

MARTIN CLUNES

Pro-Chancellor,

Martin Clunes is an actor of national renown who has played in a very wide range of film, television and stage productions, and first achieved his huge following for his role as Gary in *Men Behaving Badly*. His many other successes include the lead role in *Doc Martin*, and in feature films such as *Shakespeare in Love*. He is a son of the classical actor Alec Clunes and a cousin of the late Jeremy Brett, television's Sherlock Holmes, so perhaps Martin's school should not have been taken by surprise when he told the careers adviser that he too wanted to be an actor. The headmaster was discouraging ('it's not going to happen: buckle down') but a teacher who evidently had some foresight saw his potential and put him in *Love's Labour's Lost* as Costard, the clown who is also very much at home with wit and wordplay. So his first performance was a comedy part in a classic play, and if comedy drama has been his forte ever since, he has by no means lost contact

Martin's directing debut in 1987 brought him one of the most memorable and revealing experience of his career. He directed Alan Sillitoe's *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* in London; then, on behalf of the British Council, he took it to several countries including Nigeria. Here Martin and his small company found themselves leading theatre workshops for local actors and directors under a tree, with minimal props carried in a single trunk. This was for him an unforgettable insight into the role and power of theatre in Africa, where it often provides the only ways in which people can express their political and social concerns.

In this and many other ways Martin has sought to make a difference in the lives of those who suffer or are underprivileged. He is an ambassador for the Prince's Trust in Dorset, his adopted county, and tells how he is always moved to see young people with what he describes as 'terrible histories' achieving remarkable things and breaking out of the circle of their troubles. He is also a patron of Julia's House, the first children's hospice in Dorset, and of the Weldmar Hospicecare Trust. His love of animals takes him back to Africa with the Born Free Foundation.

Martin Clunes has been described as 'one of our busiest, best-loved actors, quietly but devastatingly cornering the market in impersonating tough guys with tender hearts'.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Martin Clunes, and ask you to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Arts.