

# The New Criterion

## Theater

January 2009

### Off the main stem

by [Brooke Allen](#)

On *Farragut North* at the Atlantic Theater Company, *Prayer for My Enemy* at Playwrights Horizon, and *Mouth to Mouth* at the New Group.

Just what makes a political animal? The recent election showed us many such creatures and gave us the opportunity to observe their frantic machinations up close. They were everywhere: in the Senate, on the campaign trail, in back-room offices, holding forth endlessly on the squawk box. Political animals are equally distributed across the left-to-right spectrum: no one party holds a monopoly on them, or even a majority. And as politics have become bigger business and take up ever-expanding portions of our money and attention, the players have become increasingly apt to see an election, especially the all-important presidential election, as a game in its own right, irrespective of any effects the result might have on human lives and well-being. It's the means and not the end that obsess these folks. The late and justifiably lamented Tim Russert epitomized the breed: on his *Meet the Press*, it was customary for the presidential election to st ...

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

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This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 27 January 2009, on page 43

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