



"I would have probably had a very nice relationship with Anthony Hopkins, but I couldn't get past the Lecter thing."

— Homemaking guru Martha Stewart, as quoted by FoxNews.com from an interview on Howard Stern's Sirius Satellite Radio show, explains why she ended a romance with "The Silence of the Lambs" star Sir Anthony Hopkins.

Just reward

A judge awarded a 40 percent share in the copyright of "A Whiter Shade of Pale," one of the most famous pop songs of all time, to a former organist for Procol Harum.

Lead singer Gary Brooker and lyricist Keith Reid always claimed credit for the hit, which became part of the soundtrack for the hippy "summer of love" of 1967.

However, in his ruling, the judge decided that organist Matthew Fisher was entitled to both credit and royalties.

"His contribution to the overall work was on any

view substantial but not, in my judgment, as substantial as that of Mr. Brooker," the judge said, adding that the song's organ solo "is a distinctive and significant contribution to the overall composition and quite obviously the product of skill and labor on the part of the person who created it." The judge said Mr. Fisher, 60, was entitled to royalties from May 2005, when he began court proceedings.

"A Whiter Shade of Pale" topped British and American charts in 1967. Rolling Stone magazine has ranked it 57th in a list of the 500 greatest songs of all time.

In a statement, Mr. Brooker and Mr. Reid said Mr. Fisher's court victory created a dan-

gerous precedent because it meant any musician who had played on any recording in the past 40 years could claim joint authorship. They intend to file an appeal.

Party pooper

Reclusive pop star Michael Jackson abruptly postponed a Christmas party in Japan that fans paid big money to attend, organizers said yesterday.

Mr. Jackson, who has kept a low profile since his acquittal on child molestation charges last year, was originally scheduled to join fans listening to his music on Tuesday evening, although he was not supposed to sing.

A total of 1,600 tickets were on sale for the Christmas party. Buyers of the 200 "platinum tickets," each priced at 400,000 yen (\$3,380), would have had a "meet and greet" with Mr. Jackson before the show.

He canceled the party "because he said he wants to hold two-day parties on March 8 and 9 next year rather than a one-day party in order to meet more fans," said a spokeswoman for organizers Positive Productions.

"Those who have the platinum tickets can join the rescheduled party with the same program," she said.

Compiled by Kevin Chaffee and Robyn-Denise Youse from Web and wire reports.

Medieval MC rocks ye house

Rapper embraces Chaucer's 'Tales'

By Mark Pratt
ASSOCIATED PRESS

TWELLESLEY, Mass. he lights dim, the music pumps—a steady beat that can be felt in the bones—and Baba Brinkman struts and bounces around the stage, belting out his rhymes about hard living, violence, sex and the secrets to true love.

He gets his inspiration not from growing up in the 'hood, but from the musings of a 14th-century English poet.

"Ready to kill with their jagged-edged daggers drawn/The three aggravated braggarts staggered up the lawn/And without dragging on while the story is told/Beneath the tree they found a bag filled with glorious gold," Mr. Brinkman raps in a seamless cadence, updating Geoffrey Chaucer to hip-hop.

Mr. Brinkman, a native of Vancouver, British Columbia, who has a master's degree in medieval and Renaissance English literature from the University of Victoria, has adapted some of Chaucer's earthy, satirical and pious "The Canterbury Tales" into rap.

There are remarkable parallels between "The Canterbury Tales" and modern rap, Mr. Brinkman says at Wellesley College during a recent stop on his tour of high schools and colleges across the eastern United States and Puerto Rico.

"Chaucer and rap are both performance-based, and they're both battles of words where your proficiency gets you by," he says. His master's thesis compared the two.

"The Canterbury Tales" was a storytelling competition among pilgrims on their way to Canterbury Cathedral, much like freestyle rap battles today.

"Before I ever read anything about [Mr. Brinkman], I could see the similarities between rap and Chaucer, especially the storytelling aspect," says Kathryn Lynch, a Wellesley English professor who teaches classes on "The Canterbury Tales."

"Like rap, the sound of Chaucer is important for the audience's experience, and they are both competitive verse forms."

Mr. Brinkman, 27, creatively adapts the Middle English of "The Canterbury Tales" into contemporary Eng-

lish, yet stays faithful to the original.

"My goal is that anyone who knows nothing about Chaucer would really be able to appreciate it," says Mr. Brinkman, who has performed previously in Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

He captures the humor, the vulgarity and the suspense, educating and entertaining in the process.

"Seeing something like this, you'd learn as much, if not more, than any other way other than reading Chaucer in the original," Miss Lynch says after a show at Wellesley attended by about 100 people. "He really knows the tales he's rapping."

College students clap and laugh as they see the stories come to life onstage.

"Brinkman's performance gives a new form of life to Chaucer's poetry. ... It can be enjoyed in a live and dynamic way," says Kyle Koerber, who saw a show at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass.

Mr. Brinkman performs the "Pardoner's Tale," the "Miller's Tale" and the "Wife of Bath's Tale." His one-man show, with recorded music and a few props, including a couple of chairs, a bottle of water and a bandanna, is constructed much like the pilgrims' journey in "The Canterbury Tales." He acts as the narrator—a stowaway fan on a tour bus—and plays the part of three rappers on the bus engaged in a rap battle.

He mixes in other songs, including a rap based on his experiences growing up in British Columbia working for his family's tree-planting business.

Mr. Brinkman has been a rap fan since age 10, influenced by Young MC, Slick

Rick, Ice T, 2 Live Crew, Snoop Dog and LL Cool J. "Baba" is not a street name—it's a word meaning peace that his father bestowed upon him the day he was born and has always been used instead of his given name, Dirk.

He wants to be known as a rapper, not just as the guy who raps Chaucer. He has released three independent CDs, including "The Rap Canterbury Tales," with a picture of Chaucer wearing wraparound shades on the cover.

"When I started rapping, I decided I am going to dedicate my life to this," Mr. Brinkman says. "My options were either drop out of school and battle my way to the top or stay in school and use my education. I spent college advocating to my professors that rap should be taken as a literary form that should be studied the same way."

Because of his background, and because of his subject matter, Mr. Brinkman knows he has to overcome skeptics.

Rap purists don't think a white kid from Canada, a self-described son of hippies, can relate to an art form that developed on the streets of urban America.

"That's a hurdle I have to jump," he says. "People have a narrow idea of what constitutes rap based on what they see on TV. Who's to say that white people are not supposed to rap, or Asians, or Hispanics? ... Hip-hop is all about proving your skills. About keeping it real. Some people are skeptical at first, but when they hear me, they realize I can rap."

Academics sometimes sniff condescendingly. Mr. Brinkman performed at Harvard University to an audience that included the chairman of the English department, but Columbia University was not interested when he offered to bring his act to campus, he says.

There are rap adaptations based on Shakespeare and "Oedipus," all part of a genre dubbed Lit-Hop, which is also the name of Mr. Brinkman's latest CD.

Rapping Chaucer is like putting any classic literature into a modern context, including Hollywood versions of Shakespeare, says Tyrone Williams, an English professor at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

"If Chaucer was around today, he'd probably rap," Mr. Brinkman says.

Baba Brinkman puts "The Canterbury Tales" into a modern context by rapping them.

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