

IAN MCKELLEN

b. 5/25/1939

“Try and understand what part you have to play in the world in which you live. ... Discover what part you can play and then go for it.”

Ian McKellen is perhaps best known for his movie roles as the wizard Gandalf in the “Lord of the Rings” trilogy, as Magneto in the “X-Men” films, and in the title role in “Richard III.” He has made more than 40 other features films over five decades. For much of his career, he was known primarily for his work in the London and New York theater and as a preeminent Shakespearean actor.

McKellen has been recognized with more than 40 major international acting awards, including two Academy Award nominations, a Tony Award, the Screen Actors Guild Award, a Cable ACE Award, a Golden Globe Award, and most recently, a Lifetime Achievement Golden Bear from the 2006 Berlin Film Festival.

His legendary performances as Shakespeare’s Richard II and Marlowe’s Edward II took the 1969 Edinburgh Festival by storm. As leading man for the Royal Shakespeare Company, he played Macbeth, opposite Dame Judi Dench, as well as Romeo, Iago, and Toby Belch, and performed in plays by Brecht, Chekhov, Ibsen, Jonson, Shaw, and Stoppard.

On Broadway he played Salieri in “Amadeus,” and most recently, he played the captain in Strindberg’s “Dance of Death.” Last year he achieved two long-time ambitions: a visiting role in the soap opera “Coronation Street” and a turn as Widow Twankey, the dame role in “Aladdin” at the Old Vic Theatre in London, where he lives.

He was knighted for services to the performing arts in the Queen’s New Year Honours of 1990.

In 1988, McKellen announced on BBC radio that he was gay, debating the United Kingdom’s “Section 28” legislation, which criminalized the “promotion of homosexuality.”

Since 1994, McKellen has performed a one-man show, “A Knight Out,” about his parallel journeys as an actor and a gay man. *The Los Angeles Times* called the show “a moving and witty assessment of the conflict between our public and private selves.”

In March 2007, McKellen will return to the Stratford stage as King Lear in the final production for the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Complete Works Festival, followed by a world tour.

Ian McKellen is one of the world’s most highly regarded actors. Since the late 1980s, he has been an activist for gay rights.

