

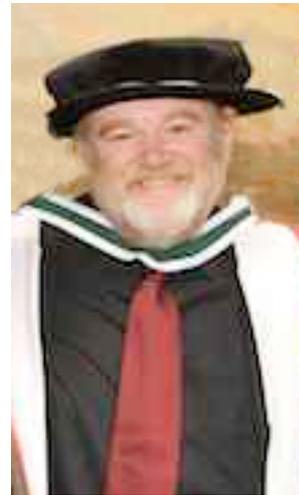
TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY: **MS CATHY HONAN**, on 2 December 2010 in the National University of Ireland, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Arts, *honoris causa*, on **BRENDAN GLEESON**

A Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

Brendan Gleeson was born in Dublin in 1955 and from an early age was involved with the theatre.

On finishing school he worked for a time with the local Health Board where he met his wife Mary. Having decided he had no ambition to become CEO of the HSE or future Minister for Health, Brendan decided to take another path in life by enrolling in UCD to read English and Irish.

During his time in college his studies were greatly distracted by the Fairview Theatre Company where he and many of his college friends spent most of their time. This resulted in him failing his summer exams in his final year.



Brendan was persuaded by his late mother to promise he would do the pilgrimage to Lough Derg if he was successful in the autumn, which of course he was and on his mother's insistence had to keep his promise and go to Lough Derg, a trip he claimed nearly killed him!

On graduating from UCD he decided to spend some time travelling and he spent a year in Germany busking for a living. On his return to Dublin Brendan was appointed to a teaching position in Belcamp School in Malahide where his subjects were Irish, English and Drama all the while continuing to be involved in the theatre.

Brendan started his film career at the age of 34. He made his onscreen acting debut as a quarry man in *The Field* in 1990 and came to prominence in Ireland for his role as Michael Collins in *The Treaty*, a film made for TV, broadcast on RTE1 and for which he won a Jacob's award in 1992.

The story goes that Brendan was given the wrong time for his audition for this film and being so annoyed at having arrived late he put in such a strong performance so like Collins he secured the role.

He then had several small roles in major Hollywood movies based in Ireland such as, *Far and Away* and *Into the West*.

His big breakthrough came in the Scottish themed film *Braveheart*, which was made in 1995 and largely filmed in Ireland, in which he played opposite Mel Gibson.

Since then he has appeared in numerous major films such as *Michael Collins*, Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York*, *Cold Mountain* for which he was nominated for the London Film Critics Circle Award for Supporting Actor of the year, Stephen Spielberg's *Artificial Intelligence (AI)* and John Boorman's film *The Tailor of Panama*.

Brendan won critical acclaim for his performance in the title role of *The General* based on the life of the criminal Martin Cahill winning several awards such as the

Boston Society of Film Critics Award for Best Actor, Irish Film and Television Award for Best Actor in a Male Role, London Film Critics Circle Award for Actor of the year to name but a few.

In 2009, he went on to portray Michael Collins' one time nemesis Winston Churchill in *Into the Storm*, winning an Emmy Award for this performance.

Brendan appeared in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, playing Hogwarts Professor Mad-Eye Moody for which he was again nominated for the London Film Critics Circle Award for Supporting Actor of the year and he also appears in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* and the latest Harry Potter film *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1*, reprising his role of Mad-Eye. His son Domhnall also appears with him in this latest Harry Potter movie.

In 2006, Brendan starred in the short film *Six Shooter*, which won an Academy Award for Best live Action Short. This film was written and directed by Martin McDonagh who also wrote and directed *In Bruges*, the 2008 film in which Brendan plays a mentor-like figure for Colin Farrell's hitman.

Brendan's performance in *In Bruges* earned him several nominations including a nomination for the BAFTA award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role, British Independent Film Award for Best Actor, Golden Globe Award for Best Actor-Motion Picture Musical or Comedy, Irish Film and Television Award for Best Actor in a Lead Role in a film.

Brendan will be making his directorial debut in a film adaptation of Flann O'Brien's novel *At Swim Two Birds*, which he hopes will soon secure funding. Brendan will also be starring in the film together with fellow Irish actors Colin Farrell, Gabriel Byrne and Cillian Murphy.

Brendan lives in Malahide, Co Dublin with his wife Mary and four sons Domhnall and Brian, Fergus and Rory.

Domhnall and Brian are both actors; Domhnall appearing with Brendan in the latest Harry Potter movie and Brian appearing in Druids recent production of Sean O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie* for the Dublin theatre festival.

Brendan has from a young age being interested in music. He recently featured on Altan's live album. He plays the mandolin and is a very talented fiddle player, which he played in his role in the film *Cold Mountain* and also in *Michael Collins* and a little bird told me he played brilliantly in an Irish pub in Cannes after the screening of John Boorman's *The General*.

He can be found from time to time playing at traditional music sessions in Hughes's pub in Chancery Street, Dublin.

He also is very interested in Irish folklore, is a big GAA fan and one of the great loves of his life is Aston Villa football club.

*PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:*

*Praesento vobis hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Artibus, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.*