



TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY:
PROFESSOR A.F. HEGARTY, on 20 September 2007, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Music *honoris causa*, on **HUGH TINNEY**

A Sheánsailéar, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoineuaisle: Hugh Tinney is a distinguished and internationally regarded concert pianist, a renowned teacher and has made a unique contribution to musical life in Ireland.

He first came to international recognition by winning First Prize in two international competitions, the 1983 Pozzoli in Italy and the 1984 Paloma O'Shea in Spain.

In 1987, he was a prize-winner in the Leeds Piano Competition. Two years later he made his debut at the Proms playing Beethoven's Emperor Concerto with the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra, and since then he has performed worldwide in more than 30 countries. Conductors he has worked with include Simon Rattle and Yan Pascal Tortelier.

He came from a background reflecting Music, Engineering and Mathematics. His mother, Sheila, was Professor of Mathematical Physics at UCD, and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. She was, incidentally, one of only four female Professors in the University in 1970, all of whom were in the Sciences. His father Sean, who later became President of the RDS, was an engineer and subsequently a Director with the ESB and possessed a fine singing voice. Both of his grandmothers Christina Power and Winifred Tinney were involved in music (piano and choirs) and his siblings have also acquired the musical gene either as performers or administrators.

He began his musical career at the age of three with the distinguished Irish musician, Mabel Swainson, who is widely regarded as one of the most important figures in the history of piano-teaching in Ireland. I understand that the three-year-old refused to fully engage with language until he could play the piano like his elder sister! It is not generally realised that he also played the cello, with his teacher Betty Barrett; this facility was particularly useful in engaging in chamber music later in his career.

Throughout his teen years he performed in the Feis Ceoil, clearly with a talent well beyond his years. He was technically very advanced and showed an unusual maturity. A combination of ability





and confidence in his playing at this time won him every available competition in Dublin.

His interests at school were very wide indeed; they included sport and particularly tennis at which he excelled as he did in both the sciences and languages. He was faced with the dilemma of choosing between mathematics, sport or music to be pursued at professional level.

In the event he chose mathematics at University but, after two years, music won out and he moved to London to accept an invitation to work with the renowned Louis Kentner, Maria Curcio and Bryce Morrison, who have remained as his mentors.

He is equipped with an extraordinary ability to commit music to memory, which has allowed him to learn challenging works in a short time, and then to concentrate on the bigger picture, playing the often very difficult music with consummate mastery, attentive to all of the composer's demands.

As The Times in London has said: "He has the sort of technique that allows the listener to forget about technique", while Music and Musicians, London, reported that: "Throughout the evening he led one to dwell on the music instead of on the virtuoso technique it demanded," and the New York Times' critic's view was that: "The vitality of accentuation, the clean brightness of the forte playing, the rhythmic urgency and lively independence of contrapuntal voices all made the ears perk up. There was never any doubt that one was hearing a finished artist"

Hugh Tinney's contribution to Irish concert life over the past 20 years has been very significant, particularly since his return to take up a teaching position at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. Highlights include his 1991 "Chopin Plus" recital series at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) in Dublin, a second major recital series in 1995, focussing on the late sonatas of Schubert; and in 1998, he completed a three-year project to perform the complete 21 original Mozart solo piano concertos at Dublin's National Concert Hall with the Orchestra of St. Cecilia. A complete cycle of the Beethoven concertos followed in 1999. He performed the full Beethoven sonata cycle jointly with Philippe Cassard and Joanna MacGregor at Bantry House in 2004. In January 2003, he gave a sell-out recital in Dublin's National Concert Hall as part of the NCH/Irish Times Celebrity Series.

He has been a regular soloist for more than twenty years with the RTE National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, most recently appearing last Friday [14 September].

A particular current interest is in chamber music where partners have included *inter alia* the Borodin, Tokyo, Vanbrugh and Vogler Quartets, Steven Isserlis, Bernadette Greevy, Catherine Leonard,



Finghin Collins and John O'Connor. He has also promoted contemporary Irish music with new works commissioned from Raymond Deane and Ian Wilson. He was also awarded a two-year bursary by the Arts Council of Ireland to research, perform and record Irish and international contemporary piano music in 2006 and 2007.

From 2000 to 2006, Hugh Tinney was Artistic Director of the Music Festival in Great Irish Houses., a major undertaking which has also helped to promote emerging musicians.

Hugh Tinney is one of our foremost Irish concert pianists, a very distinguished player of sensitivity and integrity whose performances are always polished and of the highest calibre. His playing of Mozart in particular has always impressed greatly with its thoughtful faithfulness to the score. This is a thoughtfulness that he brings to everything he plays, whether it is Beethoven, or that of Irish Composers, many of which he has premiered.

Finally, on a personal note, while I have concentrated on his achievements and standing in his career to date, we should not forget the central issue which is the joy and pleasure that he has brought to so many people through his music.

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 Musica, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.