

## About *The Hessian Officer in America*

The actors of *The Hessian Officer in America* come to the production bringing diverse experience with theater companies such as Ten Bucks Theatre, Penobscot Theatre Company, Bangor Community Theater, Midcoast Actors' Studio, The Grand of Ellsworth, and many others in and out of the state. We have performed everything from contemporary plays and musicals, to the over 100 year old comedies of Oscar Wilde, to 400 year old works of Shakespeare. This is a rare opportunity to delve into a more than 200 year old romantic comedy set in the American Revolution. Not too many theater actors, other than any who may also be "reenactors", have the chance to don Colonial garb or military uniforms, as plays from the era are not often performed.

Of particular interest to the director, is the ability to see a little slice of American history through the somewhat rosy lenses of the German playwright. Johann August Weppen manages to show conflict between characters and nations without actually vilifying any. Some ideals of the 18th Century's Age of Enlightenment show through, along with a bit of Hessian "propaganda", and an overall sense of hope and positivity for its characters in this New World.

One wonders if Weppen would ever have imagined his play being translated into English, and performed in an auditorium so near a Fort once occupied by British and Hessian troops, some 230 years later. Even if so, he would have little concept of the technology in use to produce the play. Instead of letters taking weeks or months to go over land or sea, the *Hessian Officer* director and cast make use of almost instantaneous communication by wireless Internet on their computers, tablets and phones. We are able to share and make notes on the play's script, look at related photos and videos, and hear audio tracks of an authentic German accent or the tunes composed for the show by Kevin Birch.

Even with the ease of modern conveniences, we must put in the same effort to learn lines and effectively tell the story as the actors who may have originally performed Weppen's work in 1783. We may just have to do a little more research for our roles, but it is a thrill for actors to feel that link to the past: wearing the same style of uniform, perhaps brandishing the same sword, singing the same song and telling the same story (though mostly in a different language) as those 18th century actors did! We hope you will come laugh, applaud and enjoy *The Hessian Officer in America* as much as any 18th century audience would!