

A SQUARE AND A CIRCLE

by Emma Goldman-Sherman

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A SQUARE AND A CIRCLE

A Dramatic Duet

by Emma Goldman-Sherman

SYNOPSIS: *A Square and A Circle* are building a wall together. But Square has a hard time with the way Circle is trying to build the wall. Square thinks there is only one way to build a wall. Circle thinks differently. They argue, and the argument escalates until Square says that Circles are pointless. This is a mathematical impossibility, and Circle points this out. By the end of the play, Square and Circle have transformed their relationship and the way they see the world. A play about getting along; a play about differences.

TIME: Any time.

SETTING: At the location of a soon-to-be-built wall.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 any gender)

A CIRCLE Perhaps this character is rounder than A SQUARE, or larger or smaller, or bigger, or kinder, or more patient. Perhaps their gestures are more fluid and dance-like. The creation of the character of A CIRCLE is up to the imaginations of the people involved in your production. *(34 lines)*

A SQUARE..... Perhaps this character is sharper than A CIRCLE, or straighter. The creation of the character of A SQUARE is up to the imaginations of the people involved in your production. *(35 lines)*

CASTING NOTE: Please cast with any possible combination of genders, sizes, ages, abilities, races or ethnicities

SET: Bare stage with blocks/bricks of some kind.

COSTUMES

A CIRCLE – can wear a cardboard circle like a sandwich board or might wear a large fabric costume that takes the shape of a circle when arms and legs are outstretched. Or perhaps they simply wear a crown or headband that sports a circle. A t-shirt with a bright circle drawn, printed or sewn onto it could be worn.

A SQUARE – may wear a bowtie and glasses, a button-down shirt and a tie. Or perhaps they wear a cardboard square like a sandwich board or a large fabric costume that makes a square when arms and legs are outstretched. Or perhaps they simply wear a bright square drawn, printed or sewn onto a shirt.

PROPS

Any blocks or homemade bricks will be fine as long as they are safe for the actors to play with.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This can be as simple or as elaborate as you'd like to make it. I imagine they are in a school where they've been given a task to build a wall out of those cardboard blocks printed to look like bricks, the ones that you fold to put together. But they could be anywhere.

NOTE ON CHARACTERS: While there are suggestions for designating who is the square and who is the circle, it is also possible to do the play without any differentiation between them, because sometimes we designate certain people as one thing or another without any obvious reasons. Maybe what makes them a Square and a Circle is not evident; this is also a valid approach to the play.

STAGE DIRECTIONS: I have left the script without many stage directions, but that doesn't mean business can't be added. For example, the infinite, unlimited points of A Circle could be small dots of confetti that A Circle reveals to A Square to prove their point. If so, please check with the venue to make sure they allow confetti. Arrange to sweep up when the show ends.

WEEDS: Once the weeds are mentioned, it might be great for A Square to try to see the weeds, and once A Square has indeed discovered the weeds (invisible though they are), if A Square can commit to pulling them out, we will all believe in the weeds and understand the idea. Or you could have a run crew bring out some weeds growing out of earth as set pieces.

ENDING: At the end when A Square says "together" there are so many options for a production to choose to end with: they could start building the wall together closer to each other with a sense of community or they could high five or do whatever your actors in your community feel would be best to show how they feel a new sense of solidarity together, to show how far they've grown. If you are using music, maybe they could dance: A Circle could make wide hip-circles while A Square could move like a robot... and this could affect how they approach the curtain call too. The possibilities are endless!

AUTHOR'S NOTE

One morning during the early part of the pandemic, my son's math teacher sent the plans for the day, and he included this joke: "What did the square say to the circle? You're pointless!" After the joke, there was a note about the infinite points of a circle. As an autistic person who is affected deeply by injustice, I was profoundly moved by this. I couldn't stop thinking how terrible it would be to be called pointless if, in truth, you were made up of unlimited points. So I wrote this play. It was an immediate response. I thank Mr. Andy Fitts for his email that day, the joke, and the impetus for the play. We are all infinite in our variety. I want this play to highlight how important it is to see that and honor each other as best we can.

AT START: *A SQUARE and A CIRCLE are building a wall of play bricks.*

A SQUARE: I want to make it straight.

A CIRCLE: Does it matter?

A SQUARE: If we're going to build it, we should at least make it the right way.

A CIRCLE: But why do you think straight is the right way?

A SQUARE: It will be neat. It will have sharp corners.

A CIRCLE: Angles. If it's straight, it has to have ninety-degree angles. I don't want to make a wall that way.

A SQUARE: But that's the way walls are. Always have been.

A CIRCLE: Not true.

A SQUARE: Prove it.

A CIRCLE: You seem angry. Have I done something to upset you?

A SQUARE: You changed the subject. You can't prove that walls shouldn't be straight.

A CIRCLE: The Taj Mahal is a beautiful building in India with curved walls.

A SQUARE: That's very far away.

A CIRCLE: So?

A SQUARE: That just proves you aren't like me. You're a stranger.

A CIRCLE: They put us together to build this wall. We can work together. We can talk with each other. Get to know each other. Then we won't feel like strangers.

Beat.

A SQUARE: You don't like me.

A CIRCLE: That isn't true.

A SQUARE: I know you don't. I can feel it.

A CIRCLE: I don't think you like me, but we can change that.

A SQUARE: These are straight. They should be a certain way.

A CIRCLE: You want to make something just like you.

A SQUARE: Yes!

A CIRCLE: And I want to make something more like me.

A SQUARE: But you're just A Circle.

A CIRCLE: What's that supposed to mean?

A SQUARE: Circles are pointless!

A CIRCLE: First of all, that's not true. That's not true at all.

A SQUARE: Prove it.

A CIRCLE: A circle is an infinite set of points equidistant from the center.

A SQUARE: What?

A CIRCLE: A circle. Is infinite—that means uncountable, going on and on forever into eternity and never ending. I have an infinite set of points. I'm not pointless. I can never be pointless. I am the furthest thing from pointless! I have an unlimited amount of points! And all of my points are the same distance from my center.

A SQUARE: I didn't know.

A CIRCLE: I know, but just for the future, you shouldn't expect me to tell you. You can read about me in books and online. You can find out through being curious and friendly.

A SQUARE: Now you're upset with me.

A CIRCLE: Yes, but being upset isn't a problem if I can tell you about it. Then the upset will get released. There's something else you did that bothers me.

A SQUARE: I'm sorry.

A CIRCLE: Don't apologize now. You don't even know what you did. If you apologize for nothing, your apology is worth nothing. How do I know you won't do it again? Why should I accept your apology?

A SQUARE: Sorry, I don't know what to say. Sorry.

A CIRCLE: Stop. This is no good. This doesn't make a decent wall. We're supposed to work together. It would be good to get along. It would be great if we could like each other. Amazing to be friends. But this is no good.

A SQUARE: Okay, what should I do?

A CIRCLE: Listen.

A SQUARE: You have a lot to say. You've already said a lot, and I still don't know what you mean. I think we talk two different languages.

A CIRCLE: So you want to walk away? Not try? Stop talking?

A SQUARE: Why do you even care?

A CIRCLE: It hurts me to be upset with you. It hurts my heart to carry the pain you put there. I want you to know what you did so you can apologize for real and mean it. Then we can start again.

A SQUARE: Will that really happen?

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