

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

Another richly varied month in this eclectic weekly music series, soprano and mezzo, solo pianists, and a classical harp duo.

February 4: Imogen Garner mezzo and John Gough piano We are fortunate having such fine performers to maintain the heritage traditions of the vocal recital and British song.

Chester based mezzo-soprano Imogen Garner studied at the RNCM and has sung as a soloist in concerts, live broadcasts, opera companies and choral societies.

John Gough was born and bred in Chester. He enjoys a busy career combining solo playing, accompaniment and teaching. He recently retired as Head of Accompaniment at the RNCM and introduced the songs today with engaging information. Focusing on the great tradition of British song, Imogen used her rich and mellow mezzo tone effectively in settings by Frank Bridge, John Ireland, Janet Hamilton and the rebellious Madeleine Dring, culminating in Elgar's towering song cycle *Sea Pictures*.



February 11: Rascallity Harp Duo Kathryn Mason and Alice Roberts are both first-rate musicians and formed Rascallity Duo as RNCM students; they find the acoustics excellent for their work. Today featured contemporary pieces such as the sparkling soundscape of Caroline Lizotte's *Stellae Saltantem*, with its classical storyline of Ariadne, played by a terrestrial Kathryn and a celestial Alice. They are doing contemporary music and the public a great service by programming it and performing it so well. The finale was a more relaxed yet vibrant 'Caravan' by Juan Tizol and Duke Ellington, arranged by Alice.

That could make a brilliant signature tune for them.

February 18: Adrian Lord pianist composer from Cheshire studied at the RNCM and the Colchester Institute School of Music. However, his late father was born and bred in Milnrow and attended Rochdale Grammar School, which perhaps grants the son with token Rochdale citizenship? Adrian introduced and played several of his works to great effect. His final piece, *Time to Remember* brought him round to his beginnings and was dedicated to mum! A kind of 'Knutsford Einaudi,' Adrian proved as approachable and engaging as his music proved accessible, as several people stayed to chat, peruse and purchase his books, CDs ... and vinyl!



February 25: African soprano Margaret Ferguson and Welsh born pianist Mackenzie Paget, both highly trained at the RNCM at different times, made a great duo today. Varied repertoire from the old English 'Cherry Ripe', Bellini, Mozart, Tosti, Haydn's Creation, spirituals with modern riffs and Gershwin with involuntary audience participation! was all expertly performed, with hilarious moments. This joyful hour came to a beautifully satisfying gentle close with a simple, reflective performance of Marta Keen's *Homeward Bound*.



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