

The New Criterion

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The Critic's Notebook

by *The Editors*

This week: A campus addition, Carnegie musicians & more.

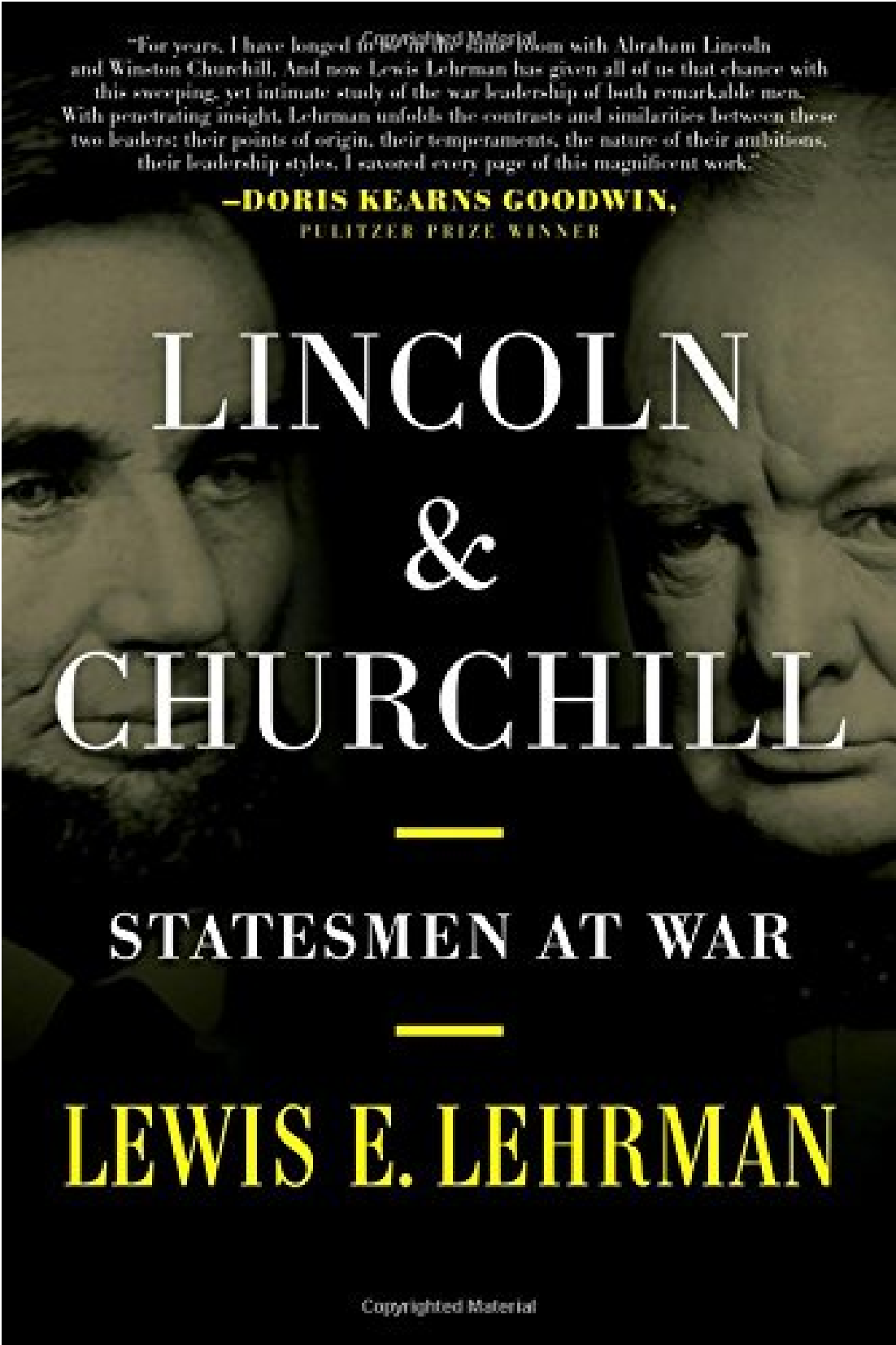


Rufino Tamayo, Lion and Horse (León y caballo), 1942, Oil on canvas, the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Nonfiction:

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"For years, I have longed to be in the same room with Abraham Lincoln and Winston Churchill. And now Lewis Lehrman has given all of us that chance with this sweeping, yet intimate study of the war leadership of both remarkable men. With penetrating insight, Lehrman unfolds the contrasts and similarities between these two leaders: their points of origin, their temperaments, the nature of their ambitions, their leadership styles. I savored every page of this magnificent work."

-DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN,
PULITZER PRIZE WINNER



LINCOLN
&
CHURCHILL

—
STATESMEN AT WAR
—

LEWIS E. LEHRMAN

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Lincoln & Churchill: Statesmen at War, by Lewis E. Lehrman (Stackpole Books): The relationship between biography and general historical writing can be at times fraught. Because the historian is charged with not only telling history but also explaining it, any book structured around a single person will find itself at constant risk of adopting the thrilling but untestable idea that the events of human

history are principally driven by a select group of once-in-a-generation “Great Men.” And yet, great men have always existed—men who in select moments make significant contributions to the direction and survival of our civilization. Lewis E. Lehrman’s most recent book tackles the wartime efforts of two such men—Abraham Lincoln and Winston Churchill—but manages to remain cool-tempered and analytical in the process. Though they lived in different eras and nations, both men valiantly led their respective countries through existentially perilous struggles (Lincoln’s Civil War and Churchill’s fight against Hitler’s Germany). The two had drastically different personalities, but held in common a rare gift for oratory, similar war strategies, and, most of all, an undying commitment to core principles of freedom and liberty. —AS

Art:



Rufino Tamayo, Dog Barking at the Moon (Perro ladrando a la luna), 1942, Oil on canvas, the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

“Tamayo: The New York Years,” at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (through March 18): The story of Mexican Modernism includes a far broader cast of characters than *los tres grandes*, “the three greats”—José Clemente Orozco (1883–1949), Diego Rivera (1886–1957), and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896–1974). There were also many counterforces and divergent influences that enriched that country’s Modernist legacy. Rufino Tamayo (1899–1991) went against the grain of his muralist contemporaries to question the wisdom of revolution and Leftist doctrine. Steeped in regional iconography, he also looked internationally for influence. For two decades starting in the late 1920s, New York City became Rufino’s second home. Branded a traitor in his native country, Rufino found quick success in New York, exhibiting his work at Weyhe, Valentine, Knoedler, and Marlborough

galleries. His art developed in contact with the innovations of Picasso and Matisse. As an art instructor at the Dalton School, he also taught a young Helen Frankenthaler. “Tamayo: The New York Years,” an exhibition now at Washington’s Smithsonian American Art Museum, reveals an artist who worked at a crossroads of modernist innovation. —JP

Music:



Jonas Kaufmann and Helmut Deutsch at Carnegie Hall (January 20): The German tenor Jonas Kaufmann has been in the very first rank of international opera stars for the last decade, but his recent career in New York has been rocky. A series of cancellations—including his withdrawal from the *Tosca* that recently opened at the Metropolitan Opera, just days after it was announced—for unspecified family reasons has resulted in very few appearances outside of Europe in the last two years. This Saturday, we'll at last have a chance to hear him again at Carnegie Hall with the great lieder accompanist Helmut Deutsch. They'll perform *Die schöne Müllerin*, the first of Schubert's two great song cycles, and the first major cycle of its kind to hold a place in the standard repertoire. The set of twenty songs, with texts by Wilhelm Müller, is hardly epic, lasting barely more than an hour in performance, yet its rich poetry and vivid music make for a powerful emotional experience in the hands of great artists like Kaufmann and Deutsch. —ECS

Architecture:

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THE
NEW
RESIDENTIAL
COLLEGES
AT
YALE
A
CONVERSATION
ACROSS TIME

Robert A.M. Stern with Gideon Fink Shapiro



The New Residential Colleges at Yale: A Conversation Across Time, by Robert A.M. Stern with Gideon Fink Shapiro (The Monacelli Press): Campus architecture, at least following the advent of Modernism, can only be described as a minefield. Build something too redolent of the past, too in keeping with historical tradition, and you are accused of pastiche and slavishness. Build something too voguish and you end up with Harvard's One Western Ave, the sort of dehumanizing structure which looks as though its walls have been bugged by the KGB. All of this makes Robert A.M. Stern's accomplishment in his new residential colleges for Yale University even more impressive. The buildings are historically situated but not dated, and have already proven welcome additions to Yale's campus. Out soon from

The Monacelli Press is Stern's monograph on his buildings; for the architect Peter Pennoyer's thoughts on the new colleges, see [his piece from the September 2017 issue of *The New Criterion*](#). —BR



Philippe de Champaigne, Saint Augustine, ca. 1645–50, Oil on canvas, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

From the archive: [“Fictions & fabrications in autobiography today,”](#) by James Tuttleton (March 1990). On the question of whether or not autobiography is literature, and its status in contemporary criticism.

From the current issue: “Populists & the past,” by Douglas Carswell. On three historical examples of populist uprisings.

Broadcast: Michael J. Lewis & James Panero discuss the life and career of Vincent Scully, 1920–2017.

Each week the editors of *The New Criterion* offer recommendations on what to read, see, and hear in the world of culture in the weekly Critic’s Notebook. To get it first, subscribe to the free Critic’s Notebook email by [clicking here](#).