the winner of the fantastic "Shells Playing Poker" sculpture:

Jethrogenous Zone: Appalachia. (Judy Blanchard, Novi, Mich.)

Waiterhole: Where your server disappears to when you're ready

Rhettriever: A dog that doesn't give a damn when you call him.

### **CAROLYN HAX**

Adapted from a recent online discussion.

#### **Dear Carolyn:**

I nag my new husband. I've gotten worse since we married, which is also when he moved into my house. He is the best partner I could ask for, and we communicate well and are very loving, but I cannot keep myself from criticizing him. I'm determined to develop good patterns now that will wear well over our life together. In the past you've advised finding the source of unhappiness. Is there anything else I can do to supplement your advice?

Naggy McGee II

If Step 1 is to identify unhappiness, then Step 2 is to make happiness. Start with a conscious and nothing but "thank you" --every time your husband does something nice, thereby willfully cutting off the criticism before it comes out of your mouth.

You can also expand that to consciously focusing on, and expressing, good things. "You look nice today," "The kitchen looks great," "I'm so glad you suggested going out to dinner tonight." Noticing his contribution both rewards - and thereby encourages — attentiveness, and reinforces your sense of well-being, which will make you a more attentive partner, too.

Forced cheer will only postpone the reckoning, so if you have to look really really hard to find anything to compliment, then my advice cycles back to Step 1: Find underlying problem, face underlying problem.

#### **Re: Nagg-ee:**

So, what if you're on the other end of the nagging? When we first got married, my husband and I each complimented each other frequently; his praise of my housekeeping, good looks, parenting skills, etc., really mean a lot to me

But that has dried up the last couple of years, and now I seem to hear only when I've done something wrong. I think my behavior hasn't really changed -AND I have made a concerted effort to give what I would like: regular specific praise for my husband's own excellent

housekeeping and parenting, etc. He is very prickly and defensive about any criticism, so I just don't do it — but how do I say, "I really love it when you appreciate me"? Arizona

Wait for a relatively calm moand have the

## The Style Invitational >>

#### **REPORT FROM WEEK 835**

in which, to mark the Empress's 300th column, we asked you to coin words that included the letters T, H, R and E, contiguously but in any order:

for the check. (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

(Ellen Raphaeli, Falls Church)

THE WINNER OF THE INKER Interhuh: The grunt you make to let a phone caller know you're still on the line. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

Zithereens: What's left after the

instruments onstage. (Tom Witte)

Thermopoly: Board game whose

object is to lose gloriously. (Ann

kindergarten pottery project. (Russ

Thermockstat: A hotel room device

designed to make you think you can

actually adjust the temperature.

(Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)

Hater-hater: Someone who is

prejudiced against bigots. (Tom

Brotherel: A gay bordello. (Lois

Rhettrovirus: Scarlett fever. (Judy

coaster to a gentle stop. (Christopher

**Dethrilled: Brought the roller** 

Dasher-turf: Snow on the roof.

popularized by Jack Benny. (Russell

**Grrrrthe! What the student said** 

when assigned to read "Faust."

**Dithrethpect: Teasing people who** 

have speech impediments. (Ira Allen,

(Peter Metrinko, Gainesville)

**Rethirty-nine: An action** 

(Mae Scanlan, Washington)

**Derth: Lord Vader's clueless** 

Therapin: The University of

Marvland psychology department

mascot. (Jane Frank, McLean, a First

brother. (Craig Dykstra)

Earthenwear: Aftermath of a

folk musicians smash their

Martin, Bracknell, England)

Taylor, Vienna)

Witte)

Blanchard)

Douthitt, Arlington

Lamora, Arlington)

Beland, Fairfax)

Bethesda)

Offender)

**ET CETERHA: HONORABLE MENTIONS** 

Urethrill: No line at the ladies' room. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

VREthren: The regulars on the train in from Manassas. (Stephen Dudzik, Olnev) **Gloatherd: A stadium full of** 

Yankees fans. (Tom Witte)

Jesther: Biblical gueen of comedy. (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

Mehtric: A measure of indifference. (Kevin Dopart; Mike Turniansky, Pikesville, Md.)

Brither: A person who insists that President Obama was born in Israel. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Twither: A social network for the elderly. (Judy Blanchard)

Hester-hemotype: A. (Chris Doyle)

Thatthere: An adjective used in Appalachia: "Bluebelle-Mae, pass me thatthere bowl of possum scrapple, thankye." (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

**Blatherlogue: The** Congressional Record. (Ira Allen)

**Re-thing: What the surgeon** did to John Wayne Bobbitt. (Craig Dykstra)

**Cashtree: The parents of a** college student. (Roger Dalrymple, Gettysburg, Pa.)

And Last: Laughterthought: The brilliant Invitational entry you come up with just after the deadline. (Ann Martin)

Next Week: Other People's **Business, or Under New** Manglement



101-time Loser Mae Scanlan, author of the neologism "Methuselay: Romance at the old folks' home," models the latest Loser T-shirt at the most recent Loser Brunch.

PHOTOS BY PIE SNELSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



## Week 839: Overlap Dance

Defibrillatte: Really, really strong coffee.

Baseballoon: A coach who has "put on a few pounds" since his plaving days

**Cicadavers:** Deceased people who surface every four years or so, for a Chicago mayoral election.

t's been four weeks since the last neologism contest, which this season seems tantamount to the time since the Redskins wore helmets with the R on them. Here's one we did 16 months ago with a different part of the dictionary: This week: Overlap two words that share two or more consecutive letters anywhere in the word, not just the beginning and end — into a single longer word, and define it. AND your portmanteau word must begin with a letter from A though D, though the second word in the combination may start with any letter

The examples above (by John Griessmayer, Toby Gottfried and Dave Zarrow, respectively) are from the first time we did this contest, back in 2002. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place

receives a trio of coffee mugs labeled with the names and logos of the CIA, the NSA and the DIA, courtesy of Super-Secret Loser Cheryl Davis, who will soon just sort of disappear. And third- and fourth-place winners have their choice of the yearned-for Loser Mug or the newest version of the coveted Loser T-Shirt, shown here by Style Invitational Swimsuit and T-Shirt Model Mae Scanlan. It's the same design on the front, but there's a new slogan (a runner-up in the previous slogan contest), by Horace LaBadie. And the shirt is now in lovely fall Loser colors.

Honorable Mentions 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, Oct. 26. Put "Week 839" 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 Nov. 14. 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 was submitted by both Tom Witte and Craig Dykstra; this week's honorable-mentions name is by Judy Blanchard.

**ONLINE DISCUSSION** Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join The Style Conversational at *washingtonpost.com/styleconversational*.

The Full 'Monty Python,' Uncoiling in Six Parts

Sardonic and

even cynical,

took shots at

everything

proper.

Monty Python



The Washington Post

K4

something we need to talk about?" conversation, because "I'm beginning to feel as if everything I do is wrong. I'd like to know if it's me, or if something else is bothering you and it's just coming out at home."

Having examples handy always helps, as does keeping your cool, as does treating this as a joint effort toward the greater good, vs. an accusatory ambush. If he gets prickly, then hold that up as an example supporting your point.

#### **Re: Naggie:**

My husband and I got to the brink of divorce over not appreciating each other enough. Saying "thank you," stopping criticism and looking for compliments can feel a little fake at first, but it becomes normal over time. Fifteen years later, we do it automatically and it makes for a really nice life.

Anonymous

Thanks. We're often taught courtesy as something we use when out in the world, and then we come home and take people for granted. But if you're grateful, it's not fake, and if you're faking gratitude, why are you sharing a life, right?

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on www. washingtonpost.com/ discussions.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or tellme@washpost.com.

GNICKGALIFIANAKIS 10,17.09



BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

BY ILIANA ARIAS FOR THE WASHINGTON POS

The exquisite dancing of Ballet Nacional de Cuba ballerina Viengsay Valdes and Jonathan Jordan claimed the stage.

# Impeccable Moves Marred by Music

DANCE, From Page C1

Who knew that DiMuro, the longtime member of the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, would be the perfect actor-clown for ballet?

The ballet was cast from strength throughout, with new hire Brooklyn Mack displaying calm power as Espada, the capetwirling toreador; Jade Payette was a classically polished Queen of the Dryads, and Sona Kharatian burned with submerged fire as Mercedes, the street dancer.

The role of Kitri calls for more jumps than just about any other classical part, and Valdes's flights in space were tireless — and huge. But I have never seen another dancer who has so perfected the art of standing still. She could balance on the tip of one exquisitely arched foot for such a long time that some in the audience were moved to helpless laughter at the sheer outrageousness of her poise. I joined them; what else could one do?

She pulled off the amazing, time and again. At one point, she stood in perfect arabesque, balanced high en pointe on one leg, with the other raised behind her. Still balanced, she moved the outstretched leg into passe and developpe front, which is to say she bent the leg and brought it crisply underneath her, then unfolded it high and straight again in front of her, as if she were

going to tap herself on the nose with her satin slipper. She even prolonged the balance here, luxuriating in the stillness of a theater in which not another soul was breathing.

Jordan, meanwhile, had simply gotten out of the way. A clean, purposeful technician, he could claim the stage when it was his time to do so, but now he stood awaiting her signal. After a few beats Valdes flashed him a you-may-touch-menow look. Lowering her leg with the tranquillity of a queen, she became a mortal biped once more, back on earth with the rest of us.

A memorable performance such as this — saddled with taped music. Talk about a downer. It's worth noting that taped sound is unusual in the world of full-length ballets, especially those danced in a premier space like the Kennedy Center. It's the kind of experience you have with the touring troupes of cut-rate Russians who perform at community colleges.

This wasn't a blending of recorded elements with a few live players; this was entirely secondhand the Austrian-born music-meister of Russian ballet's heyday — is a harsh sentence indeed. His fast tempos, the bouncy waltzes with their booming bass drums and excitable flutes, struck the ear hard. It was disorienting to hear all that music bearing down from on high,

where the speakers must be, rather than swelling up from ground level as it would were it produced in the orchestra pit. Live music from the pit seems to billow around the stage, a living, responsive participant in the dancers' world. The taped sound was a cold blanket to the warmth onstage.

It's not impossible to watch a mixed-repertory performance with inanimate sound. But an eveninglength, three-act ballet-by-boombox felt half-dressed. Worse. I missed not only the live sound, but also the physical presence of a conductor, the expressive communication of his or her hands and the conductor's ability to smooth transitions and integrate one musical section with the next.

Cutting out live music here was not a measure to put ballet in the reach of the masses. Orchestra seats for "Don Quixote" go for \$85. No, it's a sign of very bad news. In December, the Washington Ballet's "Nutcracker" will also go on without an orchestra. Apparently, this troupe is joining the ranks of others that have cut live music as their budgets fall. The most dispiriting question is this: Once a ballet company goes down that road, and once audiences accept it, will it ever go back?

Performances of "Don Quixote" continue with cast changes through Sunday.

#### **TV PREVIEW**, From Page C1

the next, Python fans were able to suss out a common nerdy cheekiness in one another.

The documentary opens with postwar, stiff-upper-lipped England, where the five of the six men who ultimately formed Monty Python were born. (They are John Cleese, Eric Idle, Michael Palin and Terry Jones — and they are all nearing 70 now. Another member. Graham Chapman, died in 1989 from cancer, at age 48. Gilliam, the cartoonist, was the troupe's lone American.)

Part 1 ("The Not-So-Interesting Beginnings") explores the Britain of the Pythons' boyhood: a middleclass culture of utter deference and rigid manners in a rebuilt, newly crowned Elizabeth II society that believed in rules above anything else. Out of boarding schools and the sketch-comedy cliques of 1950s Oxford and Cambridge came the Python players, thrown together by similar alignments of fate that put the Beatles together around the same time.

A Beatles/Python analogue runs through "Almost the Truth," underscoring the idea that no such act of genius could have ever happened the same way to popular counterculture to any other young men, in any other grouping, at any other time, in any other place. George Harrison even shows up in the later years, as the

moneyed benefactor for the controversial 1979 Python movie "Life of Brian," a spoof on the life of Christ.

Monty Python is credited with a sardonic, even cynical edge that took shots at everything proper: pompous barristers, perverted accountants, clenched old women, daffy psychologists, inept military commanders, supercilious news anchors at their desks, who all seemed to represent a ruling class that the writers disdained. But looking at Python in retrospect, one is struck by the ribald joy of the work, the naked romping across the lush literal and metaphorical garden that is England. (And about that nakedness, actor Tim Roth and others jump in to note one reason so many little boys tuned into Monty Python: "You had a good shot at seeing some [breasts] — even a cartoon pair of [breasts].")

There were only four seasons and 45 episodes of "Flying Circus," watched over and over by fans; two of their five films, "Life of Brian" and "The Holy Grail," have attained a status well beyond their initial box office. People are still singing about Spam and lumberjacks, or giggling about dead petstore parrots and the Inquisition's torturous "comfy chair."

The Pythons themselves have excellent memories and apparently little animosity for one another or any lingering regrets. "As you get older, you laugh less, because you've heard all the jokes," says Cleese. "It's the real stuff that makes me laugh [now]." That's and what a relief.

They also seem less inclined to ascribe significance to their work, letting celebrity fans do that instead. Indeed, the best stories in "Almost the Truth" come from the

many actors, writers and comedians who talk about its personal influence on them. Steve Coogan did command performances of Python sketches in his mother's kitchen; Lorne Michaels recalls that "Flying Circus," in fact, "presupposed a level of attention in their audiences that you couldn't do in America.'

Sanjeev Bhaskar, a British writer and actor, recalls how upsetting "Flying Circus" was to his Indian immigrant parents: "You didn't really want your kid to be influenced by someone who is quite patently a bloke dressed as a woman with a high voice," he says. But eventually, even Bhaskar's mother was charmed, by "the fish-slapping dance" sketch (a perennial Python favorite). "My mom suddenly burst out laughing."

Eventually everyone does. And if they don't, they're certainly no friend of ours.

#### Monty Python: Almost the Truth (The Lawyer's Cut) will

air in six, one-hour parts next week, beginning Sunday at 9 p.m. on IFC.





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