

IN THE MOMENT
By Daniel Curzon

CHARACTERS: (2) A, any age, a male or a female
B, any age, same sex as the other

SETTING: Bare Stage

PLAYING TIME: 10 minutes

(Lights up.)

A: Would you care to be my partner in the exercise?

B: I'd love to.

A: Thank you. Do you want to start?

B: Why don't you?

A: All right. Let me see now. The instructor said to make a neutral observation about the other person. Do I have that right?

B: I believe so.

(Both look toward the unseen instructor.)

A: Why don't you go first. I feel very awkward. This is my first acting class.

B: We can go with that. (observing) You feel very awkward.

A: (picking up the Meisner exercise) I feel very awkward.

B: You have your hand to your mouth.

A: I have my hand to my mouth. . . . You don't have your hand to your mouth.

B: I don't have my hand to my mouth.

A: (awkward) You don't have your hand to your mouth.

B: Indeed, I don't have my hand to my mouth.

A: I wish this exercise was over.

B: I think the instructor is eavesdropping.

A: I am enjoying this exercise.

B: You are enjoying this exercise.

A: (checking on the instructor) I think we're safe now.

B: You are wearing dark clothing.

A: I am wearing clothing. I mean dark clothing.

B: You seem to want to say more.

A: I do want to say more. I find the exercise rather confining.

B: We don't have to push it. Just let it unfold.

A: I am letting it unfold.

B: You are letting it unfold.

A: I am listening to you telling me that I am letting it unfold.

B: You are listening to me telling you that you are letting it unfold.

A: When do we start acting?

B: I think the exercise is meant to loosen us up.

A: I think it's making me more self-conscious.

B: Let me try. You are standing in front of me.

A: I am standing in front of you.

B: You are standing in front of me.

A: Are the other students as awkward as I am? (Glances around.)

B: We are supposed to concentrate on just us.

A: I am concentrating on just us.

B: You are concentrating on just us.

A: I think I will leave now.

B: You're not serious?

A: I am seriously thinking of leaving now.

B: But it's only the first class.

A: I have run out of things to say.

B: It does not matter what we say. Just that we listen and observe.

A: You have a greater tolerance for this than I seem to have.

B: I have a greater tolerance for this than you seem to have.

A: I know that we are supposed to be "in the moment," but it is proving difficult.

B: Perhaps it proving difficult *is* being in the moment.

A: I must have an evil mind. I find it hard to keep neutral.

B: I do not find it hard to keep neutral.

A: Do you think this exercise is almost over?

B: I don't know if this exercise is almost over.

A: I am not sure I will come back next week.

B: You already paid for the class, didn't you?

A: Yes, I have already paid for the class. I got a discount.

B: I also got a discount on this class.

A: Do you think if we had paid full price this exercise would be over by now?

B: I do not know if – Oh, the instructor is signaling for us to stop.

(A and B stop facing each other.)

A: Whew! Just in time!

B: I enjoyed that. It made me look into someone's eyes.

A: Is that something you find difficult?

B: Ordinarily yes. One reason I took the class was to overcome shyness.

A: I took the class to repeat inane comments over and over.

B: What?

A: I'm joking. I took the class to get out of the house on Wednesdays.

B: I want to be an actor.

A: Well, good for you! I don't think I'm cut out for it.

B: I'm sure we will be doing some acting eventually.

A: The course is only four weeks long.

B: You are an impatient person, it seems.

A: (mocking the exercise) I am an impatient person, it seems!

B: Perhaps we should change exercise partners.

A: Perhaps you are right.

(Both look around for another partner.)

A: The class is rather small.

B: And the instructor signaled for us to continue, only faster. Were you listening?

A: No, I wasn't. You're right, I was talking.

B: Shall we continue then? (Steps to face A again.)

A: (facing B) Sure! But you don't have to do me any favors.

B: I don't consider it a favor.

A: Good. I am not taking it as a favor.

B: You are not taking it as a favor.

A: Didn't the instructor say to go faster?

B: (faster) You are not taking it as a favor!

A: Your articulation was not all that it might be.

B: You made me hurry my words.

A: We're not very compatible, are we?

B: It's just a class exercise!

A: It's gone on too long.

B: Perhaps it would be good for you, to make you stop and listen.

A: If I just stood on the stage and listened, nobody would stay this long.

B: Are you going to do this exercise or not?

A: I'm doing it!

B: You're not doing it right!

A: Are you the instructor now?

B: Some people apparently can't be instructed!

A: Okay. I will try. (Gathers self.) I am now trying to observe you neutrally.

B: Faster.

A: (faster) I am now trying to observe you faster.

B: And you want to tell me about articulation?!

A: It is just an exercise! Or so I'm told!

B: Maybe we should take a time out.

A: I believe we are not supposed to take a time out.

B: Now I am feeling exceedingly uncomfortable.

A: Good! I mean, that's progress, right?

B: You have quite an attitude, don't you?

A: I didn't realize it until I had to stand in front of somebody and say silly things.

B: You don't have to stand where you don't want to stand.

A: Apparently I do or I won't win a Tony Award.

B: No need to worry. You will not win a Tony Award.

A: Oh? And how do you know that?

B: You said that you did not want to be an actor.

A: What you really meant is that I don't have the talent to win a Tony Award.

B: Very few people, even talented ones, ever win a Tony Award.

A: I could probably win a Tony Award if I put my mind to it.

B: You can't even do a tiny little exercise! How are you going to win a Tony Award?!

A: I don't think you are keeping your observations neutral.

B: They may not be neutral. But they are accurate!

A: Let us continue the exercise, shall we?

B: After you.

A: (observing the other) Your hair is quite unattractive.

B: That is not neutral.

A: Your hair is whatever color that is. Isn't "unattractive" a color?

B: (doing the exercise) You think my hair is of an unattractive color.

A: I do not mean to be insulting, just observant.

B: Your hair is. . .

A: Careful now!

B: Your hair looks like you wiped your butt with it.

A: (glancing) The instructor is eavesdropping again) (fast) You think that my hair looks like I have it professionally groomed.

B: (going along because the instructor is listening in) (fast) You think that I think that your hair has been professionally groomed.

A: I am learning so much in this class.

B: I too am learning so much in this class.

A: (about the instructor) The instructor has moved away.

B: The instructor has moved away, thankfully. (Pause.)

A: Up close, you are quite homely.

B: Up close, your breath has recently been near something shameful.

A: Your eyes are not on an equal plane.

B: Your lower teeth have plaque between them.

A: One of your earlobes is misshapen.

B: You drool when you say your S's.

A: Your clothing does not fit your body well.

B: Your clothing has cat hairs all over it.

A: Your eyesight is less than 20/20.

B: Your IQ is less than 20/20.

A: That is not how one's scores an IQ test.

B: I stand corrected. Those cat hairs must be in my imagination.

A: I love cat hairs on my clothing!

B: Too bad other people do not!

A: I thought you said you were shy.

B: I guess this exercise is working!

A: Perhaps we should stop now before it's too late?

B: You are misreading my emotions. You are a fatuous know-it-all.

A: I am a know-it-all, but I am not fatuous.

B: I hope I never have to do another exercise with you.

A: That can be arranged. I do not intend to return to this class next week.

B: Well, I do!

A: I am surprised that you wish to return to this class next week. I have observed not one ounce of acting talent.

B: I doubt that you would know talent if it sat on your face!

A: True talent does not have to sit on someone's face to prove itself!

B: Believe me, you are no Oscar Wilde!

A: No, I am not Oscar Wilde! I am myself!

B: I would not broadcast that fact too loudly.

A: By the way, did I mention that you lack stage charisma?

B: What I lack in stage charisma, I make up for in stage technique!

A: At this moment you have a booger in your nose, which I can plainly see.

B: (not wiping it way) It probably blew from your nose into mine! So loud are you!

A: I am running out of observations.

B: I am not!

A: Where is the instructor when needed?

B: I am not finished yet.

A: What have I unleashed?!

B: You have spoiled this class from the beginning!

A: I have saved this class from utter nothingness!

B: You couldn't even do one little goddamned exercise!

A: Well, I have managed to cure you of your shyness in less than ten minutes!

B: (angrily) Well, thank you very much! Fucker!

A: Now shyness will not be your problem. Not getting killed because of what you say will be!

B: Are we finished with the exercise now?

A: I don't think so. The instructor is looking through the enrollment papers. We must go on!

B: I'm game.

A: Well, I'm game too! You think I'm not?

B: Bring it on!

A: Your chin makes you look fat.

B: It makes me look ethnic!

A: All people are ethnic!

B: Some people are more ethnic than others!

A: I'd go there, but I still like you a little bit.

B: That's funny. I don't like you at all.

A: Did you just fart?

B: No, I farted when you came close to me. Anything to keep you away.

A: Have you heard? They invented arm deodorant now.

B: (smelling an armpit) No, don't need it! It must be you.

A: You know what I thought when I first saw you come into the class?

B: I don't care. I thought you were out on parole.

A: I am out on parole. I thought you were retarded.

B: You can't use that word anymore.

A: I know. But I thought *you* were retarded!

B: So? You think the retarded aren't allowed to act?!

A: I'm sure they do very well with these exercises!

B: You are mean.

A: I warned you.

B: Well, now that I am unleashed, two can play this game. To the death!

A: Okay. To the death!

B: You first.

A: Finish this sentence. "My partner in this exercise is . . ." I dare you!

B: My partner in this exercise is . . . neutral.

A: What?

B: That's the nastiest thing I can think of to say. Touché! Now you. Finish the sentence. "My partner in this exercise is . . ."

A: My partner in this exercise is . . . sorry.

B: Sorry? How lame is that!

A: I'm sorry that I'm sorry. I think it got out of hand.

B: Oh, come on now! We're just getting started!

A: How's this for an exercise? . . . I think I love you!

B: No, you don't. It's just a part we're playing.

A: Me too.

B: The world does not need yet another love story.

A: I couldn't agree more.

B: Kiss me.

A: Okay, but it's just an exercise.

B: Of course. (They kiss.) Yeah, it was just a stage illusion.

A: Yeah, you're right. And now I believe that this exercise is over at last.

B: I also believe that this exercise is over at last. Hallelujah!

A: Hallelujah!

B: Shut up.

A: Okay.

B: Want to have coffee afterwards?

A: Sure.

BOTH: Blackout!

BLACKOUT

