

# The New Criterion

## Theater

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### An entrance & an exit

by [Brooke Allen](#)

On *Enter Laughing: The Musical* at the York Theatre, *The Savannah Disputation* at Playwrights Horizons, *33 Variations* at Eugene O'Neill Theater, and the closing of *Forbidden Broadway*.

“Dying is easy,” the expiring comedian is supposed to have said when asked whether it was hard to die. “Comedy is hard.” Just how hard, no one who has not worked in the business can ever understand, so that when a perfectly executed morsel of lowbrow farce like the current production of *Enter Laughing: The Musical* at the York Theatre comes along, it is in danger of being taken for granted.

*Enter Laughing* has gone through a number of incarnations. Based (very loosely!) on Carl Reiner’s memories of his youthful beginnings as an actor in the Great Depression, the original play by Joseph Stein (1963) starred Alan Arkin as the goofy young Reiner character, David Kolowitz, and was turned into a movie four years later. In 1974, a score by Stan Daniels was added to turn the property into a Broadway musical, *So Long, 174th Street*. Despite Daniels ...

**Brooke Allen's** latest book is *Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers* (Ivan R Dee).

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