

**THE WORLD IS ROUND**

**Excerpt**

**A play with songs  
by Rachel Dickstein  
with music and lyrics by Heather Christian  
Based on Gertrude Stein's "The World is Round"**

Rachel Dickstein  
Ripe Time  
135 Eastern Parkway Suite 14D  
Brooklyn, NY 11238  
rachel@ripetime.org

*The World is Round* had its world premiere at BAM-Fisher in Brooklyn, NY in a production produced by Ripe Time (Rachel Dickstein, Artistic Director) on April 21, 2014. Music and Lyrics by Heather Christian. Book by Rachel Dickstein based on Gertrude Stein. Conceived and directed by Rachel Dickstein. Sets by Mimi Lien, Lights by Jiyoun Chang, Costumes by Ilona Somogyi, Projections by Hannah Wasileski. Aerial Choreography by Nicki Miller. The Production Stage Manager was Anne Posluszny. Music performed live by Heather Christian and the Arbonauts.

*ROSE*.....*Kristen Sieh*  
*ROSEROSEROSE*.....*Grace McClean*  
*ROSEWILLIEROSE*.....*Hannah Heller*  
*ROSEMANLION*.....*Blake DeLong*

*The World is Round* had a workshop production in May 2012 at the JCC in Manhattan with the same production team except Lights by Mark Barton, Aerial Choreography by Cariel Klein.

*ROSE*.....*Heather Christian*  
*ROSEROSEROSE*.....*Amber Grey*  
*ROSEWILLIEROSE*.....*April Matthis*  
*ROSEMANLION*.....*Philip Taratula*

Excerpts of Text from Gertrude Stein’s *The World is Round* used by special permission by The Estate of Gertrude Stein, Stanford Gann, Jr of Levin and Gann, P.A.

*This play is performed by four actors.*

*Rose – played by a young woman (an adult preferred) who sings/speaks Rose.*

*RoseWillieRose –another Rose, and the voice of Willie, her cousin played by a woman*

*RoseRoseRose – another Rose, older, who narrates and remembers Rose’s story*

*RoseManLion – another Rose, a man who play the lion and other animals*

*All four performers play/sing Rose at other times. RoseWillieRose, RoseRoseRose and RoseManLion play Willie, Billie the lion, Love, Pepe, and other creatures.*

*For ease of reading, characters are identified by R, RWR, RRR, and RML.*

*Four voices regularly share single sentences. An effort should be made to connect phrases rhythmically to feel as if it were a single voice speaking.*

*Any words printed in italics indicate lines that are sung. Songs generally involve all three voices but may be led by a voice as listed.*

*There is a live band. Ideally the performers also play instruments.*

## 1. Rose

We see Rose alone. RRR watches her from a blue chair off stage.

### **Song: “Opening”**

*RRR: Once upon a time the world was round and you could go on it around and around. Everywhere there was somewhere and everywhere there they were men women children dogs cows wild pigs little rabbits cats lizards and animals. That is the way it was. And everybody dogs cats sheep rabbits and lizards and children all wanted to tell everybody all about it and they wanted to tell all about themselves.*

*And then there was Rose.*

*ll: Rose was her name and would she have been Rose if her name had not been Rose. She used to think and then she used to think again.*

*Would she have been Rose if her name had not been Rose and would she have been Rose if she had been a twin.*

*Rose was her name all the same and her father’s name was Bob and her mother’s name was Kate and her uncle’s name was William and her aunt’s name was Gloria and her grandmother’s name was Lucy. They all had names and her name was Rose, but would she have been she used to cry about it would she have been Rose if her name had not been Rose.*

*RRR: I tell you at this time the world was round and all round and you could go on it around and around.*

*ALL: I tell you at this time the world was round and all round and you could go on it around and around and around*

*RRR: Rose and her big white dog Love were pleasant together they sang songs together; these were the songs they sang. Love drank his water and as he drank, it just goes like that like a song a nice song and while he was doing that Rose sang her song. This was her song.*

*R: I am a little girl and my name is Rose, Rose is my name.*

*Why am I a little girl*

*And why is my name Rose.*

*Simultaneously:*

*All: (canon) And as she sang this song, she sang it while love did his drinking*

*R/RWR/RML:*

*And when am I a little girl  
And when is my name Rose  
And where am I a little girl  
And where is my name Rose  
And which little girl am I am I the little girl named Rose  
Which little girl named Rose.*

*Why am I a little girl  
Where am I a little girl  
When am I a little girl  
Which little girl am I  
Which little girl named Rose*

*(continues under the following text)*

RML: Singing that made her so sad she began to cry.

RWR: And when she cried love her dog love cried

RRR: he looked up at the sky and he began to cry

RWR: and he and Rose and Rose and he cried and cried and cried

RML: until she stopped and at last her eyes were dried.  
(song ends)

## 2. Pepe

RRR: Rose had two dogs a big white one called Love and a little black one called Pépe. Pepe never did like Rose. Why? well. She liked to pretend she was queen over all the world. And one day she said:

R: I know. I do. I do. You know. Now go.

*(Drums kick in. Company jumps rope and hopscotch with danger and abandon.)*

R: I am 9 now and 9 is not young.

R, RRR, RWR, RML canon:

When Rose was young/ she was nine now and nine is not young  
no Rose was not young

R, RRR, RWR, RML canon:

Rose liked telling everybody what to do/  
She liked to pretend she were queen over all the world

RWR: Rose had two dogs a big white one called Love

RRR: and a little black one called P  p  

RML: Pepe never did like Rose. Why? well

RRR: One day she said:

R: I know. I do. I do. You know. Now go.

RML: and P  p   did not want to listen to the queen

RWR: No. Go. Know. So.

RRR: nobody does want to do what anybody tells them to do,

RML: so P  p   did not do it

R: and Rose shut him up in a room.

RRR: Poor little P  p   he had been taught never to do in a room what should be done outside but he was so nervous being left all alone he just did, poor little P  p  .

RML: And then he was let out and little P  p   made no mistake he went straight among all the legs of all the people until he found those of Rose

R: and then he went up and he bit her on the leg

RML: and then he ran away and nobody could blame him now could they.

RWR: It was the only time he ever bit any one.

RML: And he never would say how do you do to Rose again

RRR: But Rose knew and P  p   knew oh yes they both knew.

### 3. School

*Lessons. A hazing dance.*

#### **Song: Eyes a Surprise**

*ALL: In school they taught her the world is round  
The teachers taught her the world is round  
The sun the stars the moon  
Are round  
At school  
Were some other girls  
The world is round  
The stars are round  
The sun is round*

RWR: Rose went to school where mountains were high, they were so high she never did see them.

RML: The teachers taught her

RWR: That the world is round

RRR: the sun is round

RML: the moon is round

RRR: the stars are round

*The company repeats “the sun is round”, “the stars are round”, “The moon is round” to Rose surrounding her like a pack. After a time they freeze and we hear Rose:*

R: around sounds like its lost and found  
I see the world and its not round  
I see I see I see let be  
I see I see I see let be *(repeats like a mantra)*

*(The pack breaks and transforms into a new memory)*

*R: Run Rabbit, Run Rabbit, Run Rabbit, Run Rabbit*

*(piano continues under following dialogue)*

RML: Light is bright

RWR: and what is bright

RRR: will confuse a little rabbit

RML: who has not the habit.

RRR: The lights of the automobile were alight

RWR: a little rabbit right in front of the automobile light

RML: The little rabbit danced from one light to the other light

RRR: let out Love he'll help the rabbit run away,

ALL (but R): The rabbit looked at the light a-fright

R: Eyes a surprise a-fright alight  
Run away

**Song: Run Rabbit**

*R: My what sky I see before me  
My what sky I see before  
What then glass pen*

*RWR/RRR: Ah*

*R: When will there not be a rabbit  
little rabbit that I see  
when then my pen  
when then and then and when*

RML: And Rose burst into tears

RRR: She did then she burst into tears.

*Rose: Run Rabbit Run Rabbit  
(continues then all come in).*

RML: It was so sad it almost made her cry

R: A-fright alight I see let be

RML: But then she did not believe it

R: The world is round? No no sound!  
The mountains are high



they pierce the sky  
the world is not round

RRR: And then a dreadful thing was happening  
She remembered

R: when she had been young  
That one day she had sung,  
And there was a looking glass in front of her

RWR: And as she sang her MOUTH was round

*R: The world is round  
The sun is round  
The moon is round  
The stars are round  
They all are going round around  
And not a sound  
And not a sound*

*ALL: What is round  
A planet's round  
a sphere is round and spinning round  
and singing oh my mouth is round  
oh dear*

RWR: The mountains were so high they could stop anything.

R: They could stop anything. Round sound sky fly

RRR: But she could not keep on remembering and forgetting

RML: but she could sing of course she could sing

RRR: and she could cry of course she could cry.

R: Oh my.

RRR: Once upon a time the world was round? Would she be lost if she was not found?

#### 4. Willie

RWR: My name is Willie I am not like Rose.

R: Willie liked to sing.

RML: but Willie had no dog with whom to sing so he had to sing with something and he sang with owls,

RRR: he could only sing in the evening but he did sing in the evening with owls. There were three kinds of owls

RML: a Kew owl

RRR: a churette owl

RWR: and a Hoot owl

RRR: and every evening Willie sang with owls.

#### **Song: Willie and the Owls**

*RWR: My name is Willie I am not like Rose  
I would be Willie whatever whatere arose,  
I would be Willie if Henry was my name  
I would be Willie always Willie all the same.  
Always Willie*

RML: And then he would stop and wait for the owls.  
And the owls blew

*R/RRR: Who are you who are you.*

RRR: Willie was not like his cousin Rose singing did not make him cry

RWR: it just made him more and more excited.

RML: So there was a moon and the moon was round.

*RWR: Drowning  
Forgetting  
Remembering*

*I am thinking*

*R/RRR: Is it  
His it  
Any eye of any owl is round.*

*RWR: Once upon a time the world was round the moon was round  
The lake was round  
And I almost drowned  
I did  
I was almost drowned*

RRR: And the hoot owl hooted

*R/RRR: Hello Hello*

*R/RRR: Willie is your name  
Willie is your nature  
Willie you're a little boy  
Willie is your stature  
Hello Hello  
Who are you*

5. What happened to Willie

R: I sigh lie try to be like Willie. Willie doesn't frown.  
Willie almost drowned. Twice he almost drowned.

RWR: That was very exciting.

R: Each time was very exciting.

RRR: The world was round and there was a lake on it and the lake was round.

RML: Willie went swimming in the lake, there were three of them they were all boys swimming  
and there were lots of them they were all men fishing.

R: I want to sing a song about Willie

**Song: "Lakes Got Bottoms"**

*ALL: Lakes got bottoms when their round  
There are waterlillies white Pretty waterlilles yellow waterlillies  
And a boy*

*The world goes round it goes around  
The world goes round it had a lake on it  
Willie was a boy he was a one there was one the other one the other one  
ba-bigger one he called to them and they,*

R: they couldn't come and the water-lilies did not really care but they just all the same did not let them. And so the boys said:

*All: So so so so so so come and get them they cannot come out  
Come get them or they will drown drown  
Come and get them*

RML: But the men they had just finished eating  
and you must never go into the water right after eating,  
this all the men knew so what could they do.

*R/RRR/RML: I have just finished eating. I cannot go into the water.*

*R: Well well well the bigger boy he was*

*ALL: that kind*

*R: he said he would not leave Willie and the other one behind, so he went into  
the water-lilies and first he pulled out one little boy and then he pulled out  
Willie and then got them both to the shore. And so Willie*

*ALL: was not drowned although the lake and the world were round and that  
was one time*

RWR: Willie was not drowned.

RRR: Another time he was not drowned was when he was with his father

RML: and his mother

R: and his cousin Rose

RRR: they were all together.

R: They were going up a hill and the rain came down with a will, you know how it comes when it comes so heavy and fast it is not wet it is a wall that is all. So the car went up the hill and the rain came down the hill and then and then well and then there was hay, you know what hay is, hay is grass that is cut and when it is cut it is hay. Well anyway. The hay came down the way it was no way for hay to come anyway. Hay should stay until it is taken away but this hay, the rain there was so much of it the hay came all the way and that made a dam so the water could not go away and the water went into the car and somebody opened the door and the water came more and more and Willie and Rose were there and there was enough water there to drown Willie certainly to drown Willie and perhaps to drown Rose.

RML: Neither Rose nor Willie were drowned that day.

R: the world was round and they were not drowned.

5. Willie takes over

RWR: Willie's going to sing a song.

R: Now Willie's going to sing a song

RRR: He knew when he ran  
And he knew when he sang  
And he knew who

R: Who was Willie

RML: He was Willie  
All through.

RWR: He sang a little song about a house two trees and a rabbit

RRR: He sang a little song about a lizard.

### **Song: Screaming Jay Lizard**

*RWR: A lizard climbed up the side of the house, climbed on the roof of the house  
and then the lizard fell off.  
if the earth is all round now can a lizard fall off?*

R: Plump it fell off of it.

RRR: Willie saw it.

RML: And the answer was

RWR: yes if there is a roof over it.

R: Little lizard it lost its tail but it was not dead.

*RWR: a lizard does not fall off a wall, its funny not off a wall, its funny don't fall  
at all*

R: He liked cats and lizards, he liked frogs and pigeons he liked butter and crackers, he liked  
flowers and windows and everything everything everything!

*Music escalates. The world turns strange. Willie transforms into a larger than life speaker/singer a la Screaming Jay Hawkins.*

*RWR: Bring me bread  
Bring me butter  
Bring me cheese  
And bring me jam  
Bring me milk  
And bring me chicken  
Bring me eggs  
And a little ham.*

R: This is what Willie sang.

RRR: And then all at once

R: The world got rounder and rounder.

RML: The stars got rounder and rounder.

R: The moon got rounder and rounder

RWR: The sun got rounder and rounder

RML: And Willie oh Willie was ready to drown her, not Rose dear me not Rose but his sorrows.

RWR: He loved to sing and he was exciting.

RRR: This is what Willie sang.

*RWR: Believe me because I tell you so  
When I know yes when I know  
Then I am Willie oh oh*

RWR: Yes he said, he said yes.

*Once upon a time I met myself and ran.  
Once upon a time nobody saw how I ran.  
Once upon a time something can  
Once upon a time nobody sees  
But I I do as I please  
Run around the world just as I please.  
I Willie.*

R: *Once upon a time I met myself and ran.  
Once upon a time nobody saw how I ran. (repeats)*