

# What's on at Fota-Autumn 2009

We look forward to seeing you at one or more of the exciting range of indoor and outdoor events taking place this season. As always, any profits will go towards the ongoing restoration of Fota House.

For bookings call 021 481 5543

**Friday 28 & Saturday 29 August**  
Summer Theatre at Fota  
'The Cherry Orchard'

7.30pm  
€20.00 per ticket

The Adult Theatre Company of the Gaiety School of Acting (Cork) will present a unique version of the 'Cherry Orchard' by Anton Chekhov at Fota House. First performed in 1904, this comedy about a family in danger of losing its mansion due to financial problems is curiously up-to-date and wonderfully suitable for the stunning setting of Fota House. The performance will move from room to room over the entire ground floor. This play is a fitting finale to the Summer Theatre at Fota House series.

**Sunday 13th September**  
Family Fun at Fota

11.00am - 1.00pm & 2.00 - 4.00pm  
Parents FREE with child's ticket of €10  
Local Cork Harbour wildlife photographer Jim Wilson will be presenting an awesome slideshow and talk to both children and adults alike. Jim has covered wildlife from Cork to Antarctica and has an amazing collection of photos - from razorbills, shags and bees to penguins and and sharks. He'll also lead you on a nature walk around the arboretum to "see what turns up."



**Sunday 20th September**  
Lunchtime Concert - Bob van Asperen

1.00pm  
€20.00 per ticket

As part of the East Cork Early Music Festival, Dutch harpsichordist, organist, clavichordist and conductor, Bob Van Asperen will be giving a Harpsichord Recital at Fota House. Van Asperen is currently a Professor at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam.

**Saturday 26 September**  
Gardening Seminar  
'Grow Your Own'

9.00am - 4.00pm  
€45 per ticket



For all those interested in Growing Fruits & Vegetables, Brian Cross (A.T.C Garden Designer and Consultant), Nuala Madigan (Irish Peatland Conservation Council) and Joy Larkcom (Author of 'Grow Your Own Vegetables') will be at Fota for the day giving talks and walks and demonstrations. Lunch is not included but available in The Café at Fota House (optional). Places are limited, so pre-booking is essential.

**Thursday 1 October**  
Evening Concert - Colin McLean

8.00pm  
€20.00 per ticket

Fota will be the venue for a magical evening with classical guitarist, Colin McLean. McLean has been awarded Winner in the Solo Classical Guitarist section at Feis Matthew for two years running. He was also the first ever Guitarist to win a Senior Recital in the Cork School of Music. The concert will consist mostly of South American and Spanish works, including Tangos, Milongas and Waltzes. Composers include Tarrega, Pujol, Villa Lobos, York and Piazzola. Early booking advised.



**Sunday 11 October**  
Family Fun at Fota

11:00am-1:00pm & 2:00pm - 4:00pm  
Parents FREE with €10 child's ticket.  
It will be fun - we just haven't got it completely finalized yet.

**Halloween 2009**

We are busy putting together a fantastic package of events for this spooky time. Keep an eye on our website for further information. We will have events for children and for adults.

## Fota House & Cafe Opening Hours

Daily 10.00am - 5.00pm /Apr - Oct

Adult: €6.00

Child: €3.00

Senior Citizens / Students: €4.00

Group (15+): €4.00

Family (2 adults +2 children): €15.00

## Arboretum & Garden Opening Hours

Daily 8.00am - 6.00pm

## Walled Garden (to end of September)

Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.45pm

Sunday 2.00 - 5.00pm

Gardens & Arboretum are FREE

**Fota House**  
Arboretum  
& Gardens

## IRISH HERITAGE TRUST

Iontaobhas Oidhreachta na hÉireann

The Irish Heritage Trust is acquiring, through negotiation and tax incentives, historic properties, houses and gardens that will be open for everyone's enjoyment forever.

Huge thanks to all those who responded to our call for Volunteers in the May Newsletter. As a charitable organisation, we rely heavily on volunteers and are deeply grateful for the support which we receive. We are developing the Volunteers Programme with great consideration and planning to ensure that expectations will be met. The possibilities at Fota are endless - come along, get involved and have fun - watch this space for more details as they develop!

Interested in Volunteering? Please contact us at 021 481 5543 or email [info@fotahouse.com](mailto:info@fotahouse.com).

**Fota House**  
Arboretum  
& Gardens

Volume One, Issue Three  
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**Boutez en Avant**  
Fota House, Arboretum & Gardens — An Irish Heritage Trust Property

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## Success for Summer Theatre at Fota



Actors Ronan Wilmot & Ena May, 'The Tailor and Ansty' by Eric Cross  
Photograph Courtesy of Gerard Bonus, Cork

*"It has been a great pleasure to be able to perform this very special Cork story in such a wonderful setting."*

- Actor Ronan Wilmot

The inaugural season of 'Summer Theatre at Fota' opened on the 21st of July with *The Tailor and Ansty* by Eric Cross. Fota House, in partnership with The New Theatre, Dublin, brought this superbly successful production to Fota for an unprecedented five weeks run. Staged in a marquee on the parterre lawn just behind Fota House, it was an intimate experience, as the specially designed theatre afforded excellent views of the performance from each of the 100 seats.

Although only two actors were on stage during the production, they brought countless additional characters to life through vivid storytelling worthy of the great Seanachai from West Cork upon whom the play is based. As word of mouth spread of the quality of the

performances by Ronan Wilmot and Ena May, the audiences grew in numbers, with sell-out crowds in the last two weeks.

Many theatre-lovers enjoyed an excellent pre-show dinner prepared by our own Cafe@Fota and served in the Billiard Room and Long Gallery of Fota House. There were even several beautiful evenings which allowed for early arrivers to enjoy a fantastic sunset over the park land in front of the house, or a stroll around the gardens.

The encore for this first Summer Theatre at Fota was a two-day performance of *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov which ran on Friday 28th and Saturday 29th August at 7.30pm, brought to Fota by The Adult Theatre Company of the Gaiety

School of Acting (Cork). First performed in 1904, Anton Chekhov's comedy about a family in danger of losing its mansion due to financial problems was curiously up to date and wonderfully suitable for the stunning setting of Fota House. Performed from room to room on the entire ground floor of the House, the evening combined an intimate visit to Fota House with a hilarious investigation into the all too human denial of unpaid bills.

The play was fully booked out on both evenings.

Based on your fantastic support, we will expand this major initiative to connect the performing arts with the beautiful house so that in years to come, summer becomes synonymous with theatre at Fota.

## Island Life Improved with Cooperation

In every cloud there is a silver lining. The economic downturn is giving many of us the opportunity to enjoy 'stay-casions' instead of going abroad, and the result has been a bumper crop of visitors to Fota House this summer. By the start of August, our numbers had exceeded the total for all 12 months of 2008.

Our neighbours are also experiencing the same thing. The Wildlife Park is having a record year, the Fota Island Hotel & Spa are up over last year, and although there are no official records kept, it appears that the Gardens and Arboretum are also being enjoyed by many, many visitors. Obviously, Fota Island has become a fantastic combined tourist destination!

All of these attractions on Fota Island are now working more closely together than ever before to create a complete package for the visitor, and ensure an improved, overall island experience. The most visible aspect of this so far



is our new internal land train "Jeep Safari". It completes a round trip from the Fota train station to the Fota Island Hotel and Spa three times a day, with stops in both directions at Fota House.

This makes a visit to Fota by train from Cork or Cobh (and now Midleton and

Carrigtwohill) all the more attractive. Go to [www.fotahouse.com](http://www.fotahouse.com) for the timetable of this FREE land-train service.

We are also working on joint marketing initiatives, as well as some spectacular Fota Island-wide events for 2010.

## Magnificent Dining at Fota by Tom Fannon, Property Manager



John Smith-Barry, grandson of the 4th earl of Barrymore acquired the moniker of "John the Magnificent," some say because of the lavish dinner parties he threw right here in the dining room of Fota House. Our two beautiful sarcophagus-shaped wine coolers nestled under the side tables give credence to this theory. Each holds 8

magnum bottles of Champagne - more than one for each seat at the table!

I had the pleasure of experiencing just what it must have been like for John and his guests, as I organized a dinner party for some of my dearest friends, and availed of the magnificent splendour of Fota House as the perfect setting. We all got into the spirit of the event; the men donned black ties, the women wore lovely gowns. Of course, as special guests, we were allowed drive right up to the front of the house. We sipped champagne upon arrival in the front hall. We took a leisurely stroll through Fota's main reception rooms, enjoying the art, the furniture, the beautiful ceilings, and general ambience that is unique to Fota. Then we settled into the dining room where we were served a most divine meal, prepared

by Fota's very own chef Pauline Hoey. We changed the seating arrangement after the main course. We posed for plenty of photos. A few speeches were attempted. We intended to have brandy in the library after dinner, but we ended up having it in the dining room as the crowd was deep in conversation and wouldn't be moved. What we most certainly did was enjoy a very special evening that will be remembered for a very long time.

To organise an event like this for you and your friends, family, or business associates, please get in touch with us. You might be surprised at how reasonable the cost will be, especially if, like in my case, everyone pitches in.

We'd love to carry on the tradition of "John the Magnificent!" (021-4815543)

## Lookout for Changes!

Over the next three years, we are going to be carrying out many improvements at Fota. This is thanks to a large grant from Failte Ireland, as well as your donations and sponsorship. The first changes you will see will be to the car park where we expect to start improvements over the coming winter.

We are hoping that everything we do

will enhance your experience at Fota House. To keep abreast of the changes, look to our website [www.fotahouse.com](http://www.fotahouse.com)

### Fota Website

Keep up-to-date with Fota events and changes by visiting our new website [www.fotahouse.com](http://www.fotahouse.com) which we launched earlier this year



## Gardener's Patch

by David O'Regan  
Head Gardener working for the Office of Public Works at Fota Arboretum & Gardens

In August I started on a job, which on average extends over a period of at least two months. It is of course the cutting of the Yew hedges within the walled gardens. The Pleasure garden hedge was planted in 2000 and the Rose garden in 2002.



The photograph above shows the results of a lot of time, patience and a good eye. Many visitors derive great pleasure from the completed work and regularly express it. I would suspect that a degree of envy is also present and wish that the same result could be achieved at home!

## "Grow Your Own" Gardening Seminar

For all those interested in growing Fruits & Vegetables, come to Fota and enjoy a day's seminar with Brian Cross (A.T.C. Garden Designer & Consultant), Nuala Madigan (Irish Peatland Conservation Council) and Joy Larkcom (award winner of the RHS Veitch Memorial Medal and the Garden Writer's Guild Lifetime Award).

Brian Cross will be speaking about 'Creating a Fruit Garden' with practical demonstrations in the gardens of Fota House. He'll be getting right down to it - planting fruit trees and various soft fruits so

While I was disappointed with the Roses this year, there was a period when the overall display was heart warming and uplifting. Some will produce a second flush and more will keep flowering late into the year. The Dahlias in the Rose garden have performed exceptionally well and we are very lucky to have them. They were gifted to us from Killarney House where they grew in the cut flower garden for many decades.

The signs of autumn have appeared early this year. Already the beginning of August gave cool mornings and heavy dew. Some trees are shedding leaves and more are starting to get those early tints of autumn colour. There appears to be a bumper crop of Autumn fruit. Watch out for our annual guided walk in late October...

The kids will soon return to school and the red squirrels, missing for the summer, will hopefully return to fill their winter larders with nuts and seeds. We will enjoy their company as we prepare for the winter and its long nights and plan for the New Year ahead.

For the remainder of the year, the Gardens and Arboretum at Fota will be open daily from 8.00am until 6.00pm.

The Walled Garden will be open until the end of September, from Monday to Friday, from 9.00am until 5.45pm and on Sunday from 2.00pm until 5.00pm. Fota Arboretum & Gardens are free of charge. Come and enjoy!

you can repeat the process when you get home to your own garden! Nuala Madigan will cover 'An Introduction to Composting' and Joy Larkcom will be teaching us about 'Creative Vegetable Gardening'.

After lunch there will be a walk through Fota Arboretum & Gardens with Brian Cross. Related books and gardening merchandise will be on sale during the day.

Lunch is not included but is available in our excellent Cafe@Fota.

For more information, look to our website [www.fotahouse.com](http://www.fotahouse.com), or call 021 481 5543 (bookings) Cost of Seminar: €45.00 Day will start 9.00am and end c.4.00pm

## Irish Heritage Trust Moves to Number 11 Parnell Square

On the 30th July, the Irish Heritage Trust moved its premises from No.4 Castle Street, Dublin 2 to the majestic location of No.11 Parnell Square, Dublin 1. Parnell Square is the first of Dublin's Georgian squares, built between 1753 and 1785. No.11 is located on Cavendish Row, Parnell Square East. It faces onto the entrance gates of The Garden of Remembrance, once Lord Charlemont's pleasure gardens. The building enjoys many other arts and heritage neighbours: Irish Writers Centre; Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane; The Gate Theatre.

The building itself is one of the two largest and earliest houses on the East side of Parnell Square, built on a lease of 1753. The building retains much of its Georgian splendour, while some elements were substantially and fantastically remodelled in 1901 following its acquisition for the offices of the newly established Dublin County Council, founded in 1898.

Our long-term plan is to restore the property and fill its wonderful spaces with like-minded bodies from the arts and heritage world.

We would like to thank the Dublin Civic Trust for their friendship these past years. We would also like to note our appreciation to Fingal County Council for allowing us to explore the potential of No.11 Parnell Square.

Thanks to Deidre Conroy of Architectural Heritage Consultants for her research above.

