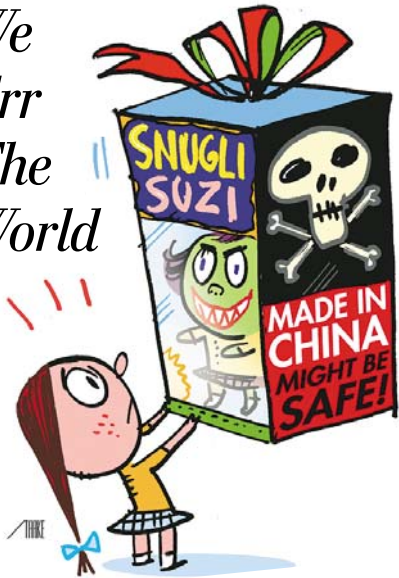


THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 746:  
We Err  
The World



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

China: In Toys We Lead

A couple of years back, we invited you to come up with new mottoes for the 50 states. Loser-275-Times-Over Kevin Dopart, having seen a "Canada — in six words or less" challenge in Our Northern Neighbor's National Post, suggests that we expand that contest to include all the countries. The Empress has her reservations about this contest, but invites you to cancel them: **This week: Give us a motto or short slogan for any country in the world.**

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets a can of Possum Ding Dongs, made with real possum, sent to us by Drew Bennett of West Plains, Mo. Drew wants us to know, however, that "we are much too cosmopolitan in the Ozarks for Possum Ding Dongs," and that he acquired this item in Alabama.

**Other runners-up** win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called that week) get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Jan. 7. Put "Week 746" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published Jan. 26. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Dave Prevar.

REPORT FROM WEEK 742

in which we sought more out-there clues for a crossword that ran in The Post this past May. The puzzle's actual author, the renowned Paula Gamache, got to help with the final judging. She did not, at least to us, declare her creation "violated." Because so many entrants offered something for almost every clue, we

ended up with a lot of duplication, but sometimes the funniest answer just happened to be sent in by 32 people. On the other hand, there were a few words for which no one managed anything thrilling. We'll spare you those. (We've included the winner and runners-up below, rather than show them out of order.)

ACROSS

- 1. AVEC: U-Deux song " \_\_ ou Sans Vous" (Randy Lee, Burke)
- 5. OWES: Calling Mr. Unseld! (David McEwan, Ellicott City)
- 9. SLIDE: A rule that's out of date (Fred Dawson, Beltsville)
- What Kucinich's poll numbers can't do (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- 14. LILA: Girl Simon & Garfunkel sang about in "The Boxer" (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)
- 15. ARLO: Woody offshoot (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.; Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Jennifer Lopez's sister Arlene (J. Larry Schott, Gainesville, Fla.)

In "Alice's Restaurant," he played Arlo (Randy Lee)

16. PETRO: The oilmighty dollar (Chris Doyle)

Toy craze that followed the mood ri (Roy Ashley, Washington)

17. PRESSKILT: A sure-fire way to beam up Scotty (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

19. LOHAN: Future star of "The Parent Trap" (Kevin Dopart)

20. SUNHATS: GOP global warming solution (J.F. Martin, Naples, Fla.; Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)

21. SPINETS: White House press office interns (Mike Dailey, Centreville)

Roswell PR task (Maria Rowan, Kensington)

23. SABBATH: What you take every Sab, whether you need it or not (many entries)

25. ATEE: Tiger starts with this (Kevin Dopart)

26. AUG: What Barbara Walters says on Talk Like a Pirate Day (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

27. ACNE: Redskin problem that's treatable (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

29. WIG: Parton's third-most-impressive feature (Russ Taylor, Vienna)

35. the winner of the Inker: ARLEN: What Texans call my country (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

36. EDU: Usually followed with "idiot," in my experience (Ed Conti, Raleigh, N.C.)

37. NAH: But isn't torture wrong, Mr. Rumsfeld? (Drew Bennett)

38. TOOBALD: Britney's problem from top to bottom (many entries)

The only thing that kept Terry Bradshaw from scoring (Maria Rowan)

41. IDO: Two really big words (Warren Tanabe, Annapolis)

42. RUNON: A cruel but not unusual sentence (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

A very anxious actor in a very small role (Ari Unikoski, Tel Aviv)

43. EDAM: Cheese that's made backward (many entries)

44. TAR: Mississippi Michelin (Cy Gardner, Arlington)

45. ITER: Place to resuscitate sick PCs (Randy Lee; Peter Boice, Rockville)

One who neuters. (Russell Beland)

46. MSG: Gloria Steinem, to her proteges (Randy Lee)

What we USED to worry about in Chinese products. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

48. TUBE: The Hamlet Channel (John O'Byrne)

50. STOPGAP: What Nixon told Rose Mary Woods after 18½ minutes (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

57. ACCEDES: Lets spouse control the thermostat (Kevin Dopart)

59. INUIT: I wz rt (Chris Parkin, Silver Spring)

60. POLKADOLT: Nasty bumper sticker from the 1844 presidential race (many entries)

Second runner-up: Someone who plays air accordion (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

62. ROLLE : With 12 Down, questionable sushi (Kevin Dopart)

63. ERIE: Lake by the Mistake (Kevin d'Eustachio, Lynchburg, Va.)

67. NEAR: How much corn y'git with supper (Michael Reinemer, Annandale)

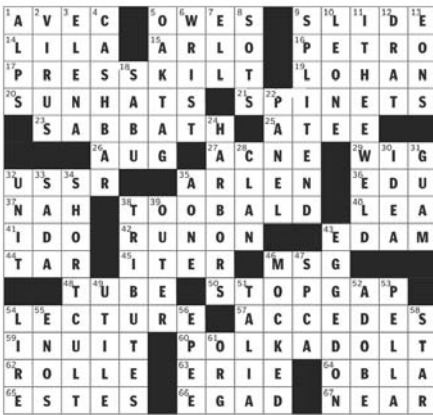
DOWN

1. ALPS: Assists Eliza Doolittle (J. Larry Schott)

2. VIRUS: \_\_ bag, scientific term for child in day care (Kelly Esposito, Frederick)

Gates crasher (Jim Ward, Manassas)

4. CASHBAR: No woman ever said, "Take me to the . . ." (Chris Parkin)



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6. WRIST: Only place where it's a relief to get slapped (Beverley Sharp, Washington)

7. ELL: New metrosexual fashion magazine (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)

8. SOTS: Fraternity admission tests (Ira Allen, Bethesda)

9. SPLITEND: Thong's purpose, briefly (Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)

10. LEONE: Monsieur Right (Michael Turniansky, Pikesville, Md.)

11. ITHEEWELD: Third runner-up: What the knight said to his bride before leaving on the crusade (Marleen May, Rockville)

12. DRAT: Dan Rather's gangsta name (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

22. PANEL: Superman's cousin the movie critic (Horace LaBadie, Dunellon, Fla.)

28. CLAN: What a kilt SHOULD reveal (Brendan Beary)

30. IDEA: The Swedish light bulb store (many entries)

32. UNIT: Lousy put-down (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

International Geek Squad (Christopher Lamora, Arlington)

34. SHORTCULT: First runner-up, winner of the Over the Hill gag bra: Twig Davidians (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

38. TRIBUTES: What bibutes aspire to be (Cy Gardner)

39. OUTER: More obviously gay (Russell Beland)

The second-most-interesting part of a thigh (Dan Ramish, Vienna)

43. EGGEDON: Dinosaur made extinct by poachers (Cy Gardner)

46. MOCKED: What Jackie Mason STILL does to Sulli-van (Andrew Hoenig)

47. SPCA: Line dance at dog weddings (Tom Murphy, Bowie)

49. UTILE: What you want when you have a Q on your rack (J. Larry Schott)

51. TALIA: NOT Jenna Bush's middle name! (Brendan Beary)

52. ADOBE: A joint in Taos (Chris Parkin)

53. PELLA: Stanley Kowalski's cry of pane (Maria Rowan; Larry Yungk, Arlington)

Your specimen, please, Miss Fitzgerald (Paula Gamache, Rye, N.Y.)

Next Week: Picture This, or Captions Outrageous

A Musical Takes Its Cue From Politics

IOWA, From C1

ical Iowa caucusgoer," and the four candidates who end up splitting their vote. The two-hour show is part tutorial (there's a mock caucus toward the end of Act 2), mostly satirical (along the lines of a "Saturday Night Live" sketch) but ultimately a celebration of what many deem an obscure, incomprehensible quadrennial exercise in electoral politics: the Iowa caucuses. And with songs such as the Cole Porter-tinged "Anything for a Vote," the witty "It's Time to Go to Iowa" and the tap dance number "The Tough Question Sidestep," caucusgoers are guaranteed at least a couple of chuckles.

Though Ford insists that his fictional candidates aren't based on any of the current candidates, the audience easily draws comparisons. Nora Halliday, a black woman, is a cross between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Harrison Tate, a moderate Republican, brings to mind Fred Thompson and Rudy Giuliani. The Rev. Stanley Jensen is part Mike Huckabee, part Sam Brownback, while Benjamin Goldman is a gay and much heavier Dennis Kucinich.

But it's the Iowans, the caucusgoers themselves, whom Ford makes the heart of the show.

The idea for a musical hit Ford in the early 1980s, when he was student at Iowa State University and observed obscure candidates standing on street corners desperately campaigning. He first wrote an outline six years ago and finally presented a staged reading two days before the 2004 caucuses. That generated enough underground buzz that he decided to produce the show himself.

"Caucus!" was originally set to open on Jan. 13. But real-life electoral politics got in the way when the caucus's original date — Jan. 14 — was moved to Jan. 3.

The fictional caucus and the actual caucus were in conflict.

Sometimes it all seems like an off-off-off-Broadway play. Think of the missed cues and late entrances. Fred



BY GARY FANDEL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Director Tony Humrichouser, left, and creator Robert John Ford on the set of "Caucus! The Musical" in Des Moines.

Thompson, anyone? And Clinton's seeming struggle between two images — soft, familial Hillary and tough, experienced Hillary.

Most everything seems to be for show. Like when Huckabee decided to go pheasant hunting the morning after Christmas and a throng of reporters, including this one, watched the former governor shoot while wearing a microphone from CNN. "A brilliant photo op," a fellow reporter joked.

"Of course politics is theater, especially when you live in Iowa," says Julie Bell, 46, who plays Sen. Halliday in the musical. She's a medical practitioner by day, a pastor at Living Truth Church in this city's east side on the weekends and an actor in her limited spare time. She's a Democrat and still undecided about whom to support.

She's standing outside the women's dressing room minutes after the show, chatting with Christine Mallett, who goes to Bell's church and showed up to see her pastor wear her acting hat.

"They're not themselves, these politicians," says Mallett, 29, a cashier at a local Hy-Vee grocery store. She, too, is undecided. "It's sad. Politics, as we have it now, aren't letting these people be people. They're

packaged, like products in a store. They're performing, like they're on-stage."

Then Mallett laughs, pauses, gives Bell a look and adds, "You were a very good actress, Sister Julie."

Oh, the laughs, the agony, the drama! It's perhaps the reason why Ford added the "I" on "Caucus!" Even when the stage goes dark between scenes, the voice-overs that serve as the fictional candidates' infomercials and attack ads fill the theater. They sting the way hard truth does, and the audience can't help but laugh off their discomfort.

Like when Jensen, the musical's conservative Christian, tells his supporters on Christmas Day: "The fact that Iowa caucuses were moved closer to Christmas this year wasn't a coincidence. It was an act of divine intervention, because the Father wants us to remember that Jesus is the reason for the political season."

And when Goldman, the liberal gay Jew, issues this attack ad against his Republican and Democratic opponents: "Harrison Tate says he will fight hard to protect the sanctity of marriage. Aren't you curious what his three ex-wives will have to say

about that? . . . And why does Rev. Stanley Jensen spend so much time preaching against gay marriage? Is he overzealous or overcompensating?"

All the while, the "typical Iowa caucusgoer" shakes his head, disgusted and frustrated. Indeed the most dramatic part of the musical comes about 15 minutes from the end. The "typical Iowa caucusgoer" — the eldest Wise, a father of two, a former Republican disillusioned by the Bush presidency — stands on the stage, without a song or a dance, and says: "It's been getting ugly from Day One. Look at them. I can't endorse any of these. Why did I agree to be a part of this?"

The actor in the role, who's lived in Iowa for more than 25 years, says that was the hardest scene for him to do in the two-hour show. He is Greg Millar, a 50-year-old college admissions counselor. He's still undecided about whom to caucus for.

"It just hits a little too close to home, I guess. I'd never done it in front of an audience until tonight. They were quiet, thinking probably about the same thing I was thinking about," says Millar. "But this is what theater does, right?"

Life imitating art, on the Iowa caucus stage.

Dresden Dolls, Creating Delight Amid Disarray

If you ever wanted to plan a disjointed concert, Thursday night's Dresden Dolls show at the Sixth and I Historic Synagogue would serve as a perfect template. For beginners, the 5:30 p.m. start time was a pain for a lot of fans. The opening act, burlesque singer Meow Meow, arrived late due to train problems. So the headliners went on even earlier than expected, only to take a brief intermission after a handful of songs to let Meow perform for 10 minutes.

Throw in the fact that it was the first show of the Dolls' tour, they had to motor up to Baltimore for another gig later that night, singer Amanda Palmer was fighting the flu and that they devoted a large portion of the set to B-sides and covers, and you'd expect nothing short of a train wreck.

But out of the chaos

emerged a unique and largely entertaining show that presented the Dolls as more than just a goth-tinged novelty act. Sure, Palmer and drummer Brian Viglione were caked in makeup, and the jaunty piano of such songs as "Coin-Operated Boy" and "Mandy Goes to Med School" was straight out of the Weimar Republic. But "Glass Slipper" showed impressive range, both emotional and vocal, as Palmer's flu-enhanced rasp only made her sound more sincere. A cover of Neutral Milk Hotel's "Two-Headed Boy" (with Viglione on guitar) was enthusiastic if a bit ill-advised, but the version of Leonard Cohen's "One of Us Cannot Be Wrong" was a powerful closer. Palmer chanted the final measure while walking down the synagogue's center aisle as the enraptured crowd stared and gazed in silence.

— David Malitz



BY LISA GORDON

The Dresden Dolls: Brian Viglione and Amanda Palmer.