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Tapas on the Ramblas, by Anthony Bidulka

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Unapologetically Anthony Bidulka

Dale Smith

Mystery writer takes the spirit of the Prairies on a Mediterranean cruise

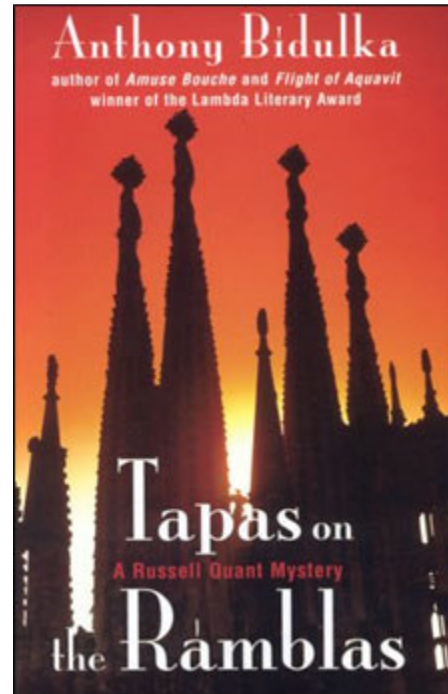
Anthony Bidulka calls his work "unapologetically Canadian, and unapologetically from the Prairies." But why apologize at all?

Last year, the Saskatoon author's first book, *Amuse Bouche*, was up for the Arthur Ellis Award for Canadian crime writing and his second novel, *Flight of Aquavit*, won best male mystery at the Lambda literary awards earlier this year. He was the first Canadian to win a Lambda award, which honour the best in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender literature, and the book was optioned for film rights, an offer that has since been extended to his first novel.

"When I first started out writing-I was always a fan of mystery novels-I really [looked] at what was already out there because I thought I'd like to write something a little different," Bidulka told XPress recently. "I saw a great number of books that were based in the U.S., or based in Canada but based in the bigger cities, or were Canadian-based but had a real U.S. flavour to them.

"I began to think that it might be kind of interesting to really go at it from a different perspective, and try and write from a Prairie perspective."

With vivid descriptions of Saskatoon and its environs, Bidulka's novels are certainly grounded in the Prairies. At the same time, he said, his heroes often find themselves travelling a fair bit, between Saskatoon and the bigger cities. "I did it specifically, not to say that the big exciting cities are better than the Prairies or vice versa, but just that there's some interesting



contrast."

Bidulka moves way out of familiar surroundings in his latest novel, *Tapas on the Ramblas*, which he will be launching in Ottawa this weekend. Set almost exclusively aboard a cruise ship in the Mediterranean, his latest mystery begins in Spain, stops in Tunisia and ends in Italy. There's intrigue at every destination, and each is as richly detailed in the writing as Saskatoon is in books past.

"The world has gotten very small," Bidulka said. "I think a lot of people travel these days, and a lot of people know about the places that used to seem very foreign and exotic, and they're not quite so foreign and exotic anymore because you can travel there through the Internet.

"But a lot of people don't travel to Saskatoon. When they're faced with it in a book, and hopefully in an entertaining way, it sort of becomes one of those places that people go, 'Oh, that's different, and that's interesting to learn a little bit about.'"

TAPAS ON THE RAMBLAS
BY ANTHONY BIDULKA
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Bidulka will be at the Tree Reading Series, held at Royal Oak II (161 Laurier Street) October 25. Doors open at 7.30 p.m., with an open set at 8 p.m., and his reading to follow.

