Wilfred Owen’s poetry is set to music

By DAISY WILLIAMS

The works of war poet Wilfred Owen were a constant theme of Dean Johnson’s school life as a teenager. Now they have inspired him to put the poet’s poignant message to music, with a little help from some big names.

Pink Floyd’s Dave Gilmour, actor Christopher Timothy and Liverpool performer John Gorman, from The Scaffold, are all contributing to the project, in Birkenhead’s Argyle Street last year. He went to the same Birkenhead school as Owen, and the drama-musical Bullets and Daffodils.

Story, the only museum dedicated to the poet’s tragic tale – he died just before the Armistice – was a constant presence during his education.

“Owen’s poems demonstrate the gruesome awfulness that happened to these men through no fault of their own,” Dean says. “The songs are illustrative rather than demonstrative, to help the story along,” said John. “Wilfred Owen died a week before the end of the First World War; the war to end all wars. There were 40 million casualties and 60 million people displaced, yet he died thinking it was for a good cause.

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Liverpool icon John was persuaded to take on the project to celebrate a poet whose words, he believes, were marginalised for a very long time, as was the connection between Owen and Birkenhead.

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Public urged to join city’s Big Sing

LIVERPOOL hosts a three-day celebration of a cappella singing next month. From hip hop to barbershop and contemporary jazz to choral, the Voices Festival will showcase the full range of a cappella singing styles, with a chance for all to get involved.

Organised by inspirational company Sense of Sound to celebrate singing, it opens on March 16 with a National Conference for Singing and Health. Later Sense of Sound Singers and Connie Lush pay homage to Joni Mitchell in a gig at Black-E. On March 17 choirs from across the region sing at the Bluecoat Hub, where the public can join in. Beethoven, Shlomo, plays Black-E that night. A free family fun day follows on March 18.

● Voices Festival, Liverpool, March 16-18, senseofsound.net.

TV footie hit on tour

TELEVISION hit show Soccer Anyday Live is going live this spring at Jeff Stelling and the Sky Sports team hit the road for a UK arena tour, calling in at Liverpool on May 14.

Presenters Matt Le Tissier, Paul Merson, Phil Thompson, Charlie Nicholas, plus special guest Chris Kamara, will all be taking part in the live shows, based on the TV sports programme which has become a huge hit with footie fans across the UK. Those fans can now join Jeff, Kammy, Charlie, Thommo, Merse and Le Tiss as they look back on some of their favourite soccer escapades. They will also reveal behind-the-scenes exploits and entertain with soccer and hilarious anecdotes.

As on TV, Jeff Stelling will anchor the show and audience members will be able to directly ask questions of the panel.

● Soccer Anyday Live, Echo Arena, Liverpool, May 14, livenation.co.uk 0844 844 0444.

Caro’s luminous star still on rise

WITH a new single out and a mini tour under way next month, it will be a busy spring for Caro Emerald, who has also announced she will be playing the Isle of Wight Festival in June.

New single Dr Wanna Do is released on March 26, just days after her sell-out tour takes her to Manchester’s Bridgewater Hall.

The number is taken from the million-selling album Delores: Scenes From The Cutting Room Floor, which has made the Dutch star a hot property in the UK.

As well as Manchester, she’ll also be touring to Birmingham, Glasgow and London. Already a big name in her native Holland, Caro’s sassy up-tempo sound now looks set to make her an even bigger star here.

● Caro Emerald, March 19, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, bridgewater-hall.co.uk or caroemerald.com.