

Andrew

Hello everyone. This is Andrew Pond, Artistic director of Eclectic FULL Contact Theatre. Welcome to Season 3 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. If you enjoy what you hear, 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](https://redcircle.com/shows/half-hour-audio-hour), where for as little as \$5/month or \$50/yr, you can get access to exclusive behind the scenes interviews with the casts and directors of our shows, as well as become our partner in highlighting the voices and stories of women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ artists, just like donors Jack Kilpatrick and Marianne Goodell

This month's production is "Lost In Tea", written by Jo Cattell, directed by Christina Casano, and starring Tess Galbiati

Before we start, we'd like to briefly introduce you to Jo Cattell. After the production, stay tuned for an interview with Jo for more insight into the play and this process.

Jo Cattell (Playwright/Director) is a leading voice in the convergence of live theatre and immersive technologies. Her work has appeared at Sundance Film Festival, the BBC, Sky Television, Cirque du Soleil, and multiple US and London theatre's. Cattell is head of content and cocreator at Kaleidoco, an innovative technology company blending metaverse with physical experience. She is a member of the LightPoets digital and immersive theatre collective, whose immersive graphic novel, SPEED OF DARK, was recently opened in downtown Las Vegas. LightPoets also created the opening performance for TED 2022 demonstrating an onstage metaverse where the audience witnessed a world-first syncing of AR over 1400 devices and live streamed AR with performance around the globe. Kaleidoco is currently building an AR mobile game that will be launched in the Fall, 2022. Cattell adapted Shakespeare's KING LEAR into an AR immersive theatrical experience in collaboration with San Francisco State University's Fabula(b). She is a 3Arts awardee, a Joan Mitchell Center Fellow, a 2021 Illinois Artist Fellow and a Perkins Coie awardee. Cattell was the Maggio Directing Fellow at Chicago's Goodman Theatre, with whom she is currently collaborating with the world-renowned Electronic Visualization Lab at the University of Illinois to create HUMMINGBIRD, an immersive theatrical experience with VR.

And now, Lost In Tea

SFX: BED SHEETS RUSTLING, LAPTOP BOOTING UP TYPING

LEANNE: The councilor is staring into her tea. Again. She is totally lost. Clueless. She suddenly remembers the video is on, looks up and nods at me to carry on.

So, I tell her, "I don't think there's anyone who'd miss me if I disappeared. I'm not, like, feeling sorry for myself. That's a trait my mother slapped right out of me at an early age."

The councilor dunks a biscuit into her tea and spouts back that I need to face this head on, then tells me to write a list of things I like about myself and a list of things I don't like. Then she holds up a mirror to the video stream as I murmur...

The world is full of opportunity.

People are there to support me.

It's all going to be OK.

Which in reality translates as...

The world is fucked up

People are fucked up

And you gotta accept it. OK... But I don't.

What I don't get is how fine everyone else is about it. But me?

I find it quite... well... awkward.

Is this all there is to adulthood? The acceptance of complete fucked-up-ness? I see adults playing fake all the time. Even the kids in my class are starting to get infected with fakeness. And then they're all surprised when things don't work out – like that princess of skanks, Theresa. She's always dumping someone, complaining that they're a "lying piece of shit." Well of course they lied. Cos everyone is fake.

The councilor thinks I've a bleak view of society and that there are good things to be found if I'm willing to "open my heart".

I tell her I had open heart surgery and that I think her turn of phrase a poor choice. You'd think I'd just announced that Peppa Pig was a pedophile.

The shit that comes outta my mouth lands like her dunked biscuit being lost in tea. Glug glug glug

Lost.

The irony is, that skank, Theresa, is meant to be the one in counselling. Not me. Theresa stabbed Keesha with a pair of scissors last term, just cos she could. The school called Theresa's parents and told them that Theresa either had to move school or see a councilor. Her parents decided a councilor would be better for her chances at a good university – her mother banging on that "moving schools always looks bad. You have to explain why. And she's going to be a lawyer." Keesha, however, was so traumatized by seeing Theresa every day, she decided to change schools. If everyone who was traumatized by Theresa changed schools, there'd be no one left here. Theresa's mother was like, "Bye Keesha", stating "that girl won't amount to anything". The school swept this injustice under the Head's new rug, kindly donated by Theresa's parents, claiming that it was Keesha's decision. No, it wasn't. It was Theresa's

parent's decision. Theresa then comes to me and says "You're fucked in the head so you're gonna see the councilor for me or I'll stab you too".

I didn't give a shit and told Theresa to schedule it during double geography.

"How are things at home?" The councilor asks. She thinks that if she digs deep enough, she'll unlock the cause to Theresa's anger. Tragic really. Should I imagine what Theresa's homelife is like?

Nah. Too much effort, and anyway, I have a plethora of personal trauma to pull from.

Obviously, my parents are to blame for my own rage. They're human rottweilers. One Christmas, my mother pulled the dinner outta the oven and threw it at me. It missed and splattered all over the floor – raw turkey spreadeagled like a Kardashian insta. She then threw every piece of crockery at my father. I waited until she'd finished, then asked politely what we were gonna have for dinner now. She threw a suitcase at me and told me to pack it and fuck right off. Given all the throwing my mother does, she missed her calling in baseball. I was seven when this went down. And I nearly did fuck off. Then I found a way to stay beneath parental radar, by hiding under my bed and living off packets of Lay's sour cream and onion – my dad's favorite, so the house is well stashed with them. Once in a while, they'd run out causing his iddy biddy bald head to get redder and redder and redder, with my mum screaming, "only you eat those fetid things so

you're to blame when they're gone!" I'd secretly watch them, laughing, as I tucked into dad's last bag of chips.

I'm doing a similar thing with the councilor – staying under the radar. I like to tell her stories about anything other than my parents. It's like playing battleship... keep her guessing the coordinates so she never lands on anything real. I talk a lot about toys. I guess cos I live under a bed with old Ted, bunny, a decapitated My Little Pony and a shoebox that I turned into a coffin for Barbie. She was still in there. I checked. Ugh, Barbie. No wonder people don't see beyond skin, when they're handed plastic beings and told that this is what they should love.

And what is the point of a short, dumpy multi-colored horse? I beheaded the one my aunt gifted me for my birthday. I wonder if the pony was bothered about losing his head. We've had chats and I reckon my reasoning probably sounds poor. But decapitating made sense at the time.

Now being a weirdo that people give a wide berth to is great when you don't want to share a table during lunch, but when you get tasked with group projects, it's a bit wak.

So, imagine my joy when the World entered a Global Pandemic and weren't allowed to interact – no more group projects! Thank fuck. Now I can stay under my bed, with my strange toy community.

I've never slept well. Until now. I'm so relieved that everyone is finally experiencing the same angst as me. For the first time in my life, I don't feel alone. Although I am. Of course. But what I mean, is that we're all alone. Together. We're all invisible. Hiding together. Forced to stop and listen to what the leaders of the world are saying – And everyone's starting to notice that they don't give a shit about the rest of us.

Lost in tea. People are drowning in over-steeped distraction tea. You can't be saving the world if you have to be liking your BFF's posts every five seconds. To be fair, it's not just social media. My neighbor has three jobs and two kids and a husband who fucked off with some waiter. She had no time to start a rebellion. But then the global pandemic started and now she has time. The leaders must be pooping their pants. Can't waffle their way out of this shit show.

The neighbor knocked on our door and asked my dad if he was gonna protest. He told her no. She asked him, "Does Leanne want to go to the protest?" My dad, confused, asked her who she was talking 'bout, "Your daughter, Leanne" she says. The neighbor remembered me. My dad slammed the door in her face.

But I did go and I made signs with words I believed in. And I stood alongside other people, crying for justice. Cos Theresa should've been forced out of school. Not Keesha. I did, like, apologize in a heartfelt manner to My Little Pony. Even tried gluing his head back on, although now it sorta looks like the Pony of Frankenstein. And I said sorry to Barbie. I know she's just a plastic thing with no depth, but she has come to mean something to me. And it must be lame always being judged on what you look like. I know I hate it.

Lost in tea?

I'm not sure. But I've been having thoughts about coming out from under the bed and confronting my parents. It scares me cos they think so different from me. But the councilor thinks this is a huge step and is saying that if I want to be a different kind of adult from them, then she thinks it's a step I have to take.

SFX:LAPTOP SHUTTING

But not today.

SFX: BED SHEETS RUSTLING

Maybe tomorrow.

Andrew

Thank you for listening to Lost In Tea, here on The Half Hour Audio Hour. Next up is a brief interview we conducted with Jo Cattell after the recording of this show.

Andrew

All right? So Jo the first thing I want to do is just say thank you so much for letting an eclectic, be part of your show lost in tea we really do appreciate it.

Jo

You guys have been awesome. This has been so fun working with you all. So I Really appreciate you being up for playing with that.

Andrew

Excellent, excellent. So my first question is how long have you been writing.

Jo

So it's a bit of a weird one for me I guess. I I started out well way back creating theater at school. Um I used to get into a lot of fights. When I was a young kid at school and sort of became the kid that all the boys at school needed to beat up in order to prove themselves and I got a bit tired of it. So as I you know how can I get myself out of the playground. And so I went to my headmaster or Principal and I said to him you know I think what what you guys really need what we really need at assembly is a bit of entertainment and I'm going to create plays for you and you're going to give me a classroom to rehearse with. And my headmaster who was an amazing guy thought it was brilliant and so did give me a classroom and let me pick my clan as it were and we created plays and I would sit in a classroom and I would tell every person what they were going to say and then direct them and then you know often would be in it myself. And yeah, quite an obnoxious child clearly um, and so that was kind of how I first started but I never really saw myself as a writer at that point, although I was always writing. so you know as I was walking to school I'd be always thinking. Okay, what are we going to do this week. What's the play going to be about this week?

I mean that was a constant narrative in my own head, even though I didn't really see myself that way and it wasn't really until university when um I you know I did a theater degree and and the university that I was at actually had a very very strong playwriting course and and doing acting and being an undergrad in performance. We were all actually. Required to be to perform or or to be actively involved in all of the plays that the playwrights would write and so every year at the end of the year we were all required to be in some way part of the the 14 plays every single one that had been written by these new playwrights. So people ah up my university were very sort of like encouraging of new writing. Um, which was really nice but I still wasn't necessarily very confident and then when I left

university I actually really wanted to be a director.

Andrew  
M.

Jo

Um, and I was like how how am I going to be a director and I I wrote to you know a well-known playwright and director called Terry Johnson and I was like you know I think you're amazing. You know I want to know how you've how you've kind of made it in the career and he. Actually got in touch with me and was like you know come and have a chat with me so I went and had a chat with him and he was like what you need to do Jo is you need to write a play and it's going to be really good and then you can tell them that you want to direct it. And I went away and I was like Terry that's great when you're a genius pain rate like you are but I don't know if that's going to work for me because I don't know if I can be a director unless I'm writing a play that everyone's you know saying this isn't a brilliant play anyway. So I called my friends I was like guys--got an emergency we have to go to the pub. So we all went to the pub.

Was like Terry's told me that I have to write a play and I you know if I'm going to be a director I have to write a play. This is not what I was expecting and so after many many drinks we came up with a title of the play that I was going to write which was going to be Dingo Queen um which was actually about. 2 Australian prostitutes and and the serial killer um, and and it actually did really well. Um, and I got amazing reviews and Terry came and saw this play that I'd written and I directed and and he actually recommended me to a number of theatre companies and and as a consequence my directing career actually did take off and so I did actually start and getting a lot of directing work. And I was always still sort of writing but I wasn't really needing to write in the same way because. I kind of felt like I had achieved what I was really wanting to do which was directing um and then in 2016 um Henry Wishcamper um, who you may or may not know but lovely lovely director, who was working out of who was you know was an autistic associate at the Goodman theater at the time, talked to me and asked me if I might be interested in writing a kids show for him to teach for a summer school that he was doing um ah a local school in Chicago. And I was like yeah sure that sounds cool and so I wrote this play and Gabe Breeze who you may know who wrote the music and created these incredible raps and um and we did this this little show with with these kids and and it went down really well and and. The parents were like this is great when are you going to do it again and we would like to it again. Oh shit oh pressure and and we went to the Chicago children's theatre and and they were they loved it and they said yeah, let's do it and so we ended up doing it which was an epic tale of scale which was an immersive piece. Piece of theatre that we did there. Um and that kind of got me back into writing and I ended up doing a few other projects all of which suddenly all got produced

which you know doesn't necessarily happen. Um for playwrights and so it kind of felt like the universe was telling me actually playwriting. You need to kind of get back into this which was really lovely. It's been really lovely and actually probably saved my sanity through the pandemic honestly. Um, but um, yeah, it's been nice because I feel like I've actually had a bit more control over the projects that I've been doing and also just who I've been able to work with which which is also you know I think that's a great privilege You know? So yeah, it's been.. It's been an interesting journey. Um, but it's also been a lot of fun I've been very lucky.

Andrew

Excellent. So so what inspired lost in tea.

Jo

Um, mostly everything that had happened was happening and did happen in 2020 really um just you know it was this sort of point where we were really forced to examine the world that we were living in and you know justice and what exactly was justice and that even living and in a country like America and you know even the yeah uk which is where I'm originally from and just seeing what was happening with the governments and. With the people and the sort of double standard which was just really sort of appalling to me. And then you know also navigating the truth through social social media and you know and how twisted everything had become um I guess that you know obviously was a big thing the pandemic plunging people into this sort of isolation but at the same time I was at home homeschooling my own child. Um, and so I had this very real thing of watching my child change and his personality changing through this experience. And it was also for me, it felt like a really crucial time for him and his personality because you know he was sort of like going into puberty which I mean I'm sure most people remember sort of how awful that experience is as it is let alone when you've also kind of got this crazy world thing happening at the same time. Um, and so yeah, those were kind of all of the things that were kind of swimming around in my head. Um. And and just yeah, really kind of remembering how isolated I felt when when I was the same age as my my kid really.

Andrew

I can't imagine what it must have been like to be hitting that age during that because it's awful enough without a pandemic.

Jo

Right? It's just like it's like trauma on trauma.

Andrew

Oh Oh man of. Yeah, yeah, yeah, he can't even you can't even get Away.

Jo

Ah I just and as being stuck at home with your mom. You don't even

have you know a friend that you can be like compare notes on the crap that you're dealing with.

Andrew

So are some of the challenges and/or advantages to to to writing for the audio medium versus the stage?

Jo

Yeah I think challenges is that you do have to obviously remember it's it all has to be aurally told. Which sounds so obvious but I used to actually read audio submissions and it's Amazing. How quickly as playwrights you you actually forget that because we are so attuned and ready to write about what we see you know? So um, it's really interesting. Um, but really what what I enjoy is the idea of you know what? what can an audio drama be what are the worlds that we could access through audio that we can't really access through other Medium. And just you know, creating that world and really trying to place someone in somebody else's head which I think audio does better than anything Honestly, um and you know not only do you really understand how the way that you know the people Think. Um, and feel but you know you really create the world for yourself and as someone who creates I do a lot of immersive theatre. Um, for me Audio Drama really is you know the OG of immersive theatre. You know it's like it's where it it kind of started, as far as I'm concerned. So yeah I think from that that perspective. That's what you know what I think is really cool about it I mean obviously there's different things that happen on stage and there's all the thing that stage is. But yeah I think audio. If you can really kind of get into that nuance and that world building and get into somebody else's head you know and really place this world in somebody else's head then then they really can get into that world with you which I think is so exciting.

Andrew

Absolutely It really is easier easier to pull you into that I think with. Which you would think would be more difficult because you can't see anything but it's literally because you have to use your imagination I think more.

Jo

Yeah, ah, definitely and and I love the fact that you know everyone can imagine it differently as well. Which I think is is great. I'm from England we would we would listen to the BBC Radio dramas growing up that was something that's very much a big part of um of my you know my youth and early adulthood. Um, and it always, rvery time I listened to a radio drama, it always felt like it was being told just for me and there is something about you know Radio Drama Audio drama that it always feels like that person is just speaking to me which made it so personal and you know really kind of made me create my own world and really want to get into it in that sense.



Andrew

That's awesome. That is awesome. So tell me do you have any upcoming projects that you'd like to promote.

Jo

So I am a co-creator on a show that is going to be opening in Las Vegas towards the end of this year but I can't actually tell you I'm not allowed to announce the venue yet. Um, but um. I will post it on my website or if people want to check out a website um of the company particle ink um p a r t I c l e I n k dot com um, that will be where the announcement will take place. But everyone should come and see it when it does open for sure.

Andrew

Excellent. I will make sure that particleink.com gets put into the ah episode description for this so that people can just click on it and go and find out everything that's going on.

Jo

That'd be lovely.

Andrew

Excellent and now of course the question of questions. What was your favorite childhood toy.

Jo

You know it's funny I didn't really have many toys growing up. Um I I spent most of my life in a tree really or in a pond. Um. But I did have a teddy bear that my grandmother gave me um, which actually is still with me to this day. Um, so so yeah that Teddy has traveled the world with me. Um, so that.

Andrew

A wow.

Jo

That would be the only one really that it's that one.

Andrew

That is amazing. That is so cool. I like the fact that you spent your childhood up a tree.

Jo

I did I um but I honestly I'm realizing some of the things that I've shared with you and you know terrible human and we we I lived I lived on a um Apple Farm and a hops farm and that there were some random cherry trees that would grow and we would pick the cherries off and throw them at people as they walked past. terrible I'm a terrible human honestly.

Andrew

You know you could just spin it that you were very very inspired by the trees in wizard of Oz.

Jo

That's what it was.

Andrew

I can justify anything.

Jo

It's bad I should I should have you on like speed style just for when I need help of digging myself out of something.

Andrew

I've just been throwing cherries at people why give me a reason why

Jo

Tell me Why it's okay quick.

Andrew

yeah see I shouldn't have gone in artistic direction I should have just gone into Pr.

Jo

There you go!

Andrew

Um, it's never too late. Um, but but um, Jo I really do want to say. Ah, once again, thank you so much for allowing us to be part of your show. It's a wonderful, wonderful show and I will second the the ah the statement that Christina made earlier which is that you know one of the things that I really liked about this show was that it had ah an opposite kind of attitude that a lot of pandemic stories do. But it really was kind of surprisingly positive, which you don't usually get a lot so I'm really really glad that we got to be. Ah, part of this show and ah on behalf of everybody here at EFCT I just want to say Thank you very much.

Jo

Thank you! It's been great I really appreciate this. Thank you Andrew.

Andrew

We hope you enjoyed Lost In Tea Next month, we will be presenting Things Needing Explanation, written by Julie Fisher. And don't forget to head over to [eclectic-theatre.com](http://eclectic-theatre.com) to find out about Crashbox an International Festival of New Short Length Audio Plays, performed live with live Foley and music November 16-19th., as well as all our other shows and

projects.

On behalf of myself and everyone here at EFCT, thanks for listening