



Art, music the clues to 'Mysteries'

By SUSAN ELLIOTT

DAVID Gordon's "The Mysteries and What's So Funny?" is a deliciously entertaining piece of *Serious Fun!*, also the name of the Lincoln Center series it opened Thursday night in Alice Tully Hall.

Aided by the music of Philip Glass and visual design of Red Grooms, writer/director Gordon finds fresh answers to the age-old question "What Is The Meaning of Life?" and delivers them with wit, compassion, and a bracing intellect.

At the center of "Mysteries ..." is Dadaist artist Marcel Duchamp, exquisitely played by Valda Setterfield, around whom revolves a host

SERIOUS FUN!

review

of seemingly Ordinary Folks. While they busy themselves in marriage, babies, TV, old age and ugliness, Duchamp remains above it all, as if to say Art, not Compromise, is The Answer.

Maybe. Whatever his message, Gordon's mediums are razor-sharp wordplay and flowing, contrapuntal stage movement, all finessed like clockwork by the 13-member ensemble.

Grooms' colorful, whimsical, cut-out set pieces are neatly interwoven into the action. And somehow the very stasis of Glass' solo

piano music, performed offstage by Alan Johnson, enhances the impact of the actors' preachy, usually impersonal tone.

As Old Sam and Old Rose, Ralph Williams and Lola Pashalinski were poignantly pathetic. Scott Cunningham and Karen Evans-Kandel slithered about menacingly as Anger I and Anger II, and Jane Hoffman, as the wizened old bird Fanny, was a master of comedic timing.

Also noteworthy were Alice Playten and Gayle Tufts, who was hilarious as Mrs. Him. "The Mysteries ..." is a most stimulating evening of contemporary theater.

"The Mysteries ..." tonight at 8. Information: (212) 875-5050. Tickets: \$25.