

# Academy Fellowship Acceptance

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16 February 2014

**HRH THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. As President of BAFTA it gives me great pleasure to present the Fellowship. The Fellowship is the highest honour the Academy can bestow, and is presented to an individual who has made an outstanding and exceptional contribution to film. The recipient of this year's Fellowship is an extremely talented British actress, whom I should probably call granny. To tell you more about her remarkable career, Jeremy Irons.

**JEREMY IRONS:** Helen Mirren has always been an actress impossible to ignore. Early in my career I, like the rest of my peers, was always aware of the theatre work she was engaged in. It was always worthwhile, it was always serious and because of her it was always intrinsically sexy. As she worked more and more in film it was her role as Jane Tennison in *Prime Suspect* that captured the attention of the television audience both here and in America. Here was a superb actress at the peak of her powers, middle aged and tough without having lost any of her immense sex appeal.

Then, sir, she played your grandmother. Not yours, Stephen. There was no going back. She won the hearts of an international audience. When I worked with her first in *Elizabeth I*, what a dream come true that was for me. I found her still to be grounded, powerful and a superb leader to those around her. I think it is as much that groundedness as her great talent that draws us towards her. She has to her name 11 BAFTA nominations and she has won four. She is one hell of a Dame. Of course, she should be a BAFTA fellow, anything else would be an oversight.

Let's remind ourselves of some of her work.

*(Film played)*

**HRH THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE:** Please welcome to the stage, Dame Helen Mirren.

**DAME HELEN MIRREN:** Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. I just want to just quickly blow a kiss to my husband who can't be here tonight and he is such a great supporter. Taylor (blows kiss), got it?

My journey to this place right here right now began with a great teacher, Alice Welding, who died just two weeks ago at the age of 102. She revealed to me the power of literature and she recognised my need to live in that world of imagination, that world of poetry. She alone was the person who encouraged me to become an actor. So I am standing up here thanking Mrs Welding and all the great teachers who have inspired the many creative people sitting here in this beautiful room. In fact, how many of you remember a great teacher who inspired you and opened the gate to the path that led you here? I want you all to put your hands up. That is a lot of teachers. So let's right now thank those teachers, all of us together.

So my teachers in film have, of course, included directors -- several of whom are here

today -- producers, ADs, costumiers, make up artists, caterers, grips, cinematographers, focus pullers, clapper loaders, writers, drivers, drivers, drivers especially of that honey wagon, you know, without whom we would all be squatting in the bushes. In fact I did squat in the bushes quite often.

All the incredible carnival of characters who make up the brilliant and the astoundingly hard working army that march into battle on any film. I thank you all, all of you, in my past. It has been an amazing journey up to now.

I am going to finish with the words of a great writer. I think the words are kind of, in a way, apt. So, as I foretold you, our revels now are ended and these are actors, as I foretold you, were all spirits and are melted into air, into thin air, and like the baseless fabric of this vision the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great globe itself. Yea, all which it inherit shall dissolve. And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.

My little life is rounded with this honour. Thank you very much indeed.