Perfection in an imperfect world?

by Ashley Bursey

Sometimes, the perfect woman might just drive you crazy.

That's the idea behind Norm Foster's play. "The Love List", the side-splittingly funny tale of two bachelor chums, Bill and Leon, who decide to put together a list of the top-ten attributes in the ideal female. But when Justine, a bombshell who happens to fit a little too neatly in the parameters of their list, shows up at the door, Bill begins to wonder if hoping for perfection is a little bit too ambitious.

Foster, Canada's most-produced playwright, actually got his start in theatre years ago in New Brunswick. He has returned to jump into the role of Leon in Theatre New Brunswick's production of The Love List alongside veterans Marshall Button as Bill and Ginette Mohr as Justine.

"It's a terrible experience, really," Button jokes, laughing, reclining on a couch on the set. "To work with two actors like this is fantastic. I first saw Norm in a play...playing Elwood Dowd in a play called 'Harvey', and he was a person who had experience being characters on the radio. But I saw this man onstage and saw him bring the house down... And Ginette, who I hadn`t met except on the Internet on these pornographic sites – no, I`m kidding. She`s a delight. She`s a comedienne, and she`s one in a million. I don`t know why she's stuck with us in Fredericton."

The cast works tremendously together, hitting all the right notes with impeccable comedic timing. And the play – which is clever and subtly sexual without being overtly raunchy – is a breath of fresh air for New Brunswick theatre and enticing for audiences of all ages.

"It`s interesting because you know, people tend to think of Norm's plays as being gentle comedies or whatever, but this play sort of breaks all the rules that I thought TNB had established ten years ago," says Button. "When I was being interviewed for a position here one time, one of the questions that came up was, 'What do you think about bad words in a play?' I said, 'What do you mean?' They said, 'Well, bad language.'

"I said, 'I don`t know, I look at a play, I don`t necessarily think about the words'... Eventually, if you program your works to try to not offend anybody, you're not going to please anybody, because they`re going to be so watered-down and so bland that it`s not theatre anymore. Is that what we want to do? To have things watered down to the point where we`re so worried about making everybody happy that we please nobody?"

Foster, sitting next to him, jumps in. "That whole thing about pushing the envelope, I've heard that so many times. Years ago, Malcolm Black was here [at TNB] and did 'Equus' – that was pushing the envelope. Four or five years ago, I acted in a show here called 'Art', where every other word was the f-word. That was pushing the envelope.

"This whole thing about doing safe plays – that`s crap. Whether it`s pushing the envelope or not, people want a good story. They want a good play. They want good performances. It`s not a case of, 'New Brunswick audiences aren`t ready for that,' because they are. They totally are. They just want some quality work."

The Love List is certainly an example of that, with witty, rapid-fire dialogue, vibrant characters, and a plot that any average Joe or Jane can relate to: finding the gal or guy of your dreams. The monkey's paw adage of being careful what you wish for just makes it even funnier.

"If you're an athlete and you pitch a perfect game or you score seven goals or you`re a hockey player, then you reach a moment that may never quite occur in that way again and it's something that you know is within our realm," says Button. "It`s these little moments of perfection in an imperfect world. I think that's what happens, and these characters begin to think it's possible because there are two or three moments that happen in the story, at least for my character, that are perfect, and then getting obsessed with trying to keep it perfect. I`m never going to score seven goals again or pitch that no-hitter again, or I`m never going to have that moment with the audience like I did that night, but by being obsessed with trying to recreate it is where you get into trouble."



Ashley Bursey / *The Brunswickan*

Marshall Button and Ginette Mohr in Norm Foster's "The Love List", running from March 12-16 at the Playhouse with discounted student tickets.

Poetry in motion, if poetry were 50 stories tall



THE FINAL SCORE

by Dan Hagerman



Robyn Hagerman 20.8

Shadow of the Colossus (PS2)

Every once and awhile, a game comes out that puts most other games to shame. Shadow of the Colossus is one of those games.

I should probably qualify such a grandiose statement.

When first booting up the game, you are greeted by a haunting melody and the vista of a canyon with a bird being tracked by the game's camera. As the camera moves, you see the bird pass by a lone figure riding a horse alongside a ledge in the canyon. The camera now follows the two characters, the boy Wander and the horse Agro, through a series of gorgeous environments. Finally they come to an incredibly large bridge, which leads over a valley to a large stone temple.

Upon entering this temple and descending a circular staircase, the pair arrives at an altar. Wander steps down from Agro and the boy removes a previously unseen, blanket-wrapped bundle from the horse. Wander carries it to the altar and lays the bundle on it gently before throwing the blanket away, revealing a beautiful but completely still girl. A voice, eerily mixed with both a male and female voice speaking in unison, demands to know what the boy is doing there.

Wander explains to the god that this girl has died because she had a "cursed fate," and says that he has heard that this god has the ability to restore the dead. The god at first claims that this is impossible to achieve, but upon witnessing a special sword that Wander has obtained, changes his statement to say that it may be possible after all, but it will come at a terrible price. Wander simply replies: "I don't care."

Why did I bother to explain all of the exposition? Because that's essentially all the exposition you're going to get from this game. From here, you must do the god Dormin's will by destroying 16 Colossi scattered throughout the land, in the hopes that Dormin will follow through on its promise.

From here on out, the game is almost nothing but you, your horse, your sword (which reflects light in the direction of your enemies' weak points), and your bow. That's it. That's the whole game. You also have a health bar, and a strength bar to tell you how much longer you can hold onto the Colossi before you're thrown off.

You will need all of these things and a fair bit of cunning to defeat these Colossi. Each of the 16 beasts are totally unique, with different environments to fight them in, different attack patterns that they follow, and different weak points to strike at.

If you think this sounds easy, all it will take is to even look at the first Colossus and you'll see that you have your work cut out for you. In terms of scale, the first monster you face is something like 20 feet wide and about 50 feet high. Oh, and it also has a really big club with your name on it. Later Colossi might be even bigger (or smaller!), so you can't just choose one tactic and run with it.

In terms of the Colossi themselves, they're also very well realized in terms of their creation. In addition to scale, these creatures look as if they could actually be some sort of mythic defenders of a barren wasteland. Some are covered in ornate rock patterns and fur, others are flying winged beasts, and the last Colossus defies description.

To compliment the excellent looking Colossi, the game itself is extremely beautiful. As the game goes on the main character looks increasingly sallow and worn. The horse is the most detailed and lifelike I've ever seen in a game. Even simple touches like the doves that appear by Wander's loved one appear gentle and gorgeous at the same time.

By now, you may have noticed that I may not have been calling much attention to Wander's horse, Agro. The reason I've done this so far is because I haven't had to. When I said Agro is the best horse ever, I meant it. If he's able to make it to you when you fall off of a Colossus, he will faithfully be by your side. You need to use Agro to get to many of these Colossi in the first place. And in some of the battles, you'll even need to attack the monsters while riding Agro and the artificial intelligence powering him will keep you out of harm's way. That's just freaking awesome.

I think the game's main draw, in addition to its technically superior visuals and gameplay, is its presentation. Aside from the cinematic sequences at the beginning and end of the game, the game uses minimalism in both its gameplay and presentation elements. People often ask me "Why would this kid go through all of this hell just for one girl?" To which I always reply that he clearly loves her more than anything else. Even if the relationship between the two is not made clear in any way, Wander chooses to risk everything for her. Even when he starts being attacked by something other than Colossi, he never focuses on them, but only on her. That kind of love doesn't show up in most media I've seen (or a lot of the time in real life, for that matter), and the same goes for Wander's faithful horse Agro.

Shadow of the Colossus is one of those games that people mention as an argument for the idea of videogames being able to be considered art, and I admit that it's hard to argue, with the majestic soundtrack, awe-inspiring Colossi, and a simple story about a boy trying to save a girl that he loves. And hey! It's fun to play, too!

16 out of 16 Colossi

Monday Night Movie Series

CARAMEL

March 17, 2008
8 pm Room 102, Tilley Hall
"Caramel"

"Caramel", a hit at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival, also triumphed at the 2007 Toronto International Film Festival, where it wowed audiences as a Gala Presentation. Nadine Labaki's directorial debut truly manages to stir the senses and emotions in this enchanting story, set in and around a Beirut beauty parlour.

Layale, (Nadine Labaki) is the owner and lifeblood of the salon. We soon learn just how complex her life is as we discover she is having an affair with a married man with whom she is hopelessly in love. While Layale awaits the secret call of her lover, Nisrine (Yasmine Al Masri), a spirited bombshell, is on the verge of marrying a conservative Muslim. Not only must she deal with the upcoming wedding, but also reckon with the fact that her fiancé might discover a secret he won't like on their wedding night. Meanwhile, Jamale (Gisèle Aouad), is an aging actress and client struggling to embrace her body as she desperately tries to hold back the hands of time. Rima (Joanna Moukarzel), hardworking and rough around the edges, has her anomalous desires awakened when her ideal client walks through the door. Nearby, seamstress Rose (Sihame Haddad) stifles her desire by deflecting the attentions of a long awaited gentleman suitor as she cares for her elder sister.

The ensemble cast on display here has such raw charisma that the film takes on an almost improvisatory quality; the touching and poignant performances generate enormous warmth and wit.

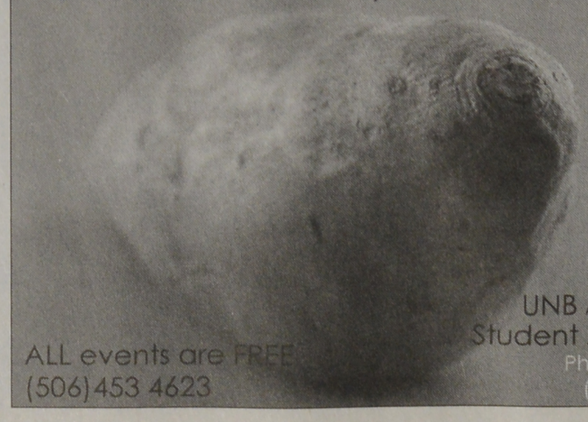
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