

"Your acting will not be good until it is only yours. That's true of music, acting, anything creative. You work until finally nobody is acting like you."

-Sanford Meisner

I discovered this quote when I was 16 years old studying at Playhouse West School and Repertoire in Los Angeles, Calif. It has since guided me in my career as both an actor and teacher. Prior to my studies in Los Angeles, as a young actor, I thought that instead of being me, I needed to be what the industry *wanted* me to be. I never thought it would want me for my genuine self - the thought process of so many young people - and therefore, I molded myself into something I was not. It limited me in my life as well as in my acting work. When I encountered the words of Sanford Meisner, not only did I discover that being myself was okay, but that it would actually elevate my career in the entertainment business. Along with that thought, I was taught that using every part of myself - including my life experiences - is what made my work authentic, honest, and real. Not one person would walk into an audition room with what I had, because they were not me. That set me apart and gave me confidence in my work, which then led to the thought process that walking into an audition room always meant that a casting director might have a different idea in mind of what they wanted for a certain role and pick another actor over me, but that *did not mean I was not good enough*. It did not define my worth as an actor. It just meant I was not what they were looking for, and that was okay. Acting and singing became therapeutic for me because it became an outlet to showcase my vulnerabilities without shame. I discovered that deep-diving into a script or score and making the character my own was an exciting feat with each audition I received. I learned that doing the work - the emotional work - is what elevated my art. Not only that, but it made me want to go back into the audition room time and time again.

Today, when I am teaching or directing, all of my students know my two most used quotes:

"I don't want to see what you think I want to see - I want to see you" and "Emotions are the vehicles for the words."

I teach my students that if they want to succeed, they have to take down the mask and showcase who they really are. I encourage them to not judge the choices they make because there are no wrong choices in acting - there are stronger choices - but there are no wrong ones. Show me what you got, and I will guide you in order to strengthen you. And, being vulnerable - knowing how to access your emotions and apply them in your scenes and musical pieces - is the key to this art. It takes work, and I rely 99% on my actors' work ethics because doing the work is what brings out the best results. Being vulnerable by yourself is hard, but being vulnerable in front of a crowd-full of people is unthinkable. However, that is why actors are actors - we do things that other people would not even dream of doing. And when we do it well, we impact. We tell stories, and we impact. And that impact often leads to movement that then creates some sort of change for the better. I begin every rehearsal process telling my actors this exact thing, because they need to know the power they hold as unique individuals, worthy of telling important stories and bringing about change.