

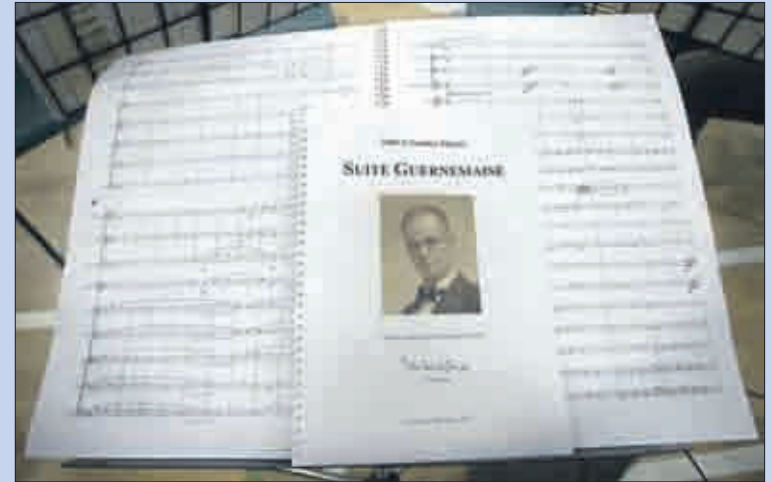
# Suite Guernesiaise charms and enthralls as Camerata serenades

**S**ERENADE: a performance given to honour or express love for someone. It was the theme that wove its way through the whole of Guernsey Camerata's Evening Serenade concert last month, from the opening drama of Schubert's Overture to Rosamunde to the final, wistful string glissando in Robert Farnon's Portrait of a Flirt. However, the world premiere of Suite Guernesiaise by John Crossley-Hayes formed the centrepiece of the evening. Crossley-Hayes wrote the suite in 1942, while teacher-in-charge of Vauvert School, to reflect his love of Guernsey and in remembrance of happier times. The original scores rested in a cupboard until Crossley-Hayes's death in 2003, when the suite was rediscovered by his daughter, Ildiko Hayes, who dedicated herself to ensuring that her father's work was performed. Ildiko Hayes and other family members were present at this first performance of Suite Guernesiaise, the culmination of 67 years' work by both father and daughter. Similar in style to Percy Grainger, an impression of Guernsey was tangible throughout Suite Guernesiaise. The first movement introduced Guernsey from the sea with surging orchestral swells, while the second

## Review by Ed Jewell

movement focused on the island's pastoral life, with wonderfully stirring solos from the lead cello and bassoon. The final movement took the form of a cheerful march, perhaps in contrast to the martial environment in which Crossley-Hayes found himself. The evening had begun with Franz Schubert's Overture to Rosamunde. Deceptively simple, the overture takes the play's orchestral motifs and repeatedly layers them around each other – gradually building a whirling sense of sound, skilfully directed by conductor Murray Stewart. Following the drama of Rosamunde, a calm air of gentility settled upon St James as the first confident notes of Mozart's Concerto for Flute and Harp K299 rung out. The combination of Fionna Traver's flute and Elizabeth Scora's harp gave the impression of an exquisite music box being opened up on stage. The atmosphere moved from gentle enjoyment to rapt fascination in the final moments of the piece, as harp and flute embarked on an unaccompanied duet, creating a completely entrancing soundscape.

The delicate ambience created by Travers and Scora was continued as Ravel's Pavane pour une infante defunte opened with a poised and sustained tenor horn solo, followed by soft, ethereal sways from the oboe. The bass section held the pace well, with perfectly controlled pizzicato interludes. There was little danger of this becoming, as Ravel described one slow performance of his work, a 'Dead Pavane for a Princess'. The contemplative air of the first half was returned to with Aux etoiles by Henri Duparc. A symphonic poem written in 1874, Aux etoiles is one of Duparc's few surviving works. A mournful note from the tenor horn opened the piece, the orchestra gradually joining in to set a pulsing base for orchestra leader Nicholas Miller's eerily captivating violin to rise from. Fauré's Dolly Suite is familiar to many and it was to the Camerata's credit that the suite sounded fresh again. The theme of serenade was again present, particularly in the beautiful Tendresse as the horn and oboe engaged in a soft exchange, accompanied by swathes of music that appeared to be massaged into life under Stewart's direction. After the calm, reflective music of



**Suite Guernesiaise, by former island resident and teacher John Crossley Hayes, formed the basis for The Guernsey Camerata's Evening Serenade concert last month. (Picture by Adrian Miller, 0848360)**

the preceding pieces, Robert Farnon's Portrait of a Flirt came as something of a shock. Filled with sweeping string crescendos and jabbing notes from muted trumpets, this was akin to being swept around the dance floor by Fred and Ginger. This was mischievous, impish music that demanded spot-on precision from the orchestra and tight control from Stewart as the piece shifted

from languorous sashays to quick two-steps. As the last echoes of the Flirt gadded out of St James, one was left not simply serenaded, but also aware of the unique power of live music to deliver intense and intimate moments, such as the harp and flute duet during the Concerto for Flute and Harp K299 or Duparc's Aux etoiles.