



LEO McKERN

Class of 1936

Leo McKern was born in Sydney and attended Sydney Technical High School from 1934 to 1936. He first worked as an engineering apprentice, then as an artist, followed by service as a sapper during World War II.

Moving to England in 1946, he soon became a regular performer at London's Old Vic theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, where his most notable Shakespearean role was as Iago in *Othello*, in 1952.

His most notable film appearances included the science-fiction classics *X the Unknown* (1956), *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961), the World War I drama *King and Country* (1964), *Help!* (1965), *A Man for All Seasons* (1966), *The Shoes of the Fisherman* (1968), *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), *Massacre in Rome* (1973), *The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother* (1975), *The Omen* (1976), *The Blue Lagoon* (1980), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981) and *Ladyhawke* (1985).

In 1975, McKern made his first appearance in the television role that would make him a household name as an actor, Horace Rumpole, whom he played in *Rumpole of the Bailey*, a series comprising 44 episodes, produced between 1978 and 1992. According to Rumpole's creator, author John Mortimer, McKern "not only played the character Rumpole—he added to it, brightened it and brought it fully to life.

In 1983, McKern was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for his services to the performing arts, while he was presented with the Australian Film Institute Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role for *Travelling North* (1987).

Leo McKern died in 2002 at the age of 82.