

The New Criterion

Notes & Comments June 2002

A note of thanks

On The New Criterion's 20th anniversary year.

With this issue, *The New Criterion* completes its twentieth year of publication. Twenty years is a significant anniversary for any magazine devoted to serious criticism of culture and the arts. For a magazine as outspoken and heterodox as *The New Criterion* has been, living through a twentieth birthday is almost a miracle.

We hasten to acknowledge that this achievement has been a collaborative effort. Indeed, it has been a collaboration of many hands. As with other magazines, the excellence of *The New Criterion* is inseparable from the excellence of its primary intellectual resource: its writers. From its very first issues, *The New Criterion* has been exceedingly fortunate in attracting distinguished literary talent. Some of that talent was already established and well known. Much of it was not. Many prominent figures on the critical landscape today first made their reputations in our pages, and we are proud to have nurtured so many young, untried writers. As we conclude this anniversary year, it seems appropriate to salute the many hands and minds that have helped fill our pages for two hundred issues. To all of them we owe a debt of thanks: together, they have made *The New Criterion* an informed, lively, and insightful repository of critical intelligence.

We know from our correspondence that what some readers find entertaining and informative, others find infuriating. We are grateful for both sorts of response. It has always been our aim to delight as well as instruct, and naturally we are pleased to have found a committed group of readers that shares our critical outlook. But we are also pleased by those readers who disagree with what we publish. Criticism aims not at unanimity but at informed debate, and if we have managed to spark disagreement and debate on contentious issues we know we are doing our job. A magazine—any cultural enterprise—is only as vital as its audience. We are grateful to you, our readers—both our friends and members of the loyal opposition—for helping to make *The New Criterion* one of the most important voices for serious criticism today.

Our writers have made *The New Criterion* eloquent and incisive; our readers have given currency to the ideas expressed in our pages. But *The New Criterion* could not exist without a third group of collaborators: our funders. Like almost all magazines devoted to high culture and serious criticism,

The New Criterion operates at a considerable yearly deficit and is therefore structured as a tax-exempt entity. *The New Criterion* could never have been created without a group of visionary individuals that understood the intellectual and cultural potential of a magazine like *The New Criterion* and that was well placed to organize funding for the venture. We are profoundly grateful to this core group of individuals and to the institutions they represent for making *The New Criterion* possible. Their steadfast support allowed a daring experiment to become a respected standard-bearer for serious engagement with culture.

We are also profoundly grateful to those individuals who have lately rallied to our cause and have helped secure the future of *The New Criterion*. We wish to thank all those who have become Friends of *The New Criterion* and who are helping us prepare for the years ahead, especially Carol Selle and Donald Oresman, prime movers of the Friends. This is also the place to mention our special gratitude to another individual whose extraordinary help over the years has been indispensable to the survival of *The New Criterion*. We mean Donald Kahn, a lover and supporter of classical music and high culture whose generosity to *The New Criterion* and to other worthy institutions has been exemplary. A magazine like *The New Criterion* only makes sense if it has the freedom of critical independence. Mr. Kahn has done a great deal to secure that freedom. We are immensely grateful for his friendship and generosity.