

OLLSCOIL na hÉIREANN

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY
DR IOGNÁID Ó MUIRCHEARTAIGH, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, President, National University of Ireland, Galway, on 29 June 2007, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Music, *honoris causa*, on **EITHNE NÍ BHRAONÁIN, ENYA**.

A Sheansailéir, agus a mhuintir na hOllscoile,

Onóir as cuimse domsa Eithne Ní Bhraonáin a chur in bhúr láthair le go mbronnfar uirthi gradam dochtúireacht oinigh.

Eithniu was a central figure in Irish mythology because so many of the gods and heroes were related to her. Her father was Balor. Her father-in-law was the Dagda. Her husband was Cian, son of Dian Cecht. Her sons were Lugh Lámhfada and Delbáeth. Her grandsons were no lesser than the mythical heroes Cúchulainn and Fionn Mac Cumhail.



Of immense global stature, the woman we honour this afternoon - Eithne Ní Bhraonain or Enya, shares with her mythical namesakes a legendary quality encompassing talent, fame, success and international renown. A gentle, modest and self-effacing presence, she is quick to share credit for her success with her collaborators Nicky and Roma Ryan, who are with us today, and we welcome them, and she lives a life of quiet diligence and dedication to her art.

Rugadh agus tógadh Eithne Ní Bhraonáin i nGaeltacht Thír Chonaill, agus bhí traidisiún an cheoil go smior sa chlann. Her father, Leo Brennan, was the leader of the Slieve Foy Band, a popular Irish show band; her mother was an amateur musician. Her siblings, formed the group Clannad in 1976 with several of their uncles. She was involved in music from an early age, and indeed her first stage appearance was at the age of three! I believe there is a photo of this performance, but unfortunately we don't have it to hand.

Enya studied her music under Sr. Evelyn at Millford College in Donegal, and after that had private tuition from Father Callahan in Dunloe in Donegal. She was eighteen at the time, and was preparing for College where she had very serious intentions of getting her degree in music. However, Nicky and Roma, who were managing Clannad at the time, were recording in Germany, and Nicky had the idea that it might be good to inject some new textures into the music but still

keep it in the family, and he called Enya and asked her to come to sing on the album. Enya stayed and toured with Clannad for two years, and so her degree was put on hold. I know that it has always been a source of regret for her that she never found the time to pursue her dream of getting her degree, and so it is a great pleasure for us to award her this degree today in recognition of her outstanding achievements.

In 1982, she left Clannad, to pursue her own musical direction along with producer/arranger Nicky Ryan and lyricist Roma Ryan. Within a few years, they were commissioned to provide the score for a BBC-TV series called The Celts. The soundtrack was released in 1986 as Enya's eponymous solo album.

She played nearly all the instruments on the album, sometimes doubling up as many as eighty voices to create her characteristic sound, of dense textures, and ethereal voices, dreamlike and enchanting. It was to paint by means of synthesizers a modern sonic landscape that could evoke different atmospheres, from the mournful lament of 'Deireadh An Tuath' to the striking 'Boadicea', with its astounding dynamic of overdubbed voices. Nicky Ryan acted as producer and co-author of the arrangements and his wife Roma wrote nearly all the lyrics, giving an evanescent character to the music by being sung in Latin, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic and one in a language invented by Roma herself..

This record subsequently climbed to number one in the Irish charts, which started the commercial rise of Enya. She signed with an important multinational (WEA), and had a resounding success with her second album Watermark, which has passed 10 million sales worldwide, and has gone platinum in 14 different countries, helped by the single 'Orinoco Flow', a No 1 hit in Britain. Then she repeated her world success with Shepherd Moons, which spent an amazing 199 weeks on the Billboard charts in the USA and has sold over 11 million copies.

The artist spent the remainder of the decade contributing soundtrack material to various projects, before returning to the studio to record A Day Without Rain, her first new studio album in five years. Of this album she says, "The title refers to the mood on a particularly peaceful day on which there was no rain. We do get a lot of rain in Ireland in all seasons. We had a run of days where it had done nothing but rain. Then one day the sun came out." I am happy that today the sun came out for all of us, and we here in the West can certainly relate to the mood of "a day without rain"!

Amarantine, her first full-length recording since A Day Without Rain, followed in November 2005.

Her music has appeared in many smash hit films, including "L.A. Story", "Green Card", "Toys", "Far and Away", Martin Scorsese's "Age Of Innocence" and perhaps most notably the Lord of the

Rings - The Fellowship of the Ring soundtrack. Incidentally, many of you may not know of the connection between “lord of the rings” and this University – JRR Tolkien was extern examiner in English here at this university in the fifties.

Enya has made appearances at benefits and has played for the Pope, the King of Sweden and the Queen of England. In 2002 Enya got a Golden Globe and Oscar nomination for "best original song" with "May It Be". Enya's "A Day Without Rain", won a Grammy for Best New Age Album, has now exceeded sales of 6.2 million in the US, where it has been certified six times platinum. She has won three World Music Awards: "best-selling Female artist", "best-selling New Age artist" and "best-selling Irish artist".

Although her global successes are well known and documented, it is interesting to note that in Japan, Enya has been the number one international Artist for three years in succession. Her major territories also take in all of the other countries of the Far East, and she has also had major successes in Germany and the US. Her song “Only Time” was adopted by America as a label for the 9/11 tragedy, and all the proceeds of that song (over half a million dollars) were donated by Enya, Nicky and Roma to the Firemen of New York.

Although Enya has never performed a concert as a solo artist, there was one occasion when she performed in public. Together with Nicky and Roma, she was in Taipei doing a radio interview and the interview was interrupted by the news that Freddie Mercury of Queen had died. In response, Enya sang Silent Night in Irish – Chan Enya Oíche Ciúin i nGaeilge – in honour of the great Freddie Mercury, and this was broadcast all over Asia, including China. There wasn't a dry eye in Asia, and it must have been a truly amazing moment.

Chancellor, it is truly a great honour to present to you for conferral of the degree of Doctor of Music, *honoris causa*, one of the most distinguished and world-renowned Irishwomen of our time. A sheansailéir, is cúis mór áthais domsa, agus don ollscoil seo, duine dár gcuid féin, bean ó Ghaeltacht Thír Chonaill, bean uasal, bean ceolmhar, duine ar leith, Enya, a chur in do láthair le go mbronnfar uirthi gradam dothúireacht oinigh, gradam atá thar a bheith tuillte aici.

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis hanc meam filiam, quam scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse quae admittatur, *honoris causa*, ad gradum Doctoratus in Musica, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.