



the flyer

£10,000 for display of historic textiles

The Friends have honoured the commitment to donate £10,000 towards the purchase of display cabinets. This will allow examples of these historically important textiles to be put on display in rotation and provide the focus for a series of activities and events.

These wonderful textiles are one of the hidden treasures of St Michael's. Many of the vestments, copes and altar frontals are of national importance. Some include elements which might date back to Elizabethan times and others were designed by important artists/architects such as Ninian Comper, Bodley himself and other members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

There is an urgent need to restore and preserve the vestments. The Friends will support the Parochial Church Council in seeking external funding for this work.

The initial contribution of £10,000 will go some way towards providing the matching funds needed in bidding for external support.



Photo: Thompson

Future events

Icicles party	Friends and guests	Friday 31st January 6 pm	£5
David Robson	John Leopold Denman	Friday 24th April 6.30 pm	£12
	Forgotten Brighton architect		
10th Annual Dinner		Friday 19th June 7.30 pm	£40

Nadine Benjamin: the life of a singer

Helen Simpson

This concert was a rare musical event for the Friends of St Michael's and their guests. Opera singer Nadine Benjamin offered us a pro bono event and gave us all a most engaging and entertaining evening. It was introduced as a recital to be given with her accompanist Andrew Robinson and a talk about her life in music and as a mentor for others. Nadine is an English National Opera Harewood Artist and having sung Clara in *Porgy and Bess* and Musetta in *La Bohème*, she is now preparing for appearances in *Luisa Miller* and *Rusalka*, both of which will be at ENO in the New Year.

We were given a number of arias which Nadine introduced winningly by outlining their historical context, the state of mind of the woman whose text was to be delivered and the way in which this could be discerned by the listener. Andrew's most sensitive piano performances made up for the lack of a full orchestral palette in helping this understanding. The acoustic of St Michael's had been tested in rehearsal and its potential for such a singer was beautifully managed by both musicians - not an easy transition to make for them, but as Nadine pointed out, her first public performances had been singing jazz in London clubs and she is well used to adapting to surroundings.

A solo recital gives the singer the chance to choose repertoire that not only suits their voice but as we saw in Nadine's case, the opportunity to demonstrate and by doing so highlight women's roles and situations in opera over the past four hundred years. One of her first operatic roles was that of Cio Cio San in *Madama Butterfly*, a tragic part indeed. This was sung during a summer school at Dartington where Nadine developed her stage presence and technique. Richard Strauss' *Four Last Songs* were also part of that period of study. At St Michael's we were given the third song which concerns the soul rising to heaven. A violin solo interweaves with the voice in this most introspective piece. Nicola Bates, a Brighton based violinist, joined Nadine and Andrew with her solo in the evocation of the soul's flight.

Back in London, Opera Holland Park offered Nadine Desdemona, in Verdi's *Otello*. Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* followed and we heard the well-known prayer of the heroine begging for forgiveness from her controlling husband for suspected but unproven sins. It was delivered with a very light and controlled tone, suitable for the intimacy of private prayer even in the large nave of St Michael's.

Nadine talked of her admiration for Maria Callas' life and work and told us of a concert marking the anniversary of Callas' death held in Greece in which she had performed. Nadine's early life we were told, lacked any musical role models and as she matured and made a complete change in her career, moving from corporate finance into singing Nadine searched for support and the musical training that she had missed. She paid

tribute to Andrew Robinson who, with singing teachers and a vocal coach has worked on repertoire and given openings to the opera world that she now inhabits.

Nadine was unequivocal in telling us that she is obsessed with music and has no life outside opera. A rou-



photo: Nadine Tubbs

tine encompassing health, study of scores, language training and stage performance techniques fills her life.

Nadine has set up 'Everybody can', an organisation aimed at those between 30 and 65 when 'they are doing something unusual, developing their gifts'. Access to operatic training, with musical and theatre skills is shown to people who, like her radically change the course of their life at the time when so many are settling into middle age and the security of a known, even if not fulfilling career. This will be most beneficial for those singers who, though lacking formal musical training are making their way onto the professional stage or screen with little support or experience of the music business.

A shift to the songs of Aaron Copland, gave us a text by Emily Dickinson and a clearer, more sparse musical aesthetic before the evening was rounded off with a well-known aria from Musetta, in *La Bohème* asking her ex-lover to return. Nadine serenaded members of the audience individually thus bringing opera directly to the people, as if we were in a club or a sun filled piazza!

We had been entertained and drawn into Nadine's life as it had grown from her early performances until, with sponsorship, training and guidance she secured her place in the high pressure world of opera. It was indeed a rare musical evening.

Lancing Chapel: Keeping faith with the founder

Jeremy Tomlinson *Hon. Sec. Friends of Lancing*

Lancing College was founded in 1848 by Nathaniel Woodard, curate of New Shoreham. His purpose was to provide excellent education ('sound grammar learning') strongly grounded in the Christian religion, 'according to the doctrine of the Catholic Faith as it is now set forth in the Book of Offices of Administration of the Sacrament . . . of the Church of England' (BCP!), at a cost affordable to the middle classes. There were no state secondary schools then and the Founder's long-term aim was to establish a nationwide network of senior schools for all levels of society. It was an ambitious scheme of social reform. Woodard was a philanthropist, a missionary and a remarkable fundraiser. Although he wanted his schools to be accessible he did not want them to feel cheap and he believed that 'no system of education would be perfect which did not provide for the cultivation of the taste of the pupils through the highest examples of architecture.'

Woodard's vision encapsulates the link between the Anglo-Catholic fervour of the Oxford Movement, which he had encountered as an undergraduate there, and the Gothic Revival in architecture. When working in London he had met Richard Carpenter, friend of Pugin and an exponent of Early English Pointed Gothic. The secular buildings which Carpenter designed for Lancing in the 1850s are collegiate, even monastic in style: severe, elegant and plainly functional. In 1868 it fell to Carpenter's highly talented son Herbert and their colleague William Slater to design the chapel. This building was intended by Woodard not only as the place of worship for a school of 300 boys, but also as a 'central minster' for all the Woodard Schools of which by then there were already five.

In spite of structural difficulties, the chapel was built on the hillside overlooking the Adur valley as an em-



Photo: Lancing College

phatic statement that this is a Christian school and that the Catholic liturgy is at its heart. Carpenter and Slater took 13th century French gothic as the style most suitable for this purpose, adapting it to an English setting with echoes of Westminster Abbey. The daring and extravagant size and delicacy of the structure declares its symbolic importance.

The crypt was dedicated in 1875 and was the school chapel until 1911. Meanwhile the upper chapel was built, on extraordinarily deep foundations, from east to west in the traditional medieval way. In 1882 the ageing Woodard had the east end built up to full height and himself set the top stone, saying '*Now should a niggardly generation arise and decide that it is too costly to build to the height I desire, then they will have to pull down my work*'. After he died in 1891, however, his heroic son Billy carried on the work at full height as far as the last bay before the slightly lower 'ante-chapel' which was intended as a link to the school. In 1911, the west arch was closed up with corrugated iron on a timber frame and the Chapel came into use. Thus it remained, dismally unfinished, through two

Lancing Chapel continued

world wars, the great depression and the changing fortunes of the College, until the 1950s. During that time everything had changed and the original plan to join the Chapel onto the school, with a tower and a south facing porch, had become impractical and vastly expensive. Several alternative completion schemes were proposed before the one commissioned by the Friends of Lancing Chapel from Stephen Dykes Bower in 1950 became reality. After the dedication of its

west wall in 1978, however, the proposed ante-chapel was again left unfinished and eventually abandoned. On the other hand, the rose window was an affirmation of the Founder's original purpose because it contains the shields of all the schools then in the Woodard Corporation.

Since 1978 mounting costs and practical considerations have intervened, but to leave a Grade 1 listed architectural masterpiece of such iconic beauty unfinished and crudely bricked up has always seemed a betrayal of the Founder's faith and of the dedication of previous donors, architects, masons and worshippers. The problem of the west end has hung over the heads of the Friends of Lancing Chapel for over seventy years: a constant reproach and disappointment. Worse still it has threatened to detract from the essential and unending work needed to conserve and enhance the existing building for the future.

The style, uniformity and, especially, the vast proportions of Lancing Chapel present a formidable challenge in designing a fitting, harmonious but affordable conclusion to 'the west end story'. Now Michael Drury, our current architect, has developed a new solution to the problem which is greatly admired and officially approved. Its three-arched porch between extended

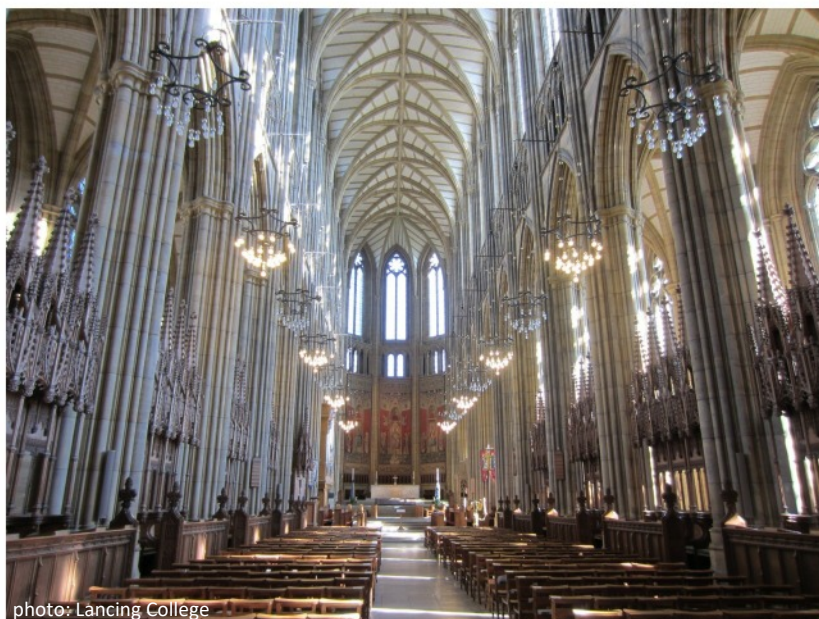


photo: Lancing College

buttresses is loosely based on the church of St Mary, Snettisham in north-west Norfolk. The blind tracery installed in the western arches in 2017 becomes a feature of the new design and a three-two-one sequence leads the visitor's eye up to the rose window and forwards into the nave. The contract to build the porch was signed in October 2019 and the Chapel will be finished in eighteen months.

Nathaniel Woodard was a force to be reckoned with. *'To preserve to the Country a system of solid Christian education, when the ideal of the nation is purely secular, is a work which the highest angels might envy'*, he wrote in a begging letter to Martin Gibbs, one of his most lavish patrons. *'That is why I think so much of the Chapel. Till that is finished we have no home; no centre to our work; no spiritual starting point. When we have that, we may rejoice before the Lord in hope and look out at the world with an anxious concern for its good, but with assurance that we must be of service to it.'*

The history of Lancing has been all about 'managing the Founder's expectations.' I trust he will not consider our generation too niggardly or be disappointed by our efforts!

Lancing Chapel is open to the public daily throughout the year (check website for details).

Oh! what fun we had

Rosemary Hodgson

On the first weekend of December it was time for wreath-making, which I believe is fast becoming a tradition at St Michael and All Angels.

Under the marvellous tutelage of Simon Thompson, a group of over a dozen of us spent a happy afternoon of creativity and chat. In the friendly atmosphere of the church's community hall we were first welcomed with tea or coffee and mince pies, after which we set to work. Simon gave us specific instructions to start our wreaths with a metal ring, moss and spruce, wired on, spraying water at each stage. He showed great patience and circulated constantly to keep us all on the right track. We were rewarded with Prosecco once we had got the foundations finished, and so the atmosphere became quite festive!



Then we were set free to choose from a wonderful selection of foliage, flowers, berries, including eucalyptus, cupressus, various ferns, and dried citrus fruits. Simon was always on hand to make suggestions, answer questions and sort out problems. He had a huge assortment of wires, pins and ribbons ready if required. However, we were never under any pressure to follow a specific pattern.

Considering that we all started from exactly the same base, the differences as we branched out were amazing. Some wreaths were compact and restrained, some were more flamboyant, making full use of all the different leaf shapes and textures

available and showing a lovely sense of flow and movement.

As a newcomer to Brighton I was taken along by my Hove resident sister, who had made a wreath at last year's session. I really enjoyed the afternoon, the company and the chance to learn how to make a successful Christmas wreath.



I am sure we would all thank Simon for his instruction and for all the hard work required to amass the materials from which we were able to choose. Thanks are also due to all those people who helped with the drinks, mince pies and washing up.



We all went home with a personal and unique wreath as a good start to the Christmas season. We just had to remember to 'spritz' our wreaths with water from time to time to keep them fresh until the New Year.

I look forward to next year's repeat session.

Let's keep spritzing!