

Rochdale weekly Midday Music

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

Ladies choir, harp duo, soprano and concert pianist

Rochdale's year as Greater Manchester Town of Culture 2025–26. This grand title, awarded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority celebrates the town's rich history, creativity, talent and diverse arts scene. Good examples of this are found here every week!

August 06: More Than Melody Ladies Choir formed in 2008. Conducted today by avuncular Jonathan Gibson and accompanied by Brian Milligan. MTM seemed to come of age today as a ladies' community choir in compelling part-singing mode: an intense and impressive tone in the wonderful acoustic. This was due to excellent direction. Soloists Suzanne Mather, Jennifer Walkman, Alyson Brailsford and Norma Dagott provided well-earned breathers for the choristers.



August 13: Rascallity Harp Duo – Kathryn Mason (lever harp) and Alice Roberts (concert harp) both first-rate musicians have made several appearances here since forming Rascallity Duo as students; they find the acoustics ideal to project beautifully in many styles. Light jazz, minimalist, folk-like elements combine to produce a mesmerising and contemplative atmosphere. The hypnotic spell was broken all too soon, as the Duo upped the ante with Noche de Fiesta by Alfredo Rolando Ortiz, an upbeat number for a triumphant finale.



August 20: Freda Farnworth soprano & J Edward Rigg piano - two bastions of the local music scene entertained right royally. Freda, a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music has performed professionally in operas, musicals, pantomimes, summer seasons and concerts and has brought her expertise to bear as performer, choir conductor and producer in the borough. We had songs of sun and moon in a variety of settings finishing with a Vera Lyn tribute set including 'We'll meet again.' Given the theme, and Friday being Debussy's birthday, Edward just had to play Clair de Lune! which made a beautiful solo interlude.



August 27: Callum Bisson piano - another local musician graced the platform, this time in his debut recital at the end of his first year at the RNCM. This augured well for the future with JS Bach, Beethoven, Chopin and Rachmaninoff all played superbly. To top it off however, he played one of his own compositions, 'Variations on a Theme by Shostakovich' which was delightfully inventive and played with mature pianism. He began his programme with brief and informative introductions and then played the whole of it from memory. Bags of potential. Watch this space.



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