

**Palissimo**

Performance Space 122  
April 12 through 15

## Dead Again, Again

In 'Le Petit Mort,'  
drastic events crash into  
the everyday

**W**e all die many times before our deaths. *Le Petit Mort (Now It's Time to Say Good-bye)*, Pavel Zustiak's latest work for his company, Palissimo, plumbs many near-death experiences — plus the small deaths of loss, humiliation, or disappointment, and the more appealing one of orgasm.

Palissimo's season, originally scheduled for December, had to be postponed because two of its six powerful performers were injured. Not

surprising. They fall, thrash, hurtle together, and stagger into confrontations and alliances. Ellen Cremer and Marya Wethers take turns choking each other from behind. In a group game of fall and catch, individuals often crash to the floor while potential catchers watch someone else. When Benjamin Asriel and Saar Harari cross the room, lying side by side, they flop like beached fish from their backs to their bellies in perfect synchrony. Gina Bashour drags Asriel by the feet and, while he's still limp, wrangles him more or less upright and into a group pose.

The action takes place in front of a translucent white curtain. People slide under it and lie half out of sight; Joe Levasseur's lights intermittently reveal blurry action behind it, and in Tal Yarden's projected black-and-white videos, shadowy human images within the grainy patterns fleetingly echo the live performers. Zustiak's cataclysmic sound design, with its occasional ironic bursts of music, jolts into silences, as if it's had a heart attack.

With the input of dramaturge Rachel Chavkin,

Zustiak has embedded the drastic events in a deceptively everyday atmosphere. When the performers are not being knocked around or writhing their own bodies into instability (as Harari does so unnervingly), they wander in to sit on chairs and watch, entering the violent action as if spelling a colleague at a job. When Zustiak and Asriel walk toward each other, straining and reaching out their arms, others hurry after them and stuff their arms into coats, like mothers seeing their kids off to school (the men pass each other unseeing — one more small death).

The temporarily dead get taken care of. Once, when Harari is supine, Zustiak revives him by blowing into his big toe. Another time, Asriel washes his feet. Toward the end, after a fierce spate of dancing, Harari drips water from his open mouth into Cremer's. These people die and come to life as if the cycle of existence were running on some kind of exhausting tape loop. You may want to get out of a room so fraught with danger, but you won't forget what you've seen. **DEBORAH JOWITT**