

12TH ANNUAL WINTER WALK KICKS OFF HOLIDAY SEASON IN HUDSON, NY

Hudson NY -- Hang on to your hats, your scarves and your gloves! The holiday season is about to shift into gear in Hudson, NY when **Winter Walk**, the annual Warren Street holiday extravaganza bursts on the scene.

On Saturday evening, December 6, from 5 to 8 pm the Hudson Opera House launches Winter Walk 2008, the hip street festival that kick-starts the holiday season in the small historic city of Hudson, NY. Always held on the first Saturday in December, this festive holiday celebration is now in its twelfth year and still going strong.

Winter Walk is now acknowledged as a major event in the Hudson Valley, with visitors coming not only from the surrounding region, but even farther afield. Some arrive before the announced hour to get a good parking spot and a head start on viewing store windows.

At 4:45 the carillon rings at the First Presbyterian Church to announce the beginning of Winter Walk. The action starts at the Opera House with a trumpet fanfare by members of the Cossackie-Athens Community Band. Then the Department of Youth Santa Parade sets off to deliver Mr. & Mrs. Claus to City Hall.

Suddenly the street is filled with an eclectic mix of merrymakers including parade puppets from the sculpture classes at Hudson High School, the Operation Unite drum line, Victorian Carolers, the walking Gingerbread Boy, the Toy Soldier on stilts and a flurry of angels and elves.

Then Warren Street becomes a wild *mélange* of the traditional and the not-so. Not to spoil the fun of discovery, but here's a little taste of what Winter Walkers will find.

Old favorites return. Horse-drawn wagons are available for rides around Seventh Street Park and in the 400 block. Live reindeer can be found below Third. Saxophone Santa and the bagpiper will be at their usual stands, as will Diata Diata, drumming at the corner of Fifth & Warren. Roger the Jester, Tots the Clown, Jack the Bear and his Handler, will all appear.

As usual, dance will be a big part of Winter Walk. Dance curator Elena Mosley has arranged for a veritable dance festival starring seven area dance companies performing in spaces graciously loaned for the evening. Dance reigns at the PARC Foundation Gallery at 330 Warren, spaces at 428 Warren and 4 Park Place, and at a stunning new venue—the SORTED graphic studio of Antony Katz at 357 Warren.

Meanwhile choreographer Abby Lappen's window performance installations can be found from the 200 block at Lili & Loo, to the 700 block at The Muddy Cup and other spots in between from 5 to 7 pm. From 7 to 8 pm, the entire company comes together at Historical Materialism (6th & Warren). Lappen is always full of surprises and this year is no exception as she changes up once again.

As from the first Winter Walk ever, the perennial favorite, Sternfeld Dance Studio's windup dancing doll, whirls away in Hudson Financial's window at 504 Warren.

An event not to be missed will take place in the second floor auditorium at the Opera House. Every half-hour, Sondra Loring and Jill Ann Schwartz's UpRiver Downtown Dance Company present a piece called *How to Make a Dance* with live music by Melora Creager and Elijah Tucker.

Twenty-one musicians will be playing in shops up and down Warren, from Celtic harps and elegant cellists to foot-stomping fiddlers and jazz guitars. And that's not counting the musicians playing all night in a Musical Revue at Musica, the newly-located music store on Fourth Street, or the twenty members of the Capital Area Flute Club performing at 6 pm at Historical Materialism on the corner of 6th and Warren. Nor does it count Mecca Bodega, a hammered dulcimer and percussion duo straight from the subways of NYC performing on the street; nor the random, errant musician or caroling group that might show up.

More music can be found at the First Presbyterian Church (Fourth & Warren) where the Coxsackie-Athens Community Band gives its annual concert. The Taconic Hills Jazz Ensemble will be playing at the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Bank of America also opens its doors for music, warmth and refreshment.

TSL, on Columbia Street, turns into a cabaret for the evening, while Stageworks/Hudson, usually in residence on Cross Street, moves over to Warren Street for the night, offering mini-performances of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* that tell the whole story in fifteen minutes!

At Union and Fourth, the County Courthouse will be open and showing off its impressive new restoration.

Some new characters will make their first appearances at Winter Walk. Cris Morales has created a Topiary Tree and the intriguing Ice Boy. They join old favorites--the Gingerbread Witch, Frosty the Snowman, the Victorian Lady and Gentleman and the CanCan Girl, among others. Look for COARC's mascot, Smiles, who will also put in an appearance.

Twenty new businesses have opened on or near Warren Street since last year's Winter Walk. They include a healthy mix of galleries, food and drink establishments, antique stores, home furnishings, women's clothing, and other retail and service establishments. Count among them Carrie Haddad's new photography gallery in the 300 block.

Walkers will find plenty of ideas for holiday shopping, a wine tasting, a cheese tasting, a number of authors' book signings, and much, much more. Many art galleries are offering small works for sale.

Winter Walk often continues past the official closing time of 8:00 p.m. when fireworks are seen atop Promenade Hill, at the Western end of Warren Street.

Warren Street from 2nd to 7th and adjacent alleys are closed to traffic for the three hours of Winter Walk, allowing pedestrians to traverse the street with ease, or to hop on a free trolley or a horse-drawn wagon.

Last year this popular event drew thousands of attendees from Hudson and Columbia County, as well as visitors from Greene, Albany, Dutchess, Ulster Counties and beyond. Visitors to the City are warned to arrive early to secure a parking spot. Municipal and county lots can be found on Columbia Street between Third and Fourth and between Fifth and Sixth, on Union Street at Sixth Street, and on Warren Street at two spots between Third and Fourth.

Winter Walk is produced and presented by the Hudson Opera House, a multi-arts center housed in an 1855 building which was once City Hall.

The event is made possible with support from the Grand Sponsor, Taconic, as well as the City of Hudson, the Columbia Hudson Partnership, Columbia County Department of Tourism, Hudson Development Corporation, Hudson River Bank & Trust Foundation, AirTran, Mid-Hudson Media, Otto's Market/Germantown, Vasilow's, and Weaver's Trolley. Contributors include Baba Louie's Sourdough Pizza Co., Ca'Mea Restaurant, Chronogram Magazine, Columbia County Chamber of Commerce, Hudson Home, Red Dot, Shallo, Galluscio, Bianchi & Fucito, and Swoon Kitchenbar. Other donors and supporters are listed in the official Winter Walk program and on the Opera House website.

For more information call the Opera House at 518-822-1438 or visit the Opera House website at www.hudsonoperahouse.org. and click on Winter Walk for maps, schedules and other information such as lodging and area restaurants. A snow date of Saturday, December 13 has been established.