

A Process Theory for Actors

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Most theory for theater and film actors is based on untenable dualisms. In this paper, I draw on the theories of Stanislavski and Meisner, two of the most influential, though philosophically dated, acting theorists in the past century. Both tend to think in dualistic terms of conscious work and subconscious inspiration, body and mind, feeling and intellect; and both continue to exert a dominating influence on contemporary American acting. I present some of their best work and then synthesize it in the context of process thought. In my process approach, actors gather up an awareness of the influences that they might draw from in performance. Then, in the moment of performance, drawing peripherally from these influences, the actors focus their attention on what their characters would attend to.