

(Inter)acting with the Inner Partner

Authorization Code

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Translated into the English by Alexander Komlosi

(Inter)acting with the Inner Partner or Partners. Creator: Ivan Vyskočil. Inception: 1968. It has been evolving and developing up to the present.

The basis of (Inter)acting with the Inner Partner is the experience and the experiencing of interacting (speaking, playing) with yourself (with your inner partner or partners), as a rule, on your own. After some self-reflection, almost every one of us should be able to recall the experience of talking to yourself, playing by yourself. (Inter)acting with the Inner Partner is about studying and learning how to generate similarly authentic, spontaneous, playful, and co-playful interaction (behaving and experiencing) in public in the presence and with the attention of “spectators,” in a situation of “public solitude” (Stanislavsky). Public solitude is understood as a situation in which we do not contact the spectators in any way, especially visually or physically. It is “as if” they were not present.

The experimenting and experiencing takes place in groups. The smallest (functional) group consists of three participants: that is, one leader (teacher) and two experimenters (students). The optimal group size is from nine to thirteen. Ideally, everyone has at least three turns during one encounter (experimentation session).

An appropriate rehearsal space is an ordinary classroom with a high ceiling. If possible, the room should be bright and empty, apart from the appropriate number of seats (chairs).

After an introduction during which the leader (teacher) and the participants (students) evoke and discuss the familiar experience of “talking to yourself” (for example, commonly occurring instances of such behavior), the leader emphasizes the necessity of “going out of yourself” and “coming back toward yourself” as well as “going into yourself” through voice and speech; and that it is necessary that the voice and speech, the vocal and spoken expression, be *interaction*. He also emphasizes that (Inter)acting with the Inner Partner is solely about experimenting, searching, learning, and finding. In other words, it is not in the least about presenting any sort of art. Lastly, the leader asks if any of the participants, any of the people who are sitting on chairs next to one another in a line facing the space as spectators, would like to go “on stage” and try it. The latter is essentially the only instruction as to “what to do.” Afterwards, there are merely

observations and comments about what each person did, how they did it, and what they accomplished. Usually, this is in terms of what was successful and what was not; what did not turn out well; why and what to do about it; and how to approach it so that it is just right.ⁱ

Each person is “on stage” a reasonably long time (two to five minutes), alone in a field of the onlookers’ attention – in a “field of energy” – without any aids (e.g., music, props, costume).

Each participant goes through an initial period of chaos and confusion, which typically lasts between six and ten encounters. She then gradually begins to concentrate, loosen up, perceive and express herself in the “here and now.” She begins to react in a more differentiated manner, to interact, relate to, and articulate. She starts to understand and observe contrast, polarity, and oscillation; genuine opposites and complementarity; reciprocity; and the play of opposites. She gradually begins to interact dialogically and experience dialogical being: that she dialogically – and often paradoxically – *is*. She achieves a “creative state” (Stanislavsky), inspiration. She experiences what it means for “it to be playing in and with a person” (Patočka) and for “the ear to be astonished by what the mouth is saying” (Wierch). She knows how to “hear her partner and respond to him” (Voskovec and Wierch). She matures into her own psychosomatic fitness, the one she needs for conscious, creative communication. This takes at least three years of systematic, continual study/training.

Students need to go through an initial phase of individual and collective chaos and confusion, and then experience its clarification, gradually structuring it “from the inside.” This is exceedingly important for further development to take place. Namely, so that a proclivity and a preference for experimenting, experiencing, searching – formulating hypotheses – as well as discovering, particularly that which is one’s own and personal, be activated and promoted from the outset, so that the often dominant tendency to imitate, copy, accept and produce various prefabrications and standards does not have the upper hand.

Continual “private” rehearsing is an organic and necessary aspect of the collective study and learning that take place on stage, especially in the form of regular written reflections, which are shared with leaders and fellow students and form the basis of collective study.

(Inter)acting with the Inner Partner incorporates and opens up a number of different areas of investigation and possible paths and goals. However, it should always remain a genuinely personal and personality-based matter, where an individual’s dispositions (e.g., the type, quality, and strength of talent) determine for what and how it can

be and is. (Inter)acting with the Inner Partner depends on what each person does with it and hopes to get out of it.

For most it can be, and often is, a path of self-discovery, self-understanding and self-acceptance; for many a path of self-realization as well. This depends on predispositions, talents, and interests.

As has already been stated, it can be, and often is, about developing psychosomatic fitness for creative communication and, therefore, for a more profound and precise “conductive” empathy; for understanding and accepting others; and for encounter, in the true sense of the word.

It can be, and often is, about experiencing, understanding, and studying the principles of dramatic play.

It can be, and often is, about experiencing, understanding, and studying open acting (playing, performing).

It can be, and often is, a way of understanding and grasping; “physicalizing” and meeting a specific challenge; answering a particular question; accomplishing a specific task; or realizing a certain text.

It can be, and often is, if it is understood and comprehended as such, an open and opening path; a methodology of rehearsing, searching and perceiving, noticing and discovering.

However, it is not a goal-oriented, worked-out, proven approach, nor a “method” that can be accepted and “deployed” as a prefabricated thing. And it is definitely not any kind of technique.

(Inter)acting with the Inner Partner continues to be investigated and studied in various directions, mainly at the Institute for the Research and Study of Authorial Acting and at the Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy at The Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

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ⁱ Trans. note: Traditionally, only teachers reflect on students’ work.