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The Bare Essentials of Dance (excerpt, picture added)

By GIA KOURLAS
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Chase Granoff and
Jennifer Kjos in
RoseAnne Spradlin's
NOVA.

photo: Roger Gaess

WHEN RoseAnne Spradlin's "NOVA" was unveiled in December in a tiny studio space on West Broadway, the audience sat a breath away from a curtain of miniature disco balls that shimmered at the slightest touch. Dressed in bulky layers of clothing, two dancers, Walter Dundervill and Jennifer Kjos, stepped onto a pair of benches. Two others, Chase Granoff and Tasha Taylor, walked onstage brandishing scissors and eyed them like painters facing blank canvases. Then they cut.

As chunks of textures and colors fell to the floor, Mr. Granoff and Ms. Taylor, with creepy and steady perseverance, sliced their way through every bit of fabric on the dancers' costumes until, still as sculptures, they wore nothing. The scene, beguilingly uncomfortable, transformed the audience into voyeurs. But it functioned on more than one level. In addition to being a thrill, it was a metaphor, one that resonates across contemporary dance: cutting away layers to get to the skin....

"I think artists really want to show the world that they care about something other than their own status and comfort," she [Spradlin] said. "Being naked onstage can be uncomfortable. An artist shows that they are willing to endure discomfort in the pursuit of finding meaning in what they do."