

The Rap Canterbury Tales



AT ONE POINT in *The Rap Canterbury Tales* Baba Brinkman injects a personal touch, revealing the ideological driving force of his mission to renew Chaucer's classic for the modern audience. In a rap which purports to tell 500,000 years of history in five minutes, Baba runs through mankind's physical, linguistic and literary development. Bar one moment of artistic license, *The Rap Canterbury Tales* sticks remarkably close to the original whilst adroitly bringing it into a more contemporary context. Introduced in the midst of a hip-hop concert, the narrator manages to sneak onto a tour bus where the rappers start a story-based battle rap. Brinkman displays a masterful grasp of rhyme and rhythm, his lyricism winding through the murky language



of Chaucer and slang of hip-hop. Retaining the same awareness of the nuances of language that made the original so shocking six hundred years ago, Brinkman's control of pace and diction creates a delivery that would easily hold its own on a concert stage. *The Rap Canterbury Tales* remains listed as theatre because of Brinkman's energetic physical display which brilliantly captures

the character of each of the storytellers, including the riotously inebriated Miller. As he bounces around the stage to portray the varying personas, it is clear that this is more than the typical crotch-grabbing bling performance of rappers. With a title that inspires both intrigue and suspicion *The Rap Canterbury Tales* manages to pull off a task that has proved elusive for others. Brinkman's display

is impressive, not the least because he has an hour of non-stop monologue to remember. Successful in paying homage to the lyricist of old, he manages to create a musical experience with comedy that will sate even the most highbrow of appetites.

MICHAEL COLLINS

**ROMAN EAGLE
LODGE, AUG 03-26,
20:45 (1:00), £7.50**

This Piece of Earth



IT'S HARD TO grasp how this cliché-strewn dirge, about a couple walking to a ship to escape the Irish Famine, got from page to stage. What this show lacks is a story. By starting with two people close to death through starvation and exhaustion, the show has nowhere to go.

Claire Lemont and Lalor Roddy have clearly invested a huge amount in their painful explorations of characters Maeve and

John. Rarely, however, has so much wailing been to so little effect. While there is a great sense of understanding between the two performers, each being clearly aware of the other's dramatic limits, they never really connect with the audience, which is almost inexcusable in such a small and intimate venue. Certain scenes rescue the performance from the lonely depths a one-star review. The production, however, simply fails to do justice to a catastrophe that erased over twelve percent of the Irish population. **SAM SAWARD**



**UNDERBELLY, AUG 02-14, 16-26, 17:25 (1:15),
£9.00 TO £10.00**