



Wilfred Owen's poetry is set to music

BULLET POINTS

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 drama-musical *Bullets And Daffodils*.

Dean set up the Wilfred Owen Story, the only museum dedicated to the poet, in Birkenhead's Argyle Street last year. He went to the same Birkenhead school as Owen, and the poet's tragic tale – he died just before the Armistice – was a constant presence during his education.

Dean explains his desire to weave narrative songs from Owen's works: "I didn't want to dilute or diminish his words. The music is poignant and powerful because his words are."

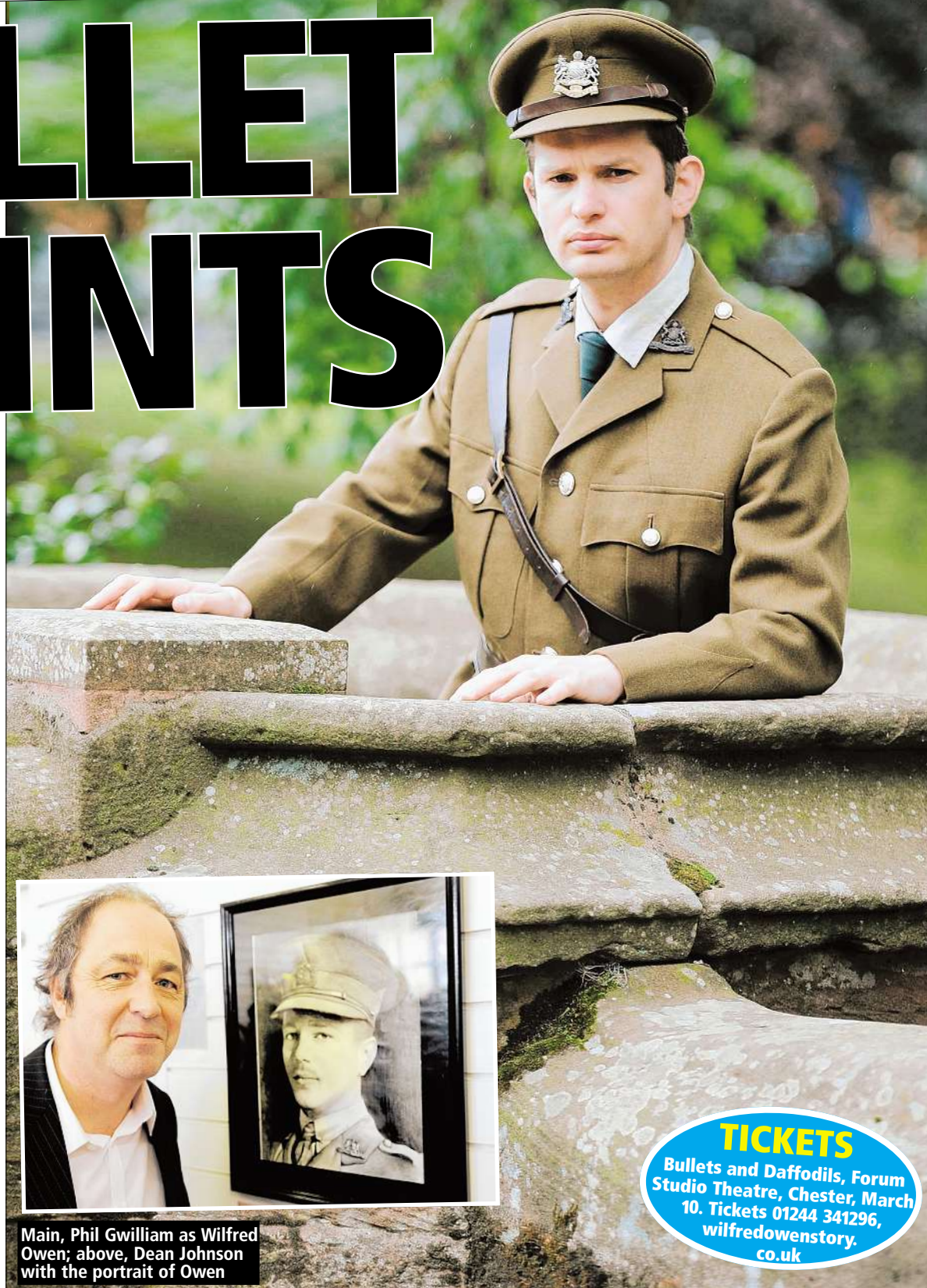
"I couldn't think of it as precious... I wanted him to live again. I think the melodies made people take the message on board a little better than the carnage and graphic scenes depicted on the page."

"Music is a powerful apparatus and it reaches people on a momentous level."

Directed and adapted by John Gorman, the musical is the first ever based on the poet's life, and it will be performed at Chester's Forum Studio Theatre next month. It then sets out on a tour, including Liverpool's Writing In The Wall festival in May.

Dean has set Owen's works to contemporary music and among the tracks is one penned by Dave Gilmour, *There's No Way Out Of Here*, for which Christopher Timothy provides the narration.

Phil Gwilliam plays Wilfred Owen, while Chloe Torpay is his mother Susan.



Main, Phil Gwilliam as Wilfred Owen; above, Dean Johnson with the portrait of Owen

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.

"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."

"Owen's poems demonstrate the gruesome awfulness that happened to these men through no fault of their own."

"Dean brings to the foreground the message that war is not a good thing, which I'm behind 100%."

TICKETS
Bullets and Daffodils, Forum Studio Theatre, Chester, March 10. Tickets 01244 341296, wilfredowenstory.co.uk

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 *Deleted 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 uptempo 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.



Dutch singing star Caro Emerald

TV footie hit on tour

TELEVISION hit show *Soccer Anyday Live* really 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 some 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.

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. *Beatboxer*, *Shlomo*, plays *Black-E* that night. A free family fun day follows on March 18.

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



Sense of Sound singers