

Meisner and stanislavski research paper examples

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Both the Meisner and Stanislavski methods of acting employ psychology to help actor's break down the acting process into manageable and relatable step. By analyzing the similarities and differences between Meisner and Stanislavski's techniques, I endeavor to identify these psychological factors and identify the effectiveness of these techniques. Meisner and Stanislavski's techniques have greatly influenced the acting world by allowing for obtainable objectives and working in conjunction with psychological thought processes.

Stanislavski's Method

Many consider Stanislavski "the father of modern acting techniques." (Harman). Stanislavski taught at the Moscow Arts Theatre (Honey-Ellen Davis). His unique approach included three basic concepts: relaxation, concentration, and emotional recall (Harman). His techniques were eventually called the "system" and were designed to make acting appear natural (Harman). Throughout the twentieth century the popularity of his techniques grew and was recognized by acting schools worldwide. Stanislavsky proposed that one should take real life examples or experiences to reinforce acting. To him, a systematic approach was needed to properly ensure the success of this craft. By breaking down the process into practicable steps, he was able to analyze the areas of concentration, voice, physical skills, emotion memory, observation, and dramatic analysis (Harman). He doesn't patron the idea of strictly adhering to a script, but instead suggests identifying key concepts and developing them through acting. The actor is encouraged to identify with the character by looking at the character's objective and their method of obtaining this objective.

Stanislavsky asks that the actor strive to understand the character and put themselves in their place.

Psychologically this creates an empathy with the character by tying them to events in the actor's life (Harman). He strived to understand how the mind worked and use it to more effectively analyze acting techniques. Many feel that his methods are a form of Cognitive Psychology (Thagard). He connects the acting process with the psychological knowledge of humans as "thinking beings" (Harman). His work combines art with science (Harman). He was amongst the first to realize that the two could work together to create a more complete experience for the audience. These methods suggest that to gain emotion one must first start with thought. Stanislavski's process is still the foremost system employed by today's actors, a testament to its effectiveness.

Meisner Technique

Meisner felt that Stanislavski's method of emotional recall did not adequately allow actors to remain within the scene (Neighborhood Playhouse). Meisner decided that it would be more efficient to listen and react naturally to fellow actors allowing for a more open form of communication. Meisner's method takes some of the thought process out of emotional recall instead relying on more heartfelt emotional response. Meisner proclaimed that the goal was to "To live truthfully under given imaginary circumstances." (Honey-Ellen Darvis). His practice combines cognitive appraisal and physiological perception to create a form of emotional intelligence (Thagard).

Meisner was unwilling to accept that Stanislavski's method was complete and decided to rethink his concepts. To promote his own methods, Meisner

developed a training regimen at The Neighborhood Playhouse (Neighborhood Playhouse). His series of exercises were less cerebral and more reality based. His most well-known exercise was known as the “repetition exercise” (Honey-Ellen Darvis). To him action was the basis of character. He also felt that an actor’s personality should be highlighted in roles. He felt that an actor’s main tool was their personality and they should use it accordingly. Meisner’s methods inspire creativity on the part of the actor (Honey-Ellen Darvis). His theory is that you should use part of yourself to make a character real. Psychologically Meisner makes the character into the actor, by injecting their personality into the role (Honey-Ellen Darvis). This is only slightly different than Stanislavski who suggests events not personality. Meisner skips the thought aspects and goes directly to the emotional experience (Honey-Ellen Darvis).

He doesn’t want to completely depart from Stanislavski, just give actors additional alternatives and move away from overly cerebral thought processes. He did away with Stanislavski’s analytical thought and asks that actor’s merely “feel” the role with a great depth of emotion.

In conclusion, most actors now employ a wide range of techniques.

Stanislavski set the stage to ensure that actor’s had the tools needed to act compellingly. Meisner further refined these ideas to suit his own acting aesthetic. Both provide different approaches with the common goal of more realistic acting. Both champion internal and external dialogue with a deep connection to the character, as well as injecting reality into fantasy (Honey-Ellen Darvis).

Both techniques have been hailed a success in theater studies; it is really up

to the preference of the actor to decide which style is most effective for them. Therefore it is inconclusive as to which is the most effective. Meisner's techniques are merely a modified form of Stanislavski's methods, just with more emphasis on emotional response than analytical thought (Honey-Ellen Darvis). To put it simply Stanislavski's process lives in the head while Meisner's lives in the heart.

Works Cited:

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