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Masters of Cultural and Stylistic Fusion in a Mash-Up of Their Very Own

As Lincoln Center Out of Doors audience members searched, with increasing urgency, for empty seats in Damrosch Park on Friday night, dancers warmed up on the band shell stage.

DANCE REVIEW
One trio executed silky moves you might find in a club, while a tall man sank into deep pliés, using stage scaffolding as his

CLAUDIA LA ROCCO
barre: it was a perfect teaser for the happy mash-up of forms and styles that lay ahead in a two-and-a-half-hour feast of works by

Armitage Gone! Dance in collaboration with the band Burkina Electric and Evidence, a Dance Company.

Karole Armitage and Ronald K. Brown, the artistic director of Evidence, are each masters at blending disparate traditions. You know fusion (that dreaded word) is working when the term never occurs to you, when you don't stop to identify the various vocabularies but simply sink unresistingly into the whole, like slipping into water at just the right temperature. To watch

these choreographers is to see two artists in conversation with imposing traditions and histories, paying homage to the past while exploring ways to go forward.

Mr. Brown, in his dances, is often talking with the whole of the African diaspora, and Burkina Electric's irresistible brew of West African music and electronica would seem a more natural fit for him than for Ms. Armitage, who has spent much of her career figuring out how to push ballet in new directions. But with "Summer of Love," a preview of a work

that will have its premiere in Italy this year, she has a sexy, richly layered hit on her hands.

Ms. Armitage is an intensely bright woman, and her choreography sometimes suffers from brainy excess. But "Summer of Love," with its ever-in-flux community of instrumentalists, singers and dancers (wearing festively sophisticated retro costumes by Peter Speliopoulos), doesn't seem overthought; it seems felt, and deeply so. Not that there aren't ideas here — of how we co-exist and don't, how we relate

and don't, physically — but the ideas are intrinsic to the movement, not imposed on it.

What is most exciting (aside from the fabulously charismatic singer Mai Langani and her back-up dancers) is seeing Ms. Armitage work through ideas of partnering. Her women seem like next-generation ballerinas, impossibly long- and strong-limbed and unabashedly sexual as they lash their legs about their men: Megumi Eda's duet with the guitarist Wende K. Blass is particularly fierce. It's 2008, and these are no longer punk ballerinas, as Ms. Armitage was once called. But they're certainly street.



MICHAEL TALCOTT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Armitage Gone! Dance, Burkina Electric and Evidence, a Dance Company Members of Karole Armitage's troupe, above, appeared in a program at Lincoln Center Out of Doors on Friday.