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Paper Presentation:

The Pleasure of Performing Grief: A Study on the
Connections Between Erotic Pleasure and Sadness in
Performance

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues there is a link between grief and pleasure and explores it with the tools of theatre. In *Constant Prince*, Ryszard Cieslak, the famous Laboratory Theatre actor, was reliving the memory of love making, when performing what was perceived to be suffering. This is not as paradoxical as it may sound, since scientific research has proved that erotic pleasure and unpleasant emotions can have similar physiological arousals.¹ The paper suggests a different way of approaching grief in performance, shedding light to a third alternative to the

¹ Daniel Gerard Dillon “Voluntary Emotion Regulation: Physiological Correlates and Mnemonic Consequences” (Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, 2006), p. 27.

polarity ‘emotional hang-over’² as opposed to catharsis: the experience of performing an unpleasant emotion itself can be pleasurable.

A practical theatrical experiment, conducted by the researcher will also be presented and discussed: the exploration of a combination of the Alba Emoting breathing patterns of Erotic Pleasure and Sadness to help an actor perform the second messenger speech from Euripides’ *Bacchae*.

² Term used by Suzana Bloch, creator of the Alba Emoting technique.