

# ARTS

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WITH COLIN LEACH

During the Occupation John Crossley Hayes was teacher-in-charge at Vauvert and in his spare time he composed music. On Saturday, more than six decades later, Guernsey Camerata will play the world premiere of Suite Guernesiaise. **Shaun Shackleton** reports.

## Suite success

**I**HAVE never heard it played by humans before,' said Ildiko Hayes. 'Except, of course my father when I was about five. Although I have heard it on a computer programme. It just doesn't compare.'

She was talking about her father's composition, Suite Guernesiaise.

'He played piano and flute. Music really is a cut-throat business and he had to make a choice – teacher or musician, and he became a teacher.'

In 1939 John Crossley Hayes came to Guernsey from his evacuated Manchester School to be an assistant teacher at Amherst School.

Refusing to go with the school in the panic evacuation of 20 June 1940, he was given charge of Vauvert, which reopened as an all-age mixed school of 96 pupils (a number which increased to 310).

While still in charge at Vauvert, he also served as a part-time teacher at the Intermediate School and spent six months in the German side of Guernsey Prison after sentence by court-martial for not handing in his wireless set (during which time he was still paid a salary).

Although she was young and the Occupation was an extremely tough time, Ildiko remembers the long curfew nights where the family sang.

She recalls in her memoir, which is published on a website devoted to her father:

'The chief consolation of our lives through the deprivations of wartime was music. There was no radio or TV or any other communication with the outside world, no new books or magazines. For children there was one film marooned on the island, a Laurel and Hardy, and we saw it once a year. But our lives were rich in music. My father spent hours composing on the piano, or on the flute, or just practising the flute, and when not writing his own music he was teaching music at Vauvert School or playing the piano in assembly. We had an enormous repertoire of English, Welsh, Scottish and American folksong, songs by all the great composers from Handel and Mozart to Brahms, Schubert, Mendelssohn and others too numerous to name. We were spiritually sustained by the great Anglican hymns in morning assembly and my father invariably picked the best tunes.'

After the war, Mr Hayes taught at the Boys' Intermediate School until 1947 and then left Guernsey to take up an appointment in Cyprus.

He would go on to hold positions in education in Uganda and in Nigeria.

He died in 2003 and it was while going through his belongings that Ildiko found Suite Guernesiaise.

'When parents die, it takes a long time to sort things out.



Guernsey Camerata busy rehearsing for Saturday's concert.

(Picture by Adrian Miller, 0848357)

'I found it at the bottom of a dusty cupboard in his room. It was an amazing moment. He never spoke about it but it meant a lot to him.'

Now aged 73, Ildiko will hear Suite Guernesiaise played by an orchestra for the first time when it receives its world premiere on Saturday at St James. Guernsey Camerata will play the first, second and fourth movements of the piece.

'Ildiko came over to Guernsey and went to see Mervyn Grand at the Music Centre and asked if he would be interested in playing it,' said Guernsey Camerata director Michelle Nash.

'It came to us as a disc and a score. We had our first rehearsal last Monday. It is really exciting and has got more exciting as the weeks have gone by. I think for Ildiko it will be exciting.'

Getting the composition onto paper was quite a time-consuming task.

'Chris Claxton downloaded and printed it out but was unable to download the second movement. We had to pay a student in

England to download it. 'Then our sponsors, BWCI, put it all into booklets. Then it was ready to give to the orchestra.' Although Ildiko retains the rights to the piece, she has generously allowed a waiver and has given it copyright-free to Guernsey.

'The main thing is to get it played.'

'I am arriving in Guernsey on Thursday and I might be going to Vauvert School and on Friday to the rehearsal.'

'My niece and her family are also coming over.'

In Ildiko's memoir she writes: 'I think the crashing chords my father used to bash out on the piano while composing the suite were inspired by the often turbulent seas off Jerbourg.'

If any group of musicians can do the piece justice, then it is Guernsey Camerata. And there couldn't be a better venue than St James.

'It sort of belongs to Guernsey,' said Ildiko.

Thank you for giving the island the chance to hear it.

**'I think the crashing chords my father used to bash out on the piano while composing the suite were inspired by the often turbulent seas off Jerbourg'**

Ildiko Hayes speaking about her father's composition Suite Guernesiaise



John Crossley Hayes and family.

(0024260)

### Hear Suite Guernesiaise on Saturday

● Guernsey Camerata, conducted by Murray Stewart and led by Nicholas Miller, presents Evening Serenade at 8pm on Saturday at St James. The full programme will feature the world premiere of John Crossley Hayes' Suite Guernesiaise. Tickets are £12, £8 students and £6 restricted view and are available at the box office on 711361. The event is sponsored by BWCI Group and supported by The Guernsey Arts Commission. To find out more about John Crossley Hayes, visit the website [www.johncrossleyhayes.co.uk](http://www.johncrossleyhayes.co.uk).