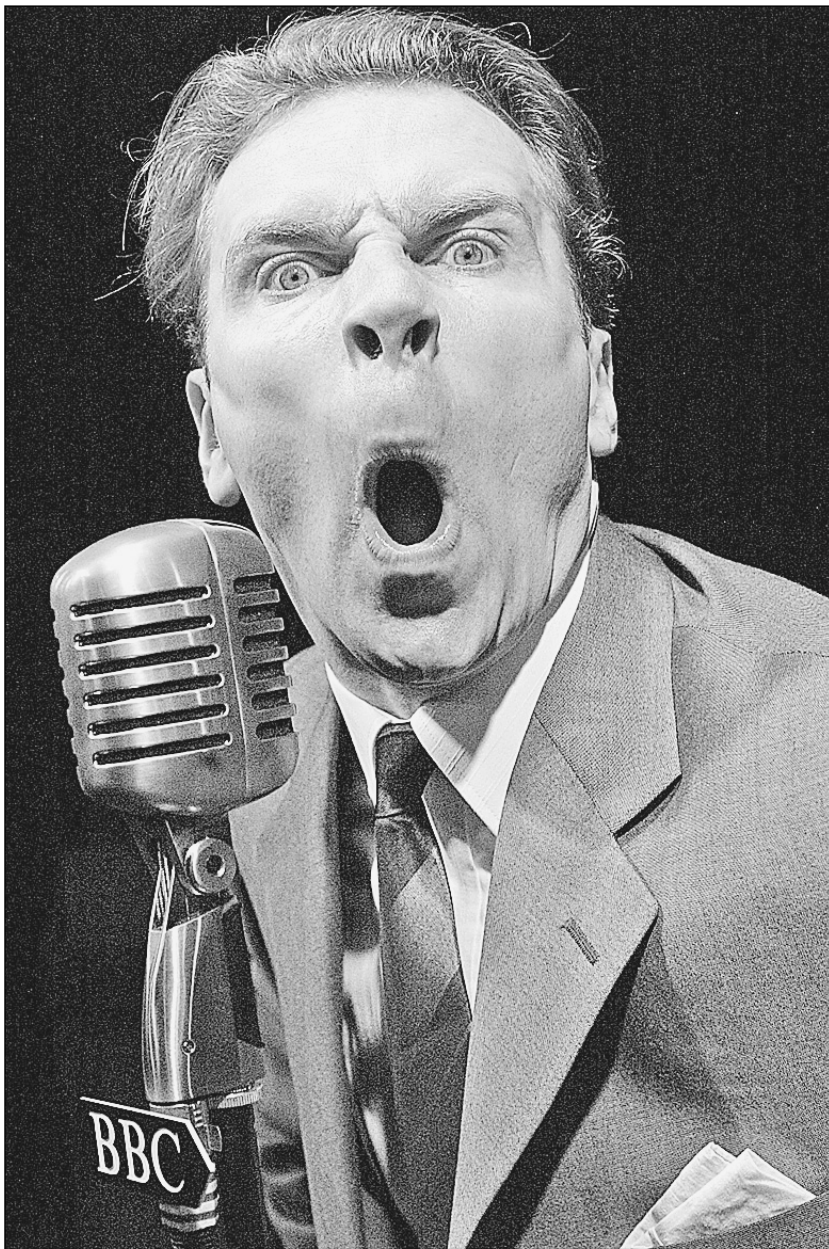


# The Arts



Alastair Muir

Naughty: Robin Sebastian as Kenneth Williams in *Round the Horne ... Revised!*

## Return of the gruntfuttock

IT is almost impossible to have a neutral reaction to the word "gruntfuttock", but your age will determine whether you smile with nostalgia, or snort with uncomprehending laughter. The radio series *Round the Horne* famously emerged when the Sixties were swinging, but swearwords were cowering in the shadows — resulting in an explosion of innuendo and punnilingus that titillated the humour of listeners twiddling their knobs to tune into Radio Four.

This exercise in irreverent nostalgia has been conjured up by Brian Cooke, the last surviving writer for a legendary team that included Kenneth Williams, Betty Marsden and, of course, Kenneth Horne. A new cast recreates the comedic alchemy leading to such golden characters as romantic Dame Celia Molestrangler and her hyperventilating co-star Binky Huckaback, or Rambling Syd Rumpo, the randy rustic whose statements include "You've turned down my fine plucked grummit."

Michael Kingsbury's loving museum-piece of a production cleverly whisks the audience to an era when it was risqué to declare: "The other night I was fiddling with my nine-inch Bakelite Bush." The set recreates a BBC radio studio, complete with flashing sign to cue audience applause — and the excitable attitude to sex seems to confirm Philip Larkin's

### THEATRE

**Round the Horne ... Revised!**

The Venue, WC2

**Rachel Halliburton**

assertion that "Sexual intercourse began/ In nineteen sixty three / (Which was rather late for me) — Between the end of the Chatterley ban/ And the Beatles' first LP."

Despite excellent performances — not least from Robin Sebastian as a naughtily narcissistic Kenneth Williams, and Kate Brown as a noxious, Noel Coward-style heroine, this eyebrow-raising innuendo can become wearisome. What persists is the linguistic dexterity, which ornaments everything from suggestive Homeric references to a saucy reworking of the Hound of the Baskervilles.

The first-night audience lapped up every second like the Hound of the Baskervilles's enthusiastic cousin, and the cast certainly evoked the mixture of education and dirt that made *Round the Horne* a cult hit in the Sixties. It's nostalgia rather than theatre — yet its piercing wit is enough ammunition to win it a temporary place in the 21st century.

● *Information: 0870 899 3335. Booking until 1 May.*

## The young Turk matures

THERE was a time when Gavin Turk liked to pretend that he was famous. In the past he conflated his identity with that of icons such as Sid Vicious, Che Guevara and the French revolutionary Marat in a series of waxworks and performances.

He also produced works that trumpeted his own, and at that time, fictitious fame, including the English Heritage plaque that he exhibited at his Royal College of Art MA show to commemorate his own presence at the college. The works intelligently played on the theme of fame as a universal language, equally useful for selling revolution, records or art.

More recently, overt signs of human presence, be it of Turk himself or any of his famous friends, have fallen out of his work.

### EXHIBITION

**Gavin Turk**

White Cube, N1

**Nick Hackworth**

He has taken to casting low-status objects — bulging black bin liners and empty, dirty sleeping bags, both on show here — in bronze, and painting them to achieve verisimilitude.

The work appears different but the subject has remained the same: the transformative power of belief. For it is in people's belief in the idea of art that art's value is to be found, a point made explicit by Turk's turning of junk into bronze.

Something of a logical conclusion of his extended exploration of this

theme is embodied in the only really new piece here, which forms the centrepiece of the exhibition. It is a maze of mirrored panels of differing reflectivity that occupies the whole of White Cube's main gallery.

The title, *The Golden Thread*, refers to the Greek myth in which Theseus slays the Minotaur who lurks at the centre of a labyrinth, in order to save his beloved Ariadne.

Happily, you will find no monster here, unless you bring one with you, for there is nothing to be found at the heart, or even at the end of the maze. All you will see is other visitors wandering through and reflections of yourself. But really, as Turk suggests, that's all there ever is.

● *Until 28 February. Information: 020 7930 5373*

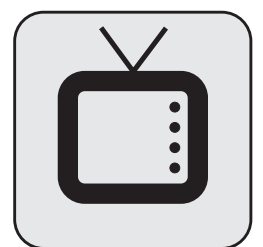
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