

Module Five
BMPF7013F
Independent Study

Abigail Sugden
Student Number: 2225850

Date: 01/11/2024

Word Count: 9653
Component One: 4721
Component Two: 4932

An exploration of the Meisner Technique and its potential to promote an actor's sense of present moment awareness

Contents

Component One

Introduction	Pg. 3
Mindfulness and the Meisner Technique	Pg. 4
Personal Context	Pg. 5
Aims and Objectives	Pg. 6
Study Plan	Pg. 6
Methodology	Pg. 8
Reflection	Pg. 10
Conclusion	Pg. 14

Component Two

Introduction	Pg. 16
Present Moment Awareness	Pg. 17
The Meisner Technique	Pg. 18
Meisner Technique and the Present Moment	Pg. 20
Attention	Pg. 21
Impulse	Pg. 23
Challenges	Pg. 24
Limitations of Current Research	Pg. 25
Conclusion	Pg. 26

Bibliography and References	Pg. 29
-----------------------------	--------

Appendices	Pg. 39
------------	--------

Portfolio

Introduction

Renowned theatre director Peter Brook once said that “the essence of theatre is within a mystery called the present moment” (1993, p.811). But as actors, how do we appreciate and embrace the potential of the present moment within our craft? Inspired by her decades of teaching and coaching, esteemed voice practitioner Patsy Rodenburg refers to presence as “the energy that comes from you and connects you to the outside world” (2009, p.11). Based upon her extensive work in the fields of acting and theatre, Rodenburg’s work rooted within the field of voice has explored the possibility of the present moment. She attributes an individual being in the present as being “in the moment – the zone – and moment to moment you give and take” (2009, p.21). But from the perspective of a practitioner, be it as an acting teacher or coach, how do we begin to consider this sense of the present moment alongside the development of acting methodology, including interpretive and technical skills for our actors?

There are many different approaches to acting, all based upon the work of many practitioners, who each have left their mark on acting practice over time (Carnicke et al., 2016). It can be said that an actor’s craft is subjective, perhaps due to the wide-ranging variation in approaches, styles and methodology. But it has been said that one thing tying the differing methodologies together is the need for considerable physical, emotional and mental commitment, which can be supported by sufficient technical training alongside talent (Lee, 2019). With this in mind, an actor’s process may also be subjective. Developing your own practice as an actor is an individual, personal process that perhaps is sometimes overlooked in actor training. There can be a temptation to stick with a one-size fits all approach in moving through the processes of teaching technical skills, dependent on a practitioner’s own experiences and what approaches they then pass down. But as practitioners, how can we ensure we are equipping ourselves with an array of different techniques in order to suit a wide range of students and their individual needs in the moment? Addressing this and filling in potential gaps in our practice can only help to strengthen our pedagogical practice overall, ensuring we strive towards the ability to be flexible and adaptable in our practice.

In consideration of this, an important aspect of my practice is the acknowledgement that students are not all alike, leading towards my intention to develop a person-centred approach to actor training. This offers the opportunity to ensure we are able to adapt and offer a variety of suggestions to suit our student’s individual needs. Inspired by own mindfulness practice and my training as a mindfulness practitioner, I am intrigued by the lessons we may learn from mindfulness

in the exploration of developing a holistic approach to actor training. This encouraged me to consider if there were any existing concepts within acting pedagogy and mindfulness that have the potential to complement one another.

Mindfulness and the Meisner Technique

Research into mindfulness-based practice within acting pedagogy remains limited (Jones, 2019), despite its growing inclusion within the field of singing pedagogy (Becker et al., 2022; Czajkowski & Greasley, 2015; Dion, 2016). One contributing factor in this may be that research into mindfulness itself is still evolving (Baer, 2003). Mindfulness is a complex construct, with many differing, although often still related definitions (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). Proposed definitions range from a state of consciousness (Brown & Ryan, 2003), a mode of awareness (Bishop et al., 2004) and the regulation of attention (Astin, 1997). However, one of the most widely accepted and used definitions of mindfulness comes from Jon Kabat-Zinn. He describes mindfulness as “awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4).

If we perceive the common inference that mindfulness is the ability to bring awareness towards present experiences, moment to moment (Bishop et al., 2004) this leads us towards the concept of present moment awareness. Described as a flexible focus towards present moment experiences (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012), present moment awareness is simply the awareness of now (Afari & Herbert, 2022). I believe this offers us a more focused and precise perspective with which to view mindfulness alongside acting pedagogy which is crucial when creating and reflecting upon clear aims and intended outcomes when developing our pedagogical practice.

But how does this relate to the Meisner Technique? Having trained in Meisner Technique myself as an acting student, the most memorable aspect I recall of the technique is the significance of being present. The technique is often seen to be training actors to be observant and responsive, moment to moment (Gray, 2015). Therefore, when considering potential interwoven concepts between acting methodology and mindfulness, the Meisner Technique emerges. Meisner practitioners highlight that the technique encourages focus within the present, with actors observing and reacting in the moment (Schebetta, 2017). An embodiment of the Meisner Technique is a state where actors remain in the moment (Durham, 2004). Therefore, I believe the work of Sanford Meisner holds potential to be considered as a possible strategy to help explore the ways in which

we can encourage a sense of presence and embrace present moment awareness within acting pedagogy.

The aim of this project, therefore, is to explore the Meisner Technique, evaluating the key principles and how this interweaves with present moment awareness. This project is part of my overarching aim towards developing a pedagogical practice seeking value in a holistic approach towards actor training.

Personal Context

My focus is within the field of acting, working with students aged between eleven and eighteen years of age. I would describe my practice as a combination of both teaching and coaching; alternating between the two styles to best suit the needs and aims of each student. With younger students, my work centres around supporting them as they first learn their craft, establishing and developing their acting skills. With older students, my practice takes on more of a coaching role as we are now refining their skills, putting their craft into practice as they prepare for assessments and auditions for higher educational settings. With this in mind, for the purposes of this portfolio I will refer to myself as a practitioner in the hopes this encompasses both aspects of my practice.

The sessions I lead vary in format, from weekly private sessions, to working in small groups. The aims of each session depend on the setting and requirements; some students are preparing monologues for acting exams, others for auditions, and group classes can include continued skills development as part of their performer training programmes. No matter the intended outcome, the foundation of my practice consists of encouraging and supporting students to develop, refine and gain confidence in both their technical and interpretive acting skills. Layered on top of that is the intention that students will also be able to develop strategies to help them work independently, enabling them to take their skills beyond our sessions together and into future work. This circles back to my efforts to ensure my practice is person-centred, working with students holistically and mindfully.

Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim of my research as a practitioner is to develop a holistic approach within my pedagogical practice. Inspired by mindfulness, my long-term focus is to develop a pedagogical framework that utilises the rich array of existing acting methodology alongside fostering a holistic approach to actor training. Part of this includes considering effective strategies and techniques to engage students in their training, before identifying potential ways to implement these into my practice. I wish to have a deep understanding of and appreciation towards a variety of strategies that I can effectively adopt and use to suit the requirements of each individual I work with as well as their needs and goals.

This project centres around the Meisner Technique. Having previously experienced the technique myself whilst in training, I now wish to explore the technique from a pedagogical viewpoint. With its emphasis on the present moment, I believe it has the potential to support the promotion of present moment awareness for acting students. Therefore, my aim is to strengthen my understanding of the technique, as well as its position alongside fostering present moment awareness for actors.

I aim to advance my understanding and appreciation of the Meisner Technique from a pedagogical viewpoint by reading and evaluating a range of existing literature surrounding the technique. Compiling a thematic analysis literature review will enable me to ascertain and evaluate key principles of the technique. I aim to discover how the Meisner Technique interweaves with present moment awareness by considering how the discoveries made may or may not align with the concept of present moment awareness. I will also identify the challenges of implementing Meisner Technique by considering the discoveries made and how this directly relates to my own practice.

By the end of this project, I intend to have a deeper understanding of the Meisner Technique, having considered the potential benefits and challenges of implementing it into my practice. Reflecting on my findings, I aim to consider the potential of the Meisner Technique to influence and contribute towards the ways I approach actor training.

Study Plan

My studies need to be planned alongside working relatively full time across multiple settings in regular teaching positions and other freelance opportunities. Due to the fluctuation of my working

hours week to week, some weeks I am able to dedicate more hours to my studies and this project than others. This is an obstacle I will bear in mind when setting targets. However, from September onwards I will be able to dedicate at least two full days a week to my studies.

My plan below features tasks alongside the preferred timescale for completion:

Task	Timescale
• Following on from previous areas of study surrounding acting pedagogy, including mindfulness, presence, Flow Theory etc. discover literature and read around areas of interest to gain potential ideas for this project and literature review.	10 th July
• Complete study plan for this project with tasks and preferred timescale for completion.	10 th July
• Decide on research question, aims, objectives, rationale and context.	31 st July
• Complete plan for written portfolio component, deciding on research design and methodology.	7 th August
• Literature search via University Wales Trinity Saint David online library and Google Scholar using key search terms and inclusion/exclusion criteria. Read introduction and abstract to determine possible relevance and usefulness. Save and label literature accordingly.	21 st August
• Complete draft of portfolio component.	28 th August
• In depth reading of literature, highlighting and annotating points of interest.	4 th September
• Follow up on any citations referenced, including citation chaining. Repeat the previous steps relating to the reading, labelling, highlighting and annotating of literature.	11 th September
• Review notes from a thematic literature review perspective. Note any initial patterns and themes that emerge.	18 th September
• Consider and evaluate discoveries made in terms of the research question, aims and objectives.	18 th September
• Select key patterns and themes for a thematic literature review for further in-depth analysis.	18 th September
• Plan thematic literature review component.	18 th September

• Begin writing draft of thematic literature review component.	25 th September
• Reflect on draft so far, keeping research question, aims and objectives in mind.	2 nd October
• Complete draft of literature review component.	16 th October
• Complete bibliography and references.	16 th October
• Proof-read completed draft of the whole assignment.	16 th October
• Submit draft copy for tutor feedback.	17 th October
• Adjust assignment based upon tutor feedback.	30 th October
• Submit completed assignment.	1 st November

Methodology

My research stems from a place of exploration; to better understand the Meisner Technique in order to determine its potential to influence on my practice. Therefore, it is important I establish a methodology that complements an open-minded approach, as well as benefits my position within practitioner research.

Ontologically, adopting a subjectivist stance allows me to consider there may be multiple viewpoints and experiences of the Meisner Technique. Subjectivism suggests there may be multiple possible realities, as reality is perspectival (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Cohen et al., 2007), thus providing me with differing representations of individuals experiences. Similarly, a subjectivist epistemology would allow me to consider that reality can be both individual and perspectival (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Cohen et al., 2007), however a constructionist stance may be more suitable. Constructivism offers the belief that truth, and the resulting discoveries we make, can arise through interaction and engagement with realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Cohen et al., 2007). I support the belief that reality may be different for each individual, as people have the potential to experience things in different ways. Essentially, this viewpoint aligns with my wish to develop a holistic, person-centred approach, with a key consideration within my practice that not all students and their experiences are alike. Therefore, allowing for knowledge and ideas to emerge from multiple viewpoints should offer an authentic, truthful and wide-ranging understanding and evaluation of the Meisner Technique.

As a paradigm, pragmatism provides a practicality in research design (Morgan, 2014) with the research question key to the process (Creswell, 2003). Pragmatism acknowledges that knowledge is contextual, with truth subject to change (Denscombe, 2010). It is not committed to the belief in one philosophy or reality (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006), with the stance that knowledge is relative and should not be deemed as absolute (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). This is beneficial towards the open-minded approach I seek to adopt, allowing me to gather a range of different perspectives across the literature I discover before considering and evaluating the possible discoveries inferred in relation to one another.

When considering research design, phenomenology offers the prospect of studying lived experiences (Lavery, 2003) which could suit the exploration of the Meisner Technique and individual's experiences of it. Similarly, hermeneutics also aims to understand lived experiences, but alongside human consciousness (Lavery, 2003). The hermeneutic circle is the process during which knowledge uncovered continues to inform the research undertaken, a moving back and forth during the research process. This allows for meaning to emerge from a two-way conversation between the material and myself as a researcher (Koch, 1999). It also opens up the opportunity for a sense of reflection (Kakkori, 2009), creating adaptability towards the discoveries made and how they impact the research's continued development. The importance of the research question is key to balancing the depth and direction of the research undertaken. Each piece of literature uncovered will be considered in relation to the research objectives to ensure the hermeneutic circle is of benefit to the shape of my research, as opposed to detracting from the initial research aim. Whilst exploring the Meisner Technique to gain a deeper understanding of it and the potential of implementing it into my practice, I also need to keep my research aligned with the consideration towards its position alongside promoting present moment awareness for actors.

My research will lead towards a literature review encompassing the Meisner Technique and its relation to present moment awareness. I will gather, analyse and evaluate a range of literature across these areas. My research will begin with searches utilising the online University of Wales Trinity Saint David library and Google Scholar for both grey and white literature. Inclusion criteria will help to limit results to peer-reviewed articles and journals, academic books, or dissertations and theses to ensure the material and therefore information considered is of a high standard and rigorously reviewed before publication. Key terms of my search will include 'Meisner Technique', 'Sanford Meisner', 'Meisner and present moment', and 'Meisner and present moment awareness'. I have previously studied present moment awareness in relation to actor training, therefore I will revisit the literature gathered for that project to support this element of this project. Key terms of that search included 'present moment awareness and actor training' and 'present moment

awareness and acting'. Initially, inclusion criteria will be limited to literature published after 2000, aiming to firstly capture more recent, up to date findings for greater validity and relevance. An exception to this will be material written by Meisner himself, with his theory developing in the nineteen-sixties and much of his writing taking place in the nineteen-eighties before his death in nineteen-ninety-seven. Other exceptions to publication date will arise from the use of citation chaining to further explore the literature beyond those initial pieces of literature gathered. Citation chaining will allow me to deepen the range of material and research undertaken, utilising the connections created between research articles (Haddaway, Grainger & Gray, 2022). Backward chaining, where I may use older publications, will allow me to utilise articles cited in the current article viewed (Cribbin, 2011), helping me to find initial source material. Forward chaining will allow me to find articles that cite the current article I am viewing (Cribbin, 2011), expanding my research by finding the continued development of concepts in more recent literature. Through the use of citation chaining, I will be able to track backwards and forwards through a network of related citations (Haddaway, Grainger & Gray, 2022). This should help to uncover a wide range of perspectives on the Meisner Technique and its potential position alongside present moment awareness in actor training.

This project will result in a thematic literature review (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke & Hayfield, 2022). As part of the exploration process, one research objective is to ascertain and evaluate the key principles of the Meisner Technique which I believe lends itself to a thematic analysis. I will aim to identify reoccurring patterns and themes that emerge from the data collected, helping me to hone in on these in greater detail. Hopefully this will enable me to meet another research objective in advancing my understanding of the technique from a pedagogical viewpoint. I am aware there may be gaps in the current literature which will impact my research. Therefore, I will aim to acknowledge these and any resulting limitations surrounding the study of the Meisner Technique and its relevance to present moment awareness. By adopting a pragmatic approach, I will be able to discover meaning that emerges from understanding and considering people's experiences of the Meisner Technique as well as any limitations, shaping my evaluation of the technique and its potential to promote an actor's sense of present moment awareness.

Reflection

The aim of this project was to strengthen my understanding of the Meisner Technique and its position alongside fostering present moment awareness for actors. In order to reflect on the

project, my research and the literature review as a whole, I have chosen to adopt Rolfe et al.'s (2001) reflective model. The three step process of 'what?', 'so, what?' and 'now, what?' (Rolfe et al., 2001) may help me to clearly evaluate my research project alongside highlighting possible next steps.

'What?' (Rolfe et al., 2001)

This project consisted of the creation of a literature review with the intention of exploring the Meisner Technique and its potential to promote an actor's sense of present moment awareness. A pragmatic paradigm (Morgan, 2014; Creswell, 2003) allowed me to approach the topic with an open mind alongside the ability to consider and evaluate a range of literature uncovered. This lent itself towards adopting Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis (2006) which offered the opportunity to identify reoccurring themes and patterns across the body of literature, complementing my objective of ascertaining and evaluating the key principles of the Meisner Technique, alongside how these may interweave with present moment awareness.

Throughout the process, I was able to discover a fair amount of existing literature surrounding the Meisner Technique, some of which acknowledged concepts such as the present moment and attention. I was able to identify and apply these discoveries to my previous knowledge of present moment awareness. The use of citation chaining (Cribbin, 2011; Haddaway, Grainger & Gray, 2022) allowed for the emergence of older, or original source material, as well as more recent references to the Meisner Technique. Although this did pose some challenges. In some cases, it was the same few research practitioners whose work frequently emerged, or multiple researchers all citing the same source material. In particular, Philippa Strandberg-Long was significantly referenced, partly due to her ongoing research and specialism in the Meisner Technique. Therefore, at times, this felt like a limitation on the amount of literature I was exposed to. With the Meisner Technique already poised as a less studied methodology within the field of acting, this further restricted the range of research and therefore perspectives I was able to gain. On the other hand, the repeated references to the same practitioners and researchers did reassure the inclusion of their work as it had been valued and evaluated by multiple other researchers before me in similar research areas.

On the whole, I was able to successfully identify a few key principles of the Meisner Technique, that became the key patterns for me to evaluate as part of the development of a thematic analysis.

I was fortunate that these also aligned well with some of the key principles of present moment awareness. Therefore, my hypothesis for the potential of the Meisner Technique to help promote present moment awareness was realised.

So, what? (Rolfe et al., 2001)

This process uncovered the key principles of the Meisner Technique including the present moment, attention and impulse which all found alignment with present moment awareness. It must be acknowledged that the data is limited in its lack of rigorous, empirical study, with the majority largely centred around previous literature reviews. But despite this, there were promising amounts of qualitative rich data providing insights and reflection from practitioners, their practice and study of the Meisner Technique. Understanding their experiences encourages me as a practitioner. Seeing the technique from their perspective allows me to identify how I am able to implement the technique myself and to pre-empt any challenges I may face. Utilising the data uncovered allows me to see how I can introduce Meisner's work as well as plan and deliver sessions with awareness and consideration of the key principles of the present moment, attention and impulse that underpin the work. I am able to learn from the experiences and honest reflections of the practitioners work I have considered and allow these observations to inform how I will adopt and work with the Meisner Technique myself.

From this research I know that beginning with a strong awareness of the present moment will be critical in establishing the foundations of the Meisner Technique for my acting students, but in turn, the technique is beneficial in enhancing a student's awareness of the present. This highlights the importance of awareness-based exercises such as body scans and observational activities that may complement the teaching of the Meisner Technique. The significance of attention in the present moment can also be demonstrated by the outwardly focused attention on a scene partner within Meisner's work. Therefore, in group or duo sessions, I will utilise the partner exercises to establish and reinforce that outwardly focus, reminding students of Meisner's advice that "whatever you do doesn't depend on you, it depends on the other fellow" (Meisner, 1987, p.34). I believe the strong emphasis on others' behaviour will positively impact my work in that I will more consciously seek to ensure every student works with every member of the class at some point across the term. By encouraging them to work with someone different each session they will continually be interacting with and therefore responding to different individuals and their behaviour in different ways.

Notably absent from the existing literature is a comprehensive evaluation of the Meisner Technique in relation to present moment awareness, or vice versa. But it is worth acknowledging there are limited studies regarding mindfulness-based practice within acting pedagogy in general (Jones, 2019). On a wider scale, others highlight there are far less studies carried out in relation to acting as a whole in comparison to other performance art forms (Winner, 2006). Therefore, limitations in data specifically related to my areas of study remain an ongoing challenge in my mindfulness-based acting pedagogy research. However, the inferences made from the current body of literature surrounding the Meisner Technique viewed alongside the concept of present moment awareness are encouraging. As previously mentioned, and explored within my thematic analysis, the Meisner Technique and present moment awareness do share similarities in key principles. Therefore, we can conceptualise that the Meisner Technique may offer a way to help establish a sense of the present moment for actors. In general, the data reviewed does infer positive correlations between the Meisner Technique and present moment awareness suggesting promise for future and more in-depth consideration.

Now, what? (Rolfe et al., 2001)

Upon reflection, I am encouraged by the discoveries made in this project surrounding the Meisner Technique and its potential to promote an actor's sense of present moment awareness. Moving forwards, I am keen to expand my pedagogical understanding and implementation of the Meisner Technique within my own practice. I am also encouraged in my interest towards utilising mindfulness-based approaches to influence my work towards developing a holistic approach towards actor training.

However, one area that impacts the study of present moment awareness is the effective and accurate assessment of an individual's perception of experiencing mindfulness and being in the moment. This largely centres around issues created by recall bias. When developing and carrying out studies, how do we as researchers find ways to efficiently and accurately ask participants to reflect on past experiences and behaviour? To do so in the moment disrupts the potential experience of present moment awareness itself. In attempting to assess an individual's experience of present moment awareness we are not only relying on the perceptions of their experiences, but also to their memories of those past experiences. This poses a problem towards the ability to effectively and precisely analyse constructs that cover concepts such as mindfulness (Shiffman et al., 2008).

In consideration of the promising correlations between the Meisner Technique and present moment awareness as inferred from the results of my literature review, I am keen to explore ways to develop and execute studies of my own. Therefore, I intend to further my knowledge surrounding forms of experience sampling (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984), such as the development of ecological momentary assessment (Shiffman et al., 2008) which places importance on real-time assessments. Hopefully, this would enable me to potentially plan and develop future studies featuring the application of these research methods. The continued development and application of assessments such as this, should contribute towards developing and strengthening effective empirical studies in the future within the field of mindfulness-based practice and acting pedagogy which I am keen to explore.

Reflecting upon my career aspirations, I have enjoyed this research and exploring ways to enhance my personal pedagogical practice, but also the potential this offers to expand acting pedagogy overall. I am keen to continue this work, but at present I am limited in the opportunities for me to fully implement this into my practice due to the nature of my current teaching positions. Therefore, I am keen to pursue positions that would allow me work on this deeper level, exploring and expanding my experience surrounding the psychological aspects of acting methodology. A move towards working in higher education specialist drama training settings, as well as further education settings, may allow me to work with actors in professional training, opening up the opportunities to commit to implementing more complex methodologies such as the Meisner Technique.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I am pleased with my findings and find reassurance that there is a future worth exploring in the links between mindfulness and acting pedagogy. The over-arching aim of my research as a practitioner is to develop a holistic approach within my pedagogical practice inspired by mindfulness. My long-term focus being to develop my pedagogical framework that continues to appreciate the rich array of existing acting methodology alongside exploring the ways mindfulness-based practice can enhance this. This exploration of the Meisner Technique and present moment awareness has identified the ways in which the two can complement each other. The discoveries made allow me to see the potential that mindfulness holds in the development of a holistic approach towards actor training. But for now, this project has given me a clearer insight and deeper pedagogical understanding of how the Meisner Technique has the potential to promote an

actor's sense of present moment awareness which I intend to begin putting into practise within my work.

Literature Review

Introduction

Sanford Meisner believed that acting is “living truthfully under imaginary circumstances” (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p.15). In a world of many differing approaches towards acting, with each practitioner leaving their mark on the world of acting (Carnicke et al., 2016), Meisner’s is a popular belief, encompassing the search for authenticity and truthfulness, whilst imaginatively bringing a story to life. Despite this, Meisner’s methodology itself is less favoured. In this review I will explore the technique and its potential to influence my pedagogical practice.

The Meisner Technique has been described as training actors to be observant and responsive, moment to moment (Gray, 2015). First emerging in the 1930s, Meisner evolved his approaches towards actor training throughout the 1940s to 1960s (Shirley, 2010), continuing his work until his death in 1997. His lasting influence is evident in the many Meisner trained actors prominent in American realist-narrative cinema (Halba, 2012) including James Gandolfini, Diane Keaton and Sam Rockwell. Meisner’s technique focuses on moment-to-moment engagement (Esper & Di Marco, 2008), with the aim of encouraging actors to develop the ability to live fully, truthfully and vitally in the moment (Durham, 2004).

This appreciation of the present moment is what inspires my exploration of the technique. The overarching aim of my research is to strengthen my pedagogical practice, developing a holistic approach to actor training. Inspired by mindfulness, my focus is to develop a framework that utilises the rich array of existing acting methodology alongside relevant aspects of mindfulness. One specific mindfulness element that captures my attention is present moment awareness. Put simply, present moment awareness is the awareness of now (Afari & Herbert, 2022), a concept I believe interweaves itself with the Meisner Technique. Therefore, the Meisner Technique lends itself towards exploration and study alongside the concept of fostering present moment awareness for actors.

In his book *Meisner and Mindfulness*, Royce Sparks (2023), makes the connection between the two concepts. He proposes a series of mindfulness meditations to accompany Meisner Technique teachings, noticing the similarities in qualities shared between the two concepts and their complementary nature. Whilst lacking in empirical study, these ideas stem from Sparks’ numerous years of teaching the Meisner Technique and experiences of mindfulness. This allows us to see the

evaluation of mindfulness' impact on Meisner's technique is beginning to emerge. Whilst currently underdeveloped, this poses the potential to continue research in this area.

In this literature review I aim to explore the Meisner Technique and how it aligns with present moment awareness. Inspired by current literature, I will evaluate the key principles of the Meisner Technique with consideration towards how they may contribute towards fostering present moment awareness for actors. I will also consider the potential benefits and challenges of implementing the technique into my practice and how it may influence our approach to actor training. It has been noted there are limited studies regarding mindfulness-based practice within acting pedagogy (Jones, 2019), whilst others highlight that far less studies are carried out in relation to acting overall compared to other performance art forms (Winner, 2006). Therefore, it is important I acknowledge the limitations of the current body of literature and identify gaps in research for further study.

Present Moment Awareness

One of the most widely accepted and used definitions of mindfulness comes from Jon Kabat-Zinn. He describes mindfulness as "awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4). Focussing on the concept of the present moment offers a precise perspective with which to view mindfulness alongside acting pedagogy. This leads us to present moment awareness, thought of as the cornerstone of mindfulness-based interventions (Herbert & Afari, 2022). Present moment awareness is described as an individual's flexible focus towards their present moment experiences (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012).

In opposition to this is mindlessness, also known as mind wandering. Whilst it is accepted that humans will always be navigating thoughts (Herbert & Afari, 2022), mind wandering refers to the arising of thoughts or thinking about experiences unrelated to the present moment (Bennike et al, 2017). It has been suggested that mind wandering may fall into two types, spontaneous and deliberate (Carriere et al., 2013). Spontaneous mind wandering accounts for thoughts that spontaneously arise, capturing and shifting attention away from the present moment, whereas deliberate mind wandering is when an individuals' attention is consciously and intentionally directed towards a new thought (Vannuccia & Chiorri, 2017). In both forms a person's attention shifts (Seli et al., 2014) and so when considering present moment awareness, it is worth also noting and understanding mindlessness.

The Meisner Technique

With strong links to Stanislavsky's System, the Meisner Technique encompasses both practical and analytical components of Stanislavsky's work (Strandberg-Long, 2019) and the origins of naturalistic acting. Stanislavsky's naturalistic approach towards acting has been described as the foundational system of thought used by much Western modern theatre practice (Silberschatz, 2013). Meisner's interest lay in the psychological aspects of the methodology, which he expanded upon. Much of Stanislavsky's System is centred around "living in the moment" (Merlin, 2014, p.17), with the aim of establishing a sense of truth, with an importance on creating well-rounded, believable performances that he called psychological realism (Merlin, 2014).

As part of the Group Theatre in 1930s New York, Meisner worked alongside well-known practitioners Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg (Krasner, 2000), expanding Stanislavsky's naturalistic approach towards acting. The group were inspired by the psychological aspects of Stanislavsky's System (Carnicke, 2008), with interests in a sense of emotional, physical and psychological truth (Blair, 2008). This illustrates the opportunity to adopt different perspectives of existing acting methodology and why we continue to value these foundations. However, strong disagreements in their interpretations of Stanislavsky's work lead towards their parting of ways (Strandberg-Long, 2019) with Adler moving on to focus on sociological approaches towards acting and Strasberg the psychological, developing The Method (Krasner, 2000).

Stanislavsky's influence can be identified within Meisner's belief that interaction is embedded in imaginary circumstances, derived from Stanislavsky's given circumstances, that make it possible to bring a character to life (Sun & Okada, 2021). There is the idea that a character can be achieved by the layering of given circumstances, objectives and obstacles, all work of Stanislavsky, on top of the self (Strandberg-Long, 2019). At the heart of Meisner's work however is behaviour. The technique encourages an interest in the spontaneity and dynamics between individuals and the expression of the human experience (Meisner & Longwell, 1987). As part of Meisner's actor training process, students develop the ability to observe, listen and perceive behaviour with the ability to trust their own instincts (Schebetta, 2017). This development of Stanislavsky's system encourages actors to move beyond themselves, placing significance on a scene partner and working with others in the present moment.

Meisner developed his technique at The Neighbourhood Playhouse during the 1930s onwards, a time when private studios were the primary place to learn the craft of acting (Schebetta, 2017). He established a two-year acting curriculum; the first year dedicated towards improvisation exercises

that focused on listening, reacting and impulsively responding, before progressing to script analysis and character work making up the second year of training (Gordon, 2010). This placing of improvisational exercises before any form of analytical engagement with material is key to the Meisner training process (Strandberg-Long, 2019). As a system, the Meisner Technique depends upon each exercise informing the next (Strandberg-Long, 2019), with every step needing to be followed in order so actors are able to experience the full benefits of the process. Meisner teacher Roy Sparks uses the Three Moment Exercise (2023, See Appendix A, p.39) to establish the foundations of repetition with actors working in pairs to make observations of present moment experiences. Here we see the connection between Meisner's work and the importance of an actor's present moment awareness; an exercise that as practitioners we can implement in our practice.

Repetition is a series of exercises fundamental to the Meisner Technique (Schebetta, 2017), designed to gradually increase in difficulty and demand on the actor (Strandberg-Long, 2019). The aim is for actors to concentrate on their partner and the behaviour they notice, acting responsively to the present circumstances (Durham, 2004). Observations made are then repeated by the receiving actor, giving the exercise its repetitive nature (Sparks, 2023, See Appendix B, p.40). Levels of observations within the exercises include noticing physical attributes, physical behaviour and emotional behaviour (Moseley, 2012) as an actor's engagement and understanding of the technique progresses. As practitioners adopting this technique, we must be mindful of the observations actors make, positively encouraging the development towards moving beyond those of physical attributes towards deeper, intuitive observations of emotional behaviour over time.

Meisner practitioners note that within the cycle of observations, actors face the challenges of wanting to be nice and being unable to trust themselves (Schebetta, 2017). They should try to remove the pressures or expectations to be clever, interesting or exciting (Courtney, 2000) and that in trying to do the exercise right, they are in fact not doing it right (Silverberg, 1994). Instead, actors should be interested in the unpredictability of the moment (Gray, 2015). These pose challenges for actors when first adapting to Meisner Technique training. In his research surrounding the Meisner Technique and acting students, director and professor of acting, Dennis Schebetta (2017) detailed that it is a teacher's role to steer students away from the possibility of anticipating the next moment or following any pre-conceived ideas of how lines should be delivered. This highlights the role of a practitioner in establishing the aims of the Meisner Technique and effectively guiding actors through the process. To do this, as practitioners we must be adept in our understanding of and application of the technique. This begins with understanding and appreciating the key principles that are embedded within Meisner's work.

Meisner Technique and the Present Moment

One distinct theme within the body of literature surrounding the Meisner Technique is the present moment, in alignment with present moment awareness. Meisner Technique teacher Philippa Strandberg-Long states that when adopting the practice, actors must invest fully in the moment (2019). Attributed to bringing the Meisner Technique to several British drama schools, Strandberg-Long has spent many years exploring and sharing Meisner's work with actors in professional training. Her perspective comes from extensive teaching, coaching and research, offering her own experiences and observations of adopting the technique. She explains that Meisner's repetition exercises demand full concentration on the behaviour of a scene partner, which in turn requires them to be fully connected to the present moment (2019). Within the technique, an actor's focus needs to be on their scene partner in the present moment. Over time, Strandberg-Long notes that use of these exercises train actors to become more observant, impulsive and present (2021).

These observations are supported by Schebetta; his research into the Meisner Technique and acting students indicated that repetition exercises encourage actors to remain present without anticipating or trying to do a scene (2017). He states that overall, the Meisner Technique builds an actor's ability to focus on being present with what is happening in the now, not what they think or expect should happen (2017). Similarly, acting teacher Kim Durham's work mirrors these views, stating actors must attend and respond to the present, rather than an assumed or anticipated reaction to their scene partner's behaviour (2004). Within the technique, Durham believes actors must simply attend and respond, finding a state where they remain in the moment (2004). This is demonstrated in the exercise Investing in the Reality of Doing (Sparks, 2023, See Appendix C, p.41), emphasising the significance of present moment experiences. These beliefs appear to align with the concept of present moment awareness and what can be described as the flexible focus towards present moment experiences (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012). From this we can infer that the Meisner Technique does align with present moment awareness and could be a useful strategy to implement in an attempt to establish present moment awareness for actors.

It is also said the technique aims to connect actors with their scene partners (Malague, 2012), with each actor aiming to be fully available to one another authentically and responsively in each moment (Silversberg, 1994). The belief is that this enables dialogue to be alive (Gray, 2015), creating a continuous action-perception loop (Sun & Okada, 2021) between each actor. This allows for actors to strengthen their ability to listen and respond truthfully with others (Schebetta, 2017) as explored in the progression to the You-I Repetition exercise (Sparks, 2023, See Appendix D, p.42) This contributes towards actors co-creating spontaneous, unpredictable and affective engagement

in the moment (Esper & DiMarco, 2008). Once again, this infers Meisner Technique exercises may complement the encouragement of present moment awareness in practice.

Attention

Another key theme discovered within the literature is attention. Meisner's repetition exercises aim to direct an actor's attention externally (Pope, 2000). They are designed to encourage actors to deeply listen and react to their partners, creating the need for actors to direct their attention outwards towards their partner (Strandberg-Long, 2019). The beginning repetition exercises can appear deceptively simple, meaning some students can initially struggle to fully place their attention on their partner (Moseley, 2012). But in order to fully observe and respond to a partner's behaviour, an actor must redirect their attention from themselves and onto the actions of their partner (Strandberg-Long, 2019).

This aligns with the description of present moment awareness as deliberate attention to an individual's experiences either internally or externally (Wilson & DuFrene, 2009). In this case, the Meisner Technique focusses on those external experiences rooted in the behaviour of a scene partner. Therefore, to explore the concept of attention further, we should consider the components of attention based upon Sohlberg and Mateer's clinical model, originally developed in 1987. The model refers to five components:

- Focused attention is the ability to direct attention to relevant stimuli, either internal or external.
- Sustained attention is the ability to focus on a specific attention demanding task for a continuous amount of time without distraction.
- Selective attention involves selecting focus on one activity or stimuli over others that are present.
- Alternating attention involves alternating focus back and forth between different tasks.
- Divided attention is to simultaneously focus on two or more tasks. This differs from alternating attention as here attention is paid to two or more things at the same time. (Sohlberg & Mateer, 1987; 2001; 2017).

Strandberg-Long (2019) provides a rich collection of qualitative data in her research through both practitioner and student interviews of individual's experiences of the Meisner Technique. She

proposes that all of Sohlberg and Mateer's components of attention can be experienced within the Meisner Technique (2019). This proposition is further supported by the observations of other practitioners through their practice and study. The repetition exercises ask actors to place their attention outside of themselves and onto their partner (Halba, 2012). Both focused and sustained attention are evident here, with attention directed towards a partner and their behaviour, which must then be sustained continuously throughout the duration of the exercise (Strandberg-Long, 2019). The aim is for an actor to offer limitless attention towards their acting partner (Durham, 2004). The exercise also requires selective attention as actors must select which behavioural observations they focus on, as well as needing to consciously focus on their partner as opposed to any other potential stimuli that a classroom or rehearsal setting may offer (Strandberg-Long, 2019). As actors shift between making observations about their partner, then listening to and repeating those made about them, they are using alternating attention. This initiates the requirement for flexible attention and awareness in the moment (Strandberg-Long, 2019). Ultimately, the aim is for actors to work towards achieving divided attention, where actors are able to divide their attention between the different layers of the repetition exercise (Strandberg-Long, 2019). Acknowledging a deeper understanding of attention and its components is something to be more aware of moving forwards. By better understanding the different components of attention, as practitioners we can then begin to promote and encourage the development of establishing focused attention, before striving towards divided attention.

In Sohlberg and Mateer's attention process training (2017), attentional load is gradually and systematically increased to develop each component in progression. Similarly, it can be inferred that this relates to how Meisner's repetition exercises advance in difficulty, with actors developing their attention skills over time. This element of time, however, is one of the challenges of implementing the Meisner Technique into practice. A full understanding of each part of the technique must be achieved in order to effectively progress further (Hart, 2008). As observed by other practitioners, the Meisner Technique relies on a continuous process of training an actor's attention and ability to listen (Gonsalves, 2012; Moseley, 2012). Encouraging these skills, especially in an increasingly digital age, is of intrigue and poses further considerations to my pedagogical development. Further exploration of concepts aside from acting pedagogy, such as attention, offer a wide range of areas for future research to deepen my knowledge and therefore skills in coaching.

Impulse

Within the Meisner Technique, whatever an actor does is always in response to their partner (Merlin, 2010). The repetition exercises develop impulse awareness (Schebetta, 2017), with actors encouraged to respond organically and spontaneously to the behaviour they observe (Shirley, 2010). Through directed attention towards a scene partner, impulses are seen as the immediate response (Strandberg-Long, 2019b) to the behaviour they observe. Rooted in behaviour, the aim of Meisner's work is to teach actors to spontaneously respond to external stimuli, acting on impulse (Malague, 2012). Therefore, the idea of impulse, found and used somewhat synonymously alongside instincts, appears as another reoccurring theme within the literature.

In alignment with present moment awareness, the technique encourages actors to respond spontaneously to each moment (Gray, 2015). Each reaction should be instantaneous, differing based upon the behaviour observed moment to moment (Sun & Okada, 2021). Meisner's exercises actively encourage actors to observe and respond in accordance to each other's continuously evolving impulsive behaviour (Strandberg-Long, 2019).

Reaction is said to be the foundation of the repetition exercises (Krasner, 2000). Here reactivity is the aspiration, rather activity, achieved through the continued detailed attention towards a partner, moment to moment (Durham, 2004). It is believed that the ability to observe behaviour contributes towards maximising the potential to be instinctive (Shirley, 2010). Meisner himself said that an actor's talent lies in the ability to be instinctive (Meisner, 1987), hence the significance he placed on his technique to allow actors to train their instincts within the present moment.

Renowned Meisner practitioner William Esper suggests that within the technique it is an actor's impulses that are being developed, not their minds (2008). Through his decades of practice and teaching of the technique, Esper believes that an actor must respond to what they hear without analysis, stating that any time an actor engages their mind during the repetition exercises, they mask their true impulses (Esper, 2008). Meisner designed his exercises to trigger an actor's emotional impulses, with the aim of spontaneity (Meisner, 1987), something we as practitioners must be mindful of when guiding actors through the techniques' exercises.

Challenges

Whilst Meisner's influence on twentieth century actor training has been vast (Strandberg-Long, 2019), its influence beyond the US remains limited (Durham, 2004). Therefore, whilst exploring the Meisner Technique and its relation to present moment awareness, another key theme emerging from the data is the challenges posed by the technique and its implementation.

Time restrictions remain one clear challenge faced by British drama schools in adopting the Meisner Technique. Some practitioners acknowledge that the technique cannot be simply taught in a few lessons or a term, with many layers to the technique that require a longer period of time (Courtney, 2000). This is found to be a contributing factor behind some school's reluctance and barrier towards integrating the technique into their existing teaching practices (Strandberg-Long, 2019). In some cases, the beginning repetition exercises are taught, but without progression into the further stages (Esper & DiMarco, 2008) limiting the technique's effectiveness and actor's experiences of it. Without adequate time to dedicate towards teaching the technique, its progression and effectiveness to be fully embodied and therefore appreciated by actors remains limited. As practitioners we must take this commitment into consideration when deciding whether to adopt Meisner's work into our own pedagogical practice.

Another key challenge is that Meisner's work is often misunderstood and therefore mistaught (Strandberg-Long, 2019). The Meisner Technique is often thought of as synonymous with repetition (Hart, 2008; Gonsalves, 2012), highlighting the disparity with which the technique is viewed. The repetition exercises only encompass the basic principles of the technique, laying just the foundation for Meisner's concept (Hart, 2008). As previously mentioned, Meisner developed his work establishing a two-year programme of progression, beginning with a foundation of improvisational exercises, before moving on to script analysis and character work (Gordon, 2010). Breaking the Back of a Scene and Text Analysis as explained by Sparks (2023, See Appendix E, p.43 & Appendix F, p.44) demonstrate the ways in which Meisner's work extends beyond repetition and into script work and performance rehearsal where layers of action and intention extend upon the foundations of earlier exercises.

The initial emphasis on improvisation builds towards actors working together in the moment to create spontaneous, affective engagement (Esper & DiMarco, 2008). It is argued that the script work acts as a framework, providing the opportunity for actors to develop a complex inner life (Shirley, 2010) in which the intent of the character is already embedded within the script (Gray, 2015). An actor should be able to authentically pursue their character's objectives by reacting to

their surroundings (Hart, 2008; Malague, 2012), this ability to listen and act on impulse developed through Meisner's process (Strandberg-Long, 2019). However, the progression to these further stages is often missed (Esper & DiMarco, 2008).

The technique and its exercises are constructed to train and develop skills over time (Strandberg-Long, 2019), designed to eventually be abandoned by an actor once the elements of the technique are embedded and become instinctive (Hart, 2008; Esper, 2008). However, when practitioners instead choose to dip into the technique, rather than commit to the technique and its process as a whole, this vital embodiment of the technique is not achieved. A contributing factor in this may be that practices are often handed down from one generation of teachers to the next (Strandberg-Long, 2019), as is often the case in the field of acting pedagogy. This can lead to further disparity as different interpretations of the technique emerge, which are not always aligned with Meisner's original work and intentions (Strandberg-Long, 2019). With this in mind, the Meisner Technique appears as somewhat underrepresented within the field of acting pedagogy in current research. This in turn, can only add to the lack of clarity surrounding the implementation and application of the Meisner Technique for acting practitioners.

Limitations of Current Research

In her research, Strandberg-Long (2019) notes a lack of publications that analyse the particulars and psychological workings of the Meisner Technique. For a methodology rooted in human behaviour and experience, its limited study is an interesting consideration. But it is worth noting that as a whole, far less studies are carried out in relation to acting in comparison to other performance art forms (Winner, 2006). So, within the field of acting pedagogy, this is not an anomaly, but something that invites me to pursue this further.

The research uncovered in this literature review is more experience based; insider research consisting of qualitative data, rich with practitioners' honest and authentic insights or reflections. However, this raises questions of reliability, validity and rigour. Whilst much of the literature uncovered were peer-reviewed articles and journals, academic books, or dissertations and theses, some were other literature reviews, less grounded in empirical study of their own. Therefore, a distinct lack of rigorous, empirical studies found does somewhat impede the conclusions that we can make. We are however able to conceptualise the positive correlations between the Meisner

Technique and present moment awareness, acknowledging key principles that align and suggest the potential for further empirical study.

In terms of the links between acting and mindfulness, there are limited studies regarding mindfulness-based practice within acting pedagogy (Jones, 2019). Again, this limits the conclusions we can make. But the depth of research surrounding present moment awareness and attention that can be applied alongside acting, and in this case the Meisner Technique, is promising. One area impacting the study of present moment awareness is the accurate assessment of an individual's perception of being in the moment. As researchers, how do we effectively and efficiently analyse an individual's response to experiencing present moment awareness? Asking research participants to reflect on past experiences and behaviour, because to do so in the moment would disrupt any possibility of present moment awareness, opens up issues surrounding recall bias. This poses a problem towards the ability to effectively and precisely analyse constructs such as mindfulness (Shiffman et al., 2008). As researchers, we are basing results and therefore discussions on not only an individual's perception of their experiences, but also to their memories of those past experiences. One solution towards this is the development of ecological momentary assessment. This is a form of experience sampling (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984) involving the repeated sampling of behaviour in real-world, real-time settings (Shiffman et al., 2008). This indicates that there is the potential to see more effective empirical studies emerge in the future within the field of mindfulness-based practice. As a research practitioner, I am able to utilise this method to impact my future research surrounding present moment awareness within acting pedagogy. I would be able to progress from the inferences made in this literature review to inform and develop empirical studies to test the correlations found between the Meisner Technique and present moment awareness.

Conclusion

Stage and film director, Declan Donnellan refers to the rehearsal process as an actor's invisible work, with performance as their visible work (Donnellan, 2005). I believe this can be viewed as an insightful reflection of the Meisner Technique. An actor's development of the technique is the invisible work, the repetition exercises reinforcing the intentions of the technique, before the effective embodiment of the work which then informs the visible work, the performance.

Meisner's initial exercises encourage actors to be observant and present (Gray, 2015), with the present moment itself directly found here. Viewing attention through the lens of the Meisner

Technique provides further depth as we can infer that multiple components of attention, as explained by Sohlberg & Mateer (1987; 2001; 2017), are developed and appreciated within the technique, tying both present moment awareness and the Meisner Technique together.

The current body of literature highlights positive correlations between the key principles of the Meisner Technique and present moment awareness. The significance of the present moment in Meisner's work immediately indicates the interwoven nature of the two. The exploration of outwardly attention suggests the Meisner Technique can be of benefit to direct an actor's attention and encourage sustaining this not only on a scene partner, but within the present. This would give us as practitioners a tangible strategy with which to establish present moment awareness and provide a discernible focus and instruction for an actor. After considering the findings of this review, we can conceptualise that the Meisner Technique may provide us with a distinct way to demonstrate and promote present moment awareness for actors.

In terms of implementing of technique myself, a key consideration needs to be made towards the commitment required to fulfil the teaching of it. A commitment in both delivery and time allocation would need to be factored before implementing Meisner's work into my practice. Another factor would be the readiness of actors, especially when working with students due to the complexities of the technique. Across the literature uncovered this appears to be an under considered area, posing an interesting research gap for worthwhile consideration and further exploration. Due to the psychological aspects of the methodology, students would need to be prepared to take on the psychological demands and commitment required of the technique. Taking the time to get to know students would be an effective way to evaluate their suitability and perceive whether they show the potential to effectively engage with the technique before adopting it into practice.

Aside from the technique itself, this research also highlights the benefits of looking outside the field of acting methodology, expanding research into wider, but possibly related fields such as mindfulness, present moment awareness or attention. Finding ways to enhance our knowledge and experience can only strengthen our pedagogical practice by uncovering a deeper understanding and contextual awareness of concepts that contribute towards effectively teaching or coaching the acting craft. The development of a holistic approach to actor training may require thinking outside of simply acting pedagogy itself. Based upon the findings of this review, mindfulness may help to offer potential clarity in exploring concepts such as attention, awareness and the present moment that are not only key principles of mindfulness, but also align with acting methodology such as the Meisner Technique.

In conclusion, upon reflection of the current body of literature, I do believe it is worth considering how we can effectively appreciate and utilise the Meisner Technique moving forwards as a way to promote an actor's sense of present moment awareness. Whilst initial implementation of Meisner's work does pose certain challenges, once mastered, the body of research points towards its effectiveness in instilling a sense of the present moment for actors. This indicates that further research would be beneficial to highlight how present moment awareness resonates with not only acting pedagogy, but also the wider craft of acting.

Bibliography and References

Afari, N. and Herbert, M.S. (2022) Present Moment Awareness, in The Oxford Handbook of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197550076.013.10>.

Agnoli, S., Corazza, G.E., Vannucci, M. and Pelagatti, C. (2018) Exploring the Link Between Mind Wandering, Mindfulness, and Creativity: A Multidimensional Approach. *Creativity Research Journal*, 30(1): 41-53.

Alfreds, M. (2007) *Different Every Night*. Nick Hern Books: London.

Aquilina, S. (2019) Cultural transmission of actor training techniques: a research project. *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 10:1, 4-20, DOI: 10.1080/19443927.2018.1538018

Astin, J. A. (1997) Stress reduction through mindfulness meditation: Effects on psychological symptomatology, sense of control, and spiritual experiences. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 66(2), 97–106. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000289116>

Baer, R. A., Smith, G. T., Hopkins, J., Kriet-Meyer, J. and Toney, L. (2006) Using self-report assessment methods to explore facets of mind- fulness. *Assessment*, 13(1)

Barclay, K. (2019) Willful Actors: Valuing Resistance in American Actor Training. *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 34(1), 123-141. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/dtc.2019.0027>.

Becker, D., Shelly, S., Kavalieratos, D., Maira, C. and Gillespie, A. I. (2022) Immediate Effects of Mindfulness Meditation on the Voice. *Journal of Voice*.

Benedetti, J. (2008) *Stanislavsky and the Actor*. Routledge: New York.

Bennike, I.H., Wieghorst, A. and Kirk, U. (2017) Online-based Mindfulness Training Reduces Behavioral Markers of Mind Wandering. *J Cogn Enhanc* 1, 172–181. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41465-017-0020-9>

Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., Segal, Z. V., Abbey, S., Speca, M., Velting, D. and Devins, G. (2004) Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11(3), 230–241. <https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bph07>

Blair, R. (2008) *The Actor, Image, and Action: Acting and Cognitive Neuroscience*. London: Routledge.

Boell, S. K. and Cecez-Kecmanovic, D (2014) A Hermeneutic Approach for Conducting Literature Reviews and Literature Searches. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 34. <https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.03412>

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Braun, V., Clarke, V. and Hayfield, N. (2022) A starting point for your journey, not a map: Nikki Hayfield in conversation with Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke about thematic analysis, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 19:2, 424-445.

Brook, P. (1993) *There Are No Secrets: thoughts on acting and theatre*. London: Methuen.

Brown, K.W., and Ryan, R.M. (2003) The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 822– 848. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822

Butler, M. (2011) *Meeting Sanford Meisner: An Investigation of the Origins, Development, and Practical Application of the Meisner Technique* <https://doi.org/10.25772/M1PP-B357>

Carnicke, S. (2008) *Stanislavski in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Taylor and Francis.

Carnicke, S.M., Rowe, K., Hoenselaars T., Kusunoki, A., Murphy, A. and Da Cunha Resende, A. (2016) *Acting Techniques*, in B.R. Smith (ed.) *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.1434-1442.

Carriere, J. S. A., Seli, P., & Smilek, D. (2013) Wandering in both mind and body: individual differences in mind wandering and inattention predict fidgeting. *Canadian journal of experimental psychology = Revue canadienne de psychologie experimentale*, 67(1), 19–31.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031438>

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2007) *Research Methods in Education* (6th ed.). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203029053>

Cole, T. & Strasberg, L. (1955) *Acting : a Handbook of the Stanislavsky Method*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Cortney, C.C. (2000) *The Neighborhood Playhouse*. In Krasner, D (Ed) *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Creswell, J.W. (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. United States of America: Sage Publications.

Cribbin, T. (2011) Citation chain aggregation: An interaction model to support citation cycling. *International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management, Proceedings*. 2149-2152.
10.1145/2063576.2063913.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. and Larson, R. (1984) *Being Adolescent: Conflict and Growth in the Teenage Years*. New York: Basic Books.

Czajkowski, A. and Greasley, A. E. (2015) Mindfulness for singers: The effects of a targeted mindfulness course on learning vocal technique. *British Journal of Music Education*, 32(2)

Darvas, R. (2010) A Comparative Study Of Robert Lewis, Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler And Sanford Meisner In The Context Of Current Research About The Stanislavsky System. Wayne State University Dissertations. Paper 9.

Denscombe, M. (2010) *The Good Research Guide for Small Scale Research Projects* (4th ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Dion, J. (2016) *The Art of Mindful Singing: Notes on finding your voice*. United Kingdom: Leaping Hare Press.

Donellan, D (2005) *The actor and the target*. London: Nick Hern Books.

Durham, K. (2004) Acting on and off: Sanford Meisner reconsidered, *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 23:3, 151-163, DOI: 10.1386/stap.23.3.151/1

Esper, W & DiMarco, D. (2008) *The Actor's Art and Craft: William Esper Teaches the Meisner Technique*. New York: Anchor.

Esper, W & DiMarco, D. (2014) *The Actor's Guide to Creating a Character: William Esper Teaches the Meisner Technique*. New York: Anchor.

Gonsalves, A. (2012) Meisner Training, in Abbott, J. *The Acting Book*. London: Nick Hern Books.

Gordon, M. (2010) *Stanislavsky in America: An Actor's Workbook*. New York: Routledge.

Gray, A. (2015) Living Truthfully Under Imaginary Circumstances: Improvisation in Psychoanalysis, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 25:6, 725-742, DOI: 10.1080/10481885.2015.1097286

Gray, A. (2023) Sanford Meisner, Improvisation, and the Art of Psychoanalysis, *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 43:7, 604-608, DOI: 10.1080/07351690.2023.2257585

Guba, E. G. and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994) Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). United States of America: Sage Publications.

Haddaway, N. R., Grainger, M. J. and Gray, C. T. (2022) Citationchaser: A tool for transparent and efficient forward and backward citation chasing in systematic searching. *Research synthesis methods*, 13(4), 533–545. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jrsm.1563>

Halba, Hilary. (2012). "Play, but don't play games!": The Meisner Technique Reconsidered. *Theatre Topics*. 22. 127-136. 10.1353/tt.2012.0024.

Hart, V. (2008) Meisner Technique: Teaching the Work of Sanford Meisner, in Bartow, A. (Ed) *Handbook of Acting Techniques*. London: Nick Hern Books.

Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D. and Wilson, K. G. (2012) *Acceptance and commitment therapy: The process and practice of mindful change* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Hodge, A. (2010) *Twentieth Century Actor training*. London: Routledge.

Ingram, R.E. (1990) Self-focused Attention in Clinical Disorders: Review and Conceptual Model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107(2): 156-76.

Jones, L. (2019) *An investigation into mindfulness, creativity and the actor*. Masters thesis, University of Huddersfield.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994) *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. New York: Hyperion.

Kabat-Zinn, J. and Hanh, T. N. (2009) *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Random House Publishing Group.

Kakkori, L. (2009) Hermeneutics and Phenomenology Problems When Applying Hermeneutic Phenomenological Method in Educational Qualitative Research. *Paideusis: Journal of the Canadian Philosophy of Education Society* 18 (2):19-27.

Killingsworth, M.A. & Gilbert, D.T. (2010) A Wandering Mind is an Unhappy Mind. *Science*, 330(6006): doi: 10.1126/science.1192439

Koch, T. (1999) An interpretive research process: Revisiting phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches. *Nurse Researcher* (through 2013), 6(3), pp. 20.

Krasner, D. (2000) Strasberg, Adler and Meisner: Method Acting. In Hodge's (Ed) *Twentieth Century Actor Training*. London: Routledge.

Krasner, D. (2011) *An Actor's Art and Craft: The Art and Technique of Acting*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Laverty, S. (2003) Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 2. 10.1177/160940690300200303.

Mackenzie, N. and Knipe, S. (2006) Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology. *Issues in Educational Research*. 16. 193-205.

Malague, R. (2012) *An Actress Prepares: Women and the Method*. New York: Routledge.

Meisner, S. & Longwell, D. (1987) *Meisner on Acting*. New York: Vintage Books.

Meisner, S., and Longwell, D. (2012) Sanford Meisner on Acting. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Merlin, B. (2001) Beyond Stanislavsky: The Psycho-physical Approach to Actor Training. London: Nick Hern Books.

Merlin, B. (2010) The complete Stanislavsky toolkit. New York: Nick Hern Books.

Merlin, B., (2014) (revised edition) The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit. Nick Hern Books: United Kingdom

Morgan, D. L. (2014) Pragmatism as a Paradigm for Social Research. Qualitative Inquiry, 20(8), 1045-1053. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800413513733>

Moseley, N. (2012) Meisner in Practice: A Guide for Actors, Directors and Teachers. London: Nick Hern Books.

Pope, B.L. (2000) Redefining Acting: The Implications of the Meisner Method. In Krasner, D (Ed) Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Power, C. (2008) Presence in Play: A Critique of Theories of Presence in the Theatre: Amsterdam. Rodopi.

Rodenburg, P. (2009) Presence. United Kingdom: Penguin.

Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D. and Jasper, M. (2001) Critical reflection in nursing and the helping professions: a user's guide. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rolfe, G. (2002) Reflective practice: where now? Nurse education in practice, 2(1), 21-29. <https://doi.org/10.1054/neprs.2002.0047>.

Schebetta, D. (2017) More Than Repetition: Meisner and BA Performance Training. The Online Journal of the Practice/Production Symposium of the Mid America Theatre Conference. Vol 6. Available at: <http://theatrepractice.us/pdfs/Schebetta%20More%20Than%20Repetition.pdf>

Seli, P., Carriere, J.S.A. and Smilek, D. (2014) Not all Mind Wandering is Created Equal: Dissociating Deliberate from Spontaneous Mind Wandering. *Psychological Research* 79(5): 750-758

Seli, P., Risko, E.F., Smilek, D. and Schacter, D.L. (2016) Mind-Wandering With and Without Intention. *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 20(8): 605-617.

Shiffman, S., Stone, A. A., and Hufford, M. R. (2008) Ecological momentary assessment. *Annual review of clinical psychology*, 4, 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.3.022806.091415>

Shirley, D. (2010) The Reality of Doing: Meisner Technique and British Actor training, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 1:2, 199-213, DOI: 10.1080/19443927.2010.505005

Silberschatz, M. (2013) Creative State/ Flow State: Flow Theory in Stanislavsky's Practice. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 29(1): 13-23.

Silverberg, L. (1994) *The Sanford Meisner Approach: An Actor's Workbook*. Hanover: Smith and Kraus.

Silverberg, L. (1997) *The Sanford Meisner Approach: Workbook II: Emotional Freedom*. Hanover: Smith and Kraus.

Silverberg, L. (1998) *The Sanford Meisner Approach: Workbook Three: Tackling the Text*. Hanover: Smith and Kraus.

Silverberg, L. (2000) *The Sanford Meisner Approach: Workbook Four: Playing the Part*. Hanover: Smith and Kraus.

Sohlberg, M.M. and Mateer, C.A. (1987) The Effectiveness of an Attention-training Program. *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology*, 9(2): 117-130.

Sohlberg, M.M. and Mateer, C.A (2017). *Cognitive Rehabilitation: An Integrative Neuropsychological Approach*. New York: The Guildford Press.

Sohlberg, M.M, McLaughlin, K.A, Pavese, A., Heidrich, A. and Posener, M. (2001) *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology*, 22(5): 656-676.

Soto-Morettini, D. (2010) *The Philosophical Actor: A Practical Meditation for Practicing Theatre Arts*. Bristol: Intellect.

Sparks, R. (2023) *Meisner and Mindfulness*. New York: Routledge.

Strandberg-Long, P. (2018) Mapping Meisner – how Stanislavski’s system influenced Meisner’s process and why it matters to British Drama School training today, *Stanislavski Studies*, 6:1, 11-19, DOI: 10.1080/20567790.2018.1437956

Strandberg-Long, P. (2019) *Beyond Repetition: Investigating how Sanford Meisner’s training process diminishes self-consciousness and enhances spontaneity in actors*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent.

Strandberg-Long, P. (2019b) The reaction in counter-action: how Meisner technique and active analysis complement each other, *Stanislavski Studies*, 7:1, 95-108, DOI: 10.1080/20567790.2019.1576114

Strandberg-Long, P. (2021) Staying on task — how the concept of skill-challenge balance provides a key element to the teaching of the Meisner technique. *Stanislavski Studies*, 9:2, 163-184, DOI: 10.1080/20567790.2021.1969762

Sun, J., & Okada, T. (2021) The process of interactive role-making in acting training. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 41, 100860.

Sun J. and Okada T. (2023) Interaction in acting training and its different manifestations in novice and professional actors. *Front. Psychol.* 13:949209. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.949209

Taylor, S. L. (2016) Act or training and emotions: Finding a balance. Edith Cowan University. Accessed from <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/1804>

Teddlie, C. and Tashakkori, A. (2009) *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. United Kingdom: Sage Publications.

Vago, D.R. and Silbersweig, D.A. (2012) Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence (S-ART): A framework for understanding the neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 6, Article 296. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2012.00296>

Vannucci, M. and Chiorri, C. (2018) Individual differences in self-consciousness and mind wandering: Further evidence for dissociation between spontaneous and deliberate mind wandering. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 121: 57-61.

Wilson, K. G., and DuFrene, T. (2009) *Mindfulness for Two: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Approach to Mindfulness in Psychotherapy*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.

Winner E. (2006) Development in the arts: drawing and music in *Handbook of child psychology*. Vol. 2 ed. Damon W. New York: Wiley.

Appendices

Appendix A: "Three Moment Exercise" (Sparks, 2023, p.55-67)

"Set Up: Two actors sit in chairs facing each other. The distance between them ideally should be knees are close to one another but not touching. What this gives is the dynamic of no starting contact but being very much 'in each other's space.'"

"It doesn't matter who starts the exercise, but whoever starts becomes partner A. Here then is the layout of the exercise:

Moment 1: A makes an observation about B.

Moment 2: B repeats the observation.

Moment 3: A says what they saw in moment 2.

After a pause happens, the same exercise begins only now with partner B starting. Once they are finished, it's A's turn again. It's a simple, cyclical exercise, and the pause in between rounds encourages everyone to not make a race out of it and memorize the structure."

"An example from Chris and Stefania.

(Moment 1) Chris: You've got black hair.

(Moment 2) Stefania: I've got black hair. (smiles)

(Moment 3) Chris: You smiled."

"A begins by making a truthful observation of partner B. This is moment 1.

B repeats the observation as they hear it from their point of view. This is moment 2.

A says what they saw in moment 2. This is moment 3 and the end of the exercise.

A and B take a moment to reset, and now it is B's turn to begin the exercise."

Appendix B: "Repetition" (Sparks, 2023, p.113-119)

"Set up: Two actors sit in chairs facing each other. The distance between them ideally should be knees close but not touching. What this gives is the dynamic of no contact but very much 'in each other's space.'"

"Who begins doesn't really matter so we'll start with Kate. Kate is going to look at Susan and notice something about her. What she notices has to be a fact; it can't be a speculation, a question, opinion or simile. She is, in effect, going to make an observation of her partner. That begins the exercise.

The exercise then falls to Susan. Susan is going to repeat word for word what she hears Kate say. While this looks identical to the start of a three moment exercise, the repeat will be word for word rather than from that person's point of view. Still, the layout is similar: an observation followed by a repetition. This is where the twist happens. Kate is now going to repeat word for word what she hears Susan say. Then Susan is going to repeat word for word what she hears Kate say, and the two will go on like this until the exercise finishes (when either the facilitator or coach calls for it to end)."

"What repetition immerses you in is what is often called the river of experience. Working with your partner, especially now with heightened observational skills and organic responses slowly emerging, is going to reveal a whole world of interpersonal experiences on offer that run beneath the text. Some have nothing to do with the words, and rather than ignoring them, you are asked to embrace them ... The connections between you and your partner in the moment determine how the text will come out. It's not what you want to do with the text that matters but what the moment is doing to you and how adeptly you can flow with its demands."

Appendix C: “Investing in the Reality of Doing” (Sparks, 2023, p.35-36)

“Set up/Instructions: Within a group, everyone takes turns doing the exercise one at a time. The key factor here is that it is witnessed. You’ll each bring something to do. I mean this in the most basic sense: a simple, physically engaging task that has only a minimal cerebral component or none at all. The task itself should be quite un-extraordinary.”

“Example 1: Scott pulls up a seat in front of us. Having brought some polish in he begins to paint his nails, doing his best to ensure he does a superb job.”

“Example 2: Reza takes off a single shoe and unlaces it completely. They then relace it, being careful to ensure it is even on both sides, until they put the shoe back on and re-tie it.”

“With Scott’s experience, this exercise reveals how our Meisner training is gradually evolving while staying true to its valuing of authenticity. Scott’s example is a perfect demonstration of our priorities. He brought in real nail polish and the necessary components to accomplish his task. Rather than pretending or miming the actions he invested his attention fully into what he was doing. There were plenty of opportunities for him to bring in imaginary elements, but rather than engaging with things not there, this exercise places the value on engaging with what happens in the moment.”

Appendix D: “You-I Repetition” (Sparks, 2023, p.131-132)

“In the previous repetition exercise, one partner began with a simple observation based on the hierarchy of observations. Their partner would repeat back word for word what they heard. Then the person who began the exercise would repeat back word for word the phrase they heard, and the exercise would go on like this.”

“Now we’re going to make a small but important modification to the exercise ... [Richard] will begin by making an observation of Michael, same as before. The change comes when Michael repeats. He will now repeat word for word what he hears, but from his own point of view. The exercise will continue on in the same way until they are stopped...

(Michael opens his bag to get a tissue)

Richard: You’re Mary Poppins.

Michael: I’m Mary Poppins. (Goes red, wipes his eyes, puts the tissue away)

Richard: You’re Mary Poppins. (Laughs deeply)

Michael: I’m Mary Poppins. (Shakes head, then laughs)”

“In the three moment exercise, the depth is more of a hint as to what is on offer, a means to get you further engaged and sharpen the specificity of your observations. In repetition, however, the values are flipped, wherein a specific observation unveils a vast world of possible dynamics between you and your partner. Since you are releasing impulses brought out by them, the experience becomes personal, the depth compounding significantly and quickly. This new version of repetition slightly shifts your relationship to the text.”

Appendix E: “Breaking the Back of a Scene” (Sparks, 2023, p.249-263)

“This is a first reading of a scene with your partner in which you will both break the back of the text. To properly break the back of a scene, several criteria must be met:

1. Don't read ahead. When you receive your scene, quickly identify your first line for reference and then don't read further.
2. When you speak the words, hold the page high, in sight of your partner's eyeline. This way you can have easy equal access to both the words and their face.
3. Hold the script with one hand, and with the other place your index finger on the line you are currently on. This prevents the issue of you losing your place in the scene and having to struggle to find your line, all of which is unnecessary time wasting.
4. When you read your line out loud, pick up only a few words at a time. Two to four is an ideal starting amount. This prevents you having to worry about remembering the whole line or paraphrasing. Look at your partner, speak the words you've picked up, and then go back for some more, until your line is finished.
5. When you do speak your words, say them flat. In the beginning, this means monotone. Yes, you'll impose a monotone inflection on all of your lines. Like a hot iron removes wrinkles, this will iron out any desire you have to impose something on the text not generated by your partner. Down the road, as in after having done this exercise a few times with different scenes, you can begin to release the monotone inflection slightly, but we'll talk about what that means after the scenes.
6. Ignore all stage directions, overlaps, interruptions, or notes on how you should inflect or emote. We'll deal with these later, but they aren't relevant at all to this exercise. This also includes movement and blocking, so stay in your chair for the entire read.
7. When you are done speaking a line, keep your attention fully on your partner. No glancing at the script, no reading ahead: your attention and eyes are fully on them while they are speaking their line. How will you know when it's your turn to speak? They will simply stop talking. What this also means is that even if the scene is filled with suspense and urgency, don't worry about that here. It doesn't matter how brutally you break up the flow or rhythm of the scene, or drain it of meaning. That can be rebuilt. The core of importance is to begin this work with our values of living truthfully.”

“Breaking the back of a scene encourages partners to infuse the words with the process of living truthfully, of connecting the first read to the most important variable in both honouring the text and engaging with the world of that story: the other person.”

Appendix F: "Text Analysis" (Sparks, 2023, p.268-273)

"By this point the scene has already been read at least once, using the breaking the back of the scene tool. Before it is read again, you will now analyze the character you are reading. A successful analysis asks and answers three questions accurately ... What is the knowledge of the character before the scene begins? ... What is the character literally doing in the scene? ... What is the need of the character in this scene?"