

The Honorary Graduand: Philippa Lowthorpe

The Orator: Lyn Barlow

Philippa Lowthorpe is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Arts.

Philippa was born in a village near Doncaster, West Yorkshire. She moved with her family to Lincolnshire, and grew up in Nettleham north of Lincoln. Philippa attended De Aston comprehensive school, Market Rasen and then went to St Hilda's College, Oxford to study Classics. She was the first person in her family to go to university, followed on closely by her two younger sisters.

Beginning her career as a researcher in documentaries at Yorkshire TV, Philippa discovered there were no women directors. After about 18 months, she and her friend, now drama exec Anne Pivcevic, thought they would change this and persuaded the Head of Programmes to commission three documentaries about women in a man's world, including a documentary about a woman bullfighter. Philippa then moved to Bristol to make documentaries for the brilliant Features department at BBC Bristol, known for its innovative and challenging film making on BBC 1 and 2. When she arrived she discovered that she and one other woman, Kate Broome, were the only women directors, and not only that, the only women to have made a documentary in that department ever. Luckily, the chaps in charge - Peter Salmon, Peter Symes and Sam Organ turned out to be great champions of women and Philippa was given the chance to develop her voice as a film maker with documentaries like Three Salons at the Seaside and a 'A Skirt Through History' about women's untold stories.

Her distinctive documentaries led her to the notice of the drama department at the BBC and she made a Screen Two "Eight Hours From Paris", for George Faber involving real people playing themselves alongside actors. This was followed by an Avant Garde adaptation of The Other Boleyn Girl for David Thompson and Ruth Caleb, on a scheme specially for documentary makers to make their first feature length drama.

In recent years, Philippa has combined directing drama with bringing up her two children, Maeve and Daniel, with the help of her husband Stephen Loach, who holds the fort when she is away filming.

Philippa's credits include Five Daughters, lead director on the very first series of Call the Midwife, Jamaica Inn, Cider with Rosie and her first feature film Swallows and Amazons which was released this summer in 500 cinemas to great acclaim.

She is currently working on drama for BBC One about Child Sexual Exploitation.

To date, she is still the only woman ever to have won the BAFTA for directing TV drama.

The Honorary Doctorate is awarded in recognition of Philippa Lowthorpe's contribution to film and television.