

# CAST INT FINAL\_mixdown

**Andrew:** [00:00:00] Hello everyone. My name is Andrew Pond, artistic director of Eclectic Full Contact Theater, and welcome to this special edition of the Half Hour Audio Hour. If you like what you hear, be sure to like, follow and subscribe to our podcast and feel free to leave a review. Today we have a special interview with the cast of the grand Experiment, discussing how they got into acting, their thoughts on voice acting, and their deep undying.

Love for director Joel Willison.

Okay. So the first thing, uh, that I'd like to do is just thank all of you for being part of, uh, the half hour audio hour and this particular episode, the Grand Experiment. I'm really grateful that you, you were all part of it.

**Sophie:** Can we

**Rashaad:** say something?

**Andrew:** I enjoyed the woo [00:01:00] shadows of things to come. So the first, the first question that I have for you, because I love actor origin stories, is how did you get into acting? And we'll start with Rashaad.

**Rashaad:** Me, you. So I got into acting. College 'cause um, actually before that I played basketball and football.

And my senior year I blew out my knee. Oh, Taylor. As old as Yeah. Tell as old as time man tale. As old as time. Oh, oh. And so I went to college, aimless and directionless and um, our college offered what was a freshman learning community class where like it was two classes can joinin together, but they were taken with the same.

People. Mm-hmm. That way it kind of was like easing your way into like the idea of like every class you take in college, you probably won't know a bunch of people. So it was like a way to like meet and really connect with people because you shared [00:02:00] multiple classes with them. Cool. Um, and it was a combination of acting one and English 1 0 1 and.

People have been like, do it because like it's an acting class. They just play games and it doesn't matter. They don't take it seriously. And I was like, that sounds easy enough. My Professor Montgomery, um, It was like, no, fuck that

shit. You came here to learn how to act and I'm gonna teach you how to do that shit.

And it was, I mean, to this day, one of the most intense acting classes I've ever taken in my life. Wow. And I've taken, I've taken numerous at this point, and it was like, I don't know. There was something about the way she was so passionate about it and how like much she wanted us to grow and learn in that class that I was like, I guess if I can't play basketball forever, I can do this.

Right. And here I am. That's

**Andrew:** awesome. That's, that is awesome. And, and I have to say the name, [00:03:00] Doty Montgomery. Sounds like she would be an acting

**Rashaad:** teacher. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Classic theater teacher.

Yeah. If you, if you hear the name, it's exactly how you picture the person. Super, super centric. Phenomenal person, but a hard ass.

**Andrew:** Straight. Straight outta central casting. Excellent.

**Sophie:** I have a really big family and all of our cousins on my mom's side, um, are all older than us and most of my family lives in Argentina. And so occasionally when we were really little, they would come to visit us, um, and when they would visit us, the older cousins would. Right plays for us then to perform for them.

So I'm happy to say that one of my starring roles that I remember in, I, I was performing in, I was the ballerina in the ballerina and Leonardo da Vinci fall in love. [00:04:00] Um, so it was a epic love story. And then we also fought a monster and won. It was great. I have a very enthusiastically artistic family. Um, And then when I was in middle school, my middle school was really small, so we didn't have a very large theater program.

Um, and so my mom found a theater camp for me to take, um, and I performed in Fiddler On the Roof, and I was one of the boys, the sons. Because there was two boys in the whole show. So, uh, you know, the classic, um, situation. Yes. But then, and then after that, I, I, I went to see Cirque de Soleil and this sounds like very disjointed, but trust me, it has a point.

Um, I went to see Cirque de Soleil like a month after I'd done this [00:05:00] theater camp. And I was sitting in the audience waiting for the show to start, and

I was like, ah, no, I can't do this. I wanna be backstage waiting to get ready to go on. I can't be just waiting in the audience. And I was like, oh, okay.

That's what I'm doing with my life then I guess. So that's how I

**Andrew:** knew that. That is amazing. And I have to tell you, I really want to see the ballerina and Leonardo da Vinci fall in love. I.

**Rashaad:** It's a classic, an epic. I, I, that is,

**Andrew:** that is an amazing, amazing show. It sounds like, um, Gil, um,

**Gil:** yeah, mine, uh, I guess how I got into acting is kind of like Rashad's in a way.

Um, in high school, I was also an athlete and. I did band and I was talking to one of my buddies, Ethan, who was really into theater and music, um, how I wish I could do that. I was always a very shy kid growing [00:06:00] up and would rather tackle people in football or wrestling, um, than get on stage. And unbeknownst to me, he had signed me up to audition and I kind of had to do it.

And it was for a little known play. Um, 12 Angry Men. Oh, and I went into my audition, really. Um, And the directors could tell. And I kind of told him like, Hey man, can you tell Ethan that I auditioned, but I'd rather do backstage, um, work, like working on the set and doing sound design. Mm-hmm. So I did that and then he found out and he signed me up again.

Or, um, Hamlet, and it was the same two directors and I went in and they looked at me and they were like, we're not giving you a pass this time. Ethan says that you do a lot of voices. You're a really funny guy. Let's get you out of that shell. [00:07:00] Um, so I actually through the audition and getting, um, just ensemble mm-hmm.

I nervous and didn't think I could handle that at the time. And yeah, and then going to college, um, I was still hesitant to do theater, uh, but I finally just decided enough was enough. Uh, stopped being shy and just try to share my talents, I guess, with those around me. Yeah, honestly, you just go out there and do it.

Rip every time, but, uh,

**Andrew:** Throw up. I, I just really enjoy the fact that your friend Ethan decided to sign you up for, you know, easy, non-stressful light comedies.

**Gil:** Exactly, exactly. Um, yeah, we're still good friends. I talk to him anytime I get cast in anything or I'm working on something. So I really have him to thank, um, [00:08:00] for really

**Andrew:** pushing me.

That's amazing. That is so cool. And.

**Crystak:** When I was in preschool, I was the second Billy goat in the three Billy goat scruff who had to walk over the bridge. Where there's a troll and I could barely make it over the bridge in front of parents children. And that was the last time I acted ever again. 20 ish years later, she came back and actually, um, it was because of the movie Lala Land.

Like I just watching that movie, like something just kind of shifted in me and I was like, yeah, you know, this, this looks fun and looks. Possible. And then you actually do the thing and you're like, it's a lot

**Sophie:** harder than we make it out to be. But it's

**Crystak:** been a wild ride. It's been crazy, and it's like a lot of good opportunities meeting amazing people.

People like this whole cast and like Joel and Rashad, whom I knew because of Directors Haven six.

**Sophie:** So, yeah. [00:09:00] Yeah.

**Andrew:** That's wonderful. And so the, the next question I have is what drew you to this? Project and, uh, we'll start with Sophie. What drew you to this project?

**Sophie:** I mean, it's probably gonna be similar to everyone else.

I am. I was just really excited to work, um, with Joel again. I've worked, I've worked with him on a few projects, uh, now, and they were all like incidentally working with Joel except the first, the first show we did was so silly, a children's outdoor show where I played like six different characters. Um, but I.

It was, it was wonderful. And Joel told me, he was like, Hey, we've got this really cool, uh, audio project we're gonna be doing. And I was like, yes. He, he didn't even finish saying audio project. And I was like, yeah. Yes, yes. I'm, yes, I'm there.

**Andrew:** Awesome. Awesome. And, and Gil, I'm [00:10:00] assuming Ethan signed you up for this?

**Rashaad:** Yeah. Yeah,

**Gil:** I went to school with Joel. Um, so yeah, same as.

Yeah.

**Crystak:** Guys stop complimenting Joel.

**Sophie:** Okay. She says that she's about to compliment. Joel,

stop. No, it really is because of Joel though. Um, like I

**Crystak:** said, like I said, I got to watch him work. I, I wasn't a part of his cast, um, for very obvious reasons for Directors Haven six, but. I got to watch him work and also watch the cast work together with him. And I thought what they had going on was really special.

And that just like comes under the [00:11:00] privilege of being able to work with the director that you really trust. Mm-hmm. And you work well with. And so I just feel super blessed to have been able to cross paths with him and yeah, get asked to do this opportunity. Excellent. And rash. Okay, everyone, now really stop.

No

**Andrew:** more. Well, we can, I gotta, I gotta hear why, uh, Rashad loves Joel so much.

**Rashaad:** Actually, I'm actually real confused as to why I'm here, because Joel has worked with me and Oh, Rashad and he's worked with me as an actor, so I don't know why he's ever called me back for anything. I thought that was a one shot.

He needed someone for his play, and then he'd be like, well, never that guy again.

I don't know why I'm here, but I love working with Joel. He's phenomenal. Um, he's like, as someone who is also a director, like watching Joel work is always a pleasure and like sometimes I'll like take little notes unrelated to acting, be like, oh, I can do that.[00:12:00]

**Sophie:** Directing

masterclass.

**Rashaad:** There you go. Lemme steal that real quick.

**Andrew:** Awesome. So, The next question is, how do you or don't you, because that's also possible. Uh, Characters. And, uh, this is gonna be very interesting to hear from Crystal, but we'll start with, we'll start with Gil. How do you relate or don't to, to Andrew?

Well,

**Gil:** who doesn't have a complicated relationship with their father at times?

**Rashaad:** Hey, hey,

**Sophie:** Ty.

**Crystak:** Issues podcast.

**Gil:** Yeah. Uh, I don't know. I, I found myself, um, you know, reading through the script and.

I was gonna be playing the minister or something. Um, just because I had worked with Joel in the past and I was like, okay, he knows me. He's probably just gonna maybe cast me as that. Um, but then working as Andrew was nice because [00:13:00] yeah, there's some I could relate to, like some of the stuff of like wanting to make those around you proud of what you do and your choices, even though sometimes they're not the best choices.

Um, accent. My stepmother's side of the family is Texan, so that was kind of fun to hear people playing around with that. Um, so yeah, I guess that would be my, my relation to

my

**Andrew:** character. Awesome. And now Crystal, you play several characters in this show, so how do you find. Stuff to relate to in, in, in all those characters?

'cause you play, what, three different characters?

**Crystak:** Mm-hmm. The Minister, uncle Harold, and Rose. Um. Actually this last take, 'cause I wasn't there, uh, I wasn't able to make it the first time we had rehearsals. So getting these three characters, I was like very pleasantly surprised. I was really happy with the outcome.

But this last take [00:14:00] getting direction for Uncle Harold, there was like a softness to him this time around that I don't think I found the first

**Sophie:** five. Hundred rehearsals we did

**Crystak:** it that I like, wish I found sooner. But I think that just like goes to show, it's just like the people that you work with and like the director that you work, like work with.

These are the things that can like, come out of a character and you like find the nuances or like the similarities.

**Andrew:** And, uh, Rashad, how do you relate or not to, to Cassie.

**Rashaad:** Uh, young African American man from the Midwest. I relate a lot to a Southern white woman.

As like the artist of my family, even though like one of my brothers is a comedian now, just outta the blue, like I was like the first person in my family to be like an artist and [00:15:00] like, it kind of just like put me away from my family in a sense. Like I, my family never disowned me. I think my family all still loves and appreciate me, but it did like create this like weird.

Huh. You do that now

feeling, and so I, I can relate to like that feeling of like somehow feeling a little othered by like the choices you make in college. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Andrew:** And Sophie, how do you.

**Sophie:** I, I think I relate most to her excitement about this new stage of just like, let's find out, um mm-hmm. Of just like what's happening.

It is very much an experiment. Um, but I, I feel like I'm entering a stage where I am more confident in my, uh, in my artistry, in my just life and just, Me who I am, and so now I'm entering the stage that's [00:16:00] like, great, we have the blueprints of me now let's see what happens out in the world with that.

**Andrew:** Awesome. That's wonderful. And it's a great, a great, no, it really is. I mean, it's a, and it's a wonderful way of looking at, at Marge, uh, and what's going on with, with, with her as well. So one of the things that I'm always interested in, in talking to actors about is this medium and, uh, what is it that you enjoy about doing voice acting?

And we'll start with crystal.

**Crystak:** Um, this is actually my first time diving into anything like this or like even voice acting. I have a bunch of friends who are professional voice actors, and they always talk about how much fun they have, just like being able to be as childlike and playful as they want, and.

I think for the first time, 'cause I never could relate to that. When it came to voice [00:17:00] acting, I thought it was kind of like, oh, it's like a silly little thing you do, but I get it. It it, it's actually really fun being able to play these characters that you normally wouldn't ever, like, I would never play someone like Uncle Harold or the

**Sophie:** Minister, but like, it's fun to pretend to be able to do

**Rashaad:** so.

**Andrew:** Uh, excellent. And, and Rashad, what do you, what do you enjoy about it?

**Rashaad:** So I listen to a lot of d and d podcasts. Yes. Lemme tell you, the Rashad of 2023 and the Rashad of 2012, we would never associate, we would hate each other, but like I listen to a lot of d and d podcasts and I like, and as a director, something about like this medium where it's like, Just voices.

It's just your voice telling the story. Like there's no more, there are no complicated, like I love theater, I love the stage. I'm a director. I love doing all that stuff. Um, but just [00:18:00] the idea of like, your voice is telling this story



and that's, at the end of the day, that's all you need to tell a story is your voice and Right.

I that, I love that about this.

**Andrew:** Yeah. It really is fun to, to kind of pare it all down like that. And, uh,

**Rashaad:** Sophie, I,

**Sophie:** I love how with the removing of like the visual element of things, you allow both yourself to dive into something that like you would never consider, think that you would in live action or film.

Mm-hmm. Um, Then it also gives, it opens the door for audiences to fill in the gaps of everything that isn't shown. And I think it's, it's a very welcoming medium because it gives so much power to the listeners to. Be able to decide like, oh, this per, this sounds like this and this is what [00:19:00] my brain creates because of that.

Um, and I think that's so fun.

**Andrew:** You know, I have to agree with you. I also think that audiences are really getting into it now too, which is mm-hmm. Is fun. And, and, and Gil, what about you?

**Gil:** Yeah, I've, I'm, I've always enjoyed voice acting, you know, growing up watching Batman, the animated series with Kevin Conroy.

Yeah. And just always wanting to impersonate that. I like impersonating and just trying to do voices. Um, and I don't know, it's just, it is fun. You know, you get to be, you could either be at your home or if you have a studio at home, if you're lucky enough, and just kind of have ball just doing different voices, having, you know, Doing goofy takes on things that you normally wouldn't do.

Goofy takes on like Shakespeare if you really wanted to, but mm-hmm. Um, yeah, it's just a, I feel like now it's more appreciated, like everybody was saying, um, with like video games being such a big thing with voice actors and, um, [00:20:00] I feel like it's finally getting its, uh, credit. Um, voice actors are, so I'm excited to do it.

I like it. You know, it's just like everybody said. And like I said, probably a million times during this, um, soliloquy, it's a, it's a ball.

**Andrew:** Well, we have no plans to stop this, so hopefully we'll continue to, to go and grow and all this other stuff and bring in even more audiences. So the final question, uh, you know, given what.

This show is, is of course, the most important and it's what is something that you always wanted to try, but haven't. And, uh, we'll start with Rashad. Oh, why? 'cause we've cycled through everybody else and it's come back to you.

**Rashaad:** Oh, and this is the one question I didn't wanna be asked first. Uh, it's as

**Andrew:** deep or as shallow a question [00:21:00] as you want to wade into.

**Rashaad:** For Sean, you

**Sophie:** get to bear your

**Rashaad:** soul. Yeah. Right now on here, so my birthday at the time of this recording was, Two weeks ago, and for my birthday, I had the entire ti like week off of work, um, because of my birthdays. During the week of the 4th of July. Oh, cool. Um, and I like thought to myself that like, I moved here in 2019 right before the pandemic and like I kind of like hit, hit the ground running as I'm ought to do.

So I like started diving into theater right away. I like got internships with the League of Chicago theaters. I was stage managing for black ensemble theater, doing a lot of just trying to like get some sort of footing. Mm-hmm. And that kind of cost me like the. Idea of like being a tourist in Chicago, like getting to see like the fun part of the city that like draws people in for a good time.

And so what I was gonna do is I was gonna get like a little, [00:22:00] uh, Chicago city, like the Chicago Go Pass where it like lets you go to five different like tourist attractions. Oh wow. Like a prorated rate. And I wanted to do that and then like, I was like on the website looking at the ticket, and at the same time I knew there was a directing class that would further my career.

Oh. And so like, I closed that page and I paid for the directing class, but I, I mean, I think I want. To do something like that, I wanna give myself, like, I often feel hesitant or I feel like I'm not doing thi something in the industry. Mm-hmm. But then people will be like, Rashad, you're working on three different projects right now.

What do you mean? It's like, is that, is that not, is that, that the normal amount of things to be doing? But I, I kind of want to just like to simple it all down. I kind of just want to give myself a break, but I don't know if my [00:23:00] brain will let me do that, but one day I would like to

**Andrew:** do that. I, I, I think, I think what you describe is very common with a lot of theater professionals in this town is that it's like work, work, work, work, work, work, work.

What? We have tourist stuff. I've lived in this city since 20, since 2002, and I haven't been, I have not visited anything. Touristy since I came down here for like, a school trip when I was in high school. Yeah. So, you know, I, I went up the, I went up the tower when it was still named after Sears. So it's

**Rashaad:** still named after Sears.

It's still

**Andrew:** named after Sears. It'll always be, it'll always be the Sears Tower, but take, take a little vacation. Breathe. Rashad. Breathe.

**Sophie:** Yeah.

**Rashaad:** One day. [00:24:00] One day when I think that I've made it to some level, I, I lemme, you did it. You made it. You're there, you made,

**Andrew:** look. I'm telling you, when you appear on the half hour audio hour, you've made

**Rashaad:** it.

Hell yeah.

**Andrew:** Where you're allowed to give yourself time to go look at the bean.

**Rashaad:** Would you guys judge me if I told you? I actually haven't done that. Oh my gosh.

**Sophie:** No, I haven't either. Don't

**Rashaad:** worry. It's perfect. No, you're, you're,

**Andrew:** you're fine. No, it's fine.

**Crystak:** It's the most accessible, free thing you could possibly do. Yes,

**Andrew:** that is, that is also true. Um, Sophie, what about you?

**Sophie:** Uh, yeah, so I, um, I used to sing a lot in like professional choirs, um, and I haven't been singing as much, but [00:25:00] something I've always wanted to do is go into a really big famous museum at the end of the day when they're closing up and find like an empty gallery and just sing a song really loudly.

I. Bomb. You know, like, like flash mob, but just me, just, just wanna, I just wanna sing in a space that has awesome acoustics, but everyone all day is always whispering and like, oh my God, look at the art. Or so, and I just wanna be like, no, fill this with vibrations and sounds. So I just haven't found the right time.

Do.

**Andrew:** Well see, I think I, I think you and Rashad can get together and kill two birds with one stone. Take him to a museum.

**Rashaad:** There we go. Rashad.

**Sophie:** We'll go to the Art Institute, Rashad, and you'll, you'll cheer me on as I run into the

**Rashaad:** room's. I'll, I'll show him the

**Andrew:** lions and then [00:26:00] go. Um, there we go. Excellent, Gil.

**Gil:** There's a lot of things. I guess one thing that I do want to do, I guess I'll frame it in like the theater world, is I, I wanna film something. Um, I've been writing a bunch of like, different things and I think I wanna like just get together with some buddies and like film a little short film or something.

Um, uh, 'cause it just seems fun. It seems fun directing, it seems fun doing, getting on that side of things. I guess that would be the main

**Andrew:** thing that I would wanna do. You know what? You could go film.

**Rashaad:** Singing, singing in a

**Andrew:** museum, and, and then Rashad can feel like he's working even though he's on vacation.

Exactly. And he won't feel guilty about doing it. See, I've got, I'm solving everybody's problems right now. This is, this is, I'm, I'm like, I'm like, uh, a, a non-problematic Doctor, Phil, just throwing out stuff. [00:27:00] Awesome. Uh, crystal, how can we work you into this?

**Sophie:** I'm just like sitting quietly in the

**Crystak:** corner, just listening to everyone give their answers. One of my big dreams is to for sure at some point, I wanna live in Japan for nine months. Yes. Why nine? I don't know. Someone actually asked me specifically, like, why nine? Why not a year? Why not half a year? And I'm like, nine.

Sounds like a very reasonable. If that's how long

**Sophie:** you have to hold a

**Crystak:** baby in

**Sophie:** your, in your

**Crystak:** belly, then you know, that sounds like a good amount for me too. Yeah. Not holding a baby, but living in Japan.

**Andrew:** Yes.

Mm-hmm.[00:28:00]

That is that, that sounds a amazing, and, and Japan is one of the, the, the places in, in the world that if I ever got a chance to go somewhere, that's one of the places I would definitely go. So that is so awesome. Well, I. I wanna say thank you once again to all of you for being part of this. It was an absolute hoot to, to not only interview you, but also to work with you on this script.

Thank you so very much. I really do. On behalf of myself and everyone at Aelectic, I really do wanna thank you all for giving of your time and your talent to this project and, and we really do [00:29:00] appreciate it.

**Sophie:** Thank you. Thank you guys. Opportunity.

**Andrew:** Thanks for listening to this special episode of the Half Hour Audio Hour, and thank you for being our partner in highlighting the voices and stories of women bipo and lgbtq plus artists. Tell your friends that for just \$5 a month or \$50 a year, they do can get access to exclusive behind the scenes interviews with casts and directors.

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