

Rochdale's weekly Midday Music Toad Lane Concerts at St Mary in the Baum Church in January 2026

Another richly varied month in this eclectic weekly music series, choir, solo pianists, and guitar duo.

January 07: More than Melody Ladies Choir

... popular visitors, this talented ladies' choir was formed in 2008 'to have fun and fellowship and provide a programme of musical entertainment'. Conductor Jonathan Gibson and pianist Brian Mulligan (who also sang a solo) led the ladies through a delightful programme of Christmas and winter choral music from Jingle Bells and Gracie Fields

numbers to the Skaters' Waltz in excellent part singing and solos. A spontaneous encore of Happy Birthday for a member's one-year-old granddaughter in the audience brought the house down and fulfilled the choir's aims. Perhaps a future member of choir and/or audience? The new year glass looked half full.



January 14: Tim Kennedy concert pianist studied music at Cambridge, but he has now been based in Manchester as a freelance professional musician for more than fifteen years. As well as being a pianist and accompanist (including being a staff pianist at the RNCM) he also works as a professional singer, vocal coach and organist. He entertained right royally with a varied programme of Bach, Beethoven (Moonlight Sonata and Fur Elise) and Brahms, followed by contemporary miniatures and Ragtime featuring George Gerswin – well suited to the 1935 Challen Grand piano.

January 21: Jonathan Ellis concert pianist is highly valued as a regular visiting musician, accompanying

singers and instrumentalists; but today he played in his own right as a concert pianist ... on his very own! He studied on the prestigious joint music course of the RNCM and Manchester University, graduating first-class from both institutions and gaining higher diplomas and prizes as a soloist, accompanist, and chamber musician. He excelled in a romantic rollercoaster of a programme of Beethoven, MacDowell, Chopin and Brahms, plus encores by Schumann.



Jonathan is not just a fine player ... he is a force of nature. We look forward to many more musical contributions as a supportive accompanist and musical partner ... as well as on his very own!

28: The Roth Guitar Duo formed by Emily Smith and Sam Rodwell in 2014 at the RNCM, has become firmly

established in the UK classical guitar scene. Their diverse and engaging programmes of Renaissance pieces to new and unpublished works have captivated audiences across the UK, including multiple invitations to Manchester's Bridgewater Hall. 'Valseana' by the Brazilian Sergio Assad set a peaceful mood immediately. Their guitars did not need amplification in St Mary in the Baum's



generous acoustic– skilful technique made every nuance crystal clear through to the finale, a traditional Congolese 'Banaha' that involved re-tuned strings and mesmerising rhythms arranged by Gary Ryan, Head of Strings at the Royal College of Music. Captivating indeed and fully deserving the accolade of their mentor Craig Ogden as "two of the UK's brightest young stars of the guitar."

The Queen's Award-winning Toad Lane Concerts are every Wednesday at 12.30 pm at St Mary in the Baum, Toad Lane, Rochdale, OL16 1DZ. Entrance fee is £6. Contact 01706 648872 for further information.

Dr Joe Dawson