

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 793: Take the Fifth



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Breed El Gato Malo with Smokin Stogies and name the foal Five Lives Left.

This week we celebrate the about-the-fifth anniversary of the Empress's reign — if we don't, who will? — with some instant nostalgia. **This week: Enter any Style Invitational contest from Week 725 through Week 789.** Here are the restrictions: **You may submit only one entry per contest** (which still lets you enter as many as 65 entries, were you so inclined, and please don't be). **And each entry must include the word "five" or "fifth" or something fiveish,** as in the example above from Week 759, **or — depending on your favorite anniversary tradition — something involving (a) wood or (b) silverware.** You may refer to events that have occurred since the contest was printed; for contests that ask you to use The Post from a certain day or week, use today's or this week's. You can find all the contests at www.washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets — just in time to be too late for Christmas — two especially fine Christmas ornaments: First, from 145-Time Loser Dave Prevar, a very fancy, large, extremely effeminate reindeer who is balancing on a little ball and wearing a purple feather boa, not to mention bells hanging from his or her glittery antlers. Oh, he or she is also wearing large red bows around his or her ankles. And the Empress will add a personal find from the dollar store: an ornament that seems to be a hand grenade dressed as a skiing Santa, complete with goggles that perhaps were painted on by a blind person, and ski poles that reach no farther down than the bottom of Grenade Santa's torso.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air freshener (Fir Stink for their First Ink). 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, Dec. 8. Put "Week 793" 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 Dec. 27. 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 results is by Mae Scanlan; this week's Honorable Mentions headline is by Mike Ostapiej. The idea for this week's contest is by Kevin Dopart.

REPORT FROM WEEK 789

in which, amid all the talk of the "Bush Doctrine," we asked you to come up with some other doctrines named for various people or entities:

- 4 The Joe the Plumber Doctrine: When you plumb the depths and stir it up, you're bound to get some on you.** (John Bunyan, Cincinnati)
- 3 The Joan Rivers Doctrine: Sew on a happy face.** (Rick Haynes, Potomac)

2 the winner of the Restop 2 Disposable Travel Toilet: The Palin Doctrine: Well, that's easy to explain: I have rules I believe in following that are based on my doctrine, which sets out the rules that are important to me if I'm to act in accordance to my doctrine and the rules that support it. (Marjorie Streeter, Reston)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER
The Obama Doctrine: Now what?
 (Kevin Mellema, Falls Church)

PETERED PRINCIPLES: HONORABLE MENTIONS

The Palin Doctrine: Marriage is defined as the union between one man and one woman. Or one boy and one girl, in the case of my daughter and — heyyyy, bucko, where's that ring? (Brenda Ware Jones, Jackson, Miss.)

The Danielle Steel Doctrine: Write what you know (will sell). (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

The Hefner Doctrine: Don't hire till you see the whites of their thighs. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

The CIA Doctrine: Get intel inside. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

The Elizabeth Dole Doctrine: Never waste 13 days in North Carolina. (Dot Yufer, Newton, W.Va.)

The Guy Ritchie Doctrine: If you can't marry wisely, marry wealthy. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

Putin's Precept: Building a defensive shield against our offensive missiles is an egregious act of provocation. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

The Darwin List Doctrine: Hey, watch this! (Hugh Pullen, Vienna)

The Real Bush Doctrine: The only way to ensure that our enemies don't destroy our freedom is to destroy it ourselves first. (Jon Graft, Centerville)

The W Doctrine: Let a smirk be your umbrella. (Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)

The Lewinsky Doctrine: No stain, no gain. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

The Easter Bunny Doctrine: Look cute, leave candy, and they'll never suspect you're a symbol of pagan fertility. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

The Angelina Jolie Doctrine: The best way to protect your privacy is to sit for as many interviews as you can book, and mention in all of them that you'd really like more privacy. (Beth Morgan, San Francisco)

The Mugabe Doctrine: Make every Zimbabwean a billionaire. (John Flynn, Olney)

The Wikipedia Doctrine: You can make this stuff up. (Chris Rollins, Cumberland, Md.)

The China Doctrine: The squeaky wheel gets the boiling oil. (Chris Rollins)

The O.J. Simpson Doctrine: If at first you don't succeed in getting convicted, try, try again. (Mike Ostapiej, Tracy, Calif.; Karen C. Love, Morehead City, N.C., a First Offender)

The Donald Trump Doctrine: Never let them see you sweet. (Mike Ostapiej)

The Carville Doctrine: The only good Republican is a bedded Republican. (David Garratt, Glenn Dale)

The Wolf Blitzer Doctrine: Coming up, my doctrine for repeating the obvious! Stick around, I think you'll wanta hear this! (Leo Agan, Annapolis, a First Offender)

The Elisabeth Hasselbeck Doctrine: If you're not the lead dog, the View never changes. (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

The Dylan Doctrine: Don't ever mfffw your grgnwnmls. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

The Pit Bull Doctrine: I may look funny with lipstick, but you'll look funnier without an arm. (Lawrence McGuire)

The Zorro Doctrine: It's not vandalism, it's free speech. (Lawrence McGuire)

The Lieberman Doctrine: Carefully determine the winning candidate in any election, and then back the other guy. (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

The Iceland Doctrine: Go for broke. (Bob Reichenbach, Philadelphia)

The Amy Winehouse Doctrine: A friend with weed is a friend indeed. (Mike Ostapiej)

The Golden Retriever Doctrine: Is that a ball? Is that a ball? Is that a ball? Is that a ball? (Beth Morgan)

The Empress Doctrine: Droll, baby, droll! (Phil Frankenfeld)

The Empress Doctrine: Always bury the filthy jokes at the end. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

Next Week: If Only! or History Repeals Itself



BY BRADY HOLT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Skiing Grenade Santa, just one of two fabulous runner-up prizes this week.



BY KEN HOWARD — METROPOLITAN OPERA

Marcello Giordani, top, as Faust and John Relyea as Mephistopheles in the Metropolitan Opera's production of Berlioz's "Damnation de Faust." The Nov. 22 performance was simulcast in movie theaters.

The Met's 'Faust' at the Multiplex: The Devil's in the Details

OPERA, From Page C1

Whatever you call it, the Lepage "Damnation" is certainly spectacle. The 50-year-old Canadian director has been doing avant-garde theater work for years, and staged the world premiere of Lorin Maazel's opera "1984." But his chief identifier these days has been the Cirque du Soleil: He designed the show "Ka" in Las Vegas, and is working on another.

His "Damnation" actually had its premiere in Japan in 1999 — Susan Graham sang Marguerite then, as she does at the Met now — but has been re-imagined for the Met with a lot of the interactive technology he tried out in "Ka." That gives the whole thing a circuslike feel: Devils hanging from the rafters! Soldiers walking straight up a vertical wall! After the underwater ballet, a colleague asked whether it was live or filmed. Watching the blurry blue forms projected on the screens covering part of the stage, it was hard to tell.

The party line on this high-tech approach is that it enables Berlioz's sprawling, episodic work, which was first performed as a concert piece, to be brought to the opera

stage. This rather overstates the case: "Damnation" is staged every so often, particularly in Europe (there have been four new productions in the past two years, and the San Francisco Opera beat the Met to the punch with a production imported from Munich in 2003). And if theaters routinely mount Wagner's epic works, then Berlioz's cannot be so great a challenge. If "Damnation" is not staged more often, it is as much because of its rather ungainly dramatic organization, or lack thereof — it is more a sequence of scenes than a narrative per se — as the challenges it poses to stage directors.

From this description, "Damnation" would seem to be an ideal work for the cinema. Lepage's production, however, is conceived as live theater, and this proved a weakness in the simulcast. The fundamental tension of opera lies in the contrast between intimate emotions and grand scale, something Lepage's large-scale set emphasized: A metal grid, it could be transformed into a single huge surface, like the lake scene described above, or a series of cubbyholes where individuals faced their own small fates, so that Faust (Marcello Giordani) contemplated suicide surrounded by

rows of oblivious students, each in his own isolation.

But the camera is about blowing open this contrast and revealing the intimacy in each moment. Some have seen this as a huge advantage of these simulcasts: The audience is truly able to see the singers. And certainly the camera made it a lot easier to follow what exactly was going on. But most of Lepage's achievements in this staging have to do with big set pieces, like the row of crucified Christs appearing to Faust, surrounded by the jewellike tones of slowly kaleidoscoping stained-glass windows. In the movie theater, some of this fell flat — the theatrical effects were, after all, less impressive than your average film action shot — and some of it got lost all together as the camera zeroed in on an insignificant detail.

Another signature feature of the simulcasts is that everyone sounds great. There have been complaints over the years about the sound distortion of the Met's live radio broadcasts on Saturday afternoons. Whatever system they're using for the movie-theater versions seems like the aural equivalent of pink lighting in the ladies' room: It evens out blemishes and flatters every com-

plexion.

That might seem like an advantage, but I am not sure it is; the listener's ear grows lazy, and the singers get away with a lot. Graham sounded fantastic both in the house and in the movie theater; she was the production's unquestioned star. But in the case of Giordani, who offers himself as a kind of Iron Man of opera (last week, he sang two roles on a single day), the miking helped mask the fact that his sound no longer has the suppleness or the high extension needed for the French repertory he used to claim as his own.

As for John Relyea, he offered, in the house, a variant on the tried-and-true devil shtick that opera-goers have seen countless times before, in a voice that is competent enough, but expressively a cipher; the camera allowed it to appear as if something special was going on.

What was special was the music, which is worth a second hearing, particularly under James Levine, who along with Graham was responsible for the bulk of the expression of the performance. The problem with Lepage's staging is that it remained emotionally two-dimensional: He offered lots of

vivid images, and then kept repeating them, but they remained more circus tricks than revelations.

Last year, opera simulcasts seemed the burgeoning form of the future. This year, it is an open question what effect the economic downturn will have.

Emerging Pictures, which partners with opera companies across Europe, is keeping a full program of Italian and German productions in American movie theaters (including Baltimore's Charles Theatre); it will even offer a simulcast of opening night at La Scala with Verdi's "Don Carlo" on Dec. 7. The Bigger Picture, the company teaming with the San Francisco Opera and other opera houses, says that it will announce its next batch of movie-theater broadcasts in the coming months. And the Met, for all its widely alleged financial woes, continues its simulcasts.

The jury is out, however, on whether this is really winning a new audience to opera. At Mazza Gallerie, certainly, the enthusiastic audience looked very much like the same crowd one sees at the Kennedy Center. It's not a new form, then, but promulgation of the old.