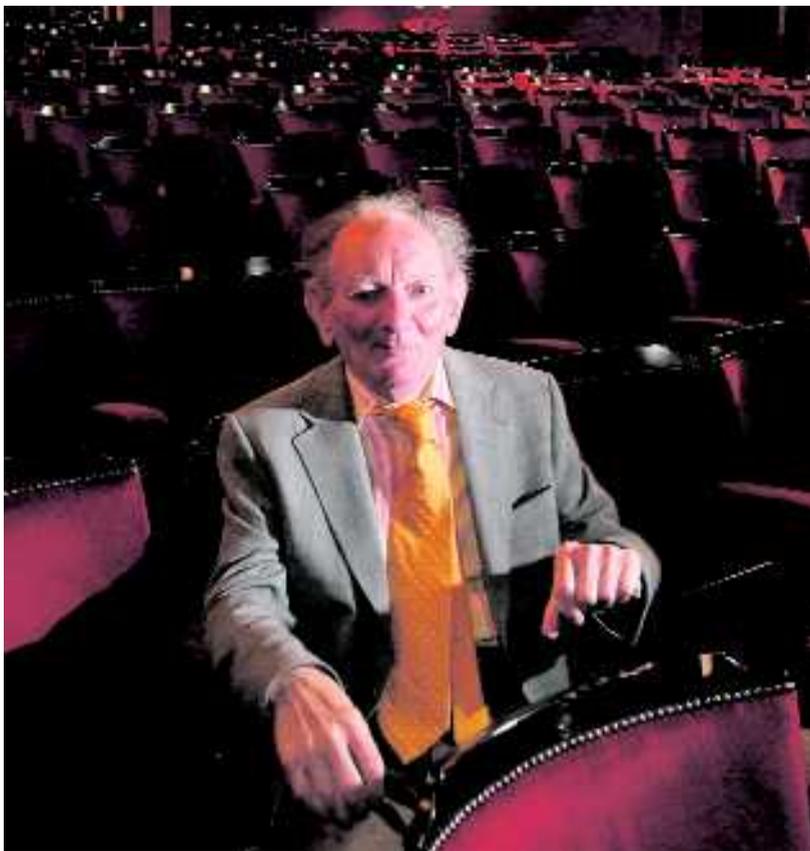


THE PEOPLE WHO INSPIRED:



GAY BYRNE

In these days of economic woe we can still find solace and hope in the examples of excellence which abound in Irish life. The disparate realms of the arts, politics, charity and sport each offer proof of what the Irish can achieve at home and abroad. They are tales of compassion, courage and belief – qualities we need now as much as we ever did.



BRIAN FRIEL

Has helped shape Ireland's arts reputation and the nation itself

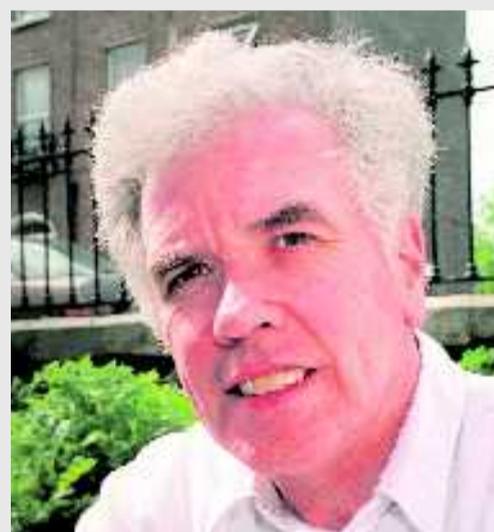
BRIAN Friel has brought a distinguished message of Ireland's artistic and literary culture all over the world. In his formidable canon of great artistic achievements, personal favourites of mine have included *Philadelphia*, *Here I Come* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*. Collectively, his full body of work has had an enormous influence, not merely in the theatrical world, but on the entire Irish nation.

MARY McALEESE

Visit to Omagh after carnage just one of many moments when her qualities shone



MARY McAleese has been an outstanding President and a person of great international influence, all of it for the benefit of Ireland. I was particularly struck by her grace and compassion in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing. Driving from Donegal to Dublin the morning after that devastating event, I recall a radio broadcast detailing President McAleese's visit to Omagh to comfort the survivors and grieving relatives of those caught in the carnage. Hearing her speak to them, I felt an enormous sense of pride in our Head of State. It was just one of many moments throughout her two terms of office when she acted in a profoundly special way.



Fr PETER McVERRY

Self-sacrifice and tireless efforts to help others are an example to us all

FR PETER McVerry has dedicated his life to the main principles of Christianity and his credo, which is to sacrifice himself, totally and completely, for those less fortunate than himself – and, indeed, ourselves. He has been relentless in his championing of the rights and status of the homeless, through The Arrupe Society – later renamed the Peter McVerry Trust – up until to the present day. We should pay heed to his warnings that the current economic turmoil may take an especially strong toll on young homeowners, as his experience in this area is matched by few. His tireless efforts are deeply commendable, and an example to us all.

STEPHEN ROCHE

Beacon of sporting excellence in Eighties economic doom



Gerry Mooney

AS AN avid cyclist in my younger days, and indeed someone who continues to ride a bike, I have had a particular interest in Stephen Roche's sporting accomplishments. Few will forget the extraordinary year of 1987 when he won both the Tour de France and the World Cycling Championship. Though as a nation we have produced more than our fair share of outstanding athletes, Roche's achievements that year made him an exceptional ambassador for sport in Ireland. Both he and Sean Kelly, whose career was enjoying similar heights at that time, proved leaders of their sport in Ireland and on the world stage simultaneously. In doing so, they kept alive a global reputation we have earned for athletic greatness.

MICHAEL COLGAN

Transformed a relatively obscure theatre into a centre of excellence



David Conachy

MICHAEL Colgan's work at the Gate has been to take a relatively obscure theatre and transform it into a centre of excellence in all of the performing arts. He has consistently managed to bring superlative theatrical works of the world to the stage in Dublin. He has done Ireland particularly proud in his promulgation of the works of Samuel Beckett, one of our greatest ever playwrights. The Beckett Festival was first executed on the stages of the Gate in 1991, and has since been performed in such esteemed establishments as the Barbican Theatre in London and the Lincoln Centre in New York. Michael Colgan has been an advocate of great theatrical work, both home-grown and foreign, for many years now and therefore has had an effect on countless generations of actors, playwrights and indeed writers of any kind.