

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. This month's production is "Stork Patrol", written by Debra A Cole, directed by Denise Yvette Serna, and starring Estrellita Beatriz, JG Smith, and Zander Galluooi

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

JDebra A. Cole is playwright and theatre/writing/arts educator from Lawrence, Kansas. Her plays have been performed all around the world. Debra's works can be found on New Play Exchange and with Off The Wall Plays and Heuer Publishing. She is also a 2023 William Inge Theatre Festival selected artist. Debra is a member of the Dramatists Guild of America, a member of Honor Roll!, and an active member of playwriting groups in Kansas City as well as Devon, England.

And now, Stork Patrol

(Sounds of children playing, traffic. A car pulls up, shuts off. Door opens, closes. Footsteps approaching, then doorbell rings. Door opens)

AGENT:

Greetings. I'm an agent from The Stork Patrol, and I believe you are Ashley Clark. Wife of Brad Clark.

ASHLEY:

(confused) I am.

AGENT:

Excellent. I love when our files are correct.

ASHLEY:

How can I help you?

AGENT:

Help me? Oh no, I am here to help you. I have three children in my van ready to be housed by you.

ASHLEY:

I'm sorry?

AGENT;

Three children in need. As you know, with recent elections and supreme

court decisions, we have a surplus of unhoused children, and you have been selected as one of our god-fearing families ready to give love.

ASHLEY:

Give love? I don't understand.

AGENT:

I get it. This is new. But we are thrilled here at the Stork Department to find such a dedicated and

(Sound of papers shuffling)

AGENT

financially stable family, such as yourselves, to help give our children such a beautiful and much needed new home.

ASHLEY:

Financially stable? We're not financially stable. We live paycheck to paycheck to paycheck. We just took a loan for the kitchen remodel.

AGENT:

But, you make it work. What a gift it is to be living as you do. We thank you for your interest in helping these children.

ASHLEY:

I think there is some sort of miscommunication. We didn't sign up for any additional children. We have two of our own. Addie and Felix.

AGENT:

Sounds of flipping papers) To clarify, it says here you voted for a ban on all abortion in our state. Congratulations, you were successful. It was close, but your dedication to life and "valuing them both" made all the different.

(More paper flipping)

AGENT

It shows here that you had a yard sign. Thank you for your service. It is brave household that stands up the culture of death.

ASHLEY:

Correct. There are so many families who want children and cannot have them. There is no reason to kill an innocent baby. And while we can't ourselves take them in, surely there are others who have such a great need. They would be so blessed to have these children.

AGENT:

Excellent. We completely agree here at the Stork Agency. We certainly understand if you can't house these children yourselves, we will just require at \$70,000 fee per child, which is the domestic adoption rate

per child in the United States for a private adoption. The families in need thank you in advance. Will that be cash or charge? We also take PayPal, Venmo, or Apple Pay.

(Footsteps coming down the stairs)

BRAD:  
What is this?

ASHLEY:  
The Stork Agency. The group that backed the last election.

BRAD:  
Aha. We totally support The Stock Agency. How can we help?

ASHLEY:  
This agent says we are to house three children in need or pay a fee to help them be adopted.

(Clock ticking)

BRAD:  
Okay, uh... Surely, there is some in-between here. As you know, we truly value every life in this household, but we can't adopt or pay a fee at this time. My bonus last year barely covered private school fees.

(Clock ticking)

AGENT:  
Well, in that case, foster care is an option. According to our records,

(Flipping papers)

AGENT  
it looks like you have qualified to be a way station based on your values and commitment to life.

BRAD:  
Way station, that sounds better. What does that look like for us?

AGENT:  
Actually, it's quite simple. You would take all the responsibility of housing, clothing, feeding, and caring for these three children, with the hopes that someday, they will be housed by a god loving family that will adopt them. Of course, we will offer a small stipend for you efforts.

BRAD:

That doesn't sound like less responsibility.

AGENT:

Oh, it isn't. It's just a shorter possible solution. Adopting is through 18 years of life, while fostering could only be 5-10 years.

ASHEY:

This is just too much for us right now. Surely you understand.

BRAD:

This doesn't mean we don't support the current ban, it just means this situation doesn't work for us. We are happy to post about your organization on social media to garner more support or give a small donation if that helps.

AGENT:

What is it about fostering these children that worries you?

ASHLEY:

Well, to be honest, we have heard of difficult issues that come with foster children.

AGENT:

Yes, these children often come with difficulties based on their previous lives but now that adoption and foster care is required by law, we ask our Christian parents to do their best in their tough situations.

BRAD:

Our best? But this isn't fair. We shouldn't be required to do anything.

AGENT:

Between you and I, I agree with you, but once it was required that a woman was forced to bear a child she didn't want, someone had to step up to take on that responsibility, and those who voted for the ban were the obvious and godly choice. Bless you both.

ASHLEY:

But we don't want more children.

(Clock ticking)

AGENT:

We get it. Neither did these women. We're just so grateful that you made choices for them.

BRAD:

But we have two...amazing kids. They take all of our energy and all of time and money. We can't take on someone else's mistakes.

AGENT:

Okay, let me make sure I have this down correctly.

(Sound of erasing)

AGENT

You don't want to be forced into having children in your home that you don't want

(Writing)

AGENT

or aren't able to care for?

(Writing)

ASHLEY:

Exactly. I'm so glad you understand.

(Clock ticking)

AGENT:

I'm not supposed to share this, but there is a hidden clause that takes you out of the responsibility, but very few people choose the option.

BRAD:

Anything. We just can't do this.

AGENT:

You may elect to send these children to our recycling center.

ASHLEY:

Recycling center? What happens there?

AGENT:

To be frank, they are eliminated, but once that occurs, you no longer are responsible.

(Sound of ice cream truck passing and kids chasing it)

BRAD:

Is our decision made public?

ASHLEY:

You can't be thinking this, Brad! They're God's children.

BRAD:

I don't see another option. While we have made good, godly decisions

our entire life, we can't be expected to repair the poor choices others have made. We would be risking everything we have worked for.

AGENT:

To clarify, I must tell you that these three children were born to loving, Christian homes, but each of their births killed their mothers. It is sad, but it happens. Tubular pregnancies have really put a strain on our system. And as you know, fathers cannot raise children alone, so here they are.

ASHLEY:

What did their mothers... look like?

BRAD:

Don't, Ashley.

ASHLEY:

I need to know. It helps me decide what to do here.

AGENT:

Look like? What do you mean?

BRAD:

You know what she means. Will they look like our children?

AGENT:

Oh, you mean white?

ASHLEY:

Yes. I don't mean to sound crass, but it matters to us. It matters to our neighbors. We would hate for these children to feel... you know... different. It wouldn't be fair to them.

AGENT:

Oh, no. They come homes in the city - miles from here.

(Papers flipping)

AGENT

Two are Hispanic and one African American. As you may know, white families in crisis are able to travel to resources that other communities have no access to. It's not fair, but nothing about this new law is fair if we are honest.

ASHLEY:

Oh. Thank you for your frankness.

BRAD:

Is there a cost to make this decision? I mean, do we pay for the recycling?

ASHEY:  
Brad!

BRAD:  
It's another data point, Ashley. Is there a cost to us?

AGENT:  
Oh no, sir. Your property tax dollars cover recycling in your neighborhood. It is one of the benefits of this area.

BRAD:  
Well, then... recycling it is. I mean, we shouldn't have to pay for the mistakes of others, right?

AGENT:  
(Writing on clipboard) Are you both in agreement? Recycling takes a unanimous vote from each adult in the household.

ASHLEY:  
You never answered... Will anyone know? Outside of the agency?

AGENT:  
No, ma'am. It is a private affair.

ASHLEY:  
Good. It should be a private decision. No one should be in this position.

AGENT:  
(Writing) Agreed. Okay. I just need both of your signatures here.

(BRAD and ASHLEY sign)

BRAD:  
What happens now?

AGENT:  
Nothing for you worry about. The Stork Agency thanks you both for your vote, for your values, for your beliefs. Together, we can defeat the culture of death and build a culture of life. Together we can make a difference and renew our society so that every human life can be cherished and loved. God bless you both.

ASHLEY:  
Amen.

BRAD:  
Amen.

(Ice cream truck passes as children play in sprinklers. Fade out)

Andrew

Thank you for listening to Stork Patrol, here on The Half Hour Audio Hour. Next up is a brief interview we conducted with Debra Cole after the recording of this show.

Andrew

All right? So Debra. First off I just want to say thank you for letting Eclectic Full Contact Theatre be part of your show Stork Patrol.

Debra A\_Cole

I am so honored I cannot believe the talent of the director, the actors and actress I mean I'm I'm overwhelmed. It's amazing. But.

Andrew

Excellent. So let's let's get to the first question which which is when did you start writing.

Debra A\_Cole

Okay, so I always tell the story I was one of these weird creative confident kids that used to run shows in my backyard right? Like like many playwrights I would write stories make my sisters be in the show. But what had started to happen was, I was charging neighbors to see the shows and my mom finally got a call could could deb stop charging them. They're spending all their money on her shows so that was kind of my early time. Um I was lucky to do theater through high school. Um I had an amazing amazing theater director and mentor Jane Eaton who ah theater it was such a love for me went on did other things got my degrees in school but then ended up teaching seventeen years as a ninth grade humanities teacher and I also was a--

Andrew

Oof.

Debra A\_Cole

I know. I love it. But I tell you it's not for everybody I love them weird and messy and gooey and ninth grade does it and I'll tell you 1 thing I even like more-- I also taught creative writing not only with my ninth graders but with middle schoolers. So I am not right

Andrew

Oh you are you are doing the Lord's work there. Let me tell you woo.

Debra A\_Cole

so I so I was teaching that and then um in 2013 my daughter graduated from high school and I kind of thought "heck I got more time now I'm going to start writing." I mean I'm teaching writing I love writing



I'm going to start writing plays and so that's when I started was in 2013 and then I started in my classroom actually teaching playwriting and doing one-act nights and evenings with middle school and high school and so um, it's been nonstop ever since and I absolutely write every day and love it every day.

Andrew

That's that's amazing. So I guess there's there's probably a ah a rather obvious answer to this question but I'll ask it anyway.

Debra A\_ Cole  
Ah, you think.

Andrew

As I was writing this list out I'm like do I really have to ask this question but I'm going to ask the question anyway.

Debra A\_ Cole

Just in case, the back of the house doesn't know. Yeah.

Andrew

yeah yeah, what inspired you to write stork patrol.

Debra A\_ Cole

Rage Pure rage. Um, absolutely rage as a woman rage as a mother of a daughter and and rage as a human being right? We have the roe versus wade overturned moment in history which is just one of the darkest times and then I live in the state of Kansas and I live in Lawrence Kansas and we had it on our August second 2022 ballot to have the amendment and legislative power to regulate abortion and I myself like thousands of kansans we worked at the local level and state level and and I'm so proud to say the state of Kansas said no and it was kind of one of those first states to do that after all that was hitting and I'm so proud of everybody but it wasn't a given. It wasn't a given and um. So I took my rage. Not only did I do something physically about it for my community but I wrote about it and I had to get that it out I had to.

Andrew

It has that cathartic kind of feel to it.

Debra A\_ Cole

Oh good, not just rage. You didn't feel the rage Andrew?

Andrew

Um, yeah, no on No no, no, no no I felt the rage. Don't don't don't get me. Don't get me wrong. The rage was there.

Debra A Cole

Oh thank goodness.

Andrew

Um, yeah, yeah, don't I don't think anybody I don't think anybody's going to go I'm not really sure how she feels about it.

Debra A\_ Cole

If you're missing it I can help explain but I think it's all there.

Andrew

Yeah, yeah, absolutely now. So this this brings me to I mean since we're talking about the state of the world as it is now. Um, ah you you know I mean jokes have been made that, you know, satirical sites are actually having problems coming up with things you know it's like how is the onion still in business when honestly the crap they make up. It seems less ridiculous than what's going on.

Debra A\_ Cole

Right? exactly.

Debra A\_ Cole

Right? How many times have you seen an Onion article and thought ah oh okay, but it really still the Onionright? I mean this is this isn't I'm gonna make sure this isn't real because it's very easy to think it is.

Andrew

Well considering the fact that a large number of people believe onion articles.

Debra A\_ Cole

Oh oh oh pain oh pain.

Andrew

Um, but but but but that leads me to this next question. Which is as a writer. What do you think of the effectiveness I mean you and I feel that set that satire is very effective. But how do you feel about the effectiveness of satire when we're living in a time where the most outlandish what would have you know, even 15 years--ten years ago-- have been looked at as ridiculous theories are now being put forth, not just by crackpots on the internet but by, God help us people in power. So....

Debra A\_ Cole

Ah, right? Oh I can't I right now I'm in a point in my life where I can barely watch news because I just need a break I need a break and and I feel irresponsible at moments. So I have to go back and have to catch up at what I've missed. But.

Andrew

Right? right.

Debra A\_ Cole

It it is so all around us. So how is it an effective tool for theater. Well one I think it gives us a release a little bit that we watched and think oh thank god it's not just me right because we live in these small bubbles and we think I'm the only 1 feeling this way. I mean especially for those of us who live in states that the fight is real right? and it's really important for us in these states especially to say you're not alone. You're not alone. Um, as for the ultimate Effectiveness I was thinking about this and I thought It's really not for me to answer. I think it depends. I think it's up to the audience I think the audience is going to make ultimately the call if it did what it was supposed to do if it gave them a release if it made them think if it gave them a conversation to have with somebody else with a neighbor right? I think that's what it comes down to because you're you're right. Oh my gosh. There's so much to write about I could write satire all day long I don't know if I would be sane at the end of it because I go back to that rage and I don't think anyone human should have that much rage constantly in their day-to-day experience. So um, yeah, dude, it's a rough world ain't it but I am an optimist so I will always keep fighting for what is right and what I believe and that's all I can do as a human.

Andrew

Well I mean I think that that's kind of the the the idea behind still utilizing things like satire because you know ultimately satire is a form of comedy which.

Debra A\_ Cole

Right? right? weird one too. It's It's a tightrope to walk that thing because it could it could turn offensive very easily and the humor not be understood and and not appreciated So it's a, It's a balance.

Andrew

Yeah, yeah, but I but I think that because the use of satire is in itself is an optimistic exercise because what you're doing is you are trying to I mean despite what's causing it, laughter is a generally positive experience.

Debra A\_ Cole

Right? It gives you that release we're talking about right? a moment to take all those feelings and just oh get them out by a physical action of laughter.

Andrew

As opposed to you know you could go the other direction if you were say more ah more pessimistic more nihilistic of just dark depressing you know drama that that makes you feel awful for having now seen it.

Debra A\_ Cole

I'm I'm a big believer that there should be a little hope in

everything I mean I think as a writer that's just my personal philosophy. Not everyone believes that but I like a little hope I like a little wink to say come on come on. Let's do this. Let's fix this. Let's find a new way.

Andrew

Well and I think that that ultimately is is is is where the satire may be effective because it does give you that that sort of thing of like if you get it which is which.

Debra A\_ Cole

Yeah, right? Oh let's start there who slow down Andrew right.

Andrew

Yeah, which nowadays is a big if but if you get it, you've got that moment where it's like well thank God we're not there yet.

Debra A\_ Cole

Right? There's still something that may be done.

Andrew

This is this is a terrifying thing for. We don't want it to go here. So maybe we should now do something in order to. You know as opposed to just suggesting Well now here it is and you're stuck and all hope is lost. So so you know who knows I don't it's It's a little. It's a little scary

Debra A\_ Cole

So scary but we've got to keep fighting. We've got to keep doing I mean there's just no choice. There's no choice. But.

Andrew

It's it's it's the old you might as well laugh because what else are you going to do?

Debra A\_ Cole

Absolutely let's just get that out Andrew ah

Andrew

Ok yeah, please everybody?

Debra A Cole

everybody take a laugh.

Andrew

Um, so so so this leads... So you you said, you know you you now you now write every day and it's and and and you love it every day. Do you have any other upcoming projects that you'd like to promote.

Debra A\_ Cole

Oh I'd love to every playwright loves this moment. Um I've got a lot of things that I'm a part of and readings happening all over the world. But 1 thing I'm exceptionally excited about is I was accepted as 1 of 12 playwrights for the fortieth William Inge theatre festival new play lab, and this is in Independence Kansas the birthplace of William Inge and if you know theater you know William Inge and I'm very excited April 20th and 21st. There's 12 of us that go our pieces are performed. We work a master class with a playwright which we're waiting to hear who it is but I'm very excited to be a part of this coming up.

Andrew  
Congratulations!

Debra A\_ Cole  
Thank you I'm really proud I'm really proud. Should I flip the hair

Andrew  
Did they please do I mean it's audio no one's going to hear you... Well I mean you could say you're doing it

Debra A Cole  
I will say flipping hair flipping hair.

Andrew  
That's right flip the hair flip the hair. Um, so we we will end this the way that we've ended every other interview for this episode which is what is your favorite dystopian novel or film?

Debra A\_ Cole  
Okay, it's not going to be a surprise to anybody that my favorite book is the Handmaid's Tale without a doubt I have to give nods to Fahrenheit 451 and 1984 and Brave New World and all of those but I'm also going to give a little love to the YA genre and I know this came up before I think Denise mentioned it. The Hunger Game series the Giver the Uglies the Pretties the Specials Maze Runner. Ah Divergent I think in the last 30 years. Our YA category of dystopian novels have been outstanding. Absolutely outstanding. So as a former middle school and high school teacher I have to give the props to the YA but Handmaid's Tale.

Andrew  
Yeah, ah, speaking of rage.

Debra A\_ Cole  
speaking of rage speaking of scary speaking of Holy Moly How close are we to this. Let's go back to Roe versus Wade and say yeah, that's my favorite book without a doubt right.

Andrew

Yeah, yeah I Also I also always enjoy using the term favorite in that particular genre

Debra A\_ Cole  
Right? It's messed up.

Andrew  
because it's sort of like it's yes, but I don't really like it. It's.

Debra A\_ Cole  
Um, I mean it's my favorite. It's such a sunny tale right? Holy Moly

Andrew  
Yeah, yeah, I Just like just like kicking back with my feet up and reading about--

Debra A Cole  
but it's yeah you know some Jezebels and some handmaids and you know shenanigans.

Andrew  
Alittle bit of new Wave Fascism Why not.

Debra A\_ Cole  
Yeah, no big deal I'll tell you though, but what an understatement that it stands the test of time. Holy Moly yeah.

Andrew  
That's I I really do think that's kind of the the worst thing about because you do you go back and and you read these books like 1980 for or or or brave new world or Fahrenheit 451 or these.that that you know a lot of people you know may not even have have picked up but you go back and you read them and you go Yep! Nope no this still still hold I mean I go back and read for I've I've gotten into this argument with people. Um.

Debra A\_ Cole  
Um, nowhere works so that you know where it works.

Andrew  
You know because there's nothing more fun to spend your time with than completely useless arguments online. Really useless is like are we more in 1984 are we more in fair and height 55 and I'm like oh we're definitely more in Fahrenheit 451 there's no question about it I mean.

Debra A\_ Cole  
I Mean we're still talking book banning and burning. Are you kidding me.

Andrew

You You're talking Well Also the the general society of that world was really about Mindless entertainment and consumption. The only books allowed to exist were comics.

Debra A\_ Cole  
Oh oh oh.

Andrew  
Their their entire life was taken up with these what what was at that time on but but almost reality television. It's just mindless it. It is the ultimate bread and circus setup and so from that standpoint.

Debra A\_ Cole  
Oh. Oh yeah.

Andrew  
I mean yes, we do have a lot of the facial recognition and cameras everywhere that we have had in 84 but from from the way society is more set up and what they're really pushing for which is if you can be as mindless and as basically uncritical as p ossible You know, Great! awesome.

Debra A\_ Cole  
All right? You really want to start a fight with a playwright bring up chat bots and Ai intelligence I mean... I'm doing right now a 28 plays later challenge which means I write a play every day for February every day and I write a new play and the prompt is different and Ai came up and I'm to tell you every playwrights like I've got plenty to say just get ready because these chat Bots that was at chat GPT Believe all these things that you just ask it a question hey write a review about this play Boom it will and it's frightening. It's really frightening and.

Andrew  
On.

Andrew  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's it's I look at that and I just go really? really?

Debra A\_ Cole  
This is what we need. Ah.

Andrew  
yeah, that's exactly what I've always wanted.

Debra A\_ Cole  
Thank you world?

Andrew

Rock on

Debra A Cole

Yeah yeah, yeah, yeah.

Andrew

this and drive this and driverless cars two things I really never needed.

Debra A\_ Cole

Ah, this is not the future we asked for.

Andrew

Um, no I still want hoverboards

Debra A Cole

oh wouldn't have to be the oh the best?

Andrew

I have a we don't really even have a good hoverboard. Um.

Debra A Cole

transport transporting from 1 location to another bring it bring it!

Andrew

Yeah, just something anything you know I don't know, a train that's designed after 1950 I'm just thinking. Maybe.

Debra A\_ Cole

Oh how about roads that are safe bridges go crazy.

Andrew

Ah, now now now you're now speaking of a bridge too far. Um, but ah, this could go on forever.

Debra A\_ Cole

So yeah, we have we have we've gotten off the tracks. Yeah.

Andrew

We're not going to fix all of society's ills on this podcast. but--

Debra A\_ Cole

No, if only if only.

Andrew

but I do want to thank you so much. Ah, Debra for allowing us to be part of this um, very funny expression of your deep and inner rage.

Debra A\_ Cole

Thank you.



Andrew

Um, it it. It really was ah a wonderful experience. It's a great script and um I know I can speak for everyone here at eclectic when I say thank you for allowing us to be part of it.

Debra A\_ Cole

Well thank you, It was an honor to be a part of it and I so appreciate it.

Andrew

We hope you enjoyed Stork Patrol. Next month, we will be presenting The False Years, written by Amy Crider. 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](http://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](http://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