

Toad Lane Concerts at St Mary in the Baum Church in March Beginning and ending with talented youngsters

March 05: Chetham's School of Music Flautist Gabriel played an assured and exuberant Mozart Concerto. Young tenor Joshua gave beautifully controlled interpretations of Schubert, Dowland, and Rodgers'. Violinist Megan drew out every ounce of passion and drama from Wieniawski's Legend, whilst Philippa enchanted the audience with Schubert, Bellini, and Saint-Saëns with a rare true developing mezzo soprano timbre.

This was rounded off by flautist Greta with captivating mature performances of Reinecke.

They were chaperoned and expertly accompanied by Elena Nalimova a member of the piano faculty. Exquisite.

March 12: Rochdale Phoenix Opera Society This successful local society formed in 1977 with the merger of Kirkholt G & S and Rochdale Intimate Opera. Soloists and chorus under Jon Gibson with Edward Rigg accompanying, gave extracts of their forthcoming Princess Ida and sneak previews of next year's show, The Gondoliers. With assorted solo vocal gems from the stage and concert hall this made for a delightful lunchtime at the opera.

March 19: Rachel Stonham violin and Tsukushi Mitsuda piano A master's student at the RNCM, Rachel's recent solo work has involved the Beethoven concerto with the Manchester Philharmonic and Vivaldi's Four Seasons with the Amaretti Chamber Orchestra. This was reflected in her solo tone and commanding interpretation of Martinu, Amy Beach and Schubert. She was supported at short notice by the Japanese RNCM student pianist, Tsukushi Mitsuda who proved to be a superb partner.

March 26: Tonacliffe Primary School This was concert number 1,130 since taking over from the council in 2001 and the youngsters put a spring in its step with their third annual visit. Excellent choral work sometimes unaccompanied and in parts, directed by Freda Farnworth; plus brass octet, clarinets and recorder groups.

Their final song title summed it all up – Supercalifragelisticexpialidocious!

With over 60 children and staff, and 66 in the audience the atmosphere was buzzing for the beginning of spring.

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

