

# The New Criterion

## Theater

June 2009

### Joe Turner's return

by [Eric Grode](#)

On *The Death of a Salesman* & *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*.

Win a Pulitzer Prize, it is often said, and the first line of your obituary is written. Win more than one, especially in the drama category, and the focus becomes less on how the world will talk about you and more on how you'll talk about the world.

Only seven playwrights have received multiple Pulitzers, and, with the exception of the tight-lipped Edward Albee, each has rebranded himself as a playwright/pontificator. Exactly one statement from one of them has achieved any level of cultural notoriety—"Satire is what closes on Saturday night," courtesy of George S. Kaufman—but that didn't stop the likes of Eugene O'Neill and Thornton Wilder from routinely stepping out of the rehearsal room and onto the bully pulpit. One of them, Robert E. Sherwood, even managed to parlay his newfound career into a speechwriting gig for Franklin Roosevelt. (Sherwood did coin the ph ...

**Eric Grode** was head theater critic for The New York Sun from 2005 to 2008 and is a regular contributor to The Village Voice.

[more from this author](#)

This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 27 June 2009, on page 39

Copyright © 2012 The New Criterion | [www.newcriterion.com](http://www.newcriterion.com)

<http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Joe-Turner-s-return-4101>