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‘The Jennifer Hudson Show’ Spirit Tunnel captures hearts

Taylor Ardrey
USA TODAY

Where is the happiest place on daytime television? At “The Jennifer Hudson Show,” your favorite celebrities and smile from ear-to-ear strolling down their personalized Spirit Tunnel, which has captured hearts online.

Actor Aaron Pierre danced down the hallway while the crew gleefully chanted “Aaron Pierre, that’s Mufasa.” His appearance became a sensation, garnering over 65 million views on TikTok alone. Creators around the world posted their spoofs of his catchy two-step. Some fans even edited themselves into the clip.

Other noteworthy Spirit Tunnelers include former first lady Michelle Obama, actor Angela Bassett, singer Gwen Stefani and rapper GloRilla. Actor Coleman Domingo snapped and moved his shoulders to the crew’s rendition of The Ghost Town DJs’ “My Boo.” Usher grooved down the path in his roller skates to a “Yeah” remix.

“Yeah, we got Usher,” the crew sang. “Got us feeling like he’s ready to roll.”

“It gets them hyped up,” executive producer and showrunner Andy Lassner told USA TODAY, like when an athlete walks through their tunnel and are met with cheers. “I’ve been doing this almost 40 years in the daytime space, and I got to tell you, I’ve never seen guests come out so ready and so energetic.”

During her sit-down with Hudson in October, GloRilla admitted that she had a ball in the Spirit Tunnel: “They just turned me up!” she said.

“The Jennifer Hudson Show” launched in 2022. Hudson wanted it to be a sanctuary for her viewers and guests “to celebrate, to escape, to have fun, for comfort, for peace,” the EGOT winner said during an interview with Variety at the time.

The idea for the Spirit Tunnel was born in the first season when Hudson came out of her dressing room and was greeted by her staff.

“It made her so happy, and the energy she felt was so infectious that she wanted the show’s guests to start feeling what she was feeling,” Lassner explained. “Then, when guests started coming down the hallway on their way into the studio, they were surprised by our staff doing these Spirit Tunnels. Then it seemed to take on a life of its own.”

In an exclusive look into the creation of the tunnel, staff members said it started organically with simple clapping, eventually leveling up to full-blown songs. When the Spirit Tunnel started going viral, they would get tags from friends on social media and see comments about them from viewers.

“Everybody on the staff who’s available at the time can participate, and they get to see them-

See SPIRIT, Page 12D



In October, Tia Mowry and GloRilla were guests on the “The Jennifer Hudson Show.” CHRIS HASTON/WBTW



Erik Larson, author of "The Demon of Unrest," will speak in the Friends of the Library of Collier County Nonfiction Author Series on Monday, Feb. 24, at Hilton Naples. PROVIDED BY FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY OF COLLIER COUNTY / NINA SUBIN

‘Demon of Unrest’ author ERIK LARSON to talk Civil War in Naples

Vicky Bowles
Special to the Daily News

In just five agonizing months — from Abraham Lincoln’s election as president on Nov. 6, 1860, until the first shot fired in the Civil War on April 12, 1861 — America went from unstable to unsustainable.

It takes a historian of Erik Larson’s skill to walk us through those fraught days, in his latest work of nonfiction, “The Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak, and Heroism at the Dawn of the Civil War.”

Larson will be the third speaker in the Friends of the Library of Collier County’s 2025 Nonfiction Author Series, on Monday, Feb. 24.

The series, which is sold out this year, is at the Hilton Naples, featuring a buffet breakfast, a talk by a best-selling nonfiction author and a book signing.

‘Demon of Unrest’ continues storytelling style

This year the Friends will spend \$238,000 to help the 10 branches of the Collier County Public Library system pay for e-books and other crucial programs. Although no tickets are available for this year’s remaining events, the info box offers details on becoming

ing a Friends member and finding out about next year’s Nonfiction Series.

In “The Demon of Unrest,” Larson employs the you-are-there storytelling style that readers have loved in his previous books, from “Isaac’s Storm” to “The Devil in the White City” to “The Splendid and the Vile.”

For the run-up to the outbreak of the Civil War, Larson’s cast of historic characters includes the loyal Union commander of vulnerable Fort Sumter in South Carolina, as well as a bloodthirsty radical secessionist who stirs the pot of violence, the wife of a Southern planter whose letters show her conflicted feelings about slavery — and above it all, President Lincoln, overwhelmed and battling his Cabinet as he tries to avoid the war that appears to be inevitable.

In an exclusive interview, Larson shared the origin of the title and a hint of what he’s working on now.

Naples Daily News: The Reader’s Guide on your publisher’s website notes that the title comes from a letter written by a West Point professor about the crumbling dominance of the Southern planter class. Could you expand on what was meant by “The Demon of Unrest,” and why you chose it as your title?

Erik Larson: As soon as I read that letter, in which

See LARSON, Page 10D

Larson

Continued from Page 1D

the writer expressed his anxiety about the deepening political division in America, I knew “demon of unrest” would be my title. I loved the image of a demon running loose in the countryside spreading disorder and discontent, because it seemed an apt metaphor for the forces of disunion then at play.

NDN: No one can read this book without thinking of Jan. 6, 2021, and so many other events of the recent past. For example, American schools didn’t teach us that in early 1861, a violent pro-slavery mob tried to stop Congress from certifying Lincoln’s Electoral College victory! Have you been tempted to publish a revised edition with more commentary about the present-day parallels?

Book is deep dive into run-up to Civil War

EL: No. The book is not about such parallels, and was never meant to be. In fact, I’m a bit sorry that I mentioned Jan. 6 in my author’s note, though I did so only to explain how this project that I’d already been working on for about year suddenly gained a new relevance with the Capitol insurrection. My goal all along was to put readers as deeply into the run-up to the Civil War as possible, with all the sights, scents and rhetoric of the time, and allow them to take from it what they would.

NDN: What’s your solution for verifying information, given the onslaught of outright fakery, careless social media, ChatGPT and AI? Even dealing with “information” from the long-ago past can be tricky. How will tomorrow’s historians be confident about what they’re seeing?

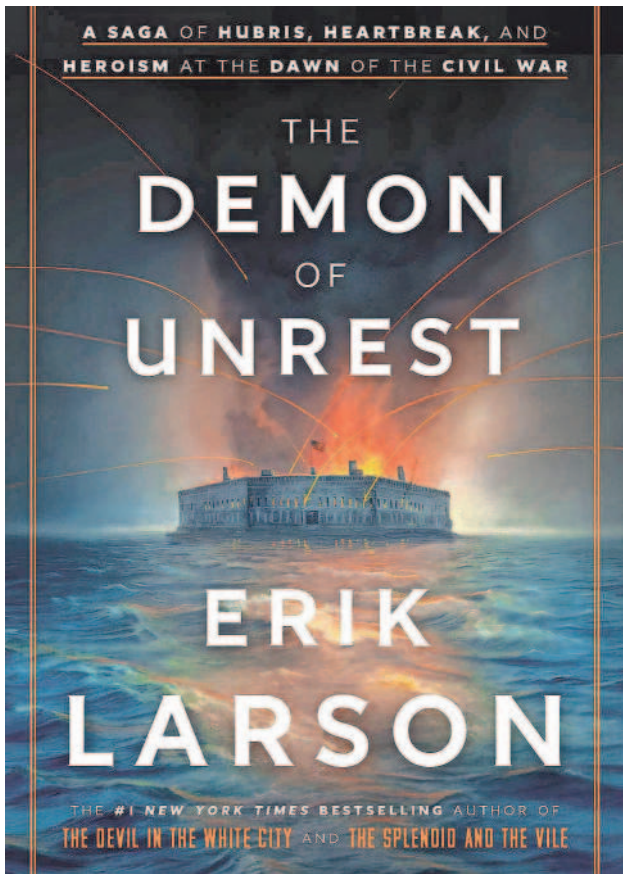
EL: Well, chatbots and deepfakes have certainly made the usual historical minefields more perilous for future investigators. My approach is to immerse myself as deeply as possible in the historical record, and whenever possible to go back to the original sources in their physical locations. I always cross-check my information with multiple sources, and trust my instincts to tell me when something is too good (or too bad) to be true.

NDN: Do you have a new nonfiction book in the works? Or another novel to follow up on “No One Goes Alone”?

He says he never discusses works in progress

EL: Yes — meaning, yes, I have a new work of narrative nonfiction underway, and yes, I have a novel also underway, which I work on early in the morning mainly to keep my writing engines tuned while I’m in the research phase of my nonfiction project. Writing is very much a thing that needs exercise and practice. Will I reveal the subjects of both? No. I adhere strictly to Hemingway’s ethos, that one should never talk about works in progress.

NDN: Repeating a question we asked in 2021: What’s happening with the movie version of “The Dev-



In “The Demon of Unrest,” Larson employs the you-are-there storytelling style that readers have loved in his previous books, from “Isaac’s Storm” to “The Splendid and the Vile.” PROVIDED BY FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY OF COLLIER COUNTY

il in the White City,” which was to star Leonardo DiCaprio?

EL: You really know how to hurt a guy! That book has been under option ever since it was first published — gasp! — 20 years ago. It’s now in the hands of DiCaprio, who, after repeated option renewals, acquired full rights to adapt the book for film. Will it ever become a film or a limited TV series? Who knows? I write books; I leave the rest to the film gods. If not DiCaprio, then who?

NDN: Because the Friends is a nonprofit that benefits public libraries, we like to ask our guest authors: Do you recall an anecdote or special relationship with libraries?

EL: Well, libraries obviously are an invaluable asset to anyone who writes history, and for that matter, anyone who writes anything. But, in high school, my local public library — the Freeport (Long Island) Memorial Library — was the nexus of my social life. Friends and I gathered there in the evening ostensibly to do homework but really to hang out, gossip and flirt. Emphasis on the flirt part. That’s how I got to know my first-ever girlfriend. I give the librarians huge points for not kicking us all out. Today if you go to that library you’ll find a mural and if you look extra hard you’ll find yours truly depicted therein. I’m glad to say Lou Reed, another Freeporter, shares the same mural.

Nonfiction Author Series

What: Author lectures and breakfast at the Hilton Naples that raise funds for the Collier County Public Library system

Details : This year’s series is sold out. Go to collier-friends.org to learn about Friends memberships, which begin at \$40/year and provide access and discounts to many other programs. For more information, contact Marlene Haywood, the Friends’ Program Director, at 239-262-8135 or mhaywood@collier-friends.org.

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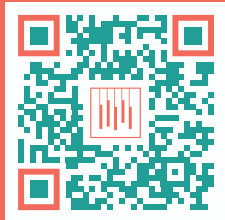
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