

CA Prize-winner 2011: Frank McGuinness

The seventh annual Classical Association Prize was presented at the Association Dinner, held on the last evening of this year's conference on Sunday 17 April at Durham's Radisson Hotel. The Prize was awarded to Frank McGuinness, playwright, poet and Professor of Anglo-Irish Literature at University College Dublin, in recognition of his adaptations of classical tragedies for the modern stage. Professor McGuinness is well known for his plays on modern Irish historical and social themes, notably *The Factory Girls*, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*, and *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*. But over the past fifteen years he has also produced adaptations of a number of classical tragedies – Sophocles' *Electra* and *Oedipus the King*, Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Helen*, and Jean Racine's *Phaedra* – performed variously in London, at the National Theatre, the Globe, and the Donmar, and on Broadway. All these productions have been critical and popular successes, Professor McGuinness' texts being praised by reviewers as offering "a fast, snappy take on the story", "sharp and staccato, with a real muscular vitality", and articulating the plays' relevance to modern-day audiences, without labouring the modern parallels. If you have not yet made it to one of Professor McGuinness' plays, the scripts have all been published and are available through standard outlets, but we can also look forward to the major production he is currently working on, an operatic version of all three of Sophocles' Theban plays, with a score by Julian Anderson, for performance by the English National Opera in 2013.

Professor McGuinness' plays are clearly in the front rank of works which promote Greece and Rome to a modern audience, placing them firmly within the Prize's frame as "a significant contribution to the public understanding of Classics". The £5000 cheque was presented by the outgoing President, Professor Christopher Rowe, after which Professor McGuinness made a short but moving speech of acceptance.

Dr Emma Stafford (University of Leeds)
CA Hon. Secretary to Council 2011-2018

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