

FINAL REPORT FOR PALISSIMO COMPANY RESIDENCY AND PERFORMANCE OF BASTARD

The UAlbany Performing Arts Center hosted Palissimo Company for five days from January 30 through February 3, 2017.



Palissimo is an interdisciplinary platform for research, development and production of live arts. Led by Artistic Director Pavel Zuštiak (born and raised in communist Czechoslovakia), the company's works have an instantly recognizable style – combining immigrant feeling of otherness and displacement with the very American sense of freedom to explore disparate cultural, artistic and intellectual resources in search for new means of expression. The company strives to provide original, transformative insight into the human condition while reaching spectators through multi-sensory theatrical experiences.

The residency included a performance of *Bastard*, a work of dance, live music and spoken word loosely based on the harsh, controversial 1965 wartime novel by expatriate Polish writer Jerzy Kosiński entitled *The Painted Bird*. With a cast highlighted by award winning Slovak dancer Jaro Viňarský and original music performed live by Christian Federickson, *Bastard* draws upon the crucial scene of the novel in which a bird captured by a human is brilliantly painted and then

freed to return to its flock, only to be violently killed by its own kind as a perceived interloper.

"It's an allegory of identity, of trying to belong," says Zustiak, "and is inspired by the novel which is very poetic and, at the same time, extremely brutal. I have an idea of how much place defines who you are, how much it is related to your identity and what it's

like trying to assimilate," he said.

Prior to the company's arrival, the venue reached out to the Capital Region community to solicit individuals to perform with the company. Twenty five people (both dancers and non-dancers) of varying ages, gender and background responded and participated in four evenings of rehearsal and the performance on the fifth day.

Following the sold out performance, there was a Q&A in the performance space between the three principal artists (Pavel Zustiak, Palissimo Artistic Director; Jaro Viňarský, Palissimo performer and Christian Frederickson, Palissimo composer and musician) and the audience. There was also a reception in the theatre lounge so that the conversation could continue.

In addition to the rehearsals and performance at UAlbany, Zuštiak taught 20 students taking a Movement for Actors class through the Department of Music and Theatre. Both he and Viňarský taught master classes at Skidmore College to approximately 50 students in the Dance Department.



About the UAlbany engagement, Zustiak had this to say:

"Thank you for a well-organized and promoted presentation of Bastard (The Painted Bird: Part 1) early this month and introducing my work to your audience. The technical staff was a joy to work with and could not have been more generous and helpful. Thank you!" ~ Pavel Zustiak

Responses to the work by press and participants included:

"When art addresses painful, horrible subjects, is it important — essential, even — for viewers of that art to feel visceral pain and horror? By that measure, Pavel Zustiak's 'Bastard,' the first section of his 'Painted Bird' trilogy, is doing its job very well. In examining the nature of violence, hatred and bigotry, 'Bastard' succeeds in making its audience extremely uncomfortable.

The stripped-down format was a good fit for the harsh emotional nature of the material. We first see Vinarsky as he scuttles across the floor, knees bent to bring him close to the ground. Even when he expands to his full height, he embodies oppression and compression; buffeted by unseen forces, he is flung across the floor again and again, his body twisted and bent as if broken. As disturbing phrases from the novel are projected on the wall behind him, he twitches in anguish." ~ Times Union

"It has been a fantastic experience for both Madelyn and me. I LOVE Pavel and his work." ~ community performer

"My daughter and I had the distinct opportunity to dance with you in 'Bastard' at the University at Albany in February; I was the old guy with the little (10-year-old) girl. The experience was life-changing for us.

I loved, loved the warm-up exercises you lead us in before our rehearsals: walk in a figure eight, feel the floor, pretend you are walking on sand, relax your focus, feel your neck, etc... Look your partner in the eye... I told Patrick Ferlo over and over again how I would love to have you lead my teaching staff (I am a principal at a local elementary school) in that exercise after school, before a faculty meeting. I have recently been harassing Kim Engel (she who got me to dance) about it, to find out if you ever make the trek up here to the Capital District. Let me know if I can convince you to come back."

"Thank you for everything! Grateful for this experience and for everyone in it!" ~ community performer

"Our time with Pavel last week was awesome. Thank you!" ~ community performer

"Thank you! It was a lovely project!" ~community performer

"I was thrilled to get out from behind my desk and move each evening. What an experience this was for someone who has never performed on a stage."

~ community performer

Photos on following page by: Patrick Ferlo Alaina Maldonado Mark Schmidt

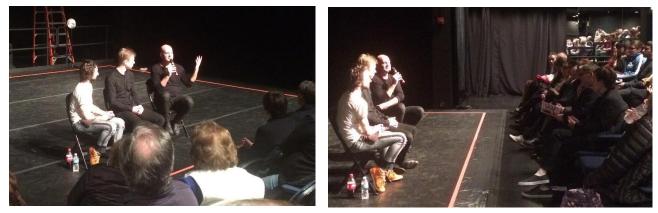
PAVEL ZUSTIAK TEACHES A MOVEMENT FOR ACTORS CLASS



COMMUNITY MEMBERS REHEARSE FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF BASTARD



THE ARTISTS PARTICIPATE IN A POST-PERFORMANCE Q& A WITH THE AUDIENCE



PERFORMERS AND AUDIENCE CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION AT A RECEPTION



