

Detroit's Henry Ford. By the time Caruso died in 1921, it was widely believed McCormack was not just the most popular, but also the most talented, singer alive.

As sales of recorded music increased, and the reach of radio widened, McCormack was there to ride the new technological wave. He also crossed over into the movies. In 1929, he was paid \$500,000 to appear in a stage-Irish film entitled *Song O' My Heart*.

At various times McCormack had an apartment on Park Avenue, a farm in Connecticut and a home in the Hollywood Hills. But despite his nearly global reach – he also toured Asia to great acclaim – McCormack never forgot where he came from.

In 1925, the McCormacks spent their summers on a large estate in Kildare. That same year he honored his parents at a Dublin concert, singing "When You Are Old and Grey" to his father, while serenading his mother with his show-stopper "Mother Machree."

Understanding how blessed he was, McCormack also dedicated his life to helping others. The Red Cross and various Catholic charities were among the many causes to which he donated vast sums of money.

Following his performance at the 100th centennial of Catholic Emancipation in Dublin, McCormack was named a Count of the Holy Roman Empire, an honor he cherished. So dedicated to these causes was McCormack that at times he failed to take his own health into account, touring until he was exhausted. By 1938, McCormack had more or less retired, performing only at his son's wedding in 1941.

## Trailblazer

McCormack died a few years later but his legacy clearly lives on. "The Irish tenor" is now a beloved brand on the international music scene, thanks to the trail first blazed by John McCormack. Meanwhile, every time the latest pop singer or rap star crosses over into movies or television, they should be reminded that McCormack did it almost a century earlier. Not only that, he worked tirelessly to return the many blessings he'd received. Not bad for a young kid from Athlone named Giovanni . . . uh, John, that is.

IA

## A John McCormack Tribute Concert

John McCormack's legacy is being celebrated in New York's Carnegie Hall on December 17th. "Icon of an Age: A John McCormack Gala Tribute Concert," will feature performances by Alfie Boe, the Tony Award winning tenor, soprano Celine Byrne, winner of the Maria Callas Grand Prix Prize, and Ireland's top classical violinist Gregory Harrington. They will be accompanied by a twenty-eight-piece orchestra. Robert Houlihan will conduct, and Gordon Ledbetter will host. The show, which premiered in Dublin at the National Concert Hall in September, echoes the eclectic nature of McCormack's career. It spans a wide range of music including opera, religious music, popular ballads and Irish song. In addition to the compelling music program, the evening will also include archival material and rare film footage of McCormack's performances.

Tickets are available online at [carnegiehall.org](http://carnegiehall.org) or by calling 212-247-7800.



Alfie Boe, alongside the John McCormack statue at the Iveagh Gardens in Dublin, and soprano Celine Byrne (inset) will take part in the concert.

MARTIN DWAN