

Robert MacKillop

had been on the streets for years when he heard a record that changed his life. Now an acclaimed lute-player, he tells Mary Miller what attracts him to early

Scottish music

UTE in hand, he looks ethereal, a gangling waif with cloudy red hair and nnocent cornflower eyes who might have strayed from a Florentine fresco. The name, though, is robust: Robert MacKillop, and the character, after tough child hood and rough teens, fairly resilient and doggedly determined. If MacKil-lop plays his celestial instrument like a wayward angel landed accidentally in the north, his route to present Scottish celebrity is unconvent Way back, as a good Catholic altar boy, he yearned to become a priest. But his parents died in his teens - he says, drily, that though they gifted him mu-sicianship, his father is probably drinking and playing the saxophone badly in hell, his mother, in heaven organising a ceilidh. His father beat him, when, at seven, he said he didn't want to play. They didn't speak much after that. School was abandoned early, parents

not much later.

He talks about always having had "the need to dig deep into my existence" - but ask how that influenced his education, and you are treated to the MacKillop blue stare. rough, wandering hungry for experi-ence and supper, MacKillop watched friends with less grit die in cardboard boxes on wet winter pavements. Their shared days and nights explored starlit extremes and black despair: "What had mattered to us existence." Then, at 24, a friend played MacKillop a recording of Andres Segovia playing the Bach Chaconne. It changed, and very like-

ly saved his life. He sold what little he had, bought a guitar, taught himself to play it, and to read music. After another year of travel, busking and learning from musicians on the road, he won a place at college, then the chance to study at

But MacKillop, as ever, was questioning, searching for "a unifying asstration which might fuse guitarplaying technique with the instrument's construction and the music's own structure". The guitar, as a 20th century instrument, he felt sounded best playing the repertoire of its own time, the music by Villa-Lobos, Britten, Tippett, But the music he loved to listen to was from an era past, music for lute by Bach and his contemporaries, by John Dowland and others who immortalised the douce, grainy sound of feather quill clucking on gut, and had that distinctive sound – the rhythmic sense.

riage of the tactile and the melodic of intabulation—the arranging of the sung parts for instruments—they had In Venice, fate looked down (posting for the sung parts for instruments—they had a superb CD, Notes of Noyce:

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The magic lute

tinctive sound – the rhythmic sense of weighted downstroke and light manuscript were burned.

Taylor, who had already begun to greatest composer?"

Taylor, who had already begun to greatest composer?"

But MacKillop is still searching. of weighted downstroke and light return – permeate the natural inflection. The importance of that mar
Surpean courts, and found evidence the return of the investigate early lute intablature. He invited up MacKillop to play, and they realised that between them, they performance in Scotland a house. Outside, as we speak, is a furniture van, and they was peak, is a furniture van, and they was peak, is a furniture van, and they was peak.

sibly in mild exasperation) and took a parts to the lute, and one part to the Notes of Joy recorded by Temple kids like himself are beginning to There's loot to be moved.

at college, then the chance to study at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. A scholarship to study with Stefano Grondona in Venice followed.

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hursday: Television & Radio Friday: Cinema Saturday: Arts Northern

Lady Aberdeen has worked wonders for opera in Scotland, says George Rousseau

delights

ISREGARD for the diversity of contemporary opera performance venues is entirely understandable. Yet the stark fact is that opera comes in as many shapes and forms as anything else:

| Application of the diversity of the property of the pr the international and national and regional, professional and amateur, and yes, money-making amateur, and yes, money-making amount resolution in the international and regional, professional and rarely performed in English-speaking countries. Every opera company and money-breaking.

all those middle-sized European

But the notion of opera per-formance as a training ground – as Tugene Onegin is as dramatic as formance as a training ground - as relatively rare, and hugely mag-nanimous, even if it does not always result in the highest stan-dards of live performance. Haddo

deeply appreciated by Scots. Tucked away in the Grampians, Haddo House seems to lie miles from anything even remotely operatic. Here, for a half century, the persistent Marchioness of Aberdeen has been producing operas that offer young singers the chance of a lifetime. She recruits them when very young, gives them roles commen-

Without exaggeration, it must be said that the marchioness has proved the nation; a selfless patron of the arts and dedicated fundraiser. Now over ians in her audience hug their walk-

Such musical pastimes may have as a literal stage for young singers their 50th season in 1996.

ISREGARD for the diver- enables the young to launch their

knows what a brave choice it is Every opera-goer intuitively recognises the consequences of the lead roles.

THE SCOTSMAN

Monday, 24 April 1995

Tuesday: Drama & Dance Wednesday: Popular Music

these differences, even if these consequences rarely get articulat-intricate in the repertoire, a pased or understood. The glittering Covent Gardens and Mets, where £50 buys little space and less view; ters, Tatiana and Olga; a tale of the cushioned, velvet trips to Glyn- iealousy, punctuated by a duel prodbourne and Santa Fe, to which one travels in Club-Med style, as lack of romantic passion. When the much to be seen as to see anything or listen to anyone.

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The seems to see anything or listen to be seen as to see anything or listen to anyone. Amateur companies also have impulse is almost hormonal - he their curious disparities. Think of draws his rapier with the vigour cities from Bremen to Brescia. Onegin does not recognise he has each boasting local talent, and the loved Tatiana. When he does, it is appreciative audiences there will- too late. Tatiana has married Prince ing to plunk down the equivalent of £10 a seat who cannot differentiate between some unknown (confronts his own conjugal void as village diva and a proto-Callas or the curtain comes crashing down on his devasted life. This is no

a school for the young, for those trying to begin careers – this is To convey this intensity, Onegin's acting must take priority over his singing - the role's known pitfall and the terror of every Onegin. The in Aberdeenshire in such a place and the Haddo House Operatic art Macintyre's rigidity. He moved Society is a group that deserves to be better known than it is and more on stage like cardboard and should have been coached, but he sung

well and produced some lovely legato phrases. The other singers compensated for Taylor and Louise Mott sang per-suasively and acted splendidly in their roles as the two sisters. Claire Livingstone glided magically on stage as Nurse Filipyeuna, Simon Crookall, for long the leader of Lady surate with their voices, after which time they work their way up the charged his role efficiently as retired musical ladder in some of the na- officer Zarestsky. The entire chorus tion's best music schools. Most sign on in their twenties as members of the chorus; ten years later, they are school in Glasgow leaped across

But Iain Paton, cast as the poet herself a remarkable specimen of musical durability; a cultural asset to

Lenski, was the evening's un-equivocal rising star; as outstanding for his acting as for his singing 80, waving her baton without aid, wobbly and arthritic but still flexing sionate yet controlled voice that her muscles, she stands majestic for three hours while other octogenar-tree hours while other octogenar-tree hours while other octogenar-

served in the 1940s and 1950s to name to reckon with. His gratitude to concept of opera as a school of sorts erdeen and her cast as they approach

Reviews

Classical

on successive nights, and each with a Mélisande – sung with profound depth packed house: sometimes the South and beauty – not an ephemeral water hourd and Strings, Douglas and the risked just a sip of schnapps.

conductor at the start of a work. vast metropolitan stage. ensemble has a remarkable so technical ease and expression. Concierto Neoclasico for Harp, allowing the undercurrents in the Marimba and Strings, Glennie and the music to imbue all the actions on Royal Scottish National

posed for her by John Dankworth. By Mary Miller

Evelyn Glennie/Emma
Johnson, Festival Hall, London

By Michael Church

TWO charismatic female performers
on successive nights and each with a

With a centre is Frederica von Stade's
on successive nights and each with a

Mélisande sune with such medieval or mythical, a world peopled by a faltering anstocracy dressed in suits and dresses with such manners that he destroys any sense of pulse. The music lacked true emulsion.

Truls Mork, wonderful, elegant and imaginative cellist, played Misakovsky's concerto, a gentle, passung with profugal death of the promise of innocence and light.

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Bank Centre really earns its keep. And
the blue-rinses mingled with designerspecs in more or less equal numbers:

sprite but a real woman who ultimately
responds with passion to Pelleas and
one whom awakes the strength of
lack of ideas and interest. Gorecki, one whom awakes the strength of lack of ideas and interest. Gorecki, Orchestra, Queen's Hall, Evelyn Glennie and Emma Johnson actions imaginable one suspects, left in peace, might appeal across all normal divides.

appeal across all normal divides.

Backed by the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, Glennie was introducing a new work, and revisiting a modern classic. The former was more accessible, the latter had more grit, but both gave full rein to her extraordinarily theatrical talent. Rocking on the balls of her feet like a tennis player about to receive a serve, she visibly absorbs the pulse from her conductor at the start of a work.

In Manuel Messende Buendia's actions imaginable actions imaginable altitude singing is outstanding brown's astonishingly powerful portrayal of Goland and Robert Lloyd, who plays Arkel. The role of little Yniold is poignantly played by a young Gregory Rodriguez, whose own scene is made all the more demanding by being portrayed as a fever-ish dream alone in his little bed on the vast metropolitian stage.

Miller's staging is outstanding brown, however, dictates that past works he might prefer to forget are aired, moth-holes withstanding: the price of sudden fame is unreasonably high.

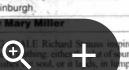
Britten's Frank Bridge Variations were hard to enjoy, despite some glamorous playing, because of tiresome gaps or to tume between the movements. The theme, thus became lost along with our concentration — a pity, because the ensemble has a remarkable sense of the conditions were hard to enjoy, despite some glamorous playing, because of tiresome gaps or to tume between the movements. The theme, thus became lost along with our concentration — a pity, because the ensemble has a remarkable sense of the conditions were hard to enjoy, despite some glamorous playing, because of tiresome gaps or to tume between the movements. The theme, thus became lost along with our concentration — a pity, because the ensemble has a remarkable sense of the conditions of the properties of the price of some actions has been described and the move the properties of the

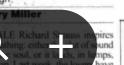
Welsh harpist leuan Jones melded de-lightfully, their naturally recessive in-a responsive, transparent toned

Orchestra, The Usher Hall,

velvet trappings and framed simply in for string accompaniment. Here, any fantasy and in Ein Heldenleben, they The complementary combination of black. Through this we see a world also stripped of any sense of the medieval or listener. Douglas makes lovely stripped of any sense of the medieval or listener.

APART from being probably the best talking composer and his listeners. oboist in the world. Heinz Holliger is a showed in Saturday's performance with the SCO, where he chose the rarely heard music of his fellow-Swiss Arthur Honegger for the first half. The Symphony No 4, The Delights of





Basle, is an charming piece, full of life, with its preponderance of tunes gaining just the right lilting expression from Holliger's direction. Playing as if craft-ing the finest translucent porcelain, the SCO responded as one to his precise,

By Carol Main

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almost to the day, the Symphony No

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