



## SOMALIA YELLOW

Written and Directed by Blake Brooker

Based on a performance concept by Denise Clarke

Featuring the video art of Allan Harding MacKay

Performed by the OYR Ensemble

**In 1993 Canada's last official war artist arrived in Somalia with his video camera. He found himself at the scene of the soon-to-be-infamous murder of a Somali teenager by Canadian troops. That is just part of his story.**

**Belet Huen.** Somalia: a gun-running, drug smuggling stop between Ethiopia and Mogadishu, and site of a rag-tag camp of Canadian peacekeepers. Living among them was noted Canadian artist Allan Harding MacKay, who the Armed Forces had commissioned to document the humanitarian mission through painting and, most compellingly, video.

The role of official war artist has a venerable tradition in Canada. Many famous artists, from A.Y. Jackson to Frederick Varley to Alex Colville, served in that capacity. MacKay's assignment, however, was markedly different. For one thing, Mackay knew that the Civilian Artist Program was being phased out, and that he would be the last in the line. And then there was MacKay's decision to add video documentation to the more traditional methods of painting and sketching. But most important was his arrival in the immediate aftermath of one of the Canadian military's most infamous acts - the torture and murder of a Somali teenager named Shidane Arone, brutalities allegedly spearheaded by Master Corporal Clayton Matchee of the Canadian Airborne Regiment.

Now OYR puts a fatigue-clad MacKay himself on the stand, along with his stunning video, to face a barrage of questions in this gripping theatrical meditation on the realm where duty and treason collide. What emerges is a hauntingly beautiful evocation of the parallel roles of artist and soldier as they struggle in a less-than perfect world, roles which, it turns out, are astonishingly similar.

First workshopped at the 1998 High Performance Rodeo, *Somalia Yellow* returns in expanded form, starring the OYR Ensemble (Denise Clarke, Andy Curtis, Michael Green and Richard McDowell) with special guest Allan Harding MacKay.

*"Incisive... Haunting...  
[with] sly wit and  
penetrating  
intelligence"-*

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