

Andrew

Hello everyone. This is Andrew Pond, Artistic director of Eclectic FULL Contact Theatre. Welcome to Season 2 of The Half Hour Audio Hour. Every month, we'll be featuring a different playwright, allowing you to not only hear their work, but to find out a little more about them and their process. This month's production is Fairies, written by Adam Szudrich, directed by Colette Cullen, and starring Rachel Walshe. Before we start, we'd like to briefly introduce you to Adam. After the production, stay tuned for an interview with Adam for more insight into the play and this process.

Adam Szudrich is a 'Bartie' award-winning writer whose work has been performed Off-Broadway, Off-West End & off in the middle of nowhere. His plays have been selected for 100+ international festivals and received 47 awards. Rosa & Leo won Best International Play @ The International Festival of Ten-Minute Plays and the critics' choice award at the Atlanta Fringe Festival. A night of his plays was staged over 2 weeks in Manila and reviewed as a "delectable morsel of theatre". Find more about Adam @ adamszudrich.com

And now, Fairies

Irish Teen

As luck would have it, I'm coming home from school and I see this bent old woman hammering a stake into the ground with a sign that says free land to the first taker! So I race home to tell daddy, See, he's always dreamt of growing daffodils and selling them at the markets but with mam being sick all those years, he's always been home to care for her. I charge through the thick cigarette smoke in Da's bedroom, stepping over empty beer bottles screaming hurry yourself! Get dressed Daddy! We're leaving now to claim your land! But he just lays in bed staring into nothing like he has been for... I cook him beans on toast and bring it to his bed, eating in our usual silence. That night I grab a torch and sneak out my bedroom window. Spotlighting the old woman's sign I look down the path that leads to her cottage. I walk through shadows of this enormous fairy-tree. Must be more than 100 years old, its branches reaching out like twisted fingers of old hands. Of course Irish legend has it that it's terrible bad luck to even break a tiny branch off a fairy tree because angry fairies will seek revenge. That's why you see these farmers' fields with a lone fairy tree, stones piled up around their base just to be sure no-one accidentally bumps into it. Come on, how can we Irish still believe in things with wings, or superstition, or even a god? Because if any of that were true, my mom would still be alive. My fist knocks on the ramshackle cottage as the old woman answers. "What do you want?" I yell, we'll take it! The door creaks open and the old woman squints at me through her bifocals. "Girl, this here land is cursed, full of angry wee fairies. My husband chopped down a fairy-tree. I warned 'im,

so I did, but he couldn't be told about luck. He was crossing a road and..." Her cold eyes stare off into the garden as she hands me a contract to give to my daddy. "I'm off far away from this evil place!" The next day I forge Da's signature, go back to the cottage, and the place is ours. Now, I'm not saying I wasn't fretting a wee bit when I held the axe above my shoulder, staring at that almighty trunk. But then I thought about the cancer that ate my mother's body and how all the chemotherapy and vegetable juices and doctors only dragged out her suffering and how it felt to watch her die a little more every day, knowing all we could do was... We'd never cut down a fairy tree, or walked under a ladder, or put new shoes on a kitchen table. We were good people who did good things and this is how we were punished? I drive the axe into that fairy tree. It barely pierces the bark. So I swing harder, driving that cold steel deep into the tree's belly. Chop after chop after chop, each one harder than the last. I barely have to strength in me to stagger home. But you know something? I didn't cross the road and get hit by a car. No little winged people attack me in the middle of the night. Every day after school I go back and chop and chop until it crashes with a fierce thud. AAHHHHHH! I call company after company to come and take away the tree, but hard-grown men quake at the mere thought of laying a finger on it. So I burn that fairy tree and wait until the winter rain washes the fields from black to green. It's parent/teacher night when I tell Daddy, "You have to come. All the moms and dads will be there. Miss Fisher says she needs to speak to you this year." I help him dress in front of the mirror just like he used to dress me, straightening his tie combing his whisks of gray hair. And as our front door opens he squints into the blue sky he hasn't seen in over two years. His legs so weak your ups an arm around mine, shuffling past people who stare without staring. All dying to get back to their friends and family and say "You'll never believe who I saw to-day. You couldn't tell him from the walking dead, god love him." We walk in silence down an empty gravel road, his heavy eyes glued to the crunching rhythm of each step until I stop and say "Daddy, I lied. Miss Fisher is delighted when parents don't show. Hates the paperwork and the chat!" He looks up at me and this ease washes over him as he cracks a sullen smile. Over my shoulder is this incredible yellow field of daffodils swaying gently. He closes his eyes sniffing the sweet breeze. Maybe he's remembering his first date with Mam when he gave her daffodils, or when he laid them on her coffin. I tell Daddy, "It's ours! I planted them so Mam can look down from heaven and see how much we love her."

He's a paler shade as I explain how I cut down that monster of a fairy tree, but I say. "It's okay, it's just one of our dumb myths. There's no such thing as bad luck. Nothing's happened to us, right? With tears in his Eyes, he lays a hand on my shoulder and says, "I once cut down a fairy-tree. On the spot where we built our house."

Andrew

Thank you for listening to Blag, here on The Half Hour

Audio Hour. Next up is a brief interview we conducted with Adam Szudrich after the recording of this show.

So Adam, first off, thanks so much for being part of this and for allowing us to be part of doing your show. So the first question I have is when did you start writing?

Adam:

I, reckon I began writing pretty much inside the womb. I was, I'm so fortunate to be surrounded by amazing storytellers, my grandmother, she could, um, break your heart or make you laugh with her stories. And my dad, he would, um, do this thing when we went to bed where we would say anything, any word, any topic, and he'd make up a story right there on the spot. So I've been writing as long as I can remember, but I've been incredibly unsuccessful. I think I was probably the most unsuccessful writer in the history of writers. I know it's a big statement, uh, but it's only in the last few years where I've been fortunate to have quite a few things produced, um, before that, um, a lot of failure and a lot of rejection and, um, my real bio, um, if, if I was to write my real bio, I think it would sound something like Adam failed English at school. At university his teacher thought his writing was so terrible that he refused to mark it. That's true. He refused to mark my work. For 22 years. Adam wrote film scripts seven days a week. One was produced by him himself. It was rejected by 32 film festivals. It was never released. Adam's plays have been rejected over 3000 times. Adam is a writer,

Andrew:

Speaking of breaking your heart and making you laugh. Uh that's. That's uh, brilliant. And, uh, so sad. So what inspired Fairies?

Adam:

This play was inspired by my first trip to Ireland, literally leaving the airport and driving through those winding Irish roads and seeing these big mystical trees, standing alone in big fields surrounded by rocks and saying to my wife, you know, what's, what's the story? And she's, she's telling me. They're fairy trees like very straight faced, no irony. That's where the fairies live. I'm like, okay, what, what happens? Why, why there rocks around those trees? You wouldn't want to touch them. Why is that? They'll bring you bad luck. Okay. Okay. I thought that was maybe just a, I don't know, a personal thing that she might've believed, but, um, the more people I spoke to, the more drinks they had, the more they told me about these fairy trees. Um, and genuinely believed it. So I thought, uh, this is a pretty good idea for a play and that's where the idea came from.

Andrew:

So. Is this the first script that you've written to do as an audio drama. And what are some of the challenges of writing for that as

opposed to stage or screen?

Adam:

I've written a few other radio plays and I liked them. Um, on stage. I feel that you're in the same room as your audience. And on radio, you're inside their head. Um, you've got to be creative with your words on radio. Find that a bit of a challenge, you know, in theater, you can see the gun. In radio you've got to find more interesting ways than look out, James, he's got a pistol. I think voice is really important in radio. I have a play called one night stand. It's about these three different women, one in their twenties, one in their thirties and one in their forties telling the story from three different perspectives of a date. Um, it works really, really well on stage because it's very rapid fire finishing each other's sentences. Uh, it would never work as a radio play unless you gave them all really weird accents. Even then, I think it would struggle. I think silence is something that you can really use particularly well in radio plays. I find that. Builds tension, but I guess the biggest challenge in radios is, uh, you know, building that picture, um, creating a sense of place through words, but doing it in a way that it's creative and authentic.

Andrew:

Excellent. Excellent. So do you have any upcoming projects you'd like to plug?

Adam: Yeah, look, I've, I've always got some, some works on the go and, um, you can always find them on my website. Which is Adam Szudrich dot com. And in case you can't spell Szudrich, um like most people on planet earth. It's S-Z-U, D R I C H. Um, I, I would love to talk about, uh, Colette, the director who I think is just one of the best writers going out there. And she's got a fantastic piece coming up called Tender Mercies, which you should definitely, definitely check out as well as all of the rest of her work. Um, brilliant director, but also a brilliant writer and just. Finds that perfect mix between heart and humor. Um, and just manages to say so much in all of her plays, but in a really beautiful way.

Andrew:

I totally agree. She was a co-writer on one of the serialized audio dramas that we did during the lockdown. And she's amazing. I can't say enough about her and, uh, Colette, you apparently now have a new agent. Um, so, uh, I'm going to ask you now the most important question of this entire interview, Adam, which is what superstitions do you believe in?

Adam:

I'm not superstitious, which is a huge problem, being a writer in the world of theater, because I'm giving flowers before performance, I'm saying good luck instead of break a leg, I've even been known to

whistle backstage. So I'm probably causing a lot of stress and tension when really I should be very, very superstitious. So this is something that I definitely need to work on.

Andrew:

Well, thank you. Once again, uh, Adam, for being part of the Half Hour Audio Hour and allowing us the opportunity to produce your show over here in the States, it was an absolute blast and we're all very, very grateful. Thank you.

Adam:

Thanks so much for having me on and also for producing my play. Really, really big, thanks to all the amazing people behind the scenes, for not only producing my play, but all the other great works. While I'm saying my thanks, thank you to Rachel, who's just fantastic. And Collette, who is not only a brilliant director, but a really, really fantastic writer.

Andrew

We hope you enjoyed Fairies. Next month, we will be presenting Salacia, written by India Rodgers, and directed by EFCT company member Rachael Proulx.

If you enjoyed what you heard, please remember to like, follow, and subscribe to our podcast. And feel free to leave a review! You can help us out in continuing this work by heading over to redcircle.com/shows/half-hour-audio-hour, where you can sponsor us through a onetime or recurring donation and become our partner in highlighting the voices and stories of women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ artists. And head over to eclectic-theatre.com to find out about our serialized audio dramas, Deep Shadows, Bloody Bay, Clusterf**k, Monocyte, and Throwing Shade. On behalf of myself and everyone here at EFCT, thanks for listening.