

Shoot, Lunchbox scores!

By LISA WILTON

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There are few things I care less about than hockey and knitting — and at least the Clinton scandal involves sex.

So obviously I was apprehensive about having to sit through a play based on two seemingly unrelated subjects.

Thankfully, Lunchbox Theatre's production of *Jacques Plante and the Parkdale Knitting League* — directed by artistic director **Bartley Bard** — turned out to be a pleasant surprise.

Toronto playwright **Paul McLaughlin's** award-winning one-act play is by no means a side-splitting comedy, but its more melancholy moments are equally balanced by some very humorous scenes.

Stephen Spender stars as **Jacques Plante**, who hockey fans (and those who've seen those Canadian Heritage Moments) will recall as the Montreal Canadian who became the first goalie to wear a mask.

Though his French-Canadian accent could be improved, Spender's portrayal of the hockey great — who also knitted his own tuques

and undershirts — was suitably sexy and arrogant.

It was easy to see how Violet Henderson (**Barbara Gates Wilson**), a wistful Toronto housewife, would become attracted to him. Her infatuation takes form in several letters she writes to Plante during his hockey playing years. Each letter becomes more and more personal as she reveals the details of her unfulfilling marriage to Fred Henderson (**Doug McKeag**) and her growing passion for Plante, as well as some handy knitting tips.

The dream sequences between her and an amorous Plante are very funny, especially the scene where she gives Plante — clad only in a towel — a back rub, only to be jolted back to reality after realizing she's actually massaging her less-than-muscular husband.

Wilson's mild stage manner makes Violet's longing all that more sad. You truly feel bad for her when she finally confronts Plante and finds out she is only one of many female admirers.

Witek Wisniewski's set design is uncluttered and effective, and the painted backdrop of a hockey arena definitely sets the mood.

A triumph, then — when the play draws to an end, you wish it could go into overtime.



NICE SAVE ... Stephen Spender as goalie Jacques Plante.

SUN RATING



*Jacques Plante
and the Parkdale
Knitting League*

Runs at Lunchbox
until Jan. 29