

# Dance

## The sex pistol

Karole Armitage rocks out. By **Gia Kourlas**

Strange as it sounds, Karole Armitage has never revived a dance. For the next two weeks, however, she is fully embracing her past—and, notably, her “punk ballerina” status—to present a program of three landmark dances from the '80s (*Drastic Classicism*, *The Watteau Duets* and *Wild Thing*), as well as the premiere of *Mashup*. For Armitage, who continues to push and play with

classical vocabulary, the time was right: “I started thinking: war in Iraq, Bush presidency, corporate greed out of control,” she says. “Before punk started, England was a great colonial power losing its esteem in the world. The parallels with the U.S. are really interesting—with our imperialism through Bush.” Below, Armitage sheds some light on her upcoming season at the Kitchen.

**The Watteau Duets, 1985 (music by David Linton)** “It’s the evolution of a couple, and it’s also a history of music. It starts out with medieval and baroque influences, but all rock & rollified—the couple moves through the same kind of territory. I think of the first duet as, Oh, this is the guy you’ve always wanted to go out with. In the second, you’ve gotten to know each other and you’re having fun. And the third is getting ready to sleep together—it’s a little more introspective and almost geishalike in places.” (Pictured: Megumi Eda and Bennyroyce Royon)

**Mashup:** “I’m always very tongue-tied about new pieces, but what’s a little punk-influenced about it is that it takes music by Mozart and mashes it with X-Ray Spex’s “Oh Bondage, Up Yours!”—my favorite pop band of 1976. I think they had one record and it has this crazy saxophone in it. It was a very distinct sound and full of jubilation. It’s the jubilation of rebellion, basically just as in the Mozart: that driving, celebratory joy of life.” (Pictured: Kristina Bethel and Bennyroyce Royon)

**Drastic Classicism, 1981 (music by Rhys Chatham)** “*Drastic* was a jolt to the system. I just thought it was time to do something different: How can ballet become a hard-rock experience? What kind of movements could have that energy, that spontaneity, that unpredictable, wild volatility that is so exciting in rock, and yet all of [dance’s] discipline? We gave earplugs to everyone in the audience and aspirin. That was part of the theatrical joke.”

“I wanted to be Suzanne Farrell. And I wasn’t. So I always felt I was not even close to being a good dancer, but I did really have a lot of strength and technique—much more than I ever imagined.” (Pictured: Armitage herself in *The Watteau Duets*)

Armitage Goes! Dance: “Think Punk!” is at the Kitchen through Mar 14. For an additional interview with the choreographer, visit [timeoutnewyork.com](http://timeoutnewyork.com).

PHOTOGRAPHS: (BOTTOM LEFT) JULIETA CAERANTES; PAULA COURT

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