

THE SUMMER CIRCLE

By Rob Roznowski

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THE SUMMER CIRCLE

A One Act Comedy

By Rob Roznowski

SYNOPSIS: *The Summer Circle* is an award-winning comedy that entertains and educates. The summer season on Circle Lake provides the perfect opportunity for four young strangers to meet and become best friends—even if just for the summer. Although they are very different, the youngsters find their collective voices through presenting free theatre to local audiences each night. This comedy about the importance of friendship and the necessity of arts education is an endearing audience participation charmer.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4-7 female, 1 male; doubling possible.)

SHARON (f)	The playwright of the group with a great imagination. <i>(86 lines.)</i>
LAURINDA (f).....	The actress of the troupe and a diva in training. <i>(80 lines.)</i>
GERTRUDE LOUISE (f).....	The director of the company and the coolest nerd ever. <i>(95 lines.)</i>
SCOTT (m)	The designer of the company who has boundless energy and enthusiasm. <i>(93 lines.)</i>
SHARON'S MOTHER (f).....	Not appreciative of her daughter's imagination. <i>(17 lines.)</i>
LAURINDA'S MOTHER (f)	Has her hands full raising this star to be and doesn't really understand her. <i>(15 lines.)</i>
GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER (f).....	Recently divorced and a bit overwhelmed. <i>(12 lines.)</i>

SCOTT'S MOTHER (f)..... Shy and unassuming and has great affection for her son. Also plays SCOTT'S DAUGHTER, Shelly. She is painfully shy. (24 lines.)

(ALL LINE COUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE.)

CAST NOTE: One actress can play all Mother's and Shelly.

DURATION: 45-50 minutes.

TIME: Past and Present.

SETTING: A Door. By a Lake in Michigan. In summer.

PROPS

- Tissues
- Watch
- Book (Preferably *Cosmos* By Carl Sagan)
- Gummy Worms
- Garbage Bag With Garbage
- Sea Monster Made Out Of Garbage Bags
- Fishing Boot Made To Look Like A Catfish
- Mop
- Box Of Weird Props
- Camera

COSTUMES

Princess clothing
 Braces headgear
 Hat
 Scarf
 Vest
 Glasses
 Grown-up clothing

PRODUCTION NOTES

SCENERY: This play can be produced very simply. The only element necessary for scenery is a door. The door in the original production was a Dutch door and allowed for more variety for “Mother” to enter and for the children to exit. You may wish to expand the design to show more of the life around the lake but it is not necessary.

STAGING: Staging can be done very simply since most of the main action centers around the door. No need for elaborate locales like the lake or the temporary stage. Allow the audience to use their imagination like the characters. Several times the action of the play may take place in the audience where indicated. The staging of the improvisations and the children’s productions should have the essence of young and imaginative design.

DIRECTOR NOTES

When *The Summer Circle* was first performed college-age actors played all of the roles in the show. It also works with younger actors in the children’s roles too. Whatever your decision, it is important that you don’t urge your actors to play “little kids” but rather think of these people as younger versions of their adult selves.

The two improvisational sections in the script offer a great opportunity for audience participation. These sections can be controlled if you fear your actors aren’t skilled improv actors. The first improv can be controlled by the way the actors ask for suggestions. More often than not, the audience will be prodded into something the actors first suggest. The improv sequence on the Fourth of July when originally performed had a box of simple props that helped focus the storytelling and always ended with a “surprise” visit from Uncle Sam

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The Summer Circle was originally produced at Summer Circle Theatre at Michigan State University on June 2014. With the following cast and crew:

SHARON..... Anna Morreale
 LAURINDA Katherine Schooler
 GERTRUDE LOUISE..... Madelayne Shammass
 SCOTT Andrew Head
 MOTHERS/SHELLY..... Mandy Myers

Set Design..... Kenzie Carpenter
 Costume Design..... Karen Kangas-Preston
 Props..... Hernando Claros
 Stage Managers Sarah Ackerman & Sarah Botruff

When first performed all of the roles in the show were played by college-age actors. It also works with younger actors in the children's roles too. Whatever your decision it is important that you don't push your actors to play little kids but rather think of these people as younger versions of their adult selves.

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Dedicated to Maddie Nicol

AT RISE: *A door that serves as the various homes of the characters is center stage. SHARON comes out of the door dramatically. Her MOTHER follows.*

SHARON: Worst vacation ever!!!!!!!!!!!!

SHARON'S MOTHER: Don't be so dramatic. We just got here. You need some fresh air after that long car ride. So stay out here!

SHARON: Fresh air makes me sick. *(Coughs.)*

SHARON'S MOTHER: Not today. Stay outside. I need to unpack.

SHARON: *(Dramatically.)* I can't breathe. There is too much fresh air. *(Gasps and collapses.)* Too much air!!! *(“Dies.”.)*

SHARON'S MOTHER: *(Walks over and looks at her. Beat.)* Finally, some peace and quiet. *(Heads back in through the door.)* I'll call you for supper.

SHARON: *(Getting up muttering.)* What's for dinner? I bet we'll have air. Air sandwiches with a side of oxygen. *(Imitating her mother, who for some reason she makes British.)* “Darling daughter, would you like some more air?” *(As herself.)* “Oh, I couldn't. I'm simply stuffed,” *(As her Mom.)* “But you must! This air is fresh from the market!” *(As herself.)* “Thanks Mother, But I am full.”

SHARON'S MOTHER: *(Opening the door.)* Full of hot air!

SHARON: That was actually a good one, Mom. I gotta write that down. *(Looks around the area. Sees nothing. She sighs and sits. To the audience.)* Mom thought it would be a great thing for me to experience life at the lake this summer. She said her happiest times were when she and her family came up to this lake every summer. Um...SNORE. Well, might as well get started looking at nature. *(Lays back.)* Oh look sky...”Hello sky!” *(As Sky.)* “Hello Sharon, you look bored.” *(As herself.)* “Oh, I am bored Mrs. Sky.” *(Heads off the stage and into the audience to look around.)* Oh look dirt. *(As Dirt.)* “Don't step on me Sharon!” *(As herself.)* “But I just gotta!

LAURINDA in her dressiest dress comes out of the door. She is wearing bows and flowers and petticoats and sashes. Her MOTHER follows after her.

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: Now Laura—

LAURINDA: My name is Princess Laurinda!

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: Laurinda, you stay out here. And play. I mean play!!!! Not tea parties. Not princesses. Not Barbie's. Just play.

LAURINDA: But Mother, I am wearing one of my finest dresses. It was made for me by my royal dressmaker person.

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: I got that dress at KMart. And I tell you what. Get it dirty. Rip it. Roll in it. Make mud pies. Dig a hole. Anything, just play.

LAURINDA: Mother, I simply cannot dirty my ball gown. What would the court think? If they saw their princess in a dirty dress.

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: They would think she is an ordinary seven year-old girl.

LAURINDA: But I am not ordi—

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: I know. You are special. But can't that special also include some non-Princess roughhousing time?

LAURINDA: (*Laughs like a princess.*) My dearest queen mother you are too, too funny.

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: I will call you for supper. (*Goes in the door.*)

LAURINDA: Until then my Queen Mother. (*Blows her MOTHER kisses like a princess would. Stops and sees the audience.*) My loyal subjects, it is I, Princess Laurinda. Yes, my Princess-ness also means I am in charge here by the lake. Even away from my palace. In our rented summer home by the lake. I am in charge. So you must do all I say. I shall pass among you so you can meet me. And experience me. How'd ya do? Nice to see you! (*Greets her subjects as she walks in the audience.*)

SHARON: (*In audience unaware of LAURINDA.*) "Hello grass" (*As Grass.*) "How is it going Sharon?"

LAURINDA: (*In audience unaware of SHARON.*) Pleased to make your acquaintance. Charmed I'm sure.

GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER: (*Coming out of the door.*) Gertrude Louise instantly get out of your room and put down that book immediately and go and explore the universe. We didn't spend all my hard earned money to rent this place to have you sit inside your tomb reading. Did you know there is a whole world outside of this cabin? Do you know that the cosmos is waiting ten feet outside of your bedroom?

GERTRUDE LOUISE appears in glasses and headgear. She is reading *Cosmos* by Carl Sagan.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Yes, mother. I was just reading all about it. If you do not mind, I, and my allergies, would prefer to remain indoors. Near my dehumidifier. And my box of moisturized tissues.

GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER: I'll make you a deal. I'll let you take your book and your tissues if you read outside. At least get some sun.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Mother, after our gray and dismal lake effect winter perhaps some Vitamin D would be exactly what the doctor ordered. I shall remain outdoors until either my allergies or the sun's harsh glare is too much.

GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER: Let's make a bargain. At least fifteen minutes?

GERTRUDE LOUISE: My allergies would have easily not kicked in till at least twenty minutes, so... (*Laughing to herself.*) you got the short end of the bargain.

GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER: Tissues. Book.

Handing them to GERTRUDE LOUISE.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: (*Programs her watch.*) T-minus fifteen.
(*Laughs.*)

GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER goes in the house. *GERTRUDE LOUISE* sits with her book on the edge of the stage. She looks up and notices the audience.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Hello audience. (*Goes back to reading.*)

LAURINDA: (*To audience.*) Princess Laurinda. How do you do?

SHARON: (*In audience, as herself.*) "Hello Mr. Dirt, have you met Mrs. Grass?" (*As both.*) "Nice to meet you!"

SCOTT'S MOTHER comes to the door. She looks around for him.

SCOTT'S MOTHER: Scott?! Scotty!

SCOTT comes barreling past her.

SCOTT: Out of my way. Got some friends to meet.

SCOTT'S MOTHER: Where were you?

SCOTT: Out! Then I was in. But now I'm going back out.

SCOTT'S MOTHER: Can't you just stay in for a little bit? Relax, honey.

SCOTT: How can I relax? It's move in day. Almost every house around the lake has people moving in today. You know what that means?

Lots of guys to hang out with! Lots of friends.

SCOTT'S MOTHER: Yes. Scott. Circle friends.

SCOTT: Don't call them that! They're real friends.

SCOTT'S MOTHER: Remember what happened at the end of last summer? Remember, you took it pretty hard when everyone packed up to go back home and you had to stay here.

SCOTT: Yeah, but I think I got it figured out this time. I'm going to make them sign a contract?

SCOTT'S MOTHER: What kind of contract?

SCOTT: Saying they won't be just circle friends but friends forever. And that they'll have to write or call or whatever when they leave at the end of the summer.

SCOTT'S MOTHER: But a contract?

SCOTT: Or like an oath? Or a promise! Or like a blood oath? Something that is for real though. See ya!

SCOTT'S MOTHER goes back into the house worried. SCOTT starts running through the audience like a madman. He is yelling "SUMMER!!!" and jumping up and down. He finally ends up by GERTRUDE LOUISE onstage.

You move into this house for the summer?

GERTRUDE LOUISE: I could say no, but my belongings inside would paint me as a liar. *(Laughs.)*

SCOTT: OK. You got any brothers? They need friends?

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Alas, the only masculine object in our home would be our cat Mr. Whiskers and he is entirely too angry to need friends.

SCOTT: OK. Well, see ya.

SCOTT runs off through the audience yelling “Summer” and meets SHARON onstage.

Hey. Did you move into that house for the summer?

SHARON: Ah. Yes. Mom says we needed a break from the city. So, now I simply can’t go on. It’s all too much. (*“Faints.”*)

SCOTT: OK. You have any brothers? They need any friends?

SHARON: I do have a brother—

SCOTT: Awesome. Can you get him so I can start being friends with him?

SHARON: Um, he’s in college. He’s on an internship for the summer. In Paris. France.

SCOTT: Hmm...that’s probably too far to be friends with him. Right? OK. See ya.

SCOTT runs through the audience a little less excitedly. He is only halfway yelling the word “Summer.” He sees LAURINDA onstage. He stares at her clothes. After a while.

Are you a doll?

LAURINDA: No a princess. My name is Princess Laurinda.

SCOTT: OK. I am guessing you just moved here for the summer. So, let’s cut to it—do you have a brother inside who needs friends?

LAURINDA: I do not allow boys in my kingdom.

SCOTT: Ok...well that about covers all of the houses. Wow, this is going to be a long summer.

SCOTT walks through the audience dejectedly only slightly saying “Summer!” SHARON, LAURINDA and GERTRUDE LOUISE watch him.

SHARON: Hey. What about us?

SCOTT: I was sort of looking for some guy friends, you know?

GERTRUDE LOUISE: We can still be friends. I don’t care that you are of the masculine persuasion. (*Laughs.*)

SHARON: Yeah, who cares? I mean considering this is the most awful summer EVER!!!! You should be ok to hang out with.

LAURINDA: I will make a special allowance to let a boy into my kingdom.

SCOTT: (*Talking himself into it.*) Oh...ok. Sure. I guess. Ok. Yeah. Cool. Fun. Look three new friends. We are friends right? My name's Scotty.

SHARON: I have the absolutely awfulest name—Sharon.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Oh dear, that is an awful name. I'm Gertrude Louise.

LAURINDA: PRINCESS Laurinda.

They don't kneel.

You don't have to kneel.

SCOTT: OK. But we are friends now, right?

LAURINDA: Yes, my subject, as much as I can be friends with commoners.

SHARON: You're better to talk to than grass. And dirt. And sky. So, sure, friends.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Despite the fact my fifteen minutes are up I choose to stay outside with my new friends.

SCOTT: FRIENDS!!!

LAURINDA: OK, so just to be clear I am the princess of all of the friends and you guys will do everything I say and that is just how it works. Everyone good with that?

SCOTT: Ok. Sure. Ok.

SHARON: Um...I think we need to look that over a bit.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Yes, monarchies rarely work. My suggestion is we decide how long we will play together, and then divide by four into equal parts and then assign a person to be in charge of deciding the recreational activities of their section.

SCOTT: This is the best group of friends ever.

SHARON: This would make a great story. Like how we are all here at the lake.

LAURINDA: And how you all got to meet me.

SCOTT: And then what happens?

MOTHERS: (*From off stage. Changing voice for each.*) Sharon, Inside immediately! Princess Laurinda, your meal awaits! Gertrude Louise, Tofu Burgers! Scott, come on Honey!

SCOTT: What happens?

SHARON: We will have to wait and see tomorrow!

GERTRUDE LOUISE: This is how John Irving ends each chapter; a real cliffhanger!!

SCOTT: I can't wait!!! OK. So, tomorrow. Meet here. You guys aren't circle friends. I know it!

They all ad-lib good byes and exit as SCOTT'S MOTHER enters the stage. She is shy.

SCOTT'S MOTHER: *(To audience.)* Hi. Welcome. Hoping you like Circle Lake. We love it. We live up here all year. Not just for the summer season like most. We keep an eye on the other cottages in the winter. Scott Senior and I do. We love the peace and quiet. *(Beat.)* I don't think Scott Junior likes it as much as we do. I mean for a young boy like that with all that energy. Getting stuck around here...gets sort of boring. His school friends all live so far away. So, for him summer is all about lost time. He's gotta pack everything, all his fun, all his adventures between Memorial and Labor Day. And he does it too. He's pretty intense about it as you can tell. *(Beat.)* We call the summer people his circle friends. Scott Senior came up with that. Scott Senior's seen the same thing every year He was raised right here by the lake. See the lake is a circle. The houses around it another circle. The seasons each year. The same pattern right back around in a circle. Circle after circle after circle. Season after season. Well, Scotty isn't really understanding the whole pattern. To him at the end of each summer... his heart about breaks. Doesn't understand that in just a few more months it will all come right back around again. New people may rent the cottages, but the pattern, the timing, the seasons, the whole thing. It's a circle.

SCOTT runs out of the door excitedly.

SCOTT: Mom, in the time that you were out here talking, I ate dinner, brushed my teeth, slept --as much as I could knowing that I would have friends out here waiting for me in the morning-- woke up, brushed my teeth--that's a lot of teeth brushing when you think about it-- fed the rabbits, told Dad that he is the best dad ever, got dressed and now I am going to play all day.

SCOTT'S MOTHER: Oh, I didn't realize it was morning already. I've got a lot to do. You want to stay and help me? We could—

SCOTT: Mom we have nine other months for that sort of thing, for now it's time for my friends. I don't even think you should worry about lunch, as I am sure we will be on adventures.

SCOTT'S MOTHER: Remember the circle... *(Exits quietly.)*

SCOTT: *(To himself.)* Oh yeah, I forgot I gotta get them to do the blood oath.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: *(Entering.)* I surely hope my ears are playing a trick on me. I believe I heard you say blood oath, which is entirely unhygienic.

GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER: *(At the door.)* Gertrude Louise, I am certain this nice young boy—

SCOTT: Scotty Ma'am. You should know my name because me and her are really good friends now.

GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER: Scotty. Certainly. Scotty was only joking about the blood oath.

SCOTT: Sure. You can just sign a contract.

GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER: See? He is ironic. Please stay out at least thirty minutes today!

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Most assuredly.

GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER: Aren't you going to set your watch?

GERTRUDE LOUISE: I anticipate so much fun that a minimum time from the cabin is not needed.

SCOTT: I told my mom we may not even have lunch because of adventures.

GERTRUDE LOUISE'S MOTHER: Oh, well excellent. I won't have to cook. Enjoy yourself. *(She exits.)*

SCOTT: I almost didn't really sleep thinking of all the fun things we can do all summer.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Oh. Like what?

SCOTT: I don't remember.

They are at LAURINDA'S door. SCOTT knocks.

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: Are you two looking for Laura?

SCOTT: I think she had a longer name than that.

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: (*Resigned.*) You mean Princess Laurinda?

SCOTT: Another of our best friends? That's her! Yes!

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: I don't think she is going to play today. Much as I want her to.

SCOTT: What? She has to! We only have ninety-seven more days till Labor Day! Till School starts!

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Is there trouble in the kingdom?

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: Well, in a way. She is afraid she will get dirty. And she is afraid you won't do everything she tells you to.

SCOTT: Well, for sure on getting dirty. And I will totally do anything she tells me to.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: I am willing to give up my allotted recreation time to her.

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: Did you hear that Princess Laurinda? They will do what you tell them!

LAURINDA: Excellent. Then my first order of the day is to have a tea party.

SCOTT: Cool, I didn't think we were going to have lunch!

LAURINDA'S MOTHER: All right, well you all go on and play! And Princes Laurinda... let them choose a few games too.

LAURINDA: Thank you Queen Mother.

LAURINDA'S MOTHER is gone.

SCOTT: OK, I have my two best friends here but new we need to get that other girl...what was her name? My other best friend?

GERTRUDE LOUISE: I have a somewhat photographic memory but I can't place it.

LAURINDA: I shall call her Floracheska. She shall be my handmaid. Search the kingdom for her.

After running through the audience seeking her, they go up to the door. They knock. SHARON'S MOTHER answers.

SHARON'S MOTHER: Can I help you?

LAURINDA: We are seeking Floracheska.

SCOTT: Her handmaid.

SHARON'S MOTHER: Um... I am not sure...

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Perhaps I can explain. This is Princess Laurinda—

LAURINDA: Nice to meet me.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: And we are seeking her handmaid, Floracheska.

SHARON'S MOTHER: I sort of got that before.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Oh. Well... is there a girl that lives here?

SHARON'S MOTHER: You mean Sharon?

ALL THREE: *(Remembering.)* Sharon!

LAURINDA: Well, we are calling her Floracheska from now on.

SHARON'S MOTHER: Oh, well, let me check on her. She doesn't really like to go out and play since she has other things to do. Getting her outside was a chore yesterday. She's very dramatic. Sharon! *(She exits.)*

SCOTT: I hope that Sharon—

LAURINDA and GERTRUDE LOUISE: Floracheska.

SCOTT: Floracheska, wants to play. It would be too sad to think of her friends having so much fun so close to her.

SHARON: *(At the door.)* Hi Kids. I think I'm gonna stay in. I got a whole lot of nature. Yesterday. And probably poison ivy and poison oak and poison berries and leeches. And sun burn. And callouses on my feet. It's too much to take! I may faint.

SHARON'S MOTHER: No fainting. Go on Floracheska.

SHARON: Flora whatta?

LAURINDA: That is your name now.

SHARON: Oh. Ok. Well, I think I'm just gonna stay in. Away from bugs. And dirt. And grass. And monsters.

SCOTT: Look we have ninety-seven days to play. I think wasting one minute stuck away when you could be adventuring with us is going to make you sad. What do you say Floracheska?

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Scott is right. I figured, I could read about fun or I could be having it.

LAURINDA: And against the rules, I will allow you to choose what we do. So come on. Play.

SHARON'S MOTHER: It is entirely up to you.

Pause.

SHARON: Ok. Just for a little bit.

SCOTT: I think your little bit will turn into forever. Let's go.

GERTRUDE LOUISE: Adventures here we come!

SHARON: OK. Bye mom!

SHARON'S MOTHER: Be home by... never mind. Today you should have some fun. (*She exits.*)

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