

## **Character Study**

Based on the Meisner Technique for acting which is to “live truthfully under imaginary circumstances”. (Meisner, 1987)

Knowing your character will help you to “get out of your head” and behave naturally while acting. This reduces self-consciousness and allows the actor to be “in the moment”. This is perfect for singers who have enough to worry about already! There are three principles of the Meisner technique that apply perfectly for acting for singing. 1. Sanford Meisner says, “Acting is not emoting, acting *is doing something*”. 2. The technique emphasizes repetition, repetition, repetition! 3. Meisner recommends the actor has a strong point of view as the character. These ideas about ‘doing’, repetition and ‘point of view’ are parallel to the practice of singing and thus the perfect pairing as an acting technique.

*“Inspiration may be a form of super-consciousness, or perhaps of sub-consciousness -- I wouldn't know. But I am sure it is the antithesis is of self-consciousness.”- Aaron Copland, composer*

I designed the following questions, based on the Meisner Technique, in order to help voice students prepare for recitals, auditions, and productions. On a separate piece of paper, answer the questions in character using the first person.

This is just a taste of Sanford Meisner and his technique. For more information on Meisner read his book, **ON ACTING.**

### **The Basics**

1. Who am I?
2. When am I? (in scene, in play, in time)
3. Where am I? Describe the environment at the time of the song.

### **Point of View**

1. Who am I talking to?
2. Who are they to me?

### **Urgency**

1. What do I want?
  - a. now, in this scene
  - b. in life
2. Why do I want it?
3. Why do I want this now? Why is it urgent?
4. What is my obstacle? What is in my way?
5. How am I going to get what I want? (fix the problem, remove the obstacle, what’s the plan?)

### **Personal Application**

1. How does my life parallel the characters?
2. How can I relate personally to the character?

## **Backstory**

*“a history or background, especially one created for a fictional character in a motion picture or television program.”<sup>i</sup>*

1. Get a Synopsis of the entire play. Attach.
2. Using first person, write a Backstory for yourself as the character.

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<sup>i</sup> Definition according to Google

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Meisner, S. (1987). *On Acting*. New York, NY: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.