

PRESENCE

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Presence is the ability to make promises and to keep them, to show up. Isn't that what we do in bringing a text and a character to life? We make a promise to give it voice, to struggle through rehearsals, and to show up on opening night.

Availability in the actor is the capacity to imagine lives other than our own and to present them fully and honestly in performance. Availability requires modesty. If we are too full of ourselves, or worse, too afraid of ourselves, there is no room for "the other" to live within us.

Presence can not be judged or evaluated. Presence is experienced. Presence demands technical elegance -- grace under pressure. How can you be available to give a character voice if you're stumbling over his lines, struggling with his costume, or unsure of his motivation?

Presence will not be commanded. It comes with hard work and faith -- that what you say and how you say it are significant; that even in failure you have done your best.

Technique in the absence of presence is the province of the performing seal. Presence in performance resonates with the audience only when the actor stands with his or her character and faces the abyss of "being." There we must pose the terrifying question of who we are and what we are capable of.

When the ephemeral elements of venue, voice, and time have slipped away, what remains is the imprint of the event. Presence is the intangible, invisible element that can make a performance great and memorable. Moments of presence have such an impact on our real lives that it is obvious that re-creating them onstage is an opportunity for us, as well as our audience, to encounter characters who will leave their "golden footprint" on us; who linger long after the actual performance is but a memory.