

Quickening Sense

Karole Armitage:

Mio



ving Life

by Alysia Scott



KAROLE ARMITAGE
PHOTO PROVIDED BY COMPANY

With severity and grace, Karole Armitage has rocked the dance world since the 1970s. After forming her first company in 1979, the *New Yorker* dance critic Arlene Croce wrote, “It is seldom that a young choreographer makes a debut doing a new thing that is exactly the right thing.” Now, almost thirty years later, Karole Armitage continues to provoke, progress, and transcend the past, inventing a new vocabulary with a set of bold principles for dance.

Originally from Lawrence, Kansas, Armitage began her studies with New York City Ballet ballerina Toni Worthan who taught her many of the great Balanchine ballets, foreshadowing her years to come (1973–1975) as a member of the Corps de Ballet in Balanchine’s Geneva Ballet. After studying with Ballet West (hiking over a 12,000 foot mountain pass from her Crested Butte home to the school, then back to Crested Butte weeks later with pointe shoes in her pack), she attended the School of American Ballet. In 1976, she joined the Merce Cunningham Dance Company (1976–1981). Around this time, Armitage also began to experiment with her own choreography, leading Vanity Fair to christen her the “punk ballerina” in the 1980s. She also gained the attention of Mikhail Baryshnikov and Rudolf Nureyev, from whom she later was commissioned to create ballets.

Karole Armitage spent the next 15 years in Europe fulfilling prestigious commissions including the creation of a new ballet for the Paris Opera Ballet, serving as director of the Ballet of Florence, Italy from 1995–1998, and as Director of the Venice Biennale International Festival of Contemporary Dance in 2004. While maintaining her own company, she continued, as she does today, to direct opera and create new ballets for companies throughout the US and Europe. The support and desire for new work kept her in Europe for over a decade. “New ideas are supported economically as well as in the cultural dialogue throughout Europe,” she says. “There is great participation and receptivity by the general public for things that are asking questions and propose new ideas. They talk about it, they live it, they want it. It is a part of daily life. That is very satisfying.”

In 2004, after a celebrated reception of Armitage’s first showing of *Time is the echo of an axe within a wood* in New York City, she officially returned to the US and established Armitage Gone! Dance.

Armitage’s roster of collaborators also traverses an impressive and colorful terrain. The list includes visual artists David Salle and Jeff Koons, fashion designer Christian Lacroix, Madonna (for the choreography in “Vogue”), Michael Jackson (choreography for “In the Closet”), and filmmakers Ismail Merchant and James Ivory, to name a few. When asked if there are any artists she hasn’t worked with that she would like to collaborate with in the future, she responded, “Many. Painter Philip Taaffe for example.”

At The Dance Center, Armitage will present two works: *Ligeti Essays*, a suite of concise jewel-like movements choreographed to music by the great Hungarian composer Gyorgy Ligeti, and *Time is the echo of an axe within a wood*, set to the music of Bela Bartok. Both have sets designed by Armitage’s long-time collaborator, visual artist David Salle.

Watching a work by Armitage Gone! Dance is like entering a finely crafted parallel universe. Minimal and grand, both *Ligeti Essays* and *Time is the echo of an axe within a wood* bare complexity. Armitage’s dancers slice air with conviction and brace the ground with soul, using each other as foundations for both balance and thrust. Within the movement can be seen influences of Merce Cunningham

and Balanchine, yet the style is Armitage, an amalgamation of technical precision, philosophy, and visual prowess. Perhaps it is Armitage’s dancemaking principles that infuse her choreography and dancers with such a poetic grace and urgency.

ARMITAGE’S DANCEMAKING PRINCIPLES

- Seek beauty.
- Move like a blaze of consciousness.
- Show mutability.
- Perfection is the devil.
- Express the eroticism of gravity.





Armitage Gone! Dance

APRIL 17, 18 & 19 * 8PM

OTHER EVENTS

DanceMasters Class

TUESDAY, APRIL 15 * 3PM

Lou Conte Dance Studio of the
Hubbard Street Dance Center

1147 W. Jackson

\$15, Call (312) 344-6600 or go to
colum.edu/dancecenter to register

Post-Performance Discussion

THURSDAY, APRIL 17

Pre-Performance Talk with Karole Armitage

FRIDAY, APRIL 18 * 7PM

Complimentary Post- Performance Reception

FRIDAY, APRIL 18

Location TBA

Open to ticket holders

Sponsored by Newcity

FOR TICKETS CALL

(312) 344-6600 OR VISIT
COLUM.EDU/DANCECENTER

Armitage Gone! dancers inherently embody these principles in their dancing. "Every aspect of how we work and rehearse uses these principles as a basis for the choreography. It is a way of being and thinking which is seen in the movement and in the way the dancers interact." When asked how these principles relate to the works we will be seeing at The Dance Center, Armitage responded, "The movement looks both personal and spontaneous as well as refined and controlled. It is a way of reconciling opposites: universality and the personal; legibility and being in the moment; using history and innovation. It is not taking a way of doing things for granted, but questions all assumptions. It is a philosophical approach to

art rather than an entertainment or politically oriented way of engaging with an audience. It is about things that affect everyone: love, mortality, the transience of life, yearning, memory. "

Karole Armitage's virtuosity has continued to entice audiences around the world, quickening the senses and revolutionizing classical dance. *Time is the echo of an axe within a wood* and *Ligeti Essays* are part one and two of the *Dream Trilogy*. The final chapter, entitled *Connoisseurs of Chaos*, with music by Morton Feldman and a moving vortex film backdrop by painter, David Salle, who designed sets for all of the trilogy, premieres in 2008 at the Joyce Theater in New York City.



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Alycia Scott is the Community Outreach and Education Manager at The Dance Center. In partnership with diverse cultural organizations and artists, she develops programs to provoke public thought and individual action, while promoting engagement with both dance and contemporary issues. As a curator and performer, she uses movement and multimedia to examine social issues and create spaces for reflection and conversation.