

NOTES FROM ZERKA



WORKING AS A DOUBLE

Dear Friends,

I have some observations about working as a double of the protagonist, with both body and mind.

Lately I have seen doubles who stand behind the protagonist, which disturbs me.

Moreno trained us to be beside the protagonist for several reasons:

1. The protagonist has to be able to see what the body next to her or him is doing, in a mirror effect, because we do not "see" ourselves as seen by others, and protagonists are rarely aware of what their actions convey. This is especially important when they behave oddly. Sometimes we can help by speaking about what we're doing and change the behavior on the spot. Other times it gives us clues about the protagonist's inner feelings.

It also helps the protagonist to learn about and correct the behavior.

Essentially, it gives direct information to the double through the body's action.

Here is just one example:

I once walked side by side as a double with a woman who walked around the stage on her toes in a scene in which she was questioning her attractiveness.

My body and mind told me we were literally teetering, uncertain about whether we could find a suitable mate and I spoke up, "Why am I not married, like all my sisters?" (She had given us and stressed this information earlier.) It hit home. It was the tiptoe walking that helped me to find the essence of her concern. Several following sessions focused on that concern and she found a mate not long after. We had the pleasure of going to her wedding.

2. Breathing rate, as Linda Ciotola reminded me, is also significant. It is much easier to hear it and take it on, when standing next to the protagonist; it too, indicates the state of the protagonist. Is the protagonist breathing shallowly or a deeply, slowly or fast, unevenly or sighing a great deal? Anyone of these signals may mean something, give clues and may be lost if standing even slightly behind. We are also body therapists.

3. Looking at the protagonist's facial expression, eye movements, eyebrows raised or frowning are not detectable from behind. All that information may be lost.

4. Angle of the head in relation to the body may not be clearly experienced.

5. Putting one's hand on the shoulder may be offensive if not asked for permission, and standing behind may be

objectionable to a protagonist. Why hide? Everything we do should be above board. We are not Peeping Toms.

It may be interpreted as a voice from the head, intellectualizing, not working from the heart. Start working with the heart, then go on to the other level if indicated.

6. Above all, try to condense your words. Pouring out a plethora may dull the message, leaving it unheard. As we tend to be rather verbal, we enjoy using that communication skill. More internalized protagonist may be overwhelmed. If the director wants to hear more, s/he will so indicate. It is the protagonist we want to hear, not the cleverness of the double. The double should just be a starter, letting the protagonist carry the ball.

If any of you have additional observations about the double function, it would be good to get them.

Thanks for reading this.

Love,
Zerka

CELEBRATING MY BIRTHDAY

It would not have been possible, even a few years ago, to be able to view people abroad on the web, to speak to them and to be seen there as well.

But here we were, on Thursday, June 26th, doing just that via Skype, which still amazes me.

The Program Committee of FEBRAP, the Brazilian Federation of Psychodrama, invited me into their celebration of my 91st birthday, during their 16th annual conference in Recife, complete with a fine birthday song and cake.

I "blew out" the candles.

Their warm welcome and energy came through.

To think I have lived long enough to experience something that would have been science fiction once and to be part of the technological revolution is just astounding.

It enables communication around the globe, wherever the countries are "wired," a curious oxymoron since only a laptop computer was used at this end, owned and used by my current manuscript assistant, Jessica Huang, from Taiwan.

You are all part of another revolution, that of improving human interaction. How many other revolutions are still in store for us?

Let's hope the human interaction one starts right here in this country, in a future fraught with difficulties.

Good luck in all your endeavors.

Love,
Zerka