

## ***Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica* – previews**

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### **Shooting to score**

#### **One Yellow Rabbit teams up with The Rheostatics for a look at the sexy side of hockey**

Stephen Hunt, Calgary Herald

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#### Spotlight

*Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica* by One Yellow Rabbit and The Rheostatics begins tonight and runs until Jan. 6 at the Martha Cohen Theatre as part of the High Performance Rodeo.

Tickets: \$23 - \$34, at Ticketmaster.

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Your erotic might be my neurotic, but if there's one thing we all can agree has to be a turn-on, surely it's hockey erotica.

"I believe I am the inventor of the genre, singlehandedly, of which there is a membership of one," says Dave Bidini, the author of *Five Hole*, a play based on his book which opens tonight as part of One Yellow Rabbit's theatre festival, the High Performance Rodeo.

"But (it's) soon to grow like wildfire for sure. Everybody is going to be jumping on the hockey erotica bandwagon. You watch."

Each *Five Hole* (the title refers to the hole between the goalie's legs when he plays his pads in order to protect the corners of the net) story will be performed by members of One Yellow Rabbit theatre, with Bidini's famed rock band, The Rheostatics, performing between each one.

*Five Hole* tells the tales of the not-so-secret lives of (mostly fictional) hockey players after the puck has been put away for the night. Bidini, who has written two other books about hockey, *Best Game You Can Name* (2005) and *Tropic of Hockey* (2000), which was the basis for the CBC documentary *Hockey Nomad*, is a collector of hockey marginalia, stories that have floated around in his imagination for years.

"A lot of these stories grew out of that sort of overheard conversations that had been told to me by friends," Bidini says.

There's one, for example, about a bar in Montreal called The Moustache across from the old Montreal Forum, which is where someone tells a story about seeing Bobby Hull sitting in a banquette, surrounded by 20 French Canadian beauties, rolling a hash joint (giving a new meaning to the name The Golden Jet).

"(Each of) the *Five Hole* stories are stories that have some sexual or erotic content," says OYR's Blake Brooker, who directed them. "They're erotic to a degree, but the notion of erotic is so different for each individual, right?"

"But I think (they're) really romantic. It feels romantic to me. There's an innocence and a yearning in the stories."

“The player’s voice goes through quite an impressive filter by the time it ends up in our laps, in the living room watching our television,” Bidini says. “Whenever a player uses his own voice, speaking ‘out of turn,’ they’re kind of branded a rebel and they’re sort of called out on the carpet for stepping kind of beyond the boundaries. Players are so micromanaged these days.

“It’s absurd, in a country where ... we really do know players’ tendencies, we know a lot about their skills and how they play on the ice and stuff,” he says. “Considering how often they circulate in our communities, particularly in our small towns and stuff, it’s amazing how cloaked and veiled they are from us. One of my jobs as a sportswriter to a point is to try to dig up those stories and round out those personalities.”

The collaboration between one of Canada’s most revered bands and Calgary’s venerable theatre companies -- both have been around the best part of 20 years now -- has been a work in progress that finally comes to fruition tonight.

“When I sent the first (story) to Michael Green way back, Michael basically went into the room where they (the other Rabbits) were meeting and said, ‘I’ve got our next production,’ and they said ‘What is it?’ And he told them, and they said “Great.’

“Nobody had actually read them, but they were so behind the concept and the notion I thought, ‘Well that’s the group for me.’”

“That sounds about right,” says Green, one of the founding Rabbits. “We had them (the Rheostatics) as our artists in residence at last year’s Rodeo, so we really got to know them better.

“It was around that time Dave ... was sending me some one-act plays he was writing. And they didn’t feel quite right, either. And he said, ‘Well I don’t know what to do with these things here,’ and sent me one of his erotic hockey stories and it just rang a bell.”

“He touches on all aspects of that hockey culture, which is such an interesting thing here,” adds Brooker. “You grow up playing hockey as kid, lots of street hockey, and then ice hockey, and then watch the games, and then fall out of it for years thinking it’s irrelevant, and then you sort of fall back into it.

“There’s a treasure trove of baseball literature in the United States, and there’s a sort of a trove of hockey books in Canada, but it’s not romanticized the same way.”

For Brooker, there’s something that resonates in finally performing with a band he’s been listening to all these years.

“If you can stay doing something for that long, then it becomes something other than just a band put together by young people, right?” Brooker says, which, in a way, describes One Yellow Rabbit as much as it does the Rheostatics.

“That’s how you start things,” he says. “The band is a gorgeous, sumptuous, tender, precise, articulate, passionate entity.”

What makes Bidini’s stories stand out is the way he catches the voices of players, the stars and never-weres, as well as the women and men who, once in a while, make love to them. Bidini’s hockey players arrive on the page and onstage unedited, which feels fresh after 30 years of

watching nice, polite young men speaking in clichés between periods on *Hockey Night in Canada*.

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### **Sex and the stick men**

**Author Dave Bidini brings to the stage the hot side of our national game on ice in Canada's first erotic hockey musical**

PATRICIA ROBERTSON

January 3, 2007

*Globe and Mail*

Calgary — “My five hole is a triangle of endless space in a hot mountain of wet padding and plastic, a passageway to pure light through which the player dreams of moving as if he were a dragonfly, and it a keyhole,” actress Denise Clarke purrs from behind a primitive goalie mask.

For those of you who reach for the arts pages over the sports section, the “five hole” is the space between a hockey goalie's legs. It's also the central metaphor that lurks playfully in a series of erotic stories by Toronto author and musician Dave Bidini.

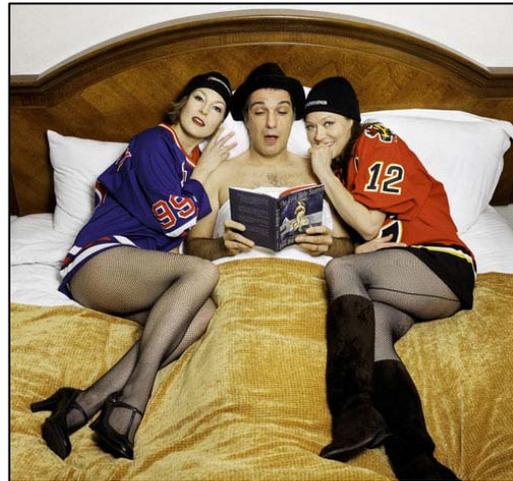
In late December, Clarke was in the late rehearsal stages of Bidini's *Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica*, which opens tomorrow night as the headliner of One Yellow Rabbit Performance Theatre's 21st Annual High Performance Rodeo.

Bidini's indie rock band the Rheostatics and Calgary's One Yellow Rabbit have conspired to create the steamy, live musical, and not since the Red Mile lit up with bare breasts and red hockey sweaters during the 2004 Stanley Cup finals has the city been host to such a raunchy celebration of our national game.

In his trademark lucid prose, Bidini explores the secrets of the dressing rooms, the late-night bar-hopping, the shop-worn women who court the hockey players off the ice and the forbidden love between macho players. Once the sole preserve of sportswriters, the seamier side of hockey has become great fodder for a group of quirky artists in search of fresh subject matter.

As the *Five Hole* monologue unfolds, Clarke clutches her goalie stick with what looks like the same ferocity as legendary Montreal Canadiens' netminder Gump Worsley once defended the crease. The eerie mask and the weighty stick are her sole props as the statuesque blonde rehearses in yoga clothes. The cumbersome goalie pads, the trap, the blocker and the oversized hockey sweater will have to wait for dress rehearsals for tomorrow's premiere.

The self-possessed Clarke is the quintessential hockey siren. Her sensual *Five Hole* soliloquy, penned by the hockey-mad Bidini specifically for the actress, reveals the sport's hidden sex appeal.



Actresses Onalea Gilbertson (left) and Denise Clarke of One Yellow Rabbit with *Five Hole* author Dave Bidini. (TRUDIE LEE)

In Bidini's hands, hockey's rowdy ice dance — with its boxy shoulder pads, toothless defencemen and pragmatic garters — possesses an erotic, burlesque subtext.

As the Henry Miller of hockey-rotica, Bidini first explored the game's lusty underbelly in the early 1990s during a reading series at Toronto's Music Gallery. After he and his band participated in a week-long residency with One Yellow Rabbit (OYR) in 2006, the Rabbits and Rheostatics talked at length about working on a larger project together — if only they could find the right vehicle. "It was time we called in the drunken late-night promises of collaboration," says OYR ensemble member Clarke.

Clarke is thrilled with her part in the play (which also features OYR's Michael Green, Andy Curtis and Onalea Gilbertson). "Dave is such a cool cat. He's also an excellent writer. When I got the monologue via MP3, I couldn't believe it was for me."

Known for his 2004 book *Tropic of Hockey: My Search for the Game in Unlikely Places*, Bidini seduced the Rabbits the old-fashioned way: with his writing. He scored big points when he came up with the raw material that best suited OYR's trademark appetite for sensual subject matter with an intellectual edge. Bidini sent a moving story, "I am Bobby Wolf," to High Performance Rodeo curator Michael Green. The other Rabbits, who hadn't read any of the stories yet, jumped at the opportunity to co-create Canada's first erotic hockey musical.

"It was that easy," *Five Hole* director and co-writer Blake Brooker says as he and Bidini break from rehearsals for some pulled-pork BBQ sandwiches in a downtown Calgary eatery. "The material began as a play," Bidini explains, "and then *The Five Hole Stories* book project with [Edmonton publisher] Brindle & Glass came later."

As preparations for the play *Five Hole* ensued, Bidini asked his eclectic Rheostatics band members to make their own contributions to the production. "I asked each of the other band members [Selina Martin, Barry Mirochnick, Ford Pier and Martin Tielli] to come up with one song to accompany the five stories," Bidini says.

Brooker's face lights up when the subject of music arises. He's a keen Rheostatics fan, so this collaboration was a dream gig for him. "We like to choose challenging, interesting projects," says Brooker, OYR co-artistic director. "We often select material that doesn't lend itself to theatre. Dave Bidini fits so well with us. He's an enterprising and profound artist."

Brooker contends that there is as much romance as erotica in *Five Hole*. "Bidini is a closet romantic. He loves to explore that which is missing. We could have called it 'Hockey Romantica.' There's an innocence to these stories and in them you'll find missed opportunities that make them poignant."

Despite OYR's penchant for choosing unusual material, it was a first for the company when a sportswriter turned up for the *Five Hole* media preview. "We never get interest from sports guys," laughs Brooker, who co-founded the experimental OYR theatre company 25 years ago.

But will *Five Hole* be able to score at the box office? "Oh yeah," he grins. "This piece will be sold out before it opens."

*Five Hole* runs tomorrow through Saturday at Calgary's Martha Cohen Theatre, as part of One Yellow Rabbit Performance Theatre's 21st Annual High Performance Rodeo, which starts today

*and runs through Jan. 20 (403-299-8888 or <http://www.oyr.org/highperformancerodeo/index.html>).*

*Five Hole will also be recorded live by CBC Radio for national broadcast this spring.*

*Special to The Globe and Mail*

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And for those of you curious about One Yellow Rabbit and the High Performance Rodeo ....

**Silly rabbits: Daring, offbeat theatre remains Rodeo's mantra**

Heath McCoy, Calgary Herald

Published: Wednesday, January 03, 2007

Preview

One Yellow Rabbit's High Performance Rodeo runs from Jan. 3 to 20 at various venues. For information and passes, phone 264-3224 or visit [www.oyr.org](http://www.oyr.org) or Ticketmaster.

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It was anarchy in the art gallery.

The year was 1994 and the place was The New Gallery. The occasion? One Yellow Rabbit's famed High Performance Rodeo, an annual festival of experimental theatre. This particular performance was dubbed Everybody Loves Dessert, a conceptual piece organized -- or, is the right word "instigated?" -- by Calgary's Green Fools Theatre.

Michael Green, ensemble member of One Yellow Rabbit and curator of the High Performance Rodeo, recalls walking into the gallery and being astonished to find all the art had been removed from the walls. Those same walls were covered in plastic, along with the floor and the ceiling. To top it off, Green, and everybody in attendance, were given full-body plastic suits.

A show commenced, involving "puppets and strange masks" and a feast was served up -- heaping plates of mashed potatoes with gravy and corn.

"It didn't take long," Green says. "I saw people revert to their high school selves. You'd see that glint in their eyes. Sure enough, the same guy who started food fights at his high school cafeteria started it and that's all anybody needed. The whole place went off. . . . I got hit in the face a couple of times and I thought, 'I guess it's a food fight . . .' The Green Fools just set up the petri dish and the culture exploded."

Some in attendance were highly offended, Green says, including a Calgary Herald reviewer who was present. When homeless people were starving on the streets, was this art to be wasting food, flinging it around an art gallery? "It was a highly contentious artistic endeavour," Green concedes. "But people still talk about it today."

That sort of challenging and bizarre, anything-goes approach to the performing arts has been the High Performance Rodeo's way from the beginning. It goes back to One Yellow Rabbit's origins and continues today, as the High Performance Rodeo kicks off for another year, with performances from Jan. 3 to 20.

Green co-founded One Yellow Rabbit in 1982 along with aspiring playwright Blake Brooker, when the two of them were young, spiky haired punks, searching for an antidote to the earnest, straight-laced productions that made up Calgary's theatre scene at the time. "Instead of forming a rock band, we started a theatre company," Green says.

But in those early days, running a successful experimental theatre group was a tricky proposition. Before it had Canada Council funding or help from the provincial government, One Yellow Rabbit was a do-it-yourself organization frequently flying by the seat of its proverbial pants. During Alberta's recession in the mid-'80s, there were times when the group did what Green calls "squatter's theatre," holding shows in abandoned homes.

By 1985, the group had been evicted from its third official venue, the SkyRoom on the former Electric Avenue, and they were desperate. "We felt like we had run out of luck," Green says. "We were looking for a place to call home and it was depressing because there didn't seem to be anything. We were looking at two-car garages in Inglewood wondering: 'Will this work for us?'"

Then it occurred to them they didn't have a traditional venue, but they did have an office, across from the Globe Cinema on 8th Avenue S.W. "We had half the penthouse," Green says.

Utterly defying their circumstances, OYR decided to hold a festival in that cramped office space, which could accommodate about 25 people. City inspectors would never allow such an event, so Green and company acted as outlaws getting the festival, which would become the High Performance Rodeo, off the ground.

"The first year it was called the Secret Elevator Experimental Theatre," Green says. That's because the festival's patrons had to be brought up to the event in the building's elevator.

"We put up posters around town, but we couldn't put an address on them because we knew we'd get into trouble. The inspectors knew who we were. The posters had a phone number on them. We'd sit next to the answering machine and listen to messages that came in. If we didn't feel like we were being probed by the long arm of the law we'd call back and give people a rendezvous point, around the corner from our makeshift theatre.

"We'd collect whoever was standing on the corner, take them down the alley, into the back entrance of our building and then bring them up on the elevator, six at a time. We blacked out all the numbers on the elevator so you couldn't see what floor we were taking you to. . . . The whole (festival) sold out and we didn't even get busted."

By the winter of 1987, when OYR founded its permanent home at the Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts, inhabiting the space they would dub the Big Secret Theatre, the festival was resurrected as an annual event, the High Performance Rodeo.

That sense of adventure has been maintained ever since. This year has its share of non-traditional fare, including a rock musical about erotic hockey stories (*The Five Hole Stories*), a real-life gay marriage as part of a performance (*Yellow Wedding #3: Courage and Power*) and a performance by Istvan Kantor, who banned from the National Art Gallery after he sprayed his own blood on the walls.

Green has often referred to the core members of OYR, which include actress/dancer Denise Clark, as a rock band of sorts, and if that is indeed the case, then the High Performance Rodeo is

the highlight gig of the group's year -- its own personal Lollapalooza. As well as attracting local performers, the Rodeo has brought in acclaimed artists from around the world, such as Laurie Anderson, the Rheostatics, comedian Bruce McCulloch and writers such as Irvine Welsh of *Trainspotting* fame, whose play *Filth* ran during one festival.

With each performer, there's a new adventure, says the Rodeo's managing producer, Stephen Schroeder.

"In 2005, we had the Suicide Girls Burlesque show," Schroeder says. "We had people lined up out the door and down the stairs for tickets. We had to turn away hundreds of patrons. The theatre was packed and the vibe was huge, like we had rock stars in our little theatre. It was very sexy and fun and quite rowdy, but the audience really got into it. We have a pretty eclectic crowd but I'm pretty sure some of those people had never been to a theatre event in their lives. As for the Suicide Girls? They liked to party backstage. That's all I'm going to say about that one."

Then there was the Phillip Glass performance in 2003 when Schroeder was sent running around downtown Calgary looking for the nail clippers that Glass demanded at the last minute. "Piano players need to have very short fingernails, right? And Glass had forgotten his clippers. So there we are scrambling around just before showtime trying to find a drugstore to get him his nail clippers. That was funny."

That sense of adventure and happenstance is felt by some of the hardcore fans as well. Dale Turri has been attending the Rodeo for the last 10 years. Each year she schedules her entire January around the event and in some years has taken in every show on the program.

"You do get hooked," Turri says. "For me, going to the Rodeo is a chance to hook up with friends. I look forward to it. It really does kick off my year."

For his part, Schroeder thinks the Rodeo transforms Calgary.

"You know (Calgary's) image," he says. "We're socially conservative, Tory blue, corporate. I don't see that Calgary so much during the Rodeo. In 2002 we had a Rodeo guide made up . . . with a naked model. You could see her naked breasts and torso and she was wearing a bunny head. . . . We sent out 50,000 of those and we got zero complaints."

"I think our city has an incredible interest in the new and the innovative and the unusual. We're poised to be a great city and I think the Rodeo really fits Calgary's new identity."

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#### Highlights of the Rodeo

The Five Hole Stories by The Rheostatics and One Yellow Rabbit. Jan. 4 to 6 at the Martha Cohen Theatre

Hockey is everything else for Canadians -- our identity, our consuming passion, our Saturday nights -- so why not our erogenous zone too? Based on a book of hockey erotica penned by Rheostatics guitarist Dave Bidini, *The Five Hole Stories* are a series of sexy tales about pucks and where not to deposit them. Starring One Yellow Rabbit, with original music by the Rheostatics.

Transmission Machine by Istvan Kantor Jan. 9-10 at the Art Gallery of Calgary.

The bad boy of Canadian performance art, Istvan Kantor -- yes, he's the guy banned from the National Art Gallery for spraying his blood on the walls -- brings his unpredictable persona to town. It may be best described by a warning not to wear your favourite cashmere.

An Oak Tree by News From Nowhere and Theatreboom, Jan. 17-20 at the Engineered Air Theatre

Rodeo curator Michael Green says this production may steal the show at the Rodeo. Local theatre group Theatreboom provides a different actor each night to play a part they know nothing about, playing opposite a fictional hypnotist in a scripted absurdist comedy.

Alejandro Escovedo Jan. 6-7 at Big Secret Theatre

The Texas singer-songwriter, once deemed "artist of the decade" by No Depression magazine, returns to Calgary behind his soul-searching seventh studio album, *The Boxing Mirror*. The eclectic Escovedo, who dabbles in punk, rock, Latin, orchestral, folk and blues styles, is a favourite of songwriters in Calgary and throughout North America.

The Glorious and Bloodthirsty Billy The Kid, the Greatest Serial Killer of Our Time Trickock Company, Jan. 10-13, the Big Secret Theatre

Albuquerque's Tricklock Company gives the tale of William Bonney an irreverent twist. America's favourite outlaw is given vaudeville treatment in this critically acclaimed show that uses Billy the Kid as the "perfect metaphor for today's America."

Yellow Wedding #3: Courage & Power by Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens, Jan. 14 at the Big Secret Theatre

Former porn star and sexologist Annie Sprinkle is madly in love with self-professed "dyke playboy" Elizabeth Stephens, so much so that they've vowed to have a wedding every year for seven years. Coming to Calgary for their third marriage ceremony -- and their first that's legally binding -- they invite audience members to be bridesmaids, groomsmen or tranny ring-bearers, or just to sit in as spectators for the event.