

Chaucer goes aulde school

B.C.-based literature lover adapts Canterbury Tales into rap

ILLUSTRATION: MATT HOLLISTER



IN A BID to promote literary appreciation, B.C.-based Baba Brinkman will be touring British schools and kickin' classic literature aulde school — as in 14th century-style.

After wowing last year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival with his *The Rap Canterbury Tales*, Brinkman received an invitation from Cambridge University to be part of its Aspirations program, designed to raise awareness of English literature in high schools.

Brinkman's show adapts four of the stories in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a frequently bawdy collection of stories told by 30 pilgrims travelling to Can-

terbury, England. The pilgrims tell stories to pass the time, often getting into lascivious one-upmanship. Brinkman's version features a competition among rappers on a tour bus.

"I don't want to replace Chaucer's version, which is wonderful, but it should help young people to see how vibrant his stories are and make them more interested," Brinkman told the BBC.

Brinkman, who holds a masters degree in medieval and Renaissance English literature from the University of Victoria, says the idea of retelling Chaucer's poem came to him while working on his undergraduate English thesis.

He's spent the eight years since then crafting the show and touring Fringe festivals around the world, garnering praise from audiences and critics alike.

Although Chaucer wrote the *Canterbury Tales* between 1387 and 1400, Brinkman believes it's still relevant, if not somewhat risqué for high school students.

"All of the themes of rap music are there in the tales: jealousy, anger, greed, lust. 'The Miller's Tale' in particular contains a lot of references to genitalia and bawdy humour. Some of it had to be censored to make it suitable for children," Brinkman said. — DAVE MCGINN/DOSE