

# **Humiliation, Stanislavsky and Consciousness**

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In 1992 Donald C. Klein expressed concerns that humiliation and the fear of experiencing the emotion is "universal", and that the insidious, destructive force of humiliation is empowered by a lack of clear identification and open discussion. Reflecting Klein's concerns Evelin Linder founded and is president of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS). Lindner describes the work of HumanDHS in terms of developing a theory of humiliation. However, much of the discourse on humiliation thus far has been broadly, but not inclusively, related to: violence, mental health, gender, and global conflict. Lindner recognises the need to expand the discussion in order to "begin to understand the experience of humiliation".

Experiences of humiliation can be stored in the unconscious for many years or indeed a lifetime and are, according to Mario Jacoby, essential to socialisation from early childhood. Stage fright, the "black hole", and "the devil" are all examples of terms used in connection with the, often debilitating, fear that actors commonly experience before or during a performance. This study proposes that this anxiety is an instinctive fear of humiliation. Stanislavsky understood this anxiety as fundamentally human and developed a system that provides practical tools for the actor to combat the fear.

This paper will discuss: the neurological pathways associated with physical/social pain and fear, the link between the fight or flight instinct, and the physical symptoms associated with humiliation anxiety. By considering Linda M. Hartling, and Tracy Luchetta's pioneering empirical study, *Humiliation: Assessing the Impact of Derision, Degradation, and Debasement* and analysing Stanislavsky's system as a protection from potential social pain this study aims at a better understanding of why we experience performance anxiety and what wider implications Stanislavsky's system may have to break the cycle of humiliation, the overarching aim of HumanDHS.