

**EDWARD HIGGINBOTTOM**  
**Director**

Edward Higginbottom, recently made the first-ever Professor of Choral Music in the University of Oxford, has been director of New College Choir since 1976. He has brought to the post a unique mix of musicological and practical attributes.

He spent his formative years in Cambridge, having established himself at a young age as the most successful candidate in the Royal College of Organists fellowship examination. He became John Stewart of Rannoch scholar, as well as organ scholar at Corpus Christi, and was active as a director within the wider community of the University. His work with the Cambridge Purcell Society took him to France with one of the first early music ensembles from the UK to tour abroad. A couple of years in Paris in the early 70s deepened his acquaintance with French baroque music, culminating in a doctoral thesis and recordings of organ music following intensive study with Marie-Claire Alain.

His post at Oxford also involves a teaching position in the Music Faculty, as well as the Directorship of New College Choir. From this has stemmed various published work, including contributions to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*, editions of French music, and a publication project with Bärenreiter involving the greater part of Pergolesi's church music. However, he is known mainly as a conductor and for his recordings with New College Choir, which span a vast repertory and a whole gamut of styles. With the Choir he has toured extensively, and enriched the record catalogue with numerous first performances, as well as items from the regular repertory. Collaborations with well-known orchestras have born fruit in recordings with OAE, Academy of Ancient Music and New Century Baroque. He is sought after as a choir trainer, and mentor to choral directors at home and abroad. For his contribution to French culture he has been awarded

the decoration Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Edward Higginbottom leaves his post with New College Choir in the summer of 2014 to pursue a freelance career.

**STEVEN GRAHL**  
**Assistant Organist**

Steven Grahl has been Assistant Organist at New College since 2007. He plays for the chapel services, coordinates the choir's outreach programme and is a member of the University Faculty of Music. Steven is also Organist and Director of Music at St. Marylebone Parish Church, London, where he conducts the professional choir and is custodian of the 1987 Rieger organ. He is Principal Conductor of the Guildford Chamber Choir, and chairman of the Association of Assistant Cathedral Organists.

In recent years, Steven has given performances in America, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, and at numerous prestigious UK venues. He appears on several CD recordings, and his playing can be heard on the weekly webcast from New College Chapel, and has been broadcast on the BBC and French Radio.

A prize-winning graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford and the Royal Academy of Music, Steven gained the Limpus (highest mark) and Dixon (improvisation) prizes in his FRCO examination, and is also a holder of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Silver Medallion. He is an accompanist and examiner for the RSCM's singing awards and in 2010 was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music (ARAM), an award offered to past students of the Academy who have distinguished themselves in the music profession and made a significant contribution to it in their particular field. Steven was an interpretation finalist in the 2011 St. Albans International Organ competition.

For more information, please visit [www.stevengrahl.com](http://www.stevengrahl.com).

**BEN BLOOR**  
**Organ Scholar**

Ben Bloor was born in Derby in 1991. He started his musical education with the piano in 1998 closely followed by the organ in 2002, studying with Peter Gould. As a boy Ben sang in the Derby Cathedral Choir and in his final year was Head chorister. This led to his being chosen as the organ scholar when his voice broke, playing for many services. As part of this role Ben also accompanied the choir on several tours to places including Italy, Germany and France as well as to St. Albans and York Minster. During his time at Derby Ben also played for live national radio for the BBC Radio Three Choral Evensong, indeed he was one of the youngest organists ever to do so. In 2010 Ben achieved his ATCL Piano Diploma, in addition to the ARCO Organ Diploma awarded in 2009, for which he won the Sawyer and Durrant prizes.

In 2010, Ben was awarded the organ scholarship at St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, where he resided and worked for a year, training the probationer choristers as well as playing regularly for services, many of which were attended by royalty – in particular, he contributed to the music at the prestigious annual Garter Day service and HRH the Duke of Edinburgh's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday service, both in June 2011. During his time in Windsor, he was the accompanist for the Windsor and Eton Choral Society; he is now accompanist to the Oxford Bach Choir directed by Nicholas Cleobury.

Ben is currently organ scholar at New College Oxford, where he is reading for a degree in Music. He studies the organ with Stephen Farr. Recently, he was a finalist in the American Guild of Organists Quimby Competition for Young Organists, held in New Jersey, and winner of the 2012 Northern Ireland International Organ Competition in Armagh. As part of this prize, he will be giving recitals in Trinity College, Cambridge, St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast and Westminster Abbey.

*Updated January 2013*