

RoseAnne Spradlin broadens definition of dance

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Everyone gets a front-row seat at RoseAnne Spradlin's "beginning of something," the better to appreciate the fierce focus of its four performers. In various stages of undress, layered with garments of metal or fur or fabric, these women seem transfixed by their own images, glimpsed in decorative mirrors hung on three of the Chocolate Factory theater's four walls.

Rebecca Serrell Cyr launches the hour-long display by strumming an electric bass and then dons huge metallic epaulets and headgear, channeling Cleopatra or some ancient goddess. Natalie Green wears and snuggles scraps of fur, while Rebecca Wender covers her black undergarments with a black coat. Molly Poerstal starts out in a long plaid summer dress ripped at the bottom to allow freedom of movement.

Sometimes the room feels like a fashion runway and these dames like models run amok. Other times their organized patterns feel almost military: They march and turn, splay their legs, stomp and tremble and stare. A painted platform that almost fills the room puts them just above our line of sight. They ignore us, and they clearly control the situation.

What's going on here? Spradlin, one of the bravest choreographers of her generation, seems to be testing the possibilities, letting us witness, up close, the transformation of conventionally pretty young things into powerful icons. Other times she wants us to see them as they exist in their most private moments.

Burt Bacharach's 1962 hit "Don't Make Me Over" shares the airspace with recorded works by Krzysztof Penderecki. Jennifer Goggans, herself a performer, designed the costumes. By no means conventional entertainment, "beginning" broadens the definition of dance.



ROSEANNE SPRADLIN

RoseAnne Spradlin's dancers are pretty, powerful icons in "beginning of something."

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