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LET'S HEAR IT FOR THOSE 'GOLDEN MOMENTS'

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Years ago, an aspiring playwright told a group of panelists that his plays were his gifts to the world.

Such well-intentioned fervor was hard to repudiate. It made one feel like Scrooge. What our earnest young man overlooked is that gifts must be worth receiving. For him, writing the play was enough. Forget making sure it was good.

Yet when you're addicted to prowling theaters in search of that "gift"—that golden confluence when everything conspires to illuminate a moment—you're only too keenly aware of how rarely you find it.

So while plum puddings perecolate and the air stirs with good will, let's forget the business of show business. Let's talk about its art—those "gifts" you can't buy at Bullock's and won't find under the tree. Let's, for a moment, give cheers and credit to those performers who've garlanded our lives with "golden moments" like flashing Christmas lights.

In no particular order, then, here's thanks to:



—BARBARA RUSH in "A Woman of Independent Means" (Back Alley), for demonstrating that she possesses the range, variety and craft one strongly suspected she did, but never had a chance to see before. (I mean, "Flamingo Road.")