

The New York Times

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**(500) DAYS OF
SUMMER**

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Spare Times: For Children

By [LAUREL GRAEBER](#)

BLACK VIOLIN

Last Friday middle school students crammed the New Victory Theater, swaying in their seats, waving their arms high, cocking their heads in rhythm to the musicians onstage, who included a busy D.J. and an enthusiastic drummer. With the stomping and the turntables, the electronic amplification and the velvety darkness, the limitless energy and the youthful vibe, the setting could have been any pop concert, except for the piece being played: an excerpt from the “Brandenburg” Concertos.

But this wasn’t the “Brandenburg” as Bach envisioned it. “We’re going to spice it up a little bit,” Wilner Baptiste, known as Wil-B (above left), told the crowd. He and Kevin Sylvester, a.k.a. Kev Marcus (above right), look less likely to appear onstage with a symphony orchestra than with [Alicia Keys](#) or the [Wu-Tang Clan](#) (and in fact they have). But Wil-B, on acoustic viola, and Kev Marcus, on electric violin, are both classically trained musicians, who, with the D.J. Dwayne Dayal and the percussionist Jermaine McQueen, make up Black Violin. They borrowed the name from an old jazz album, but Black Violin also expresses their identities as young men who mix the brashness and beats of urban hip-hop with the soaring lines and fleet finger work of orchestral virtuosos.

What’s most amazing is how great it sounds. In addition to the funky “Brandenburg,” during a one-hour set the group explores old Motown riffs from [the Temptations](#) (“Ain’t No Words to This Song”), contemporary hip-hop (the [Fugees](#)’ “Ready or Not”) and its own genre-busting compositions like “Jammin’,” which pairs insistent drumbeats and rap with fast and furious strings. The musicians finished with Coldplay’s “Viva la Vida,” as if to say, “Yeah, we can do the Brit thing too.”

Black Violin’s performances also include an improvisatory interlude and what you might call “Dueling Viols,” a competition that Wil-B and Kev Marcus ask the audience to judge. Along the way they promote education and practice. “I could not have done anything without the fundamentals — classical,” Wil-B said. It seems they’ve managed another ingenious combination: hipness and wholesomeness. (Friday at 7 p.m., with a postshow discussion; Saturday at 2 and 7 p.m.; Sunday at noon and 5 p.m.; 209 West 42nd Street, Manhattan, 646-223-3010, newvictory.org; \$12.50, \$25 and \$35; \$8.75 to \$24.50 for members.) LAUREL GRAEBER

‘ADVENTURES WITH DORA AND DIEGO’ (Friday through Sunday, and Tuesday through Thursday) The young Latino stars of the Nickelodeon animated television series “Dora the Explorer” and “Go, Diego, Go!” have taken their expeditions into new territory at the Children’s Museum of Manhattan, whose exhibition has separate Dora and Diego environments, including Diego’s Animal Rescue Center and Dora’s Fiesta.