

Burns 2018

The Bard At Summerhall

See the poet as never before in this exuberant multi-arts festival

by GARRY FRASER

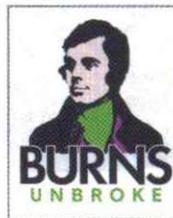
THERE are many words and phrases written by Robert Burns that quickly spring to one's lips, but Burns Unbroke isn't one. It comes from the verse written at the beginning of his first poetry collection, the Kilmarnock Edition, which was published in 1786:

*The Simple Bard, unbroke by rules of art,
He pours the wild effusions of the heart:
And if inspir'd 'tis Nature's pow'rs inspire;
Her's all the melting thrill, and her's the kindling fire.*

It's the title of a multi-arts Burns festival that opens in Edinburgh's Summerhall on January 25. Here you'll find no addressing of the haggis, no immortal memories nor any other speeches that prevail at traditional Burns' celebrations. Instead you'll find a contemporary display of ingenious visual arts that explores the Bard's life and highlight his continuing relevance in the 21st century.

The festival sees the end of three years' planning by Sheilagh Tennant, inspired by a Burns-themed visual arts exhibition she curated in 2009.

"I feel that Burns Unbroke will offer a way of expanding on the more traditional celebrations," she says. "It will offer new insights into Burns and particularly in relation to the continuing relevance of his poetry. For me,



the most exciting aspect of the festival is that, for the first time, contemporary interpretations of Burns in different disciplines are being brought together under one banner.

"What amazes me about Burns is the breadth of his influence – even today. I find this apparent ability to connect with people from different cultures and times on a deep emotional level fascinating. I think it's fair to say that it is perhaps an indication of a truly great artist when an audience or reader can feel as if they are being spoken to directly."

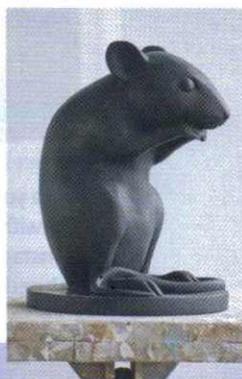
Burns Unbroke, which will run until March 10, will feature work by more than 30 visual artists and will include four specially-commissioned works – a mural by Ciara Veronica Dunne, a film/installation by Ross Fleming, a series of mixed media installations by Derrick Guild and Robert Powell who has been asked to design a map highlighting all the places in Edinburgh relevant to Burns.

There will also be poetry and song performances staged over the first weekend of the festival. In one event, five contemporary poets – Liz Lochhead, Billy Letford, Harry Giles, Iona Lee and Andrew Blair – will give their own interpretations of a Burns poem of their choosing.

Oor Rabbie is an introduction to Burns for anyone aged seven or over, presented by Andy Cannon and Wendy Weatherby. *Burns Eruption* is a combination few lovers of Burns will ever tire of – music, poetry, haggis and



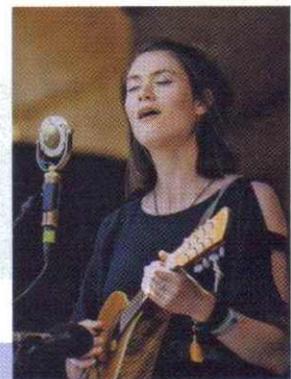
Red Burns,
David Mach



Monument to a Mouse,
Kenny Hunter



Burns and the School of Love,
David Mach



Folk musician
Rachel Sermanni