

Speech by President Michael D. Higgins at RTE 'Centenary'

Bord Gais Energy Theatre, Dublin, March 28, 2016

Fearaim fíorchaoín fáilte romhaibh go léir go dtí an ócáid stairiúil seo. Agus muid ag comóradh céad bliain ó Eirí amach na Cásca, cuireann sé áthas orm go bhfuil muid ag tabhairt áit lárnach dos na healaíne, atá mar oidhreacht saibhir againn mar Éireannaigh agus atá faoi bhláth agus muid ag céiliúradh.

Fellow Irish citizens,

Dear friends of the Irish people,

Whether you are watching here in the audience, or on a screen at home – in Ireland or abroad – it is my pleasure to join with you all as we commemorate the centenary of the 1916 Rising.

This year, and in particular this weekend, we have been remembering - and celebrating - the contributions of those who fought and died 100 years ago so that future generations might live as citizens of a free and independent State.

The decades from which the rebellion of 1916 sprung were ones of vision, energy and imagination. It was a time of new cultural and literary awakening in Ireland.

That cultural renaissance of which Dubhghlas de hÍde, James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, Augusta Gregory, W.B. Yeats, John Millington Synge, Seán O'Casey and so many more were a part, sought to fashion and create a new Irishness and a distinctive Irish literary culture. That cultural rejuvenation was central to the Rising, as a source of inspiration for many of those who took part.

From that foundation, that cultural and literary awakening, Irish artists known and appreciated throughout the world have emerged, and continue to emerge.

Tonight we celebrate not only our rich cultural heritage, but also its contemporary expression, our new imaginings, and the many creative ways in which we are telling our stories.

For ours is a story still in the making.

This year, as we celebrate this important centenary and reflect on what we have achieved, we are committing ourselves to continuing the journey of imagination, committing ourselves to sustain the artistic work that will form the next chapter of our story.

The Republic the signatories envisaged in the Proclamation is ours to achieve. Together, we have the power to realise the possibility of an inclusive future, in which we share our Republic and its opportunities with all who belong to her – both here and abroad.

For the leaders of 1916, their political hopes and aspirations for what a free Irish Republic might be, were linked to a rich Irish culture, which they cherished and promoted. Within that vision, their ancient Irish language and culture, informed by our history and migration, was central to everything for which they hoped and fought.

Let us continue, then, to imagine and to dream - for that is surely how we best make use of our past - to build, together, a just and equal future.

Casann an roth. The wheel always turns. What generations have created – beautiful, flawed and full of promise – we now entrust to the next. We wish them well as they make music, and continue to dream.

Slán abhaile agus beir beannacht.