

Toad Lane Concerts at St Mary in the Baum Church in July

Extraordinary piano music, elegant tenor, expert cello and Voci Voices

July 02: John Sabar piano a freelance musician who gained a diploma in his 6th form, a first-class honours degree from York and a master's from the RNCM played a stunning and powerful recital. Grieg's popular Wedding Day at Troldhaugen, JS Bach Partita No. 1 in Bb Major and Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 23, Op. 57, the "Appassionata" were delivered expertly and with enthusiasm.

July 09: Tim Kennedy tenor with Joanna Garcia piano - Two expert performers in an exemplary recital on Shakespeare and Time - time with both was well spent. Both staff accompanists at the RNCM, Tim Kennedy studied music at Cambridge and is also a professional singer, vocal coach and organist. Joanna Garcia gained a First and several prizes from Manchester University and the RNCM. Shakespeare related settings from Quilter, Rota, Bernstein, and Dawson, and theme-related popular standards separated by a terrific piano solo by Ravel.

July 16: Cellist Isabel Williamson (RNCM distinction, Manchester first-class) and **pianist Jonathan Ellis** (multi-award winning RNCM and Manchester graduate) teamed up for a superb concert. Isabel's expertise and versatility met Jonathan's solo and chamber artistry. Beethoven's variations on Mozart's Magic Flute duet, was played with charm and clarity. Schumann's Fantasiestücke highlighted lyrical cello and elegant piano. Beethoven's G minor Sonata Op. 5/2 was dramatic and witty, with equal brilliance from both. A surprise encore (Berkeley's Andantino) was exquisitely played. Chamber music of the highest calibre, delivered by two outstanding musicians Rochdale is lucky to welcome.

July 23: William Poon piano: Hong Kong-born graduate and RNCM masters' scholar, impressed with a recital of Debussy and Schubert. Witty characterisation of eccentric General Lavine; dreamlike atmosphere in Voiles; and dazzling flair in Feux d'artifice displayed both sensitivity and virtuosity. The main work, Schubert's monumental Sonata in B-flat Major, D.960, was delivered with stamina, depth, and expressive nuance. William's interpretation captivated the audience, especially as he performed entirely from memory. A musician of remarkable promise and artistry.

July 30: Voci Voices returned to deliver a pulsating programme. Soprano Elizabeth Ambrose, mezzo Margaret Ferguson, tenor Eric Cymbir, and baritone Mackenzie Paget, with pianist Jonathan Ellis—offered a banquet of styles: jazz, Ketelbey, a sacred set by Mozart, Saint-Saëns, and Rossini, a soulful African lullaby leading into Schubert's Ständchen, followed by Verdi's dramatic Ai Nostri Monti. The mood lightened with The Water is Wide and musical theatre duets from Brigadoon and Phantom of the Opera. The



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finale featured jazzy classics like Smoke Gets in Your Eyes and You Make Me Feel So Young. An encore, Gershwin's I Got Rhythm, capped an enthusiastic and well received performance, perfectly attuned to the venue's acoustics.

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