



THE SCOTSMAN

THEATRE
RAPCONTEUR
CABARET VOLTAIRE
(VENUE 139)

★★★★★

THE rap artist who makes being intellectual seem cooler than a pair of Aviator shades, Baba Brinkman is back with his trademark combination of fast-paced, lyrical debate and breathtaking analysis of classical literature, pop culture, science and theology. If the prospect of something so seemingly highbrow fills you with dread, please throw aside your reservations and trust me. Disregarding the fact it's a free show, if you do, you'll be blown away by how funny, compelling and profound Baba is able to make such subject matter, aided

only by a mixing desk, originally produced hip hop music (from Mr Simmonds) and rhythms that are inbuilt to our very core.

This time he ambitiously takes on four classics – *Beowulf*, *The Merchant's Tale*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (an ancient poem from Iraq) and *Kalevala* (a folk story from Finland) – and adapts these into cutting observations on human relationships and behaviour. Through *Gilgamesh*, he provides a new perspective on immortality, while *The Merchant's Tale* becomes a vehicle for exploring perceived gender differences. After reworking *Kalevala* to highlight the conflicts between youth and age, Baba concludes the show with a transcendent finale tackling disparities between 'pop' and 'real' culture through *Beowulf*.

As ever, Baba's rapid style of delivery leaves little time to challenge or consider many of the ideas he presents and it is telling how easily some of classical literature's more passé definitions of men and women's roles can be incorporated into the conventions of modern day rap – albeit with a firmly facetious slant in this instance. Ultimately, Baba concludes that we all need to check out the original *Beowulf* rather than "listen to rap music to get an education". And that's just what you want to rush off and do.

SALLY STOTT

Until 28 August. Today 8:45pm.