



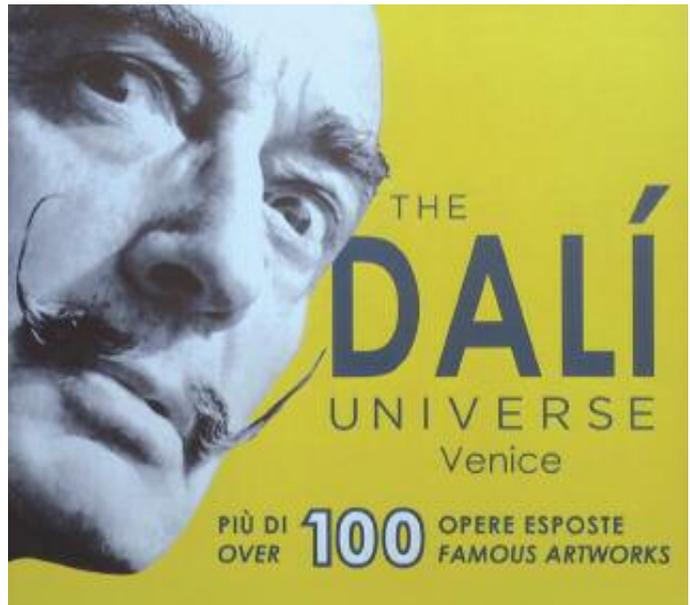
# FRIENDS OF THE TOWNER

Supporting the Arts in Eastbourne

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## TOWNER TIMES

*WINTER 2011*



***News Reviews Interviews Events***

- Coming Events
- Inside the new Birley Centre
- Exhibitions at Towner

[www.friendsofthetowner.org.uk](http://www.friendsofthetowner.org.uk)

# A message from the Chairman

Elizabeth Muir-Lewis

I'm sure you will all agree that the latest developments in the history of the Friends have turned a new and encouraging corner.

From the doldrums of having no real home, we now find ourselves in a very special place, the Birley Centre. At our opening event the superb young Greek guitarist Dimitris Dekavallas proved, in so many ways, that it is a fine venue. Afterwards he told me what an excellent place it was to perform in. We found it very comfortable, with excellent acoustics, and very pleasing architectural detail. The bar and foyer with its fabulous display of art helped to create a really friendly atmosphere. It lived up to expectations.

Our future looks good. Everyone involved feels that this is an exciting new beginning for the Friends. Many of you will be delighted to know that next year, with the enthusiastic support of the gallery, we plan to start art lectures in the Towner. These are planned to be held in the afternoons, and those who find it difficult, or prefer not to come out in the evening can then enjoy a stimulating set of lectures.



Read all about our high quality and diverse programme for 2012 in this

Towner Times, with something to attract and satisfy the many different interests of our members.

***On Saturday 28th January I and my committee have pleasure in inviting the "Friends" (old and new) to a Coffee Morning (10.30-12.30) in the Lansdowne Hotel. As we would be pleased to know how many will attend, please either ring me on 01323 507337 or email: [pridmore789@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:pridmore789@tiscali.co.uk). I would be so delighted to see as many of you as possible to enjoy a happy and friendly social meeting to bring in the New Year together***

As this is the last issue of 2011, we would all like to wish you a very happy Christmas and New Year, and look forward to sharing the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Elizabeth'.

Cover Picture: Salvador Dalí Poster spotted by Sheila Yates on her trip to Venice, Nov 2011. Remember our talk on Dali by Professor Anthony Slinn which is on 5 January.

## OUTINGS AND EVENTS

### A special outing for Friends

Monday 6th February



If you love good singing and the company of like minded music lovers, why not join the annual trip up to the **Royal Academy of Music** to hear the final of **The Richard Lewis vocal prize**. (considered to be one of the most prestigious in the music profession).

This outing is now in its 11th year, and is perhaps among Eastbourne's most popular events. A comfortable 60 seater modern bus will whisk everyone up to London, where lunch is taken in the Academy, followed by two hours of superb singing by young talented classical singers. The first prize is £12,000 the 2nd £7,000 and the **Webb Award** for the best accompanist is £3,500.



The Royal Academy of Music

The day will start by leaving the Congress Theatre at 9.15am and arriving back in Eastbourne at around 10pm. Booking is underway already, and the organiser Elizabeth would be delighted if our members would like to join the trip.

Tickets (door to door) are £12

For more information call Elizabeth on: 01323 507337 or email: [pridmore789@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:pridmore789@tiscali.co.uk)

We will be holding our  
**Annual General Meeting in the Hydro Hotel  
on Sunday 25th March**

After the business is done, we will enjoy an excellent 2 course lunch, and our guest speaker will be **David Battie** the well known Antiques Road Show presenter.

AGM (no cost) Lunch and Talk £17



## OPENING NIGHT IN THE BIRLEY CENTRE

After months of eager anticipation the Friends held their inaugural event at the new Birley Centre. Eastbourne College had struggled long and hard to achieve their new auditorium, with its associated studios and rehearsal rooms. When the unveiling day arrived, the Birley's masculine design complemented the curves of the nearby Towner. The two structures make a handsome couple.

Our first event featured the brilliance and charm of Greek guitarist, **Dimitris Dekavallas**.

While Friends, members of the public and invited guests mingled in the attractive and spacious foyer, Dimitris practised in the auditorium. The sound quality was excellent. Both the guitar and the performer's introductions were audible without the use of microphones. The excitement among the audience was palpable. One could sense that those mingling in the foyer were aware that this evening was an historic occasion for the society. Determined that this level of excellence will be maintained, the Friends' Committee is planning a varied and attractive programme for 2012. In the meantime we can look back with pleasure at our first evening at the Birley.



Marie Thompson (Towner), Chairman Elizabeth, and Committee Member Geoffrey Mantle



Guests arriving and mingling in the foyer

Photos by Michael and Sheila

## COMING ATTRACTIONS - BOOK NOW!

All tickets are available from Philip Anson on 01323 411906, see the enclosed Friends' Events Order form, or from the Tourist Information Centre in Cornfield Road.



### Professor Anthony Slinn

Thursday 5 January at 7.30pm  
The Birley Centre, Carlisle Road

Admission £8 (Members £6)  
Balcony £4

# Salvador Dalí

Anthony Slinn is well known as an entertaining and distinguished expert on many aspects of painting history.

His Picasso talk, (Guernica) given to the Friends some years ago was enthusiastically received by critics and public alike.

Anthony Slinn's talk on January 5th about that extraordinary eccentric, Salvador Dalí, a living legend in his lifetime, will be an exciting exploration of perhaps one of art's oddest and most controversial figures.



## An Evening with Robert Cohen

Thursday 23 February, 7.30pm

Birley Centre

Admission £12 (Members £10)

Balcony £4

Robert Cohen communicates in two ways – with words and music. One of the world's leading cellists, Robert's career began at the age of five when he performed his first concert in public. Since that tender age Robert has played, among others, with Claudio Abbado, Antal Dorati, Sir Mark Elder, Mariss Jansons, Sir Charles Mackerras, Kurt Masur, Riccardo Muti, Sir Simon Rattle and Michael Tilson-Thomas.

Robert has collaborated with many great chamber musicians, including Yehudi Menuhin. Listen to his recording with the Amadeus String Quartet of the C Major Schubert Quintet.

If you have already experienced the chamber music festivals which Robert puts on twice yearly at Charleston Manor, you will know what a brilliant communicator he is. His programmes are exciting, and the acoustic of the ancient barn which serves as a concert hall is perfect. Yet it is Robert's personality which magically melds the ingredients into an unforgettable whole.



His warmth and easy manner endear him to his audiences.

Robert has accepted a challenge from the Friends to appear at the Birley Centre alone (except for his cello), and take us on a musical journey through his career. Robert will introduce us to his instrument and to recorded extracts from his performances, with some of the great conductors listed above.

This promises to be a very special occasion.

So join your Friends for  
**'An Evening with Robert Cohen'**.

# ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC SINGERS

## Afternoon Music Event at The Birley Centre

Sunday 11 March, 2.30pm - 5pm

Admission £15 to include tea, Balcony £8



**Sussex Opera and Ballet Society**  
Registered Charity 271113

Friends of the Towner  
*in association with*  
Sussex Opera and Ballet Society

**Singers from the  
Royal College of Music  
will perform songs and arias.  
Directed by Nick Sears.**

This fascinating event, showing off the talents of the young singers from the college, will be of great interest to all lovers of vocal music, performed by the singers of the future already in their final years study.



Nick Sears trained at Trinity College Cambridge and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Nick worked for many years as an operatic and concert soloist - first as baritone and later as tenor. In addition to his performance, teaching and artist management experience, Nick Sears has worked for the Development Department of English Touring Opera, and as an auditions and careers consultant for RNCM and Trinity Laban.



The Royal College of Music

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## Sir John Tusa Man for All Seasons

Thursday 29 March, 7.30pm

Birley Centre

Admission £12 (Members £10)

Since he launched his career as a BBC trainee in 1960, John Tusa has scarcely been out of the public eye. After going freelance he presented '24 Hours' in the BBC World Service. He switched to television in 1979, presenting 'Newsnight;' from its inception.

In 1986 the BBC chose this most brilliant of broadcasters to be Managing Director of the World Service. He led his internationally-minded staff of journalists, language specialists and broadcasters for seven exciting years - probably the heyday of the World Service. His departure was much lamented at Bush House.

In the mid-1990s John was back in front of the cameras, reading the 'One O'Clock News'. Even after seven years in management John showed he was still a compelling broadcaster.



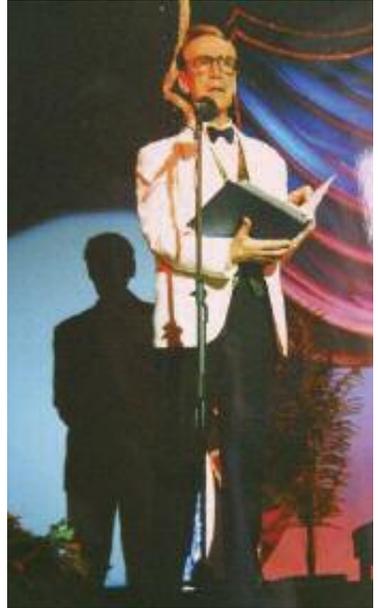
John has always been a passionate lover of the performing arts and especially of music. In 1995 he became Managing Director of the Barbican Arts Centre in the City of London. Since 1998 he has been chairman of the board of the Wigmore Hall. John was appointed chairman of the University of the Arts in 2007. In that same year he published '*Engaged with the Arts: Writings from the Frontline*'. In it John explored how the arts can survive in a climate in which funds are constantly under threat.

Throughout his career Sir John Tusa has been the most trenchant and eloquent defender of the role of the arts in society, as you will discover when you hear him at the Birley Centre.

**Robin Gregory**  
**The Great Musicals: Musical  
Theatre, its Origins and Future**  
**Thursday 12 April, 7.30pm**  
**Birley Centre**  
Admission £8 (Members £6)

Robin Gregory will be presenting an illustrated talk on Great Musicals, at the Birley Centre. Since moving to Eastbourne Robin has written and presented some fifty programmes on BBC Radio Two, on such subjects as Tenors, Divas, Singers of the Century and Operetta, with one-hour specials on Paul Robeson, Webster Booth and Gigli.

It's no surprise that his love of the Theatre has led him to some strong views on Musicals. His collection of recordings contains fascinating examples which he will share with his audience. He has twice addressed the Ashridge Circle, which enjoys the largest attendance of any English regular lecture organisation. He is proud to be President of the Sussex Opera and Ballet Society.



Robin Gregory introducing  
Dame Felicity Lott at the De La  
Warr Pavilion

Robin has lost count of the number of talks he has given for the Towner Friends. His most recent talk was on Vaughan Williams, which was “sold out” at the Hydro.



# Travels in Italy – Art Galleries

by Philip Anson

In October 2011 for my annual holiday, I went on a coach tour of Italy. During my trip, I visited Florence and Rome which have some of the best museums and Art Galleries in the world.

In Florence, there are many museums/galleries including the Uffuzzi Art Gallery which has a number of very valuable paintings including those by Leonardo da Vinci, Tintoretto and Botticelli. Many of the other museums in Florence also have wonderful paintings by these artists.



David (copy of original statue) outside Vecchio Museum, Florence

Unfortunately many people want to see these paintings and the Uffuzzi Gallery has set up a system of two queues: those who have purchased advance tickets who can go straight in and those who turn up on the day, joining a queue which never seems to move!



Roof top views over Florence

Not all tour operators include the Uffuzzi in their excursions to Florence because it costs 15 euro per person to buy advance tickets (£13.60). So if you are visiting Italy and are keen to visit the Uffuzzi Museum it is essential to check if it's included in your excursion package.



Inside the Vecchio Museum, Florence

Similar problems occur if you visit Rome. Most tours take you to St Peter's Square and give you free time for a few hours.



*The Original Sin, Michelangelo*  
Sistine Chapel

You need to go to the Vatican Museum about half a mile away from St Peter's. Again, there is a long line to join for those who do not have advance tickets.



Inside the Vatican Museum



St Peter's Square



Ceiling detail, The Vatican Museum

It's free to enter St Peter's Church there are long queues, even off-season. This does not include visiting the Sistine Chapel, where the best paintings are.



Above photos:  
The Coliseum, Rome

## EXHIBITIONS AT TOWNER

### New Eyes

22 October 2011 – 19 February 2012

Six artists from Blue Monkey Network, an artist network run by local artists in partnership with Towner, have been given a unique opportunity to curate a collection display at Eastbourne's award-winning gallery.

The group of artists were inspired by the Marcel Proust quote "*The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes*". Comprising a painter, a printmaker, a sculptor, a photographer, a ceramicist and an installation artist, the group reflects the breadth of contemporary artistic practice locally. Following their own voyage of discovery, they have created a diverse display that leads the visitor on a journey into the collection, its artists and their recesses.

The exhibition includes etchings by Picasso, teacup designs and woodblocks by Eric Ravilious and a film piece by Tacita Dean – whose work is currently on display in Tate Modern's famous Turbine Hall. Also on display are works by founder of the British pop art movement Eduardo Paolozzi, Turner Prize winner Grayson Perry, ceramics by Quentin Bell and much more. The works on show range from painting and printmaking to ceramics and photography – all selected from Towner's internationally renowned permanent collection.

The Bluemonkeynet curatorial team is: Paul Bartholomew, Sally Colledge, Nikki Davidson-Bowman, Sheila Hay,

Axel Hesslenberg and Cat Ingrams. Bluemonkeynet is a not for profit organisation, funded by membership subscriptions and supported by the Networking Artists' Networks initiative.

For more information on the New Eyes display or Bluemonkeynet artist network visit Towner's website – [www.townereastbourne.org.uk](http://www.townereastbourne.org.uk)



Tacita Dean, Bag of Air

### EXCLUSIVE FOR THE FRIENDS

#### New Eyes

**Walk & Talk event exclusive to Friends of the Towner**

Thurs 19 January. 3.00 - 4.30pm

Friends only, private walk and talk of the winter Collection exhibition: 'New Eyes' - followed by tea and cake. Led by Towner's assistant curator Julie Brown

Tickets £8 - advance purchase only from Philip Anson tel: 01323 411906

## FRIDAY TALKS FOR THE FRIENDS



### **A NEW DIRECTION FOR THE FRIENDS !** **With lecturer Michael Kaye** **Art history talks at the Junction Box,** **Towner Gallery. All talks 3-4.30pm**



#### **Talk 1** **Friday 17 February** **Losing Our** **Marbles?**

A look at the art of the ancient world as reflected by the British Museum collection. Should we send back artifacts such as the Elgin Marbles, the Rosetta Stone and the Benin Bronzes? Illustrated with photographs taken in the Museum by Michael.

#### **Talk 2** **Friday 16 March** **The Building Plot**

Eastbourne's history through its architecture, from 12th century to the present day.



#### **Talk 3** **Friday 20 April** **Rome Re-discovered**

From 13th century Italian scholars rummaged enthusiastically through the remains of the ancient world. Out of this exploration came the Renaissance. It took a little longer for the new wave to reach Britain and as usual it was a bit of a compromise. Hampton Court and the National Gallery.



#### **Talk 4** **Friday 18 May** **Not Just** **Academic**

The Renaissance influenced art almost down to our own time. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the creation of a 'British School' of art in the wake of the foundation of the Royal Academy. The National Portrait Gallery.



#### **Talk 5** **Friday 15th June** **Art Is What I Say It Is!**

The supremacy of French art and the arrival of Modernism. From the Barbizon School onward French innovation dominated the world of Western art. But, after 1945, the centre of the avant-garde moved to New York and thence on to London.



Ticket cost per talk £8  
restricted to members.

*To secure you place please fill in  
the enclosed yellow form.*

Photos by Michael Kaye

## MUSICAL EASTBOURNE PUNCHES ABOVE ITS WEIGHT

### *Robin Gregory considers past and present examples of a fine tradition*

Eastbourne has always had a strong musical heritage. Between the wars great performers graced the stage of the Winter Garden. Visiting orchestras and conductors boosted the regular work of our home-grown players. Glazunov, no less, was at the Congress as it opened, and today no music-lover can afford to miss the visiting London Phil, the regular Sunday music at the Under Ground Theatre, the work of our many fine choirs, or concerts by the several Eastbourne orchestras.

But standing behind such riches are some prestigious organisations which ensure that youthful rising stars are supported and encouraged. I well remember seeing young master Kempf, the fourteen year-old winner of the Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra's competition, perform at the Congress. Then in 1998 (as Frederick Kempf) he went on to win the Bronze Medal at the Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow, changing "Frederick" to "Freddy". He is now much sought-after onstage and on disc, but he has not forgotten that early link with the town, having become the Patron of the Norah Sande Award, which is now in its seventh year.

The well-funded Norah Sande Award, though based entirely in Eastbourne, is by no means merely local in scope. Pianists aged from 18 to 25 may compete, provided they have defined links with Kent, Sussex, Surrey or London; and as "study" is included in that remit students at all the great London music colleges are eligible. As a result the five previous competitions have been won by talented and committed performers who have delighted audiences not only during the Heats and the Final

Round, but especially at the Recital which each winner gives as part of his or her prize.



This year's winner in July was **Cordelia Williams**, who had already landed the piano prize at the 2006 BBC Young Musicians Competition. Her sell-out recital on November 18th at the Birley Centre of Eastbourne College was sponsored by the Friends of the Towner, who do as much for music as for art. She was introduced by Eastbourne's Mr Music, Spencer Freeman, and she herself gave delightful and informative spoken introductions to the music she had chosen.

In Beethoven's late Opus 109 Sonata (which is unusual in having three movements which run Slow-Fast-Slow) she progressed impeccably to the magical ending of the final theme-and-variations.



Spencer Freeman

Liszt's *Leggierazza* Study displayed her dexterity, never losing the musical impetus; and she then brought his view of Swiss Lake Wallenstadt into a magical, misty focus. To complete the first half, Liszt's *Benediction* was a superbly-judged re-creation of the composer's religious conviction.

After the interval Cordelia showed that she could grasp all the complexities of one of the keyboard's greatest, and most extended, love-poems: Schumann's *Fantasie in C*. All the composer's desperate passion for Clara rang in our ears: only a superb performance of every movement can achieve this. We had poetry, vigour and desperation, but always supreme pianistic control. Perhaps Cordelia is herself in love: but certainly, as she took her deserved applause, the entire audience was in love with her. When Elizabeth Muir Lewis made her vote of thanks in the presence of the Mayor, we all knew that Eastbourne had done it again.



Elizabeth thanking Cordelia



The Mayor Carolyn Heaps



Viewers before the recital



Photos by Michael Kaye



Geoffrey Mantle selling tickets

## FRIENDS OF THE TOWNER

**Patron** The Duke of Devonshire KCVO, CBE, DL

**President** The Worshipful the Mayor of Eastbourne

**Vice President** Geoffrey Williams

**Chairman** Elizabeth Muir-Lewis

**Honorary Treasurer** Rodney Browne

**Honorary Secretary** vacant

### Committee Members

Ron Cussons, Ann Gregory, Robin James, Frances Lloyd, Frances Robinson, Geoffrey Mantle, Michael Kaye, Sheila Yates

**Co-opted Member** Philip Anson

**EBC Representative** Councillor Neil Stanley

### Events Committee

Michael Kaye (Chair), Elizabeth Muir-Lewis, Ann Gregory, Robin James, Frances Lloyd, Margaret Whitehead

### *The Friends of the Towner Newsletter*

**Editor** Sheila Yates

sheilayates4@btinternet.com

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We would love to hear your comments and views on our events. Let our chairman Elizabeth know. Email: [pridmore789@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:pridmore789@tiscali.co.uk)

# Forthcoming Events 2012



Thursday 5 January, 7.30pm  
**Professor Anthony Slinn**  
**Salvador Dalí**  
The Birley Centre

Monday 6 February  
**Day Trip to the  
Royal Academy  
of Music**  
*Richard Lewis vocal  
prize Final*



Thursday 23 February, 7.30pm  
**Robert Cohen**  
**Cello Concerto**  
The Birley Centre



Sunday 11 March, 2.30-5.00pm  
**Afternoon of Music  
with the Singers from  
The Royal College of Music**  
The Birley Centre



Thursday 29 March, 7.30pm  
**Sir John Tusa**  
**A Man for All Seasons**  
The Birley Centre



Thursday 12 April, 7.30pm  
**Robin Gregory**  
**The Great Musicals**  
**Illustrated Talk**  
The Birley Centre

For tickets, please complete the ticket order form. Enquiries regarding tickets only to Philip Anson on 01323 411906 . Tickets are also available from the Tourist Information Centre, Cornfield Road.