taken by his great-great grand-uncle who was Lincoln's photographer. Inguire is a ninth generation resident of Saratoga County.** **The Balladeers, led by John Quinn of Greene County, will lead the** **audience in songs of the Civil War period as the gathering of visitors** **prepare to leave the picnic grounds in the former state armory.****Tickets for picnic lunch and the celebration are $15.00 for adults and** **$13 for students 17 and younger. Reservations are available at** **518/499-0477.** ***(The Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council (LARAC) in Glens Falls has provided a small grant from New York Arts Council funds to enlist the aid of the musicians, speakers and actors.)*** ***# # # # # # # # # # # # # #*** **BACKGROUND**: Since 2012 the Bridge Theater has, at the invitation of Greg Gross, been an occupant of the former Whitehall Armory in presenting cabarets and now this major celebration of the Civil War. Two such cabarets were presented in June (Kathy Beaver, former Fort Salem theater performer and producer) and in July (Courtney Shayne as Patsy Cline). It is planned that similar cabarets will continue through the year, about six weeks apart. The theater troupe lost its unique bridge theater, the former 112 Street vehicular bridge in Whitehall over the final lock of the Champlain Canal, in 2009. A defect in the bridge's structure was found during a state inspection in the early summer of 2009 requiring the group to find another home. When the Whitehall Armory was purchased, producing artistic director Martin P. Kelly urged the late David Mohn who had designed the bridge and led the community in building it, to eventually move the operation to the Whitehall Armory once it was purchased by Gross. Mohn who passed away last summer (2012), agreed and a preliminary schedule was presented in 2012.  |
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