

The Moment Lived

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Moments are what actors act. They are the things directors direct.

Scenes *seem* to be comprised of words. This is misleading. Rather they are *described* by words. In a well-written script the words point us toward the moments that surround them. A poor script is one in which the words don't point anywhere but to themselves. This is a literal text - a vehicle for a plot, not a story. It does not require our investigation – it is what it is. Such scripts are not our concern. We cherish the text that is a medium in which life can grow. We mine these texts for their moments.

Moments are something different than words. A moment might prompt a word, or call forth a line of speech, but speech is not a moment. Moments exist outside of dialogue; they exist on their own. They are to be explored, examined, questioned and then filled. They are not to be ignored.

A moment is a unit of time. Time is the most precious thing we have in life, and the only time we have is in the moment. The past is a fiction and the future an illusion. The present moment is our reality and we must meet it.

Our lives are made up of moments. We live a moment, and then another, and another. The present presents itself to us moment by moment.

We find some moments immediately meaningful. These prompt us to react or act. Others pass, escaping our notice. In either case we live them. We are accountable for our moments whether we mark them or not.

Imagine you meet a man, an acquaintance who has recently lost his wife. Suppose some circumstance leads you not to acknowledge the fact. That moment remains, unattended.

A moment is like a cup, a container, there to be filled or left empty. It's a vessel made of time.



A moment is a volume of possibility...of potential...of opportunity. It can be met, missed or ignored.

The moments that arise from our encounters can be evaded, but they cannot be escaped. They happen, even when “nothing happens.” They have what physicists call a “turning effect.”

Moments are what move people.

A novel or poem may recall a moment; a drama must create it in the now. Directors and actors work to move an audience by enacting moments.

Directors ask actors to accept the reality of a specific fiction and proceed to act upon its circumstances moment by moment. We work with actors to knit a fabric of life one stitch at a time, one moment at a time. Moments are our elementary particles. We build by compiling and structuring moments into encounters we call scenes.

A moment is a place during or in between dialogue in which

something registers in emotional terms. It's a place where a message is received or resonates. It may be revealed by a glance, a pause, a gesture, or a "look behind the eyes". It's a place where we, the audience, see into the inner life of the character. The director's job is to investigate the script and identify its moments. The actor's job is to live them. Together, our job is to attend to the moments.

Sometimes we "make a moment" sometimes we "take a moment."

Making an actor conscious of a moment is sometimes enough. The actor does not have to do anything or show anything; the simple awareness of the moment's potential – of the possibility inherent in it – may convey to an audience. A moment happens and the audience sees into a character's soul. Sometimes the moment reveals itself in a pause, a look, a gesture or bit of behavior. The choice of how to "play" a moment starts with the actor's impulse, but ultimately resides with the director's approval.

Moment to moment directing is directing in the radical present tense - directing not the before, nor the after, only the now. The director's job is to tell the story. A story can only be told in the now, one moment at a time. That is how a scene proceeds. One thing happens and then another and then another, leading to some culminating moment - an event that has meaning. That event signals a change, and that change is the thing that

must happen for the story to proceed.

Scenes are actually comprised of moments, which, as we have seen, are grouped into beats, which lead to a culminating change we name an “event.”

There is only one route to the event. It is the path we call “moment to moment.”