MOMENTS & BEATS

A SHORT INTRODUCTION

You Can't Direct
a Whole Scene
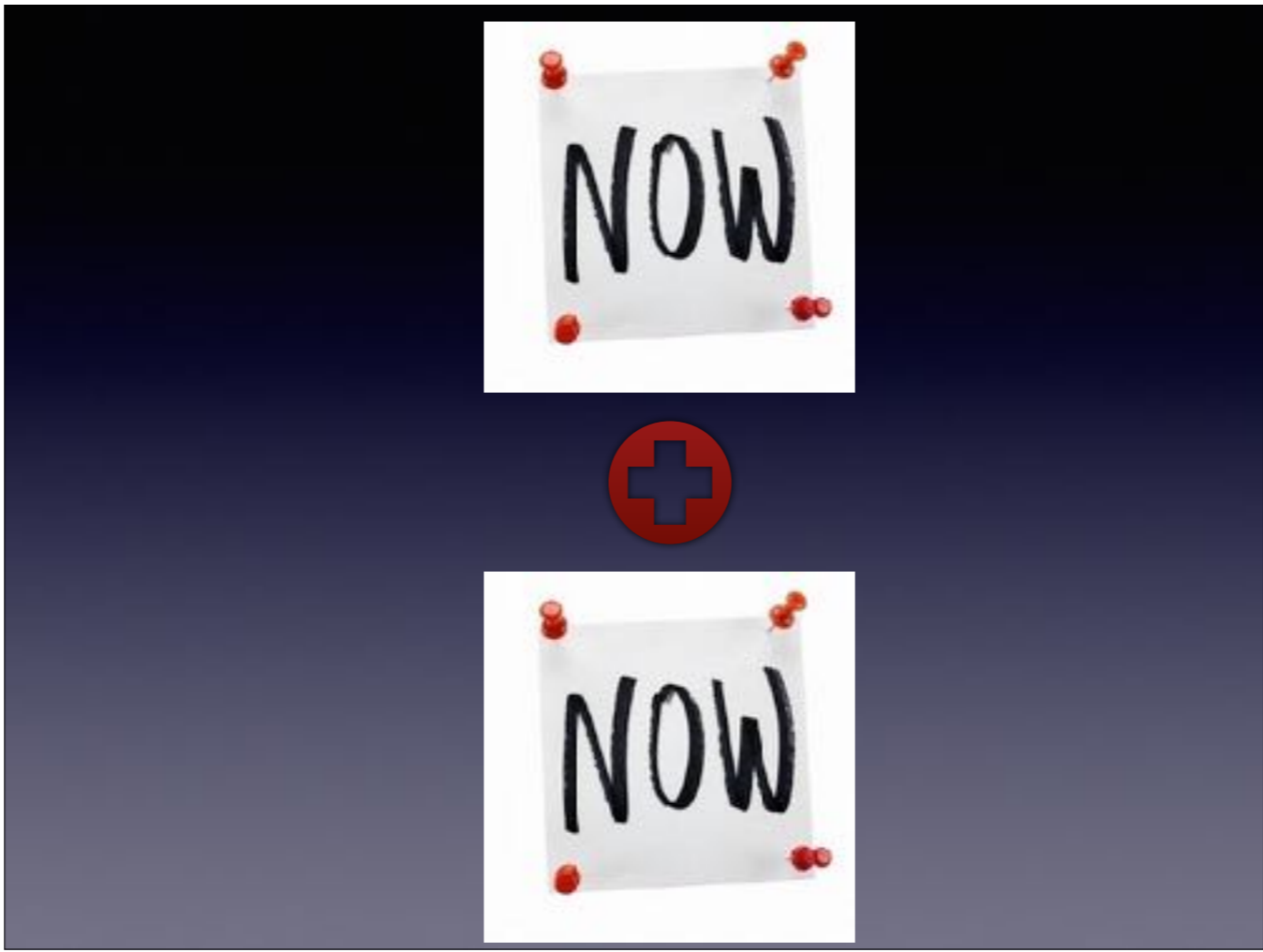
Any more than you can eat a whole Elephant — you have to do the job
ONE BITE AT A TIME.

One Bite at a Time

You have to work Moment to Moment

by the way — if you work moment to moment you don't need to worry about giving line readings

TIME OUT:
What's wrong with
line readings?

Watch —

The reason why line readings don't work is that
there are no line readings in real life

So Back to MOMENTS —

A moment is a container - a space that contains. It's like a vessel made of time. It is there to be filled – or left empty. If it is left empty it will still be there…an empty vessel. A moment missed or ignored.

A moment is a moment of possibility…of potential…of opportunity…
Moments are not to be ignored. They are to be explored, examined, questioned and then filled.
Moments exist outside of dialogue. They may precede and motivate dialogue. They may occur as a result of something spoken. But they are not dialogue – they exist on their own. If you leave them unattended they remain there empty like vacant houses in a neighborhood suffering neglect.

In Moments

A director was struggling in rehearsal

I ask him to tell the story of the scene....to "tell the scene as a story")***** He offers to "summarize" and he goes back to past events and starts telling the whole movie. I insist that he tell this scene moment by moment. Narrate each moment as if it were a silent movie – or in a foreign language. He really is struggling. I say that if he can tell the scene as a story made up of moments, he can direct the moments and therefore the scene. And if he cannot – then he cannot.

He was failing because he was trying to direct the whole scene at once

Imagine a piano whose keyboard was made of a single slab of ivory
all we could do was hit that one slab — how would it sound?

so

We Cut the Ivory into Keys (Moments)

We group the Moments into Chords (Beats)

all we could do was hit that one slab — how would it sound?

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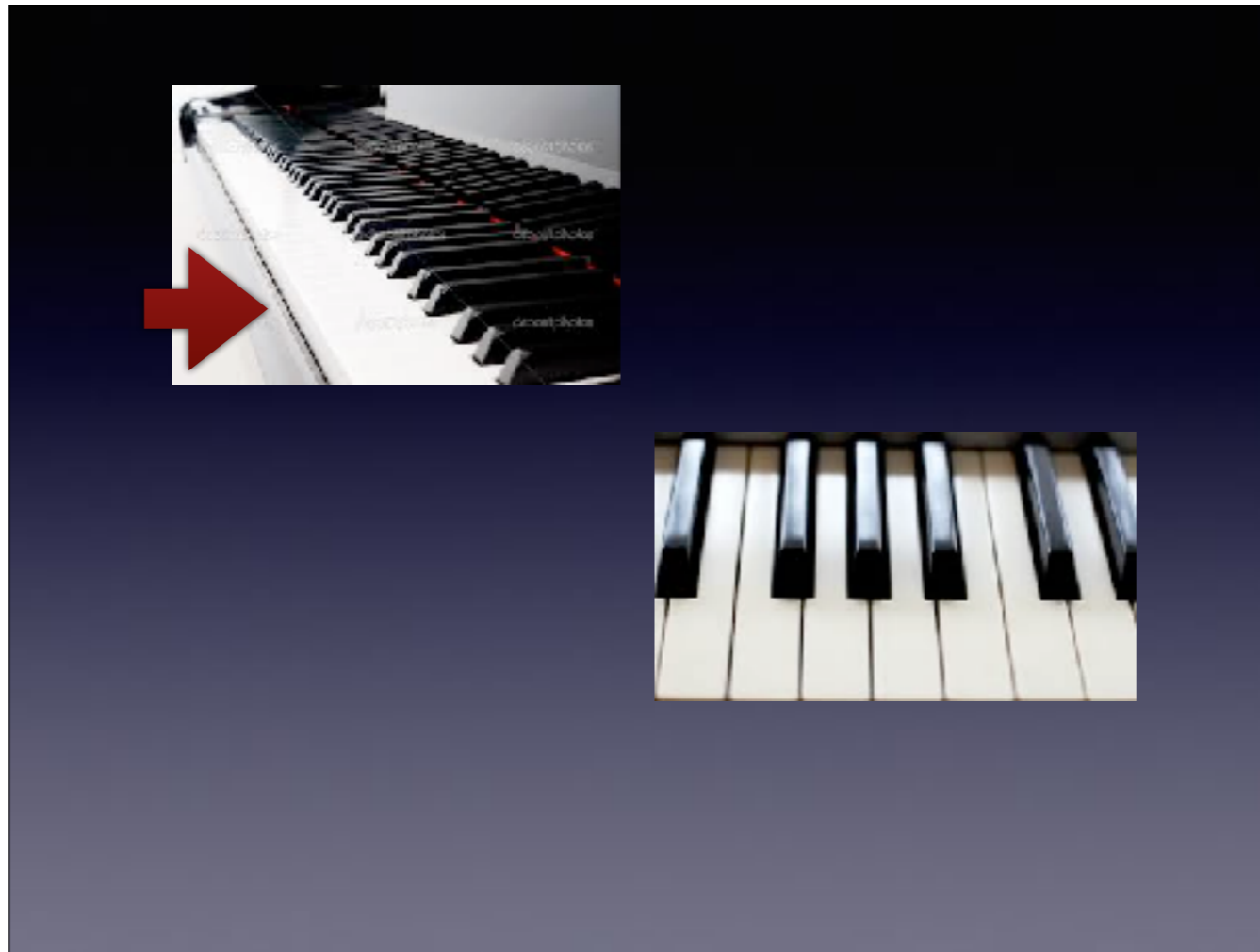
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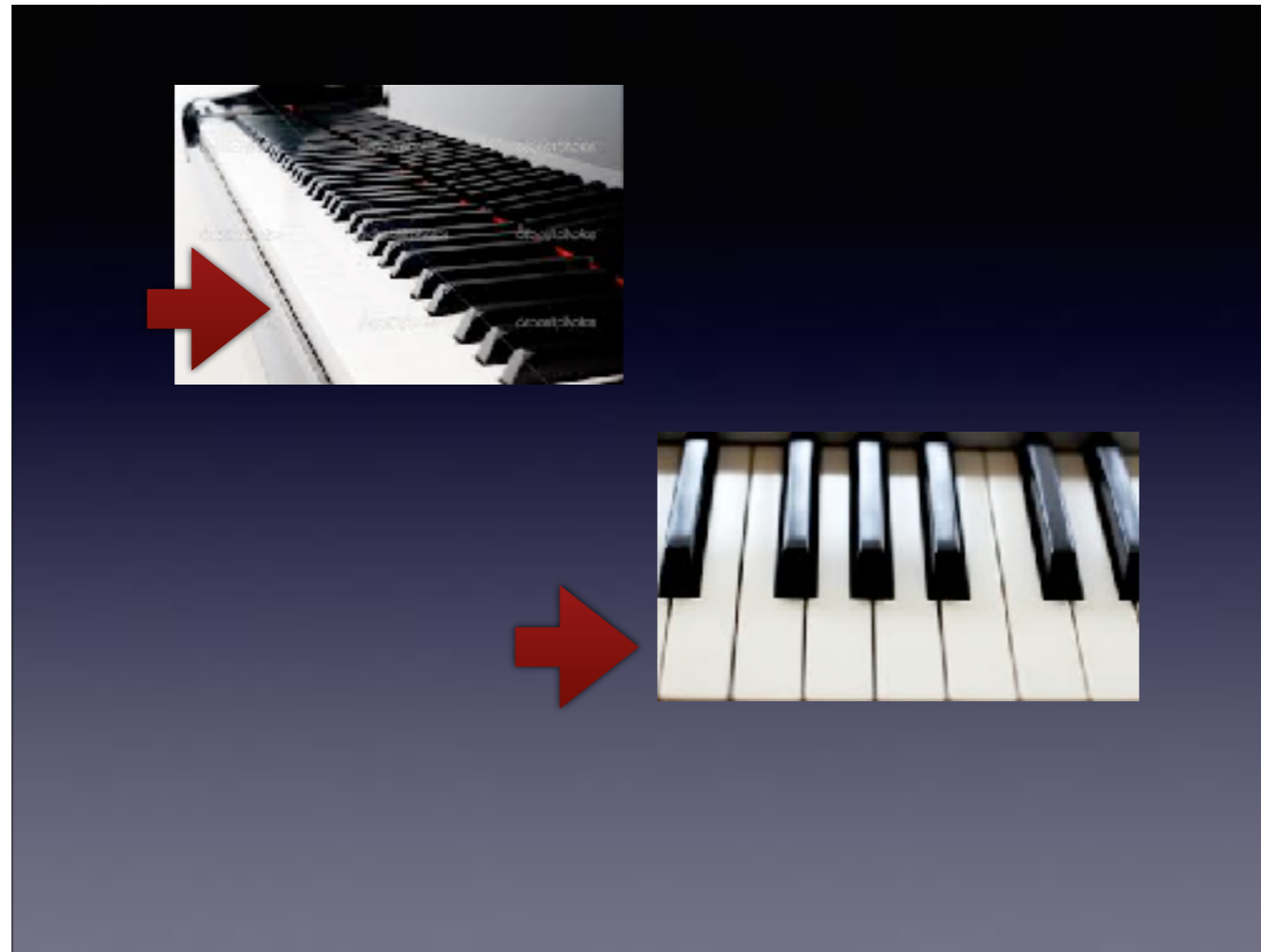
We group the Moments into Chords (Beats) - but we'll get to that in a minute…First let's clarify what we mean by A MOMENT:

A Moment is...?

A "moment" is a place during or in between dialogue in which something registers in emotional terms – a place where an emotional message is received & registered

It may be revealed by a look, a pause, a gesture..or the "look behind the eyes".

A Moment is...?

A scene is made up of moments.

They are the Atoms of the scene….

       Some decisive moments are designated as "BEATS".

A BEAT IS…???

A DECISIVE MOMENT

- AN INFLECTION POINT — IT IS A STRUCTURAL JOINT ON WHICH THE MOVEMENT OF THE SCENE DEPENDS - IT SHAPES THE PROGRESSION OF THE ACTION TOWARD THE EVENT OF THE SCENE

THE EVENT OF THE SCENE IS THE DECISIVE BEAT THAT SENDS the character
off into another scene

ALL EVENTS ARE BEATS - JUST AS ALL BEATS ARE MOMENTS

Just as all monkeys are primates but all primates aren't monkeys…

ALL EVENTS ARE BEATS, ALL BEATS ARE MOMENTS.

BUT ALL MOMENTS ARE NOT BEATS AND ALL BEATS ARE NOT THE EVENT OF THE SCENE.
IT IS UP THE DIRECTOR TO DISTINGUISH AMONG THEM

Why?
Why do we need beats...?

WE excavate the Beats to determine the emotional structure of the scene
They provide definition to the journey

Cartoon
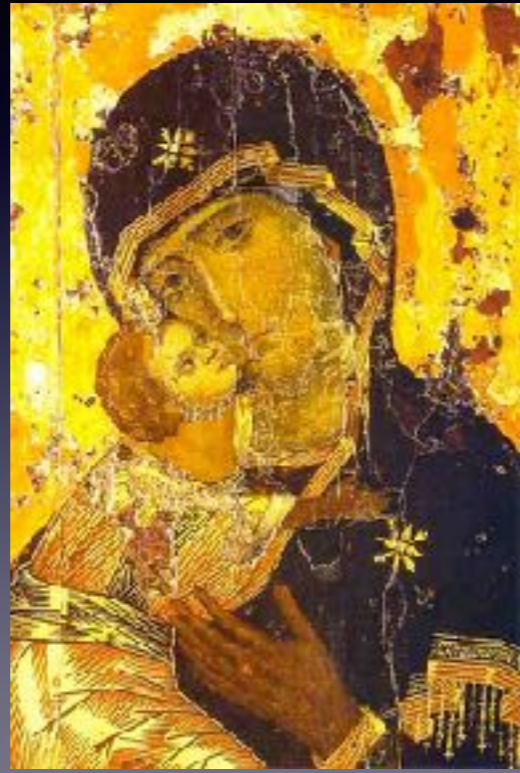
A cartoon is a type of illustration in a non-realistic or semi-realistic style. It illustrates or indicates the time it represents without attempting to create the illusion of reality.

The tree in the lower right is a step toward a more realistic representation

The difference is a recognition that form emerges from STRUCTURE

The Italian Renaissance
Leonardo Da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci, who lived from 1452-1519, is well known for his anatomical sketches of the human body. He would dissect dead human remains and then draw what he saw. Dissection was completely illegal unless one was a physician, which da Vinci was not. It is believed that da Vinci would get a grave robbers, and eventually a hospital director to get him cadavers to study. da Vinci hid all of this anatomical drawings and kept them secret because of the illegal nature of what he was doing. He was able to identify not only muscles and bones, but also their functions in the body, which was an incredible breakthrough.

LEONARDO FOLLOWED THE STRUCTURE OF THE HUMAN BODY TO A MORE REALISTIC - LIVING REPRESENTATION

BEATS ARE THE SKELETON OF THE SCENE – THE BONES AND THE CONNECTIVE TISSUE – THE SKIN IS THE SURFACE DECORATION — THE WORDS ARE LIKE THE SKIN — BY FINDING THE SKELETON DIRECTORS FORM A SURE EMOTIONAL PATHWAY – TO THE REALIZATION OF THE EMOTIONAL EVENT OF THE SCENE

THE WRITER HAS "DIRECTED" THE WORDS - -- THE DIRECTOR DIRECTS THE MOMENTS AND THE BEATS

is it:

- beat - as in a rhythmic hit?

- beat - as it "bit"...a piece or unit?

- beat - as in pause or silence?

- beat - as in point on an outline?

5 Ways of thinking about BEATS

- A MUSICAL PHRASE

- A DOWN IN A FOOTBALL POSSESSION

- A SKIRMISH WITHIN A BATTLE

- A PLACE WHERE THE SCENE WOULD END...if nothing changed

OR MY DEFINITION - WHERE THE SCENE WOULD END IF SOMETHING DIDN'T HAPPEN TO MAKE IT CONTINUE - WHERE THE SCENE COULD END...

OR MAYBE IT"S HELPFUL TO THINK ABOUT GPS in YOUR CAR

INTERSECTIONS OR ALTERNATE ROUTES - Inflection points - DECISIONS/RELEASES -
=
Beats help to excavate and expose the emotional structure of the scene
They provide definition to the journey:

A Matter of Interpretation

the same scene
may be performed in
four beats,three beats or two beats

How many beats a scene is played in can be A matter of directorial choice --   STYLE IS REFLECTION OF CHOICE

BEATS SHAPE THE SCENE AND THE DELIVERY OF ITS PAYLOAD
in order to understand the way the scene happens THE DIRECTOR MUST EXPOSE THE BEAT STRUCTURE AND DETERMINE HOW ONE BEAT ENDS AND ANOTHER BEGINS
AS IN LIFE PROGRESS IS MADE