



CAROLYN HAX

Curfews in college

While I'm away, readers give the advice.

On curfews for adult children:

I also have a daughter in college and we faced this question when she returned home for breaks. My daughter and I have come to an arrangement that she will text me at 2 a.m. if she is still out and let me know where she is and what her plans are — sleep over with friends, come home soon or watch another movie. She is also free to call me anytime for a ride — no lectures — if the alternative is getting in a car with kids who have been drinking. I have gotten out of bed at 4 a.m. to pick her up. She knows that I trust her, and my top priority is to keep her safe. Some of our best talks have been in the car late at night or having a late-night snack together before she goes to sleep.

Sleeping pretty well

On choosing to cohabit:

I am a professional Christian theologian/pastor-type connected to a mainline denomination. My ears always perk up when someone is claiming to speak for God, completely sure of "God's will." Parents sometimes (often) do not know when it is time to cease trying to control adult children. And these children need to decide if they are willing to continue to be controlled by their elders, period. And if God's opinion, blessing or not, is truly important to anyone involved here, it is important to remember that God loves a sinner and understands the actions and motivations of this kind of "sin," ESPECIALLY if it is the choice of a person of faith, one who is routinely in conversation with God. People need to do what will make themselves happy as long as they can live with their OWN decisions and THEIR understanding of God's requirements of them.

As a parent of adult children, I can relate to the desires of "well-intentioned" parents and grandparents. But they need to remember and trust that, if they trained up their children well in the first place, they have no cause to worry how they will turn out. Having once stated their position quite clearly, perhaps the relatives should keep their voices out of their children's business until they're asked for their advice. Then they need to remember that children don't have to follow that advice.

Midwest Godwoman

On choosing cohabitation, continued:

ABSOLUTELY. Wish I had done it this way — my "wife" turned out to be a nightmare that frankly, would have certainly surfaced in the first year. Biggest mistake of my life and a lesson I really didn't need.

Anonymous

On stating a ring preference without mentioning marriage:

If the couple ever watch TV together, all the woman needs to do is wait until an advertisement for diamonds comes on, and then say, "I can't believe any woman would be happy with such an expensive piece of jewelry. There are so many better uses for that kind of money." She doesn't have to mention engagement rings specifically, or say anything about the boyfriend's purchases.

J.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays at 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 897

in which we asked you to "translate" a sentence appearing in The Post into "plain English"; we also allowed the occasional not-really-a-translation if it was funny enough. Funny can trump a lot in Invite Land.

THE WINNER OF THE INKER

Sentence in The Post: "The positions the Obama administration is taking today are not the traditional positions of most Democrats."
Plain English: They're trying out alternatives to "fetal."
 (Danny Bravman, Chicago)

- 2** the winner of the turkey carcass hat: "If you are out and about in a kilt, then remember to show some decorum."
 PE: And decorum is the only thing you'd better be showing. (Dion Black, Washington)
- 3** "Our biggest sweater sale of the year!"
 PE: "Nobody bought our sweaters!" (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)
- 4** Obama: "Our success depends on our willingness to engage in the kind of honest conversation and cooperation that hasn't always happened in Washington."
 PE: "We're doomed." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

A B IN PE: HONORABLE MENTIONS

- "I'm absolutely a person who has not let ego run amok,"** Winfrey says.
 Plain English: "... as you will learn in this month's article about me in my personal magazine, O, and on several shows premiering on the Oprah Winfrey Network." (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)
- "We clearly have to continue to provide the message to the Afghan people about why we're here and what it is that we want to do," Petraeus said.
 PE: "Can somebody tell me why we're here and what it is that we want to do?" (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)
- Buy your next BMW with zero down, and no processing fee.
 PE: Please, please, for the love of God, buy one of our ^%&% cars! (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)
- This is a show about being a disaffected, emotionally scarred New Yorker.
 PE: This is a show about being a New Yorker. (Kevin Dopart)
- Richard Nixon, discussing various ethnic groups on a recently released tape: "I've just recognized that, you know, all people have certain traits. . . ."
 PE: Mine is that I'm a sleazy bigot. (Russell Beland, Fairfax; Nan Reiner, Alexandria)
- Obama: "As much as the political wisdom may dictate fighting over solving problems, it would be the wrong thing to do."
- PE: "There was no way I was going to win this fight." (Jeff Hazle, Woodbridge)
- Rick Santorum: "Things are happening that maybe give me the impression that maybe I need to look at this seriously."
 PE: "For crying out loud, even I would make a better president than Sarah Palin!" (Trevor Kerr, Chesapeake, Va.)
- Despite a performance by helmet-haired tweener heartthrob Justin Bieber and pop star Katy Perry, this year's Grammy Nominations Concert plunged in the ratings.
 PE: Because of a performance by helmet-haired tweener heartthrob Justin Bieber and pop star Katy Perry. . . (Dixon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.)
- Friday's memo states that workers and contractors must "use government information technology systems in accordance with agency procedures so that the integrity of such systems is not compromised."
 PE: We thought we told you guys to lay off the porn. (Edward Gordon, Austin)
- Senators always have expected time to debate issues.
 PE: Senators always have expected time to debate nonissues. (Danny Bravman)
- The tax deal "offers the best prospect that was available for achieving the kind of escape

- velocity that we've been seeking for the past two years."
 PE: "We hope to escape being murdered in the next election." (Judy Blanchard, Novi, Mich.)
- Redskins Coach Mike Shanahan: "I'm not exactly sure at this time exactly what we're going to do or what direction we're going to go."
 PE: "I'm exactly sure that we don't know how to win." (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)
- Washington football fans are a pretty sophisticated bunch.
 PE: Only the finest hog-snout masks will do. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)
- Horsenko: What someone considers beautiful might not be your cup of tea, and that's something you can keep to yourself.
 PE: It's never a good idea to start a sentence with "Yo mama." (Beverly Sharp, Washington)
- Take any sentence from an article or an ad in The Washington Post or washingtonpost.com from Dec. 3 to Dec. 13 and translate it into "plain English."
 PE: Read vast sections of The Washington Post, especially the advertisements, extremely carefully for 10 straight days. (Michael Reinemer, Annandale)

See more plain-English honorable mentions at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

Next week: Pre-current events, or Foretell it to the judge

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

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 901: Dead Letters



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Edwin Newman, grammarian: Edwin Newman past away But if he would of seen this rhyme, He'd of crawled right out of his dark grave And died a second time.

On this first day of 2011, we pause a moment to look back at those we lost in 2010 — and to write funny poems about them. It's our eighth annual Dead Letters (or Post Mortems) contest: Write a humorous poem about someone who died in 2010, as in the example above by Washington Post Resident Elegist-in-Doggerel Gene Weingarten. It doesn't have to rhyme, though good rhymes tend to be funny. Short poems are more likely to get ink in the print paper, but especially good longer ones will get virtual ink on washingtonpost.com. Song parodies are not forbidden. There are many lists of "notable deaths 2010" and such online.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a Flarp Noise Maker, a little nothing machine the size of a yo-yo on which you push buttons to create various electronic noises, ranging from froglike to sick cat. The whole thing sounds kind of anemic, actually. Donated quietly by Dave Prevar.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Loser 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, Jan. 10. Put "Week 901" 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 to be published Jan. 30. 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 Brendan Beary; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Jeff Contompasis.

RECORDINGS

'Porgy' times two: They ain't necessarily the same

BY MARK ESTREN

There are two very different works called "Porgy and Bess," and one man was largely responsible for both. It was not George Gershwin, who clearly wanted this to be an opera; not lyricists DuBose Heyward and Ira Gershwin; not Rouben Mamoulian, theater and Hollywood director and arguably George Gershwin's most important collaborator in getting "Porgy" staged.

It was Alexander Smallens, conductor of the premiere of "Porgy," who first established the work as an opera in 1935 — and then, 15 years later and 13 years after George Gershwin's death, turned it into a musical by removing much of the accompanied recitative, leaving a series of individually effective numbers connected by minimal dialogue. Smallens preferred the revised work: He called the parts he excised "dull [and] draggy." But for more than three decades — since the first recording of a full operatic version of "Porgy" — conductors and other performers have been trying to restore what Gershwin intended "Porgy" to be.

The problem is that what he wanted isn't entirely clear. Lorin Maazel's trailblazing 1976 recording, now remastered and available on CD on the Decca label, used the original, uncut score and original orchestration. But Gershwin and Mamoulian changed and shortened a number of elements during rehearsals; the full original version was never performed. So conductors and directors have kept trying to come up with a "Porgy" that is satisfying and effective, if not definitive.

Nikolaus Harnoncourt's turn came in 2008 at the Styriarte Festival in Graz, Austria. That performance, recorded live, is now available on RCA. It is dramatically cohesive, using fairly small cuts to advance the action without eliminating musical numbers. It is grand, sweeping, personal and pathos-filled — and in some ways deeply flawed. Its best elements are instrumental. The Chamber Orchestra of Europe is excellent, and some touches are simply brilliant: the use of African drums rather than bongos before the Kittiwah Island scene (as Gershwin intended but as is very rarely done), and the reintroduction of an improvisation-style "symphony of noise" before the opera's final scene (Gershwin included this Catfish Row-awakening element at the opera's first performance, but it soon disappeared).

But the singing is another matter. The refined, elegant sound of the Arnold

Schoenberg Choir is entirely too smooth for this music. Among the soloists, the women are stronger than the men: Isabelle Kabatu is emotionally convincing as Bess, although she could use more fire; Bibiana Nwobilo is effective as Clara; and Roberta Alexander makes a fine Maria — her dressing-down of Sporting Life (Michael Forest) is a highlight. Forest himself, though, has none of the slippery sliminess that his character demands, and his precise pronunciation of the scat singing in "It Ain't Necessarily So" is so misguided as to be funny. Gregg Baker lacks the vocal strength of a really effective Crown. And most disappointing of all is Jonathan Lemalu as Porgy. He gets the character's emotions right, but



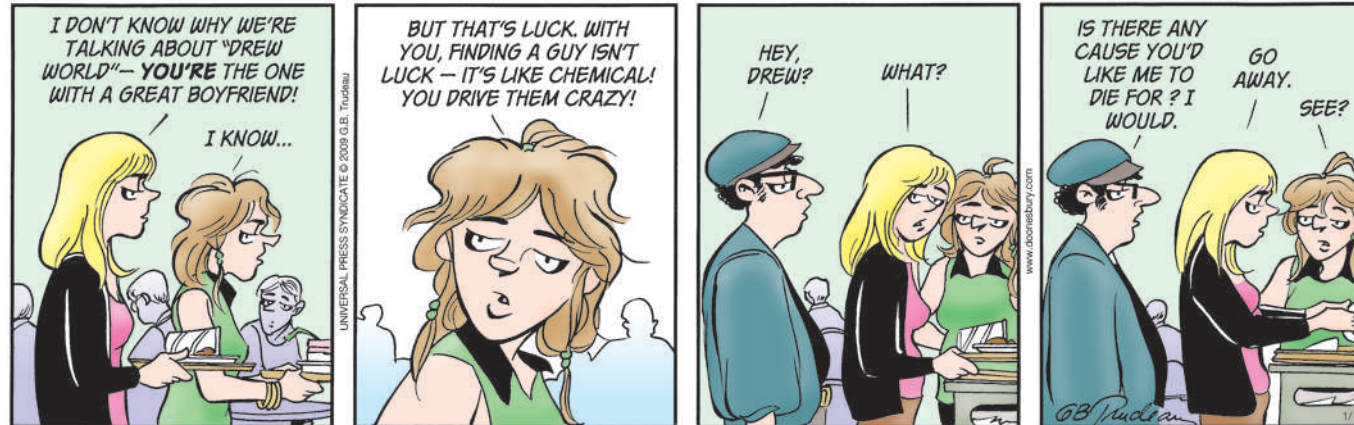
not his music: Lemalu's voice is wobbly, unsteady and all too often off pitch. The Maazel recording is also very well played, and the singing is more consistent. Willard White's rich, full baritone gives Porgy epic scale; McHenry Boatwright is a powerful, frightening Crown; and Francois Clemmons is positively oily as Sporting Life. Leona Mitchell is a

thoroughly operatic Bess, Florence Quivar a strong Serena, and Barbara Conrad a fine singing Maria — although less effective in her spoken parts. Maazel's soloists and chorus are more comfortable with the text than Harnoncourt's, who often restore dropped final consonants and pronounce words too carefully ("there" instead of "dere," "your" rather than "yo"). Both Maazel and Harnoncourt handle "Porgy and Bess" as grand opera, but Maazel's far more idiomatic reading is the one that really gives the work its due.

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DOONESBURY FLASHBACKS BY GARRY TRUDEAU



CUL DE SAC BY RICHARD THOMPSON

