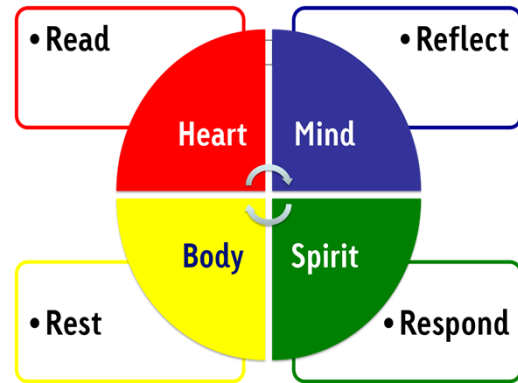


# *A Road to Integration for the Actor*

## *or*

### *Mindfulness: Is There an App for That?*

- Today we have computers and cell phones. Truncated, electronic communication has replaced intimate human contact. For the actor, whose task is to explore and illuminate the human condition, such a culture of intellectual and emotional sound bites has compromised this exploration. The application of traditional Buddhist meditation techniques, in conjunction with the Benedictine practice of Lectio Divina, offer an ideal model to aid the actor in deepening their relationship with themselves, the text which they strive to bring to life in performance, and with their fellow performers.
- I spent the summer of 2013 studying the religious practice of Lectio Divina at the Benedictine Prince of Peace Monastery in Oceanside, California. Lectio Divina, or “divine reading”, is the Benedictine practice of slowly reading short passages of biblical scripture and pausing to reflect on a sentence or a word. I practiced with the monks in order to create exercises aimed at developing the actor’s understanding of a text and to strengthen to contemplate upon language in order to discover its relevance to their character and to their own lives. I practiced Buddhist meditation with the monks at Deer Park Monastery in Escondido, California in order to explore methods in which mental distractions could best be alleviated to allow the actor greater focus during rehearsal and performance. I tested the applicability of these practices to the acting process in my rehearsal and performances of the lead role of Walter Huff in the stage adaptation of James M Caine’s Double Indemnity, produced at one of America’s major regional theatres, The Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, CA.
- The results of my studies was a series of exercises addressing the actor’s exploration of a text and ways in which meditation can heighten their awareness of the mental, physical and emotional blocks which hinder their focus and free expression. Taken together they offer tangible means in which the repetition inherent in the actors work can lead to an ongoing, deepening, critical and creative understanding of themselves and a script. Lectio Divina offers an ideal model for script analysis, a process of listening to a text as a first step toward creating a bridge between intellectual understanding and creative thought. I found, in performance, that meditation could be practiced not only in respite, but in motion, observing myself in the act of doing. This observation took place in what I now call the “pause”, the space between stimulus and response, where the performer directs their awareness to their mental, physical and emotional blocks. Awareness of these blocks allows the actor to ultimately shrink this space, allowing them greater freedom.
- My findings thus far have been limited to my personal experience as an actor, and increasingly in their application with my students. Both confirm that this type of practice encourages responsiveness as well as bridges the perceived gap between critical and creative inquiry. In future creative projects, I plan to broaden my scope of inquiry, interviewing actors from various training methodologies and practical experience. In this way, my practices can be honed and introduced in various academic, workshop, conference and professional settings, augmenting and enhancing current actor training methodologies.



Neuroscientists continue to make exciting discoveries about the workings of the brain. Higher states of awareness and consciousness can now be monitored. As a future stage of my research, I intend to study the means by which these discoveries can have tangible application for the actor, as well as the ways in which acting exploration can inform scientific knowledge of the brain.

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