

# Marrow-Minded

she jams the thing between her legs and wags it behind her, like a misbegotten erection.

To a Chopin *Valse* Hefner and Gyllenhaal tippy-toe in tiny tutus; they're pugnacious baby ballerinas, growing increasingly bellicose, as the music keeps wandering off key like a wonky music box. Later, in *Valse II*, the same pair are pregnant, too pooped by their maternal loads to finish their routine. The music Evan Gallagher and Ladonna Smith play live at the rear of the theater is always sensitive to the movement. It's hard to keep from swiveling around to watch them produce their delightfully unlikely sounds with electric violin, keyboard/synthesizer, and voice.

In three final dances Hefner represents mature women: as mother in a sultry tango with half a dozen suckling rag dolls attached like leeches to her body; as fertility goddess/baby factory to Middle Eastern music, caressing a large egg that she finally plops from between her legs; and as quintessential female—soft, sensitive, vulnerable.

Short sight gags, called *Interludes*—in one, a bride receives a toilet brush for a gift; in another, she gives birth to a rag mop—aren't funny enough to merit interrupting the flow of the piece as they do. *Beauty Myth* is a joke with no punch line: frantic woman trying to press away wrinkles in her skin with a steam iron. And the dancing sometimes plays second fiddle to the music and marvelously manic text. *Marrow*

*Clamor* doesn't get to the core of issues as promised by its title, but it is an entertaining package of winning performances by two deft musicians and three talented women.

## Dada's Boy

By Elizabeth Zimmer

David Gordon, Red Grooms, Philip Glass

*The Mysteries and What's So Funny?*

At Joyce Theater

December 15 through January 3

**Judging from the tableaux on-stage at the Joyce, David Gordon's is a mind in constant motion. In *The Mysteries and What's So Funny?*, he arrays his thoughts and feelings—and those of Marcel Duchamp—in a brilliant cartoon landscape realized by artist Red Grooms. Philip Glass motifs must have been cycling through his head—well, he got Glass to compose something new (played on the piano by Alan Johnson) and bagged a few new viewers in the bargain.**

Gordon assembled 14 performers, including his wife, Valda Setterfield, to act out this half-centu-

ry of cultural and personal history. Birth, marriage, aging, death, the peculiar paths artists take: these concerns mingle in the mind of one middle-aged artist, who may have taken a more conventional route than Duchamp, but has nevertheless captured a place in the hearts and heads—and probably also the history books—of the generation that followed the Dad of Dada.

Gordon's work may be an acquired taste; I picked it up years ago, when he began manipulating pedestrian movement, light and language, folding chairs, and smart, tall dancers at Dance Theater Workshop and his own Broadway loft. He went through a period of choreographing for other, larger ensembles, extending his range in terms of both scale and technique; this work combines the best of both expansions and beckons an audience too rarely served by Downtown artists.

For a change, here's a work I want to take my parents to, a 90-minute confection of movement and music, language and visual delights, centered around the prime concerns of their generation. Its story is their story: meeting in wartime, keeping a marriage together for 50 years, facing change in the world, in their own lives, and in the lives of their children.

"The art of making something of being together" is explored in *The Mysteries*, as well as, through Setterfield's understated portrayal of Duchamp, the art of making it alone. The show is talky, but the rhythmic cadence of the talking, and the movement that moves it along, seem absolutely right. Clearly an autobiographical meditation, it craftily embraces that

which is universal about this artist's life and experience, weaving together the high-minded and the homely, the French artist-philosopher and the New York Jews and the squabbling bourgeois couple untouched by the blessed curse of art curiosity.

The performers wear clothing overlaid by clear vinyl jackets; framing devices (like actual frames) are used continually to focus attention. The occasional corniness seems both calculated and honest. Gordon's work looks hard and affectionately at his roots in life and in art; post-modernism meets Molly Goldberg; both win.

### JOWITT

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ups and downs of their relationship into a dance that Rachel is purportedly teaching Sara; dancing, they embark on a double dialogue about truth. Rachel and "David" have a ferocious—and hilarious—erotic duet with fencing foils, she talking to Toby throughout.

But a figure in trench coat and hat (Armando Duarte) lurks in the background, and after Toby arrives in California, all the men reappear in similar garb, dancing. As they lift and embrace him, he smiles with excited pleasure. The tender dead welcoming him? I liked this, but it bothered me that it had come almost without transition. Maybe Lampert was unable to contemplate this man's illness, his gradual withdrawal from life. It's as if he said goodbye and flew, not to the West Coast but straight to death. Is this, too, a time when she had to revise the truth?

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