

# The New Criterion

## Theater

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### LuPone's turn

by [Brooke Allen](#)

On *Gypsy* at the St James Theatre, *Boeing-Boeing* at the Longacre Theater, and *The New Century* at Lincoln Center.

The highbrow theater and opera director Peter Sellars once gave it as his opinion that there have been three great epochs in theatrical history: ancient Greek tragedy, Shakespearean drama, and twentieth-century American musical comedy. Not everyone will go along with his judgment, but I think it is safe to say that the American musical is now considered, at least among the more open-minded segments of the intelligentsia, to be one of our major contributions to world culture (along with jazz and the Hollywood movie). The ecstatic reception of the new *South Pacific* revival at Lincoln Center confirms me in my suspicion that Richard Rodgers, written off by the hoity-toity some thirty years ago as a facile middlebrow tunesmith, is now accepted as being a major composer, the equal perhaps of Verdi or Puccini, and that some of our musicals can easily hold their own with *Tosca* and *Traviata*.

One such is *Gypsy* **Brooke Allen's** latest book is *Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers* (Ivan R.

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