Charleston Gaillard Center & Buxton Books Present
A Conversation with Erik Larson
May 16, 2024


Arriving April 30, 2024, The Demon of Unrest “brings to life the pivotal five months between the election of Abraham Lincoln and the start of the Civil War,” a timely story from American history with deep ties to Charleston.

Spend an evening with Erik Larson, the New York Times bestselling author of titles like The Splendid and the Vile, The Devil in the White City, and In the Garden of Beasts, just minutes (and a boat ride) away from where “the passions of North and South came to focus on a lonely federal fortress in Charleston Harbor: Fort Sumter.”

Download photos here.

Tickets on sale Friday, March 29 at 12 PM EST at gaillardcenter.org. Gaillard Center Members receive presale access! To learn more about our Membership program, please contact our Advancement Office at info@gaillardfoundation.org or (843) 718-1578.

ABOUT THE DEMON OF UNREST
A saga of hubris, heartbreak, and heroism at the dawn of the Civil War.
The #1 New York Times bestselling author of The Splendid and the Vile brings to life the pivotal five months between the election of Abraham Lincoln and the start of the Civil War—a slow-burning crisis that finally tore a deeply divided nation in two.

On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln became the fluky victor in a tight race for president. The country was bitterly at odds; Southern extremists were moving ever closer to destroying the Union, with one state after another seceding and Lincoln powerless to stop them. Slavery fueled the conflict, but somehow the passions of North and South came to focus on a lonely federal fortress in Charleston Harbor: Fort Sumter.

Master storyteller Erik Larson offers a gripping account of the chaotic months between Lincoln’s election and the Confederacy’s shelling of Sumter—a period marked by tragic errors and miscommunications, enflamed egos and craven ambitions, personal tragedies and betrayals. Lincoln himself wrote that the trials of these five months were “so great that, could I have anticipated them, I would not have believed it possible to survive them.”

At the heart of this suspense-filled narrative are Major Robert Anderson, Sumter’s commander and a former slave owner sympathetic to the South but loyal to the Union; Edmund Ruffin, a vain and bloodthirsty radical who stirs secessionist ardor at every opportunity; and Mary Boykin Chesnut, wife of a prominent planter, conflicted over both marriage and slavery and seeing parallels between both. In the middle of it all is the overwhelmed Lincoln, battling with his duplicitous Secretary of State, William Seward, as he tries desperately to avert a war that he fears is inevitable—one that will eventually kill 750,000 Americans.

Drawing on diaries, secret communiques, slave ledgers, and plantation records, Larson gives us a political horror story that captures the forces that led America to the brink—a dark reminder that we often don’t see a cataclysm coming until it’s too late.

ABOUT ERIK LARSON

Erik Larson is the author of six New York Times bestsellers, most recently The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz, which examines how Winston Churchill and his “Secret Circle” went about surviving the German air campaign of 1940-41. Erik’s The Devil in the White City is set to be a Hulu limited series; his In the Garden of Beasts is under option by Tom Hanks, for a feature film. He recently published an audio-original ghost story, No One Goes Alone,
which has been optioned by Netflix. Erik lives in Manhattan with his wife, who is a writer and retired neonatologist; they have three grown daughters.

ABOUT BUXTON BOOKS
Buxton Books, opened in 2016, is an independent bookstore located on King Street in downtown Charleston, SC. With a knowledgeable staff, highly curated book selection, and robust event schedule, we value and uphold the traditions of a neighborhood bookstore while also welcoming the visiting reading community. We specialize in multi-day author weekends with events ranging from bespoke walking tours to culinary events, and are proud to partner with incredible venues throughout Charleston, including the Gaillard Center.

ABOUT THE CHARLESTON GAILLARD CENTER
A leader in the performing arts in the Southeast, the Charleston Gaillard Center commissions, supports, and presents ambitious, multidisciplinary cultural programming and provides access to the best local, national, and global artists and companies on its stage. Deeply rooted in the community, the Gaillard Center is committed to elevating local and regional voices and partnering with Charleston institutions to reflect the city's diversity, both on stage and off. Through programming on its public campus and extensive arts education initiatives, the Gaillard Center serves as a platform to participate in community building and essential dialogue.

The Gaillard Center is located in the heart of an inspiration corridor of cultural institutions on the Charleston peninsula, across the street from Mother Emanuel AME Church and half a mile from the International African American Museum (IAAM). Established as a nonprofit in 2015, its campus includes the 1,818-seat Martha and John M. Rivers Performance Hall, a 16,000 square-foot Exhibition Hall, and an adjacent park space that was recently activated for artistic presentations. Find more information and upcoming programming at gaillardcenter.org.

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