



CAROLYN HAX

Wedding party choice leaves a left-out friend smarting

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

Dear Carolyn:

I can't have all of my eight BFFs in my wedding, and I can't choose without hurting feelings, so I let them all know I was leaving it up to chance — they drew straws, and three randomly chosen friends are now my bridal party. Now I find out the one I've known the longest is hurt that I didn't pick her. Others have said they wouldn't mind if I added her, but I feel like that would open a can of worms. Is this too dumb to even devote mental energy to?

Florida

Hurt feelings are never "too dumb" for our attention.

Now, there's some duh residue in (a) having eight "best" friends; (b) deciding arbitrarily that having three bridesmaids is okay but eight isn't; (c) drawing straws instead of including all of them or none of them; (d) your oldest friend taking things personally instead of just recognizing the desperate act of a desperate bride.

But still, you can't brush off a friend who's smarting. Tell her you're sorry for . . . not thinking more clearly, or lumping all your friends together, or not anticipating how much she'd care, or whatever else you regret.

If you're not sorry, and instead you think she's overreacting, then stick kindly to your decision, with a response along the lines of: "I hear you, and I see now that you're hurt, but please realize that I was trying to preempt hurt feelings."

Which, again, is a good argument for not having a bridal party at all — an option you still have at this point. The hard feelings and unwelcome expenses so often take away more from weddings than the uniformed camaraderie brings.

Re: Bridesmaids:

Three bridesmaids is such an arbitrary number. But I guess if it has to be three, could you have the other five involved through a reading at the ceremony? Or maybe have some usher-ettes that don't stand up but have coordinated outfits so that everyone feels involved? Weddings, in my opinion, should be about inclusivity.

Anonymous

Not to sound insensitive, but, barf. Putting names on the board for little make-work jobs is the stuff of kindergarten classrooms. If you have eight people whom you regard as legitimately close to you, then take a moment to be thankful that you have quality companionship in such an unusual quantity, and then send them all the same invitations to your wedding that you're sending everyone else. That is inclusion. Creating a hierarchy of inclusion is the idea that launched a thousand matrimonial train wrecks.

Re: Bridesmaids:

How do you know three is arbitrary? Maybe she's getting married in a small chapel. Maybe her husband-to-be has only three attendants and she needs a compatible number. Maybe they can only afford gifts for three. Maybe three is her favorite number. It's not arbitrary to the bride.

Anonymous

The need for all of the attendants to stand at the altar? Arbitrary. The need to match his number of attendants? Arbitrary. The need to spend a certain amount on gifts for the wedding party? Arbitrary. Three as favorite number? Arbitrary.

The feelings of the people you love? Priceless.

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.



NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

REPORT FROM WEEK 884
in which we asked you to combine two products:



Poop 'n' Scoop Canadian Winter Gloves: With built-in tongs, plus a special pocket where you can place your dog's business and keep your hands warm for the rest of the walk. (Scott Weinstein, Montreal)

2 winner of the gospel-singing stuffed lamb:The Crowbarcalounger: A comfy recliner with a useful hidden accessory for when it's time for Fred to take out the trash. (George Smith, Frederick)

3 The Roombazooka: Combination robo-vac and missile launcher — sit back and relax while all the crap in your attic turns into space junk. (Bob Klahn, Wilmington, Del.)

4 Green Eggs and Bam!: Garbage disposal attachment for the back of your fridge so you can just push out the stuff you wouldn't ever touch again. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

PAIRED DOWN: HONORABLE MENTIONS

Viagranola: The breakfast guaranteed to get you up in the morning. Great with wild oats. (Stephen Gold, Glasgow, Scotland; Beverley Sharp, Washington)

Tango: An orange-flavored beverage powder that's also a powerful laxative. (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

Purse-Into-Flames: A handbag with a built-in incinerator for the next time you're stopped for driving while famous. — P. Hilton (Kevin Dopart)

Combining a motion detector and sprinkler system would discourage the neighbor from "walking" his dog in your yard. (Pam Sweeney, St. Paul, Minn.)

Remotrin: Head hurts so bad you can't get up off the couch? Just click, and the ibuprofen comes to you. (Lennie Magida, Potomac)

The Rolling Pint: While making those pie crusts, Grandma can keep a nip within easy reach with this built-in kitchen flask. (For larger appetites: the Tuna Fifth casserole dish.) (Craig Dykstra, Centerville)

The Buzzkiller: Make crowd control at any high school football game a snap — at the pep rally, hand out these wireless Breathyalyzer-kazoos. (Kevin Dopart)

Pepcocacola: A mix of Pepsis and Coke that gives you extra energy (not always available in summer and winter). (Russell Beland)

A car and a box: Ikia, a Korean-Swedish automotive venture in which you take home all the parts and two Allen

wrenches and you put it together yourself. (Christopher Lamora, Guatemala City)

Pepcorn: A movie theater snack coated with caffeinated butter, enabling guys on dates to stay awake through romantic comedies. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

Bradio (bra and radio): Don't touch those dials! (Christopher Lamora)

Sidewalk with a tollbooth: Dan Snyder's latest idea to gouge fans at FedEx Field. (Craig Dykstra)

A cable subscription with hemorrhoid ointment: Preparation HGTV, for those who sit and watch other people renovate houses. (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

He-PS: Combines a condom with a TomTom to give the man in your life the directions he needs to help you "reach your destination." (Dion Black, Washington)

The Mappnifier: A detailed miniature road atlas with a magnifying glass. Never be lost driving again! Attaches to the dash with a handy suction cup. Updates available annually. (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

Mugnet: The new yearned-for Style Invitational prize for Losers who keep misplacing their coffee. (Mike Caslin, Round Hill, Va., a First Offender)

Next week: Mess with our heads, or Fake it to the bank

Online discussion Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.

MUSIC REVIEW

Adams's 'Atomic' symphony bombs

Work derived from composer's opera lacks musical thrust, logic

Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra brought two overplayed chestnuts and a local premiere to the Music Center at Strathmore on Thursday evening.

John Adams has assembled a "symphony" from his recent opera "Doctor Atomic," and Alsop, a longtime champion of Adams, presented it. Program symphonies have a long, distinguished history (Beethoven, Berlioz, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Shostakovich, etc.), and good new ones are added regularly. But if the music is going to lean on externalities, it helps if the audience is generally aware of what they are. Other than pounding, generically "apocalyptic" passages, the murky philosophical/ mythological concepts Adams tried to explore in the opera do not particularly stick in anyone's mind. Lacking internal musical thrust or logic, the symphony was riddled with longueurs, especially in the slower sec-

won't mind if I just reprint what I wrote the last time: "[Her] interpretation was vigorous, but generically so. There seemed to be little effort to place the piece in its proper stylistic context. The scherzo was breathless a la Beethoven (no sense of earthy Indian drumming), the varied thematic strands in the finale all sounded the same, and the Largo exposed numerous imprecisions in pitch and attack."

Violinist Stefan Jackiw delivered Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto before intermission. While his sound is not especially large or interesting, he has an appealing hyper-sensitive performing style, moving in a kind of unconscious reverie, the passage-work glistened with precision. Alsop's accompaniment was absolutely superb, the best thing she did all night.

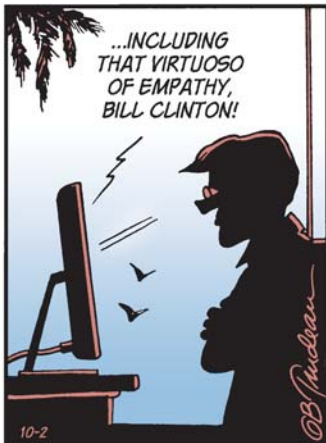
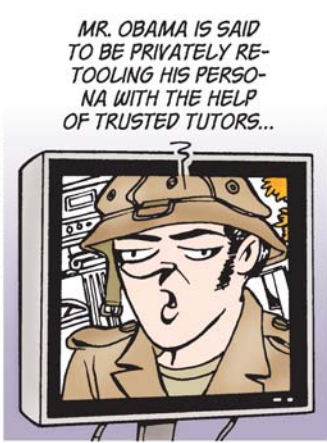
— Robert Battey



GRANT LEIGHTON

HIGH NOTE: Marin Alsop was at her best in the Mendelssohn concerto.

DOONESBURY BY GARRY TRUDEAU



CUL DE SAC BY RICHARD THOMPSON

