

OLLSCOIL na hÉIREANN
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY
DR ART COSGROVE, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, President, University College
Dublin, National University of Ireland Dublin, on 22nd April, 1999, on the
occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on
SIR PETER USTINOV

Chancellor and Members of the University,

I am privileged and honoured to present Sir Peter Ustinov to you for the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

Some famous artists and entertainers seem so type-cast that the public persona becomes an amalgam of the constituent parts they play. Not so with Sir Peter. No tortured, suffering artist is he. His talent to amuse, entertain and educate while remaining in touch with the common man is one of his most endearing qualities and marks him out as one of the most beloved of our global personalities.

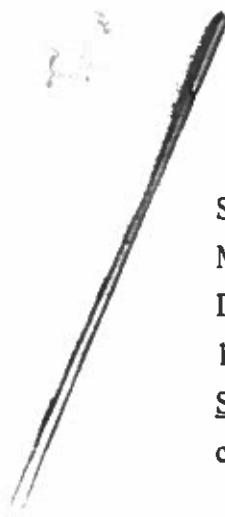
His output is prodigious - at last count he had written twenty-three plays, thirteen books and nine motion pictures, had major roles in forty films and twenty plays, and directed eight films, eight plays and fourteen operas. And the list goes on! He has recorded twelve best-selling records, written and starred in his own radio shows, and appeared on dozens of top television shows in Britain, the United States of America, Australia and the pinnacle Late Late Show. His essential sympathy for humanity is evident in all his undertakings - even his villains retain a large part of goodness and humour.

Sir Peter's interest in the plight of deprived peoples everywhere, and especially of children, has found fitting expression as a Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF, publicising their cause through the media, lectures, performances of his famous one-man show, and - perhaps typical of the man - going out into the field to encourage UNICEF's thousands of dedicated workers.

Born in London on 16 April 1921 to the late Iona Ustinov, a famous journalist known as "Klop" and Nadia Benois, artist, Peter was educated at Mr Gibbs preparatory School for Boys and at Westminster School. He entered the London Theatre Studio at age 16 where he learned the rudiments of his trade and set the course of the multifaceted career which lay ahead. First, however, came the army. There is a story that when asked in which capacity he wished to serve, he replied that he would like to join a tank regiment. When pressed for the reasons for this preference he stated that if he did have to go into battle he would much prefer to do so sitting down! He did serve in the British Army from 1942 to 1946, but largely in the Kinematograph Service and Directorate of Army Psychiatry, culminating in a morale-boosting picture, The Way Ahead, co-written by himself and Eric Ambler and directed by Carol Reed. Sir Peter's ancestral roots lie in Eastern Europe, and in 1982 he finished his eighth book My Russia, describing it as "a detective story to the roots of a national character". In 1993 he returned to Russia on behalf of UNICEF where he made a film in schools, hospitals and shelters about the children most affected by the transition of Russian society. In December of that year he was honoured by UNICEF for his twenty-five years' service as Goodwill Ambassador.

Other honours have been numerous: two Oscars for best supporting actor in Spartacus (1961) and Topkapi (1964); three Emmys, first for best television performance as Dr Johnson in an Omnibus Show, the second for Barefoot in Athens (1966) and the third for Storm in Summer (1970). He received the British Critics' Award for Best Play for Romanoff and Juliet when it ran in London and in New York. In 1953 he won both the New York Critics' Award and the Donaldson Award for Best Foreign Play of the Year for his work The Love of Four Colonels, and, in the same year, a Grammy Award for his recording of Peter and the Wolf with Herbert von Karajan.

During 1993, Sir Peter's love of opera found expression when he directed Tchaikovsky's Iolanthe and Rachmaninoff's Francesca da Rimini for the Dresden Opera. He speaks French, German and English with equal fluency, some Italian and Russian, and a little Spanish, Turkish and Greek, and I suspect even a little Irish, and has a huge library of books on the theatre, from every country in the world. He appreciates and collects rare prints and drawings, particularly those of Toulouse Lautrec, Tiopolo and Daumier. He has a collection of over six thousand classical records and a considerable collection of flamenco music.



Sir Peter's association with Ireland started with his attendance at a PEN congress in Maynooth College. His play Photo Finish had its World Premiere in Gaiety Theatre, Dublin and he completed his Award winning film Billy Budd at Ardmore Studios, Bray in 1961. During long sojourns in Ireland while filming Taxi Mauve and The Old Curiosity Shop, and playing in his one-man shows, he has been associated with many local charitable causes.

A superlative actor, Sir Peter can be summed up in the words of one of his films Hot Millions, as having the three essential "H's" - humour, honest and humility. He is a worthy recipient of the honour the University confers on him to-day and he, in turn, adds to the stature of the University by his inclusion in the illustrious list of its honorary graduates.

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 Utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.