

celebrating 125 years

Debbie Williamson gives us an insight into the distinguished circle of friends of John Singer Sargent RA and the Broadway Colony...



For more information about the Festival and the 2012 Festival dedicated to the life and work of Alfred Parsons visit:

www.broadwayartsfestival.com

Debbie Williamson is a member of the Broadway Arts Festival Steering Committee

The picturesque Cotswold village of Broadway hosted its inaugural Broadway Arts Festival last month recognising its internationally renowned artistic heritage. Dedicated to John Singer Sargent RA and the Broadway Colony, the 10-day Festival celebrated the 125th anniversary of Sargent's first visit to Broadway and his iconic painting *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*.

Sargent (1856 – 1925), painted *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* whilst staying in Broadway during the summers of 1885 and 1886. He was a member of the Broadway colony of artists that included writers, musicians, actors and notable architects who were all drawn to the village at that time and made Broadway their home. Sargent's circle of artistic friends; Francis Millet, Henry James, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Edwin Austin Abbey, Edmund Gosse, Alfred Parsons, Mary Anderson and others, all enjoyed the quiet village life but also participated in rollicking evenings of music and dance of what Millet described at the time as 'high cockalorum'.

The 2010 Festival was opened by Richard Ormond CBE, a distinguished academic and great-nephew of Sargent. The gallery at Trinity House housed an exhibition of over 30 paintings and sculpture by Sargent, Francis Millet, Alfred Parsons, Phil May and Laura Alma-Tadema all generously loaned from public and private collections including, courtesy of Tate Britain, two sketches of Dorothy and Polly Barnard, the daughters of Fred Barnard and the models for *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*. A photographic exhibition at Cotswold Design Centre complemented the exhibition with a series of photographs of the village during the

late 1800s and early 1900s.

Broadway's High Street was decorated with thousands of lanterns similar to those used by Sargent in *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* and St Michael's Church hosted a most beautiful Flower Festival based on the theme of the painting. The Festival featured a number of plays including an interesting and informative evening of music and images by the Canadian author, Hugh Brewster, titled '*Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose: The Story behind the Painting*', performances of Frances Hodgson Burnett's enchanting '*The Secret Garden*', Oscar Wilde's social comedy '*An Ideal Husband*' as well as the internationally acclaimed one-man entertaining show '*An Evening with Mark Twain*' starring Gavin Wilson. Mark Twain has an interesting connection with the Broadway colony, having been best man at Millet's wedding in Paris.

The Festival also featured musical workshops and concerts including a virtuosic performance of Elgar's 2nd Symphony transcribed for piano by the accomplished musician and composer Iain Farrington. A concert of music of the time incorporated the glee that inspired the title of Sargent's painting.

The village of Broadway celebrated the Festival with a Community Celebration for the whole village on the green led by a children's lantern procession and opened by designer of the decade George Davies. The finale, a celebrity cricket match at Broadway Cricket Club, re-enacted one of the matches between Broadway-based Shakespearian actress Mary Anderson de Navarro's Broadway team and the team of Sir JM Barrie, creator of *Peter Pan*, *The Allahakbarries*. **PS**