

## ARTS

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BY COLIN LEACH

The Guernsey Symphony Orchestra continued its 20th anniversary celebrations on Saturday with a concert that featured BBC Young Musician of the year Laura van der Heijden as guest soloist. **Bob Beebe** was there

# A great way for GSO to celebrate 20 years

**C**ELEBRATING the 20th anniversary of the Guernsey Symphony Orchestra couldn't have been marked by a more exciting event than on Saturday evening at St James. In the days leading up to the concert, there was speculation in the air that something special was going to be shared with the audience.

Indeed, for everyone who was lucky enough to get a ticket, a real treat was to be had as the winner of BBC Young Musician of the year Laura van der Heijden was the special guest soloist for the evening.

The concert began with a beautiful rendition of 'Welcome Ode Op.95 by Benjamin Britten, admirably guided by guest conductor for the evening concert Richard Dickens, a graduate of the Royal College of Music and musical director for Imperial College, London.

This beautiful piece featured a wonderful melodic backdrop by the Guernsey Schools Music Service Youth Choir, directed by Rachel Wright.

The piece certainly set the scene for what was to follow. Anticipation was building as Laura van der Heijden arrived on stage.

At the age of 10, Laura had achieved distinction at Grade 8 in both piano and cello and is now just 15 years old.

The 70-piece orchestra also seemed to watch every move Laura made as she prepared to perform her winning piece from the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition, William Walton's Cello Concerto. The orchestra, ably led by regular guest Roger Coull, sensed the excitement as Laura produced a spellbinding, faultless performance.

The way in which she communicated to the audience through the harmony with her cello was beautiful to both watch

and listen to. She made her cello sing out eloquently in a refined and passionate way which captivated the audience from start to finish.

The three movements were almost magical and after the final ruminative one ended very quietly it was met with rapturous applause.

After several encore visits to the stage and with a tear in her eye, she had truly entertained everyone - this star of today and of the future had won the hearts of everyone.

During the interval Laura said she was 'delighted to play in Guernsey for the first time', adding that everyone had been helpful and made her feel very welcome.

The second half of the evening was an opportunity to listen to Schubert's Symphony No.9 in C Major (D944 Great).

This piece was played well, was full of energy and intensity and also showed Schubert's ability to integrate rhythmically inventive allegro with a powerful finale section which thoroughly entertained the audience.

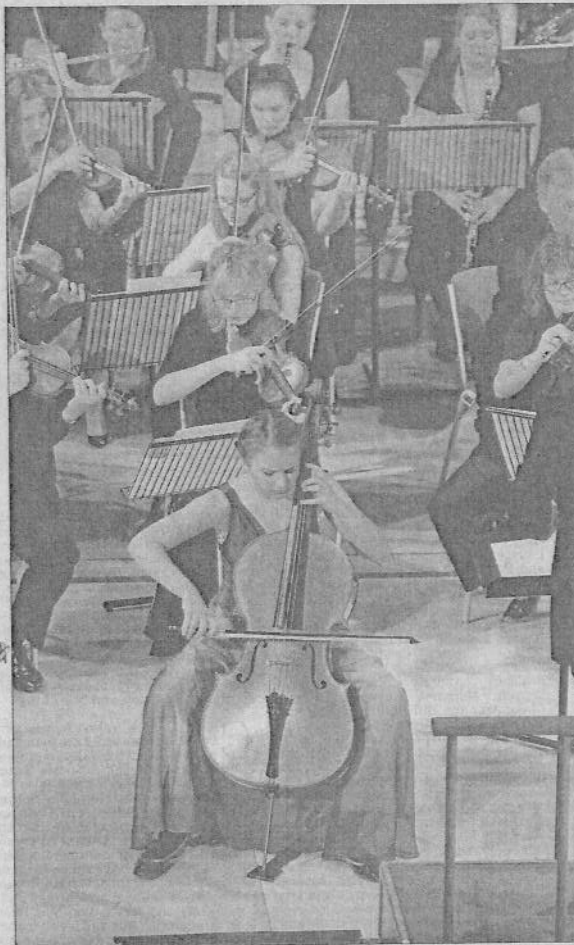
A wonderful balance of music for the entire evening, and a fitting end to the 20th year celebrations of the Guernsey Symphony Orchestra.

With Credit Suisse sponsoring the orchestra for the last 20 years, we are very lucky that we have such talented musicians locally and are able to attract guests of outstanding calibre to the island to play with this accomplished orchestra.

Conductor Richard Dickens told the audience: 'Life without music is a poorer life' and that 'the Music Service players in the island were our diamonds in the Guernsey music crown'.

It was an evening not to be missed and I'm already looking forward to the next GSO Beethoven concert on 16 March next year at St James.

Make a note in your diary - I have.



Cellist Laura van der Heijden with The Guernsey Symphony Orchestra at St James on Saturday. (Picture by Tom Tardif, 1284362)

## Laura van der Heijden

Born in England, Laura van der Heijden joined the Junior Department of the Royal College of Music in 2005, where she learned piano with Emily Jeffrey and participated in many ensembles.

Since 2008 Laura has been a student of the renowned British-Russian cellist Leonid Gorokhov. In 2011 they performed together at the Brighton Festival and in Germany.

In 2010 she won Erster Preis mit Auszeichnung (full marks) and a special prize in the final of the Swiss National Youth Music Competition, which led to her performing the Boccherini Cello Concerto in G with the Zurich Kammer Orchestra at the Zurich Tonhalle in January 2011. She was also the 2011 winner of the Marjorie Humby competition at the Royal College of Music, 2011 Beekham Musician of the Year and 2012 Woking Young Musician of the Year.

Laura's first public performance as a cellist was at the age of nine with the Jupiter Chamber Orchestra. Since then, she has given many recitals and played with various orchestras. Recent performances include Elgar's Cello Concerto with Worthing Philharmonic Orchestra and Dvorak's Cello Concerto with Somerset County Youth Orchestra.



## Bach choir welcomes special guests to Saturday concert

ITS special guests and soloists galore for the Guernsey Bach Choir and Orchestra concert on Saturday.

Conductor Alan Gough will lead the choir and orchestra, which will include James Henderson on organ, mezzo-soprano Alexandra Gibson and Bartone Giles Underwood.

The programme includes Bach's Mass in F Major and Handel's Zadok The Priest and Dettingen Te Deum. Formed in 2007, The Guernsey Bach Choir has already built up a large repertoire of choral music and is now a well-established vocal ensemble with a growing reputation for high-standard performances.

Between them, Alexandra Gibson and Giles Underwood have appeared as

by Shaun Shackleton

soloists and consort singers with some of the leading choral conductors, including Sir Roger Norrington, Harry Christophers and Sir John Eliot Gardiner, and have performed with vocal ensembles such as the Tallis Scholars, the Monteverdi Choir and The Gabrieli Consort.

● The concert takes place at St James this Saturday at 8pm. Tickets are £12 and those for senior citizens, students and restricted view cost £10. They are available from the booking office on 711361 and [www.guernseytickets.gg](http://www.guernseytickets.gg).



The Bach Choir and Orchestra are at St James this Saturday.