

## Biography: Kenneth Branagh

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Kenneth Branagh

**Kenneth Charles Branagh** (born December 10, 1960) is a versatile, Emmy Award-winning, Northern Irish-born British actor and film director.

### Biography

Branagh was born in Belfast, where he was educated at Grove Primary School, Belfast; but at the age of nine relocated with his family to Reading in England. He received a honorary doctorate in Literature (D.Litt.) from the Queen's University of Belfast in 1990.

The actor achieved some measure of success in his native Northern Ireland for his role as the title character in the BBC's Play for Today series known as the Billy Plays, written by Graham Reid (writer) and set in Belfast.

He has worked on both stage and screen. He received initial acclaim in the UK for his stage performances, including the title role in *Hamlet*. He is probably best known for his popular film adaptations of the works of William Shakespeare, beginning with *Henry V* in 1989 and including versions of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993), *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000) and *Hamlet* (1996). He has also starred in a number of other films unrelated to Shakespeare, some successful, some not. In recent years, he has branched out into made-for-TV films, none of which he has directed. One of his most acclaimed portrayals has been that of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the film *Warm Springs*, the story of how FDR sought a cure for his polio by buying the rehabilitation institute at Warm Springs, Georgia, and turning it into one of the most famous rehab institutes in the world. It was nominated for sixteen Emmys and won five, though none for Branagh. Branagh did win an Emmy Award for his performance in the 2001 TV film *Conspiracy* which is the story of how the Nazis conceived the Final Solution. Branagh played Reinhard Heydrich in the film.

Branagh has been nominated for four Academy Awards, including two for directing and acting in *Henry V* and another for the screenplay of *Hamlet*.

Branagh was also nominated for the Worst supporting actor "Razzie" in 1999 for his work in the film *Wild Wild West*.

He starred several times with his then wife, Emma Thompson; they were married in 1989, and divorced in 1995. For several years he was in a well-publicised relationship with Helena Bonham Carter, with whom he also starred. He married again, in 2003, to film art director Lindsay Brunnock, who had been introduced to him by Carter in 1997, although they did not begin seeing each other seriously until 2002. ([1])

He also narrated the book *The Magician's Nephew* by C.S. Lewis for Harper Audio.

In 1994 Branagh declined to become a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE).



### Trivia

- Co-founder of the Renaissance Theatre Company.
- Cast in the lead role of the film *Amadeus* until the production company decided to hire American actors instead.
- Branagh was the youngest actor to receive the Golden Quill (also known as the Gieguld Award) in 2000.
- He is a Member of the RADA Council.
- During pre-production of the Star Wars prequel films, there was speculation that he was being considered for the role of Obi-wan Kenobi.
- He received an honorary doctorate in Literature from Queen's University of Belfast in 1990.
- He was considered for the role of Jack Crawford in *The Silence of the Lambs*.
- Speaks Italian.
- Mentioned during *Blackadder: Back & Forth* by the time travelling Lord Blackadder who mentioned him while speaking to Shakespeare.

- Is a lifelong supporter of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club.

## Filmography

### Selected Filmography (actor)

- *Warm Springs* (2005) as Franklin D. Roosevelt
- *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002) as Professor Gilderoy Lockhart
- *Shackleton* (TV) (2002) as Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton
- *How to Kill Your Neighbor's Dog* (2002)
- *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002) as A. O. Neville
- *Conspiracy* (TV) (2001) as Reinhard Heydrich
- *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000)
- *The Road to El Dorado* (2000) (voice)
- *Wild Wild West* (1999) as Dr. Arliss Loveless
- *Celebrity* (1998)
- *The Theory of Flight* (1998)
- *Hamlet* (1996) as Hamlet
- *Othello* (1995) as Iago
- *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994) as Dr. Victor Frankenstein
- *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993) as Benedick
- *Swing Kids* (1993) as Herr Knopp, Gestapo (uncredited)
- *Peter's Friends* (1992)
- *Dead Again* (1991) as Mike Church, P.I.
- *Henry V* (1989) as Henry V
- *A Month in the Country* (1988) as James Moon
- *Fortunes of War* (TV) (1987)

### Selected Filmography (director)



Branagh (bottom left) in his 2000 film version of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

- *The Magic Flute* (2006)
- *As You Like It* (2006)
- *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000)
- *Hamlet* (1996)
- *A Midwinter's Tale* (1996)
- *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994)

- *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993)
- *Peter's Friends* (1992)
- *Dead Again* (1991)
- *Henry V* (1989)

### **Narrator**

- *Cold War* (TV series) (1996)
- *Walking with Dinosaurs* (UK version) (TV series) (1999)
  - *The Making of Walking with Dinosaurs* (UK version) (TV series) (1999)
  - *The Ballad of Big Al* (UK version) (TV special) (2001)
- *Walking with Beasts* (UK version) (TV series) (2001)
  - *The Science of Walking with Beasts* (Australia) (Two-part TV special) (2001)
- *Walking with Monsters: Life Before Dinosaurs* (TV series) (2005)