



INTRODUCTION

Brian Friel once said that Donal McCann's theatre work "contains extraordinary characteristics that go beyond acting... it is deeply spiritual". Following his performance in Sebastian Barry's *The Steward of Christendom* in New York, *Newsweek* hailed him as "a world-class star" and "the greatest actor in the English-speaking world", the *New York Observer* described him as giving a "performance of unarguable greatness", and the *New York Times* referred to him as an "astonishing Irish actor... widely regarded as the finest of them all". His acting of the same play in *The Abbey* is arguably the single finest performance by any actor on the Dublin stage.

In 2011 the Past Pupils Union are launching an exciting and ambitious legacy project to honour Donal, who passed away in 1999 at the age of just 56. A joint venture between the PPU and the school, the proposed scheme envisages a major renovation of the Concert Hall, with the goal of improving the experience for both actors and audience, and providing a performance space that can be enjoyed and appreciated not just by the school, its pupils and their families, but also by the wider local community.

Terenure College has had a long and hugely successful history of endowing Irish theatre, television and cinema with many of its most well-respected, inspiring and talented actors. By supporting this project, you can help provide an environment which will further nurture and encourage the next generation of acting talent to graduate from school plays to performing on stage and screen. That would be a fitting legacy, not just for parents and past pupils, and not just for the School, but also for Donal, who was one of this country's best-loved and greatest actors.

The Donal McCann Theatre Committee

A MESSAGE FROM ANJELICA HUSTON TO TERENCE COLLEGE

"I first met Donal McCann when he came to Los Angeles to read with me for the part of Gabriel in an adaptation of James Joyce's *The Dead*. My father was going to be directing the film from a screenplay he had written with my brother, Tony. I liked Donal immediately. He was dedicated to his craft; serious and soft-spoken, that most wonderful of people, the highly literate Irishman.

My father was unwell and could not travel to Dublin to make the film, so Ireland came to him. His producer, Wieland Schulz-Keil, had videotaped a selection of top actors working at *The Gate* and at *The Abbey*. From the moment he had seen him on tape, Donal was Dad's first and only choice.

I felt that Donal was morose, that he held a sorrow inside, but he never referred to it. I believe that his brother's death when they were children had affected him greatly. But he was also fun and loved to clown; he was a natural comedian.

On our last day of filming *The Dead* in a warehouse in Valencia, California, Donal and I, in a moment of lunacy, grabbed a pair of spray cans and drew cartoons on the plywood walls of our dressing rooms.

I was never fortunate enough to see Donal on stage, but I have heard that it was one of the great experiences, and his performance as Thomas Dunne in *The Steward of Christendom* is legendary.

Donal was a superb actor and wonderful to work with. His passing was a great loss to us all."



DONAL McCANN: A LIFE

(Taken from Donal McCann's obituary by Alan Murdoch, published in The Independent, 20 July 1999)

Donal McCann was the finest Irish stage actor of recent years. His last great role, in Sebastian Barry's *The Steward of Christendom*, prompted *Newsweek* to describe him as "the greatest actor in the English-speaking world".



From the mid-1980s he became fixed in the public mind as the quintessential performer of Sean O'Casey's Irish classics. He had a disarmingly easy fluency in O'Casey's flinty dialogue and the musical nuances of working-class Dublin accents. But most of all he had an exemplary timing which carried scenes that could otherwise fall flat. His performances drew many back for a second and third time, prompting several return productions and lucrative foreign tours for Dublin companies.

After schooling at Terenure College he studied architecture and then tried his hand as a journalist, working for 18 months as a copy-boy on *The Irish Press*. While there he began acting, training with Dublin's Queen's Theatre, the Abbey School, and the Academy. His breakthrough came in the stage version of Patrick Kavanagh's novel *Tarry Flynn*.

The story was well suited to what was to emerge as McCann's hallmark, an ability to evoke the darker, harsher sides of adversity and to bring acute sensitivity to moments of tragedy. Kavanagh himself was enthralled by the performance.

He subsequently played in London productions such as Strindberg's *Miss Julie* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1971, alongside Helen Mirren, and with Peter O'Toole in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. His performance in the BBC's *Your Man from the Six Counties* won a best actor award in the Prague d'Or Festival.

In 1980 he took the role of Frank in Brian Friel's *Faith Healer*, but it was his roles in O'Casey plays that confirmed him as a major actor for Irish audiences. His first Gate production of *Juno and the Paycock*, playing Captain Boyle, was in 1986. It was widely hailed in Ireland as the theatrical event of the decade, going on successful tours round Britain, Israel and New York.



In John Huston's *The Dead* (1987), based on a James Joyce short story, McCann brought a restrained dignity to his role as the kindly Gabriel Conroy, who learns that his wife Gretta, played by Anjelica Huston, still longs for her long-dead young sweetheart. There was also a cameo role of a doctor in *Out of Africa* (1985). In 1996 Bernardo Bertolucci gave him the leading part of an artist with a hidden past exiled in Tuscany, in *Stealing Beauty*.

His greatest achievement in the last decade and, as it turned out, his swan song on Dublin and New York stages, was his mesmerising performance in Sebastian Barry's *The Steward of Christendom*, as the mentally unstable pensioner recalling his traumatic memories as the first Catholic police superintendent in the Royal Irish Constabulary. During rehearsals he so moved his normally sharp-edged fellow actors that several broke into tears.

Sebastian Barry said of McCann: "He was a nuclear actor. He had so much compression in himself that when he brought that on to the stage, it broadcast in the most extraordinary and unique way." He described how on the last night of the play in New York in February 1997 the actor gave a towering performance on the anniversary of his father's death, which was also the day his mother died. "It was in a sense his own farewell."



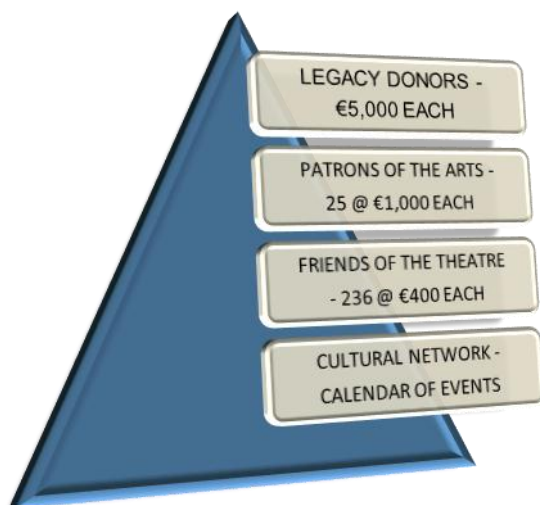
© Artisan Entertainment Inc. – 1999

Donal McCann, actor: born Dublin 7 May 1943; died Dublin 18 July 1999

YOUR CONTRIBUTION

The Concert Hall, in its current form, has been an influential part of College life for over almost 65 years. In those years thousands of students have stood on its stage, as part of school dramatic productions, prize-givings, presentations of school colours before a Junior or Senior Cup campaign, or in any one of the other countless times the Concert Hall has played an integral role in a student's school days. With your help we can restore and further enhance this essential space, making it an active environment for future generations of students, as well as delivering an amenity that can be enjoyed by the wider local community.

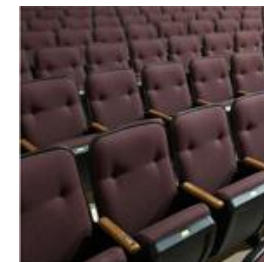
There are a number of opportunities for parents, past pupils, and friends of Terenure College to contribute to this important legacy project.



Legacy Donors: The opportunity to be a Legacy Donor is limited to an exclusive number of people, groups or organisations. The names of the Legacy Donors will be displayed on commemorative plaques permanently installed at the entrance to the Donal McCann Theatre, and each donor will receive complimentary admission to all events organised for the duration of the fund-raising cultural season.

Patrons of the Arts: A select group of benefactors who donate €1,000 each, every Patron of the Art will have their name permanently displayed on a Donor Board at the entrance to the Donal McCann Theatre.

Friends of the Theatre: Your donation will be memorialized with an engraved plaque on an individual seat, offering you the unique chance to provide a legacy in the Donal McCann Theatre. A contribution of €400 will place your name, or that of a family member or friend, in the spotlight.



Cultural Network: A season of cultural events, catering for all interests, and show-casing the many potential uses of the Donal McCann Theatre, will be staged regularly during the duration of the fund-raising campaign. A calendar of events is printed at the back of this booklet, with more exciting events to be added.

Donations: We welcome donations of any size. Your contribution, no matter how big or small, will help to create an environment that will nurture the next generation of acting talent to emerge from the school.

For as little as €40 per month for just ten months you can make a valuable contribution to the Donal McCann Theatre, and leave a lasting legacy that your family, friends, and future generations can appreciate and enjoy.

REMEMBERING DONAL

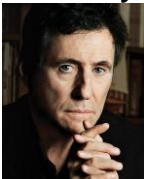
Excerpts from "Donal McCann Remembered", Edited by Pat Laffan & Faith O'Grady. Kevin Myers excerpt from *The Irish Times*, 23 July 1999)

Bernardo Bertolucci (Director of *Stealing Beauty*)



I was looking for an actor who was able to play an artist. Donal McCann entered and immediately I felt ... I had found my character, my actor, but also my actor had made me understand the character – a kind of feeling of great humanity, but with something dangerous in there too.

Gabriel Byrne, actor



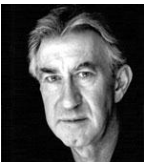
He made it look so easy and yet what he achieved was so profoundly complex and courageous. He became the truest of actors, not by becoming somebody else but by fearlessly revealing his own self. A man who held the dark mirror of truth up to his soul and fearlessly, shamelessly allowed us to examine it.

Sinead Cusack, actress



When I saw him walk on stage ... it seemed to me as if all the light in the theatre had concentrated on him. He seemed to draw the attention of the audience in an extraordinary way into his character and what he was doing. He was ... an astonishing actor.

Barry McGovern, actor



Donal McCann was a great actor, not merely because he was hugely talented but because his personality was so attractive on stage. He walked the edge, and that gave his best performances a daring that few ever matched.

Kevin Myers, journalist



Donal was a wonderful actor. He had grace and poise and perfect timing. He did not need to steal scenes because his audience could barely take their eyes off him. His smile could illuminate the remotest seat in loftiest remove of the gods; his smallest gesture seemed full of significance.

Thaddeus O'Sullivan (*December Bride*)



He was capable of an uninflected style that was beautiful to watch. Donal's acting was a window onto something elusive, unknowable, fine, universal. In reality he was an actor of consummate courage and freedom.

David Nowlan, Theatre Critic



... (T)he ultimate privilege was to be able to watch him on stage in a live performance. His every inflection, his every pause and movement, his every gesture and facial expression, informed by his intelligence and his emotion and even by how his audience was responding, added layers of meaning to the characterisation given to him in mere words by the playwright.

Prof John Luce, Trinity College



When he treads the boards his presence has an almost supernatural quality, so strong and mesmeric is his hold over the audience.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONCERT HALL

The Summer of 1946 saw work commence on a new two-storey extension to the existing redbrick wing. Comprising a Crush Hall and Concert Hall at ground floor, and seven class rooms, two music rooms and a cloak room upstairs, the new wing came into operation at the start of the school year in September 1948.

Performance talent in the college in the decade or so after the war was predominantly but not exclusively confined to acting and theatre direction. Musical talents from the time include Brian McNamara, who gave his first public performance in the Concert Hall in 1956 at the age of ten, and went on to perform violin solos to delighted audiences in England, Scotland, Holland, Switzerland and Japan.

It is in acting circles that the legacy of the Concert Hall is mostly widely felt. John Bosco Hogan's performance of the lead role in school production of Hamlet in 1966 saw him go on to win best actor in that year's Dublin



Shakespeare Festival, and the 1970 production of Juno and the Paycock (the first non-Shakespearian production in the college since the 1940s) saw future stars Daragh O'Malley, Stephen Brennan and Michael Grennell share the stage. Other contemporaries on the school stage at this time included Philip O'Sullivan, Nicholas Grennell and Lorcan Cranitch, all of whom followed their illustrious school-mates into the world of professional acting.

It is the 1975 production of Hamlet, with Lorcan Cranitch in the lead role, that earned the college the highest acclaim for its dramatic productions. The performances over four nights were so successful that the word spread, and it was decided to extend the run for another full week for the benefit of other Dublin schools and colleges.

New talents continued to emerge, notably Michael McElhatton, who played the lead role of King Lear in 1980, Stephen Nealon (Claudius in 1987's Hamlet) and Aidan McCardle (King Lear in 1989).

Edited excerpt from "Terenure College, 1860-2010: A History" by Fergus D'Arcy



DONAL McCANN IN SCHOOL PLAYS, 1957-1960

The year 1957, which saw future actor and broadcaster Mike Murphy win golden opinions for his Edmund in King Lear, saw the role of Cordelia taken by a neophyte – Donal McCann. “Cordelia in the middle of the front row is dodgy if you have boarders in the second row”, Donal would later recall to Gerry Stembridge. It says something for the talent of this third-year lad that he made an immediate impact in what was a remarkable production. Gabriel Fallon, the illustrious Irish Press theatre critic, offered high praise to Philip Williams (in the lead role), Murphy, McCann, and the other leading players and then concluded: “Having seen King Lear, my only regret is that I missed the College’s Hamlet, Macbeth, Julius Caesar... Merchant of Venice. What sins of omission on my part! But what a golden record for Terenure College! Long may it continue”.

Having shared in the triumph of 1957, Donal went on to play Malvolio in the 1958 Twelfth Night and Polonius in the 1960 Hamlet. *His* early affinity for the stage was hardly surprising since his father, John, was a well-known playwright of those times. For all that would follow later, Donal did not let the early stage reputation go to his head or lead him to be anything other than a normal Terenure teenager, enjoying his rugby and especially the Scouts, as much as the concert hall.

Edited excerpt from “Terenure College, 1860-2010: A History” by Fergus D’Arcy

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 11th, 2011	Announcement
November 2011	Launch: Exhibition of Paintings and sketches by Donal McCann
Nov/Dec 2011	School Art Competition
January 2012	Season of Donal McCann’s films, commencing with <i>The Dead</i>
Spring 2012	Acting Workshop for students
Autumn 2012	Costume and Fashion show
Winter 2012	Concert
May 2013	Opening Night – Evening with the Stars

For updates, follow us on:



Facebook: Donal McCann Theatre

Twitter: @mccanntheatre

Email: mccanntheatre@gmail.com

Inside Cover Photo and Set Photo from “The Dead” – © Lions Gate Home Entertainment
Every effort has been made to source the copyright holder of all photographs used in this brochure

TERENURE COLLEGE PAST PUPILS UNION

Founded in 1924 with the objective to “re-establish the Union” of former pupils both of Terenure College and the Carmelite Academy on Dominick Street, the first Past Pupils Union annual dinner took place in the college grounds in June 1925. Since then the remit of the Union has expanded to play an important role in the life of Terenure College, its past pupils, and the wider community.

The activities of the PPU have progressed and evolved since the first Annual Dinner, while still upholding and preserving the memory of that inaugural event. The Past Pupils' Annual Dinner, its format still recognizable over eighty years later, has been joined on the calendar by the Autumn Lunch, Annual Golf Outing, Tennis Tournament and the Tour de Nure, a charity cycle from Carmelite College Moate to Terenure College.

The Union's support for the school continues to grow, as we embark on this exciting and ambitious legacy project to honour Donal McCann. A venture of this type is not without precedent, as the Union's assistance has previously been crucial to the completion of projects as diverse as the Gymnasium and Classrooms in 1979, the Joe Griffin Memorial Library in 1981, and the Lake Restoration Project in 1994. The Union also continues to encourage sporting and academic development in the school through awards and individual bursaries, including the Fr Hegarty Bursary, awarded to a Fifth Year pupil for excellence, improvement and attainment in a Modern Continental Language.

Through events like the Tour de Nure and donations collected at other outings, the PPU was able to raise over €6,000 in 2010 to make a difference to the lives of those people who need it most. Principle beneficiaries include the Past Pupils' Benevolent Fund, which helps and supports Past Pupils and their dependants who find themselves in difficult circumstances due to ill health, loss of employment or other such strain on their income. Other recipients of the monies raised include A Little Lifetime Foundation and the Umbrella Foundation, and events in 2011 will see us raise funds for ARC Cancer Support and Saplings School for Autistic Children.

The PPU's methods of communication to its members continue to evolve with the Union. The Annual Bulletin, email updates and the website, www.nure.ie, ensure that the Union's commitment to represent and be relevant to its members remains evident. If you are a past pupil and you would like to join the Union, please visit www.nure.ie to download an application form. If you would like to contribute your time to our growing and progressive committee, please contact a member of the current union executive, or email tercollpu@eircom.net for further details about how you can help.

DONAL McCANN THEATRE TERENURE COLLEGE

