

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

Another richly varied month in this eclectic weekly music series

**March 04: Students from Chetham's School of Music** - accompanied by Staff Member Gemma Webster, herself an award-winning pianist. Violet sang Handel, Viardot and also Lloyd-Webber's *Wishing you were somehow here again*, all with a pleasing clear tone and engaging manner. Erin's enthusiastic viola playing of J S Bach's unaccompanied Cello Suite No. 4, was followed by the first movement of Hoffmeister's Viola Concerto. Superb. Violet was joined by Miriam for Mendelssohn's Lieder Duets, in beautifully balanced part singing. Cellist Will played Sally Beamish's contemporary unaccompanied piece *Gala Water* and Brahms Sonata op. 99 with immense control, power, and musicianship beyond his years. A fantastic lunchtime concert, doing Chetham's proud and giving enormous pleasure through its gifted students ... and staff.



**March 11: Rochdale Phoenix Opera Company** - Established in 1977 with the merger of Kirkholt G&S Society and Rochdale Intimate Opera Group it represents the borough's rich tradition of amateur operatic and dramatic performance. Firstly a set of solo songs delivered by Anne Butterworth, Jane Reynolds, Gerard Marsden, and Susan Fletcher, accompanied by Elaine Marsden as appetisers. Then the assembled company delivered solos, duets and

extracts from 'The Gondoliers' and 'The Pirates of Penzance' with the second accompanist, Isobel Richie-Ingham. The superb acoustic of St Mary in the Baum made up for the lack of costumes and scenery. All narrated and directed by Jonathan Gibson who has done a great job developing his team's ensemble work.

**March 18: Tonacliffe Primary School** in their fourth annual visit. Headmistress Mrs J Heap brought fifty-five children for a delightful hour of music-making. Few things could signify spring so joyously. The choral singing (sometimes in parts), recorders, embryonic brass group was always enthusiastic. They even sported a solo guitarist, Harry Slattery, who showed much promise with his Turkish March and cheerful smile. Music teacher Freda Farnworth apologised for including Christmas leftovers; but we appreciated the well-rehearsed numbers and that leftovers can often taste better when reheated!



**February 25: Louise Taylor soprano & Jill Taylor mezzo & Jonathan Ellis piano**, two singers with extensive



careers across oratorio, recital, concert and stage. A soaring performance of *The Flower Duet* by Delibes (a.k.a. British Airways advert) established them as fine performers whose voices and characters blend well together. Concert songs by Faure, Hahn, Quilter, Britten plus an extract and solos from *West Side story* and Weill and Blitzstein culminated in Humperdinck's famous duet, *Evening Prayer*. They were expertly accompanied by **Jonathan Ellis** who also contributed a piano interlude with the fantastic concert piece,

*Hungarian Rhapsody in C sharp minor* by Listz, from memory. A terrific trio of talent.

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**