

'Phantoms' ready to take stage

Press Release

On April 8, there will be a total solar eclipse – one of the most spectacular events in nature – and Lewiston is in the direct path of totality. To commemorate this event, the Opera Hall Players, who formerly presented the Marble Orchard Ghost Walks, have been rehearsing to a brand-new show: "Phantoms of the Opera Hall."

The show will be on stage at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, April 6-7, and at 2 and 7 p.m. Sunday, April 7, at the Historic Lewiston Opera Hall, 732 Center St.

Tickets are \$15 per person, available online or at the Upward Niagara Chamber of Commerce office, 895 Center St., Lewiston. For more information, email Phantomsoftheoperahall@gmail.com or visit on Facebook (Phantoms of the Opera Hall). The performance venue is on the second floor, accessible only by stairs.

This is a new production that features "spirits" from Lewiston's past who will share music, stories and tall tales about this architectural landmark. Given the awe-inspiring celestial event of the weekend, many tales are tied to the miseries and mysteries of the moon. Some of these spirits have not forgotten what this building once was, nor are they willing to let go even in death.

The Opera Hall housed the first telephone switchboard, library and masquerade ball. Benevolent organizations such as Sacarissa Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and Good Templars had their meetings here – and it's quite probable that many early Lewistonians were involved in secret activities of the Underground Railroad. Revival meetings were held after regular Sunday morning church services for poor families and the "River Rats" that lived at the river's edge. Lewiston also had its share of bawdy inhabitants and was a gossipy little place. ... Still is.

Local audiences will recognize the "Phantom" actors, having shared stories in the graveyard for so many years! Thespians include Don Batalaris, Claudia Carnes, Anna Frankovitch, Tim Henderson, Lynda LaGreca, Marc Melzer, Eva Nicklas and Kathryn Serianni. Newcomers Will Howard and Tim Walton (Summer of '69) will add music and a little crazy to the production!

Walton to participate

The upcoming production of "Phantoms of the Opera Hall" will bring local celebrity Tim Walton back to his hometown when he takes on the role of the Rev. Lorenzo Dow.

Dow was a fiery preacher whose eccentric dress, style of preaching and fearless behavior attracted thousands of worshipers, including the faithful of Lewiston.

When offered the role, Walton said he "jumped at the opportunity" – and many say he was "typecast"!

Locals know or recognize Walton as a "rock star" of the "Summer of '69," a popular event that's been presented by Lewiston Council on the Arts since 2005.

He grew up in Lewiston and was heavily influenced by



"Phantoms of the Opera Hall" cast: sitting, from left: Lynda LaGreca, Anna Frankovitch, Eva Nicklas and Don Batalaris; standing, from left: Kathryn Serianni, Tim Henderson, Mystery Phantom, Marc Melzer and Claudia Carnes. Camera shy: Tim Walton and Will Howard. (Photo: Ray Lonsdale)

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April 8, 2024

his experiences during the 1960s. His maternal grandfather, Edwin, founded Wendt's Dairy and taught Walton the value of hard work and the success that comes from owning your own business.

After the Beatles appeared on "The Ed Sullivan Show," Walton immediately went to Brundo's Music store, purchased a guitar and amp, and, with some friends, started the County Orphanage.

The band eventually included Grammy Award-winning songwriter, musician and vocalist Gary Baker. Country Orphanage played local dances, the Peach Festival, parties and pizza joints.

Walton claims another influential '60s experience was watching "Bonanza," a popular TV show about Ben Cartwright and his sons living on a large ranch in the mountains of Nevada. The show

inspired Walton's love of skiing. He said, "the allure and stark beauty of the American Rockies was strong and I knew then, at age 12, that I would live my life in the mountains of the American west, where the mountains are huge, the powder skiing is deep, and the cattle outnumber the people."

True to his word, Walton subsequently attended law school in Idaho where he eventually set up his private practice and, for the past 44 years has represented "the Davids of the world against the world's Goliaths."

Every summer, Walton returns to the area and spends his summers living on his sailboat in Wilson. And every year, he reunites with the guys he made music with in the 1960s for the "Summer of '69."



FUN FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

*Never look directly at a solar eclipse without ISO approved viewing glasses or you risk permanent damage to your eyes.

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Solar Eclipse Party!

April 8th noon- 5 pm

Join us for a once in a lifetime TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE event at our Town of Niagara Office. Bring your lawn chairs & cooler and enjoy a live band. Complementary hot dogs & eclipse glasses while supplies last*. Don't miss our llama petting area plus stop by our optical boutique & check out the latest styles & trends.

Office location - 5500 Porter Road NF NY 14304

'Solar Eclipse Day' at Old Fort Niagara

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Information Courtesy of Old Fort Niagara

Old Fort Niagara offers a great view of the western sky in a setting of centuries of history. Join us to observe the solar eclipse. Special programs precede the event from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. These include musket and cannon firings, life of a soldier in the 18th century, 18th century domestic life demonstrations and 18th century military engineering.

The full schedule includes:

- √ 11 a.m., musket firing demonstration
- √ 11:30 until 2 p.m., visit the French Castle and learn about the daily life of a soldier, eclipse history, the fur trade, the roles of women at the fort and games from the 18th century
- √ noon, musket firing
- √ 12:30 p.m., use your math skills to design an 18th century fort
- √ 1 p.m., cannon firing followed

- by a musket firing demonstration
- √ 2 p.m., cannon firing
- √ 2:03 p.m., partial eclipse begins (approximate)
- √ 3:20 p.m., totality (approximate)
- √ 4:30 p.m., partial ends (approximate)
- √ 5 p.m., cannon firing and musket firing demonstration
- √ 12:30-4 p.m., special science exhibits include telescope viewing, cootie catcher solar eclipse, solar bead activity, and solar eclipse spinning wheel activity presented by Lewiston-Porter schools

Lewiston-Porter will launch a weather balloon equipped with camera to record the eclipse at 100,000 feet. Launch time is 1 p.m. NASA officials will present in the officers' club from 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Food will be available for purchase onsite.



The Discover Niagara Shuttle will offer FREE transportation for the eclipse event. We will service our regular Falls to Fort route, as well as Four Mile Creek Campground.

Thursday April 4th to Monday April 8th

Falls to Fort Route: 8:30am-5:40pm
Four Mile Creek Loop: 9:00am-6:00pm

Look for our eclipse themed shuttle wrap, featuring this painting by Christina Francis!



For more info, visit:

discoverniagarashuttle.com