

How rap helps bring medieval writer to life

Chaucer brought into 21st Century

RAP versions of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* have been keeping Cambridge youngsters rapt.

Canadian hip-hop star Baba Brinkman stunned pupils with his unique performance of the medieval stories, written some time before 1400.

Baba, a Chaucer scholar and rap "battler", was brought to the UK by Cambridge University for a two-month tour of schools.

His latest visit was to St Matthew's Primary School in Norfolk Street.

Baba, who hails from Vancouver, said: "They're using me as kind of a hook. I go into schools and do the Chaucer rap and that's the kids' introduction to medieval theatre."

"The *Rap Canterbury Tales* started in 1999 as an experiment, an attempt to adapt Chaucer's stories into a rap style to make them accessible.

"Comparing Chaucer's poetics to those of rap artists was the subject of my thesis at the time and this seemed a natural extension. Since then the project has snowballed into

By David Williams

a successful one-man theatrical performance, a series of educational presentations and workshops and a CD recording.

"The translations stay as close as possible to the tone and thrust of the original *Tales*, while completely updating the language into a lively hip-hop rhyme style. They are occasionally a bit raunchy, but I relinquish all due credit and blame to Chaucer, as he did to his 'sources'."

Sarah James, research associate at Cambridge University's Faculty of English, brought Baba to the country last year, after he scored rave reviews at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival - an event which he returns to next month.

Speaking after another well-received showing before the St Matthew's children, she said: "It was absolutely wonderful, it was a lot of fun and that's exactly what the original *Canterbury Tales* are all about."

davidwilliams
@cambridge-news.co.uk



Other fresh slants on Chaucer: Julie Walters and Paul Nicholls in BBC2's adaptation of *The Wife of Bath* and, far right, Billie Piper in *The Miller's Tale*. Right: Rapper Baba Brinkman.

An extract of *The Pardoner's Tale*:

"And up they stire, al dronken in this rage,
And forth they goon towards that village,
Of which the taverner hadde spoke bifore,
And many a grisly oath thane han they sworn,
And cristes blessed body al torente,
Death shal be deed, if that they may hym hente!
Whan they han goon nat fully half a mile."

... and Baba's rap version:

"... When he said his piece,
The rest agreed, and the three friends hit the streets.
And went to seek their destiny and provoke a confrontation,
In a drunken rage hoping Death would come and face them,
Their intoxication made them sure of their purpose,
And fed the infernal furnace of their courage,
A kernel nourished by these three murderous wretches in denial.
Less than a mile into their quest to put Death on trial."

NEWS

IN BRIEF

Police seek A11 crash driver

A FEMALE driver is being sought by police following a crash on the A11. A Vauxhall Vectra was involved in a road traffic collision on the A11 one mile from the Charterhouse Bridge at 12.22am on Saturday. The car ended up in the central reservation.

Police would like to trace the owner of a silver Mercedes Coupe - a female driver who was wearing glasses. Please contact Pc Jane Allen on 0845 456 4564 if you have any information.

Shed fire extinguished

FIREFIGHTERS were called to a shed fire in Histon.

One crew from Cambridge attended the fire in a large outbuilding in Orchard Road, Histon at 11.51pm on Saturday night.

The blaze was brought under control by 12.27am using one hose reel.

One person was treated for smoke inhalation by firefighters who had to cut away part of the building to douse the fire.

Butterflies attracted

BUTTERFLIES and moths are to have nicer homes at three nature reserves in Huntingdonshire thanks to a £12,800 donation.

The money from Landfill Tax credit funding was handed over to the Wildlife Trust by WREN on behalf of The Waste Recycling group.

It will go to six nature reserves, including Brampton Wood, Upwood Meadows and Houghton Meadows. In Brampton Wood areas will be created for butterflies, moths and other insects.

The reserve expects to attract orange tip and ringlet butterflies, along with white admirals and the black hairstreak, one of the county's rarest butterflies.

Odd entertainment

THE Oddfellows have a number of events coming up this autumn.

On Tuesday, September 27 you can visit a private collection of musical boxes and organs at Landbeach, while Thursday, October 6 sees an evening of entertainment.

Tickets for both events are £3.

The group is also planning its annual Christmas Party on Saturday, December 17 in the Lodge room, 131 Newmarket Road, Cambridge.

It starts at 7.45pm and tickets are £5 each. For further information or tickets contact Mike Park on (01223) 351197.

Parachute for free

DAREDEVILS are being sought to help with an appeal by a disabled sports organisation.

British Wheelchair Sport is looking for able bodied volunteers to take part in a sponsored parachute jump.

The 10,000ft jump is on offer at more than 20 venues around the country.

To find out where you can take part in our area please visit

www.jumpforfree.org.uk or call

Wheelpower on (01296) 395 995.

Blood donor sessions

YOU can donate blood in a number of venues in the region this month:

Huntingdon Commemoration Hall, High Street, Huntingdon on Tuesday, August 2 from 1pm-3pm and 4.30pm-7pm; Chatteris Conservative Club, King Edward Road, Chatteris, on Monday, August 1 with the same opening times; and the Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots on Wednesday, August 3 at the same times.