Many Shades Of Sorcery

Jen Rosenblit’s “a Natural dance” induces a kind of morning-after haziness, its images revisiting you in the hours after you’ve seen it like scenes from a fitful dream. None of it quite makes sense: Why is Justin Cabrillo wearing that “Where’s Waldo” costume? What are Effie Bowen and Addys Gonzalez doing with all of those microphones? What is the meaning of this monologue about colors?

These episodes don’t add up. And they probably aren’t meant to. Given full rein at the Kitchen’s black box theater, where “a Natural dance” had its premiere on Thursday, Ms. Rosenblit, for her first evening-length work, has come up with something willfully diffuse. Her impetus, to interrogate the adjective in the title — to confront its “implicit paradoxes,” says a news release — manifests as an assortment of overlapping studies, each concerned, it seems, with just running its course. I found myself comparing these curiously assembled parts to guests at a party: some arriving uninvited; some overstaying their welcome or making a scene; others leaving without

“a Natural dance” continues through Saturday at the Kitchen, 512 West 19th Street, Chelsea; 212-255-5793, thekitchen.org.
saying goodbye.

If, by “natural,” we mean “oc-
ccurring in nature,” the set design,
by Sam Roeck, is anything but. A
metal platform adorned with two
pink throw pillows, it juts into the
first few rows of the audience,
serving at one point as an indus-
trial throne where Ms. Rosenblit
finds a comfortable seat, the chore-
eographer taking stock of her
work.

The first to arrive is Mr. Cabrillo,
in all-white, including his
high-top sneakers, which squeak
against the white floor as he runs
toward and away from the audi-
ence, a stuttering back and forth
that eventually sends him onto
the platform. This kind of dogged
futility keeps asserting itself.
Spinning in place, Mr. Gonzalez
sheds his white T-shirt, tosses it,
retrieves it and repeats. Later he
rearranges a forest of micro-
phones around Ms. Bowen, who
languishes beneath them, utter-
ing the puzzling refrain, “Helen,
where did you go?”

This comes after her lengthy
enumeration of various hues and
their uses. She chirps: “65. Day-
light Blue. Useful for achieving
depressed moods.” When Hilary
Clark enters, she and Ms. Rosen-
blit, like twin sorceresses, gestic-
ulate toward a corner of one wall.
The spell refuses to be cast.

Ms. Rosenblit designed the cos-
tumes and the sound, which in-
cludes violent clashing and her
own voice wailing, “Baby.” But
it’s her presence as a performer
that’s her greatest strength. The
way she invests herself in a task
is as captivating as how she just
lets it go: dangling, incomplete.