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[Moving to Love's Ups and Downs](#)

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THE ETERNAL DANCE THAT IS LOVE

Ashley Kaylynn Green and Chalvar Monteiro, center, with fellow members of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, performing in the premiere of Kyle Abraham's "Are You in Your Feelings?" at New York City Center. The piece is Abraham's third work for the troupe. REVIEW, PAGE 2

Moving to Love's Ups and Downs

In the choreographer Kyle Abraham's third work for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the dancers find intimacy in songs by Erykah Badu and Jazmine Sullivan.

THE CHOREOGRAPHER KYLE ABRAHAM knows how to make a playlist. His third work for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, "Are You in Your Feelings?," which had its premiere on Friday as part of the company's annual New York City Center season, unfurls to an R&B, soul and hip-hop compilation of thoroughly danceable songs about love and relationships.

Alone and collectively, these are songs that narrate the ups and downs of getting together and breaking up; of making a commitment to oneself or being unbothered by love. (As Erykah Badu sings during "I'll Call U Back," a mellow track from her 2015 mixtape: "I'm busy, so I'll call you back.") The silken and turbulent whorls of Abraham's choreography, for 12 dancers, reflect those emotional states or, at times, posit parallel stories of their own.

"Are You in Your Feelings?," the centerpiece of a program that began with Aszure Barton's 2009 ensemble work "Busk" and ended with a particularly energized performance of Alvin Ailey's "Revelations," arrives on the heels of Abraham's unequivocally pleasurable "An Untitled Love" (2021),



Clockwise from above right: Ashley Kaytlyn Green, lifted, and Chahvar Monteiro in the premiere of "Are You in Your Feelings?"; Caroline T. Dartey and Ghrai DeVore-Stokes, also in that work; Monteiro, center, and fellow members of the Ailey troupe.

an evening-length work for his own Brooklyn-based company, A.J.M. If "Untitled," with its D'Angelo soundtrack, is "a Black love sitcom dance" (as one of Abraham's collaborators has said), "Feelings" could be Season 2; in their themes and structure, they inhabit the same universe. While "Feelings" doesn't quite break new ground for Abraham or for the Ailey company, I can imagine happily returning to see it again and again.

The dancing commands attention right away, as Chahvar Monteiro and Ashley Kaytlyn Green — a powerhouse who joined the company just last year — walk assertively onto the stage and begin a tension-filled duet, soon joined by two more couples. An ultraviolet arc dips across the backdrop (Dan Scully designed the expressive lighting), and under its influence, Karen Young's

bright, attractive costumes of billowing pants and sheer tops take on a fluorescent glow.

In retrospect, what follows could be a roundabout return to that initial relationship; the work ends, too, with a duet for Monteiro and Green, more developed, in which they seem to build trust and surrender to the joys of each other's company, embodying the euphoria and abandon of Jhené Aiko's "While We're Young," when she sings, "I'll go everywhere you go."

But a lot happens between those first and final scenes, in overlapping vignettes that often find two dancers intercepted by a third (or more). "Don't catch feelings," Jazmine Sullivan warns in "Roster," as James Gilmer drifts away from Ghrai DeVore-Stokes, who has found a new partner — and who seems especially in her element

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
Through Dec. 24, New York City Center,
Manhattan; nycitycenter.org

throughout the work, basking in its playfulness and groove. Same-sex relationships also evolve and dissolve. Shirley Brown's "Woman to Woman" accompanies a duet for DeVore-Stokes and Caroline T. Dartey. While the song takes shape as a certain kind of confiding, this pair uncover a closer if fleeting intimacy.

In other passages, partnering gives way to the satisfying unison of a group (though at times the dancers seemed to still be getting their bearings). To Badu's "I'll Call U Back," seven women, each in her own spotlight, deliver a nonchalant dance of the torso, with paddling arms and wagging

hands that match the beat. Kendrick Lamar's soaring "LOVE" (featuring Zacari) propels a section for the full cast, a crescendo near the end. Arranged in a triangle formation, the dancers move together — fluidity punctuated with details like a shoulder brush or a simple passé — but don't make physical contact, perhaps a consideration of what it means to love oneself.

A fiery solo for Green could be the same — though here, she seems to seethe with longing for another person, or maybe with the grief of losing someone. In the work's closing moments, when she and Monteiro exchange a little handshake and walk away, his arm around her, it's hard to tell if their love is platonic, romantic or both. But its exact contours matter less than the obvious: that at least for the moment, they have opened themselves to each other.



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