

the village

# VOICE

DECEMBER 23 - 29, 1992

theater

By Michael Feingold

**The Mysteries and What's So Funny?**

By David Gordon

Music by Philip Glass

Joyce Theater

175 Eighth Avenue

242-0800

**Orpheus is draped** in somber dark blue; David Gordon's delightful *The Mysteries*, back for a welcome return visit, sparkles in Red Grooms's pinks and greens, a pop-art playroom of cardboard objects that revolve, fold up, and, with help from Gordon's merged troupe of dancers and actors, leap through the air. At a second viewing, the pure fun of *The Mysteries* turns out to be based on strong, serious specifics that make the

second half of its title perfectly apt: In both staging and writing, Gordon is consistently playful, but his twin subjects—how a love affair endures and how an artist survives—are utterly in earnest.

As suits his dual subject, everything in the piece is based on doubling and duplicated movement. Except for the old couple (touchingly played now by Lola Pashalinski and Jerry Matz), each pair onstage was originally made up of one actor and one dancer; the tension between the two approaches electrified every movement, appropriately enough in this piece which is all simultaneously spoken and danced, against the filigree background of Philip Glass's delicate score. What comes across most strongly now are the two unpaired figures, one actor and one dancer as before: Jane Hoffman as Fanny, the tyrannical grandmother, whose protracted death (a sublimely powerful piece of acting) is contrasted to Valda Setterfield's Marcel Duchamp, "lucky right up to the end," tossing off paradoxes with elegant, easy gestures. ■

## TEASERS AND TORMENTORS

BY PORTER ANDERSON

### MICHAEL FEINGOLD, FIRESIDE CHAP

Check your latest Fireside Theatre brochure. Its January selection is the *Grove New American Theater* anthology edited by **Michael Feingold**, the basso-profundic chieftain of our *Voice* critics' coven. Hardly more than 10 *Classic Mysteries and Suspense Plays* Fireside kindling, it's six plays, Feingold opines, that can remind America it has a theater. There's **David Gordon's** *The Mysteries and What's So Funny?*, which you can see through January 3 at the Joyce. There's **Karen Finley's** *The Theory of Total Blame*, **Richard Greenberg's** *The American Plan*, the late **Ethyl Eichelberger's** *Das Vedanya Mama*, **David Greenspan's** *Dead Mother, or Shirley Not All in Vain*, and **Mac Wellman's** *Helms-era triumph, Sincerity Forever*. "The full truth about the Iran-Contra scandal, if it ever came out (which it won't), would probably justify **George Bush** and his predecessor being shot for treason," Feingold writes in his preface. This month, the selection ain't Agatha Christie.

**The Zelsler Group**  
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