

## Touring Information 2009

# THE **RAP** CANTERBURY TALES

**The Rap Canterbury Tales** is a clever, entertaining, and utterly hilarious one-man adaptation of Chaucer's medieval masterpiece. The Tales of the Miller, the Pardoner, and the Wife of Bath come alive through a combination of brilliant wordplay and physical theatre. Hailed as a "**hip-hop tour-de-force**" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) and "**the clearest retelling of Chaucer**" (*British Theatre Guide*), the show will be touring schools and theatres around the world in 2009.

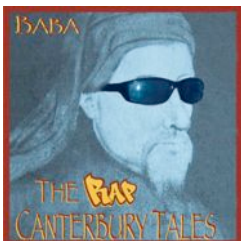


**BABA BRINKMAN**, the writer and performer, is a Canadian hip-hop artist, actor, published poet, and medieval scholar, and most recently the winner of the **Spirit of the Fringe Award** for outstanding theatre at the **Edinburgh Fringe**. Since 2004, **The Rap Canterbury Tales** has toured festivals around the world, including performances in Prague, Melbourne, Montreal, London, New York, Brisbane, Toronto, and San Francisco. Baba Brinkman has also entertained students by invitation at dozens of universities and colleges in the USA and UK, including **Harvard, Wellesley, Oxford and Cambridge**.

**The Rap Canterbury Tales** offers a rare combination of poetry and pop culture, of medieval and modern sensibilities. The adaptation remains completely faithful to the spirit of the original Tales, and has been used as a teaching tool in hundreds of classrooms around the world. At the same time, the language of the rap is completely modern, funny, and engaging, making Chaucer's complex themes and characters accessible both to young people and a wider general audience.

The purpose of the performance, besides teaching the Tales while providing a laugh-out-loud experience, is to celebrate rap as a form of lyrical storytelling. The audience will be challenged to think about the importance of the written and spoken word throughout history, and will be given a new perspective on today's global hip-hop culture. Six hundred years can't keep a good pilgrim down!

**The Rap Canterbury Tales** is also available as a studio-quality audio CD and as an illustrated paperback from **Talon Books**.



**For information and bookings:**

[info@babasword.com](mailto:info@babasword.com) / +1 604 862 6834

[www.babasword.com](http://www.babasword.com)



## Recent Testimonials (2008 USA Fall Tour)

### **Melissa Dixon, Oak Mountain High School, Birmingham, AL**

Dear Baba - I returned to the school after lunch to get some feedback from the kids. I am thrilled! They were so impressed with your performance. I never expected such an amazing reaction from them. No one said, 'He was good.' or 'It was fun.' They all said over-the-top comments similar to giving them a major trip to Hawaii or a handful of cash! The juniors are now asking if you are coming back next year so they can be a part of the experience!

### **Tara Williams, Oregon State University, Covallis, OR**

Dear Baba - I just wanted to say thanks again for the fantastic performance! We've heard nothing but rave reviews here; a Corvallis mom who brought her teenaged kids emailed the department to say how terrific you were and all of the students I've talked to have agreed that the performance was hilarious and entertaining as well as intelligent and thought-provoking. Best of all, the event made the students more interested in Chaucer and helped them better understand how he fit into his own historical moment. And it made some faculty more interested in rap. : )

### **Sarah Stanbury, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA**

Dear Baba - Two thumbs up on your show Monday night. The students were across the board enthusiastic, I hear. Word on the street: "so talented...how does he memorize all those lines....charismatic....really liked the connections he made between rap and Chaucer...I never would have thought about rap that way."

Here are some more comments from their written responses:

From Freshmen:

"...A very talented man"

"Brinkman's version improves and elevates [the Pardoner's Tale]"

"I loved Baba Brinkman's whole persona and his intense, never-ceasing energy."

"His interpretations improve and take the CT to a whole new level."

"An innovative and creative genius"

"It showed that he really did have a strong foundation in literature in using terms like persona."

From Juniors and Seniors:

"...made me realize why Chaucer may have decided to write the CT in the first place: to celebrate the hypnotic phenomenon of storytelling."

"...his comparison between the Pardoner's and Ludacris was hilarious, but also something I had never considered."

"The effect of this I can only describe as picking you up and carrying you away with him."

## Critical Acclaim for “The Rap Canterbury Tales”:

“Truly awe-inspiring... a sharp script and one charismatic and versatile actor... could hold it's own in both the rapping world and the theatre world... !”  
THE SCOTSMAN, EDINBURGH 2004

“Genius...staggeringly clever...”  
THREE WEEKS, EDINBURGH 2007

“Brilliantly done, riding a wave of surging metre and inventive rhyme...with unflagging energy and prodigious verbal skill...”  
THE AGE, MELBOURNE 2007

“A humorous, engaging and, I would say ground-breaking crossover piece that is, all at once, storytelling, live poetry, rap, and theatre... The audience was not only under thirties, and I saw more than a few grey-haireds (myself included), tapping their feet and watching in awe at a genius writer, performer and rapper at work...”  
FRINGEREVIEW.COM, EDINBURGH 2007

“Brinkman displays a masterful grasp of rhyme and rhythm, his lyricism winding through the murky language of Chaucer and slang of hip-hop...”  
FEST MAGAZINE, EDINBURGH 2007

“A genius with an astounding command of the English language, Baba Brinkman bamboozles with arcane words and startling alliteration.”  
FRINGEREPORT.COM, LONDON 2006

“He preserves the kind of brilliance and surprise, the kind of linguistic pyrotechnics one finds in Chaucer”  
DR. JAMES SIMPSON, HARVARD UNIVERSITY MEDIEVALIST

“A fun, crisp, non-literal translation that, at its very best, captures the verve and stylized rhymes of its inspiration”  
BLOOMSBURY REVIEW OF BOOKS

“Certainly the clearest retelling of Chaucer's work I've ever been exposed to (and yes, that includes the BBC dramas that graced our television screens).”  
BRITISH THEATRE GUIDE

“Hilarious...by far the best performance I have ever been to!”  
BBC WEST YORKSHIRE

“[A] hip-hop tour de force...”  
SAN FRANCISCO WEEKLY

**More reviews can be found online at [www.babasword.com](http://www.babasword.com)**

# Programs Offered

The following programs can be adapted to time slots of approximately 60-90 minutes. The current fee is \$1000 (£500) for a single performance or \$1500 (£750) for a day of activities including multiple performances and workshops (up to four). Travel and accommodation costs are not included. Discounts are available for multiple bookings. Please contact [info@babasword.com](mailto:info@babasword.com) for more information.

## Rap Canterbury Tales Performance

### **60 Words:**

The performance includes a discussion of Chaucer's narrative techniques and poetic form in *The Canterbury Tales* compared to the narrative techniques and practices of contemporary hip-hop culture. This instructional component will be followed by rap performances of the Pardoner's, Miller's and Wife of Bath's Tales, with introductory details about the themes and characters associated with each pilgrim.

### **300 Words:**

For both his undergraduate honours thesis and his Masters Thesis, Baba Brinkman explored various aspects of hip-hop culture and contemporary urban poetry, drawing parallels to the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer and *The Canterbury Tales*. Many of these parallels are explored both creatively and explicitly in his hit show "The Rap Canterbury Tales." In this special performance, Baba will explain the findings of his research in simple language, interspersing the lecture with a presentation of his rap versions of the Tales.

The introductory talk will focus on key aspects of hip-hop culture, as well as aspects of rap writing techniques and the history of hip-hop, identifying ways in which Chaucer's storytelling competition and his treatment of poetic form in *The Canterbury Tales* anticipate much of what is happening today in rap music. Certain changes in literary trends in the middle ages will be summarized to give Chaucer's poetry a strong historical context, and Baba will also draw on his experience as a freestyle battle rapper and live performer to add first hand insight to the topic.

Performances of the Pardoner's Tale, the Miller's Tale, and the Wife of Bath's Tale in hip-hop style will be prefaced by details about their characters as described in Chaucer's "General Prologue" and the prologues to the individual tales. Through this combination of creative adaptation, theatrical performance, oral storytelling and direct engagement with the original Middle English text, a complete picture of each pilgrim will emerge, memorable and engaging.

Participants will leave the presentation with a better understanding of hip-hop culture and its nuances, a better understanding of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and medieval poetry, and a greater familiarity with the stories and characters of the three individual tales performed, and their tellers. Participants will also leave with a broader appreciation of how storytelling techniques and practices cross boundaries, cultures, and even centuries.

**Technical Requirements:** Auditorium, theatre, or lecture or classroom space with sound system and CD player or iPod line-in. Microphone required for larger spaces. Video projector optional.

# Rap Lyric Writing Workshop

## **50 Words:**

This workshop will teach participants the basics of hip-hop rhyme and rhythm technique, using familiar examples from hip-hop songs to illustrate various styles. These techniques will then be put into practice in a hands-on writing exercise, encouraging participants to compose raps of their own and experiment with lyrical wordplay.

## **250 Words:**

Baba Brinkman began his rap career at nineteen, freestyling and writing songs in his hometown of Vancouver, Canada. In the past seven years he has toured around the world, independently released seven albums, three EPs and four LPs, and performed at dozens of music and theatre festivals, writer's festivals, as well as clubs and spoken word events.

In this workshop, Baba will share the basic techniques rap artists use to express themselves and tell stories, explaining the way hip-hop lyrics are designed to fit with musical percussion and some of their innovations around poetic form, especially rhyme. Drawing from examples of well-known rap songs, Baba will show the difference between rap versification and traditional poetry, and break the process of composition down into simple steps to make it accessible for participants. Each quality of hip-hop poetics will be discussed in terms of its origin in hip-hop culture as well as its antecedents in English literary history.

Then, once these skills have been communicated in simple terms, Baba will lead the workshop in co-creating a tailor-made rap verse, adhering to the complex structural demands of the art form. Participants will leave the workshop with a general understanding of the lyrical techniques of rap, including devices such as punch lines, metaphors, polysyllabic rhyme, battle rhymes and storytelling styles. This will allow those who are interested to begin composing their own verses in rap form, and will give everyone a new appreciation of the complex wordplay employed by hip-hop artists.

**Technical Requirements:** Classroom or common room space with a CD player and whiteboard or flipchart with felt pens. Participants will need pens and paper. Workshops are normally limited to approximately 25 participants, unless a special provision is requested.