

Operas and Presidents

I GET ASKED ALL THE TIME ABOUT PREPARING FOR “JEOPARDY!” One can prepare, of course, and the best way to start is by watching a lot of shows. Certain categories occur over and over. Learning the basics of those categories, especially lists of things, is a great way to start.



It’s not a bad way to practice puzzle-solving, either. For this puzzle, I’ve chosen two common “Jeopardy!” categories—operas and presidents—and put them into a cryptic puzzle. Each of the 14 lines of the following sonnet contains the anagrammed name of either an opera or the last name of a U.S. president, in one or two words. The two-word ana-

grams always involve consecutive words. The other words in the poem are meaningless, at least as far as clueing goes.

There are six operas and eight presidents. The operas aren’t obscure. You wouldn’t be surprised to find any of them in a standard crossword puzzle. I drew them from a list of the 20 most-performed operas in North America, from OperaWorld.com. Not all the operas are one-word titles, and some foreign words are involved.

Two years ago, I published a puzzle in the September/October 2010 *Contingencies* called “I Never Do Anything Twice.” Lest you think that this puzzle is a repeat of “Ars Poetica” from the January/February 2011 issue of the magazine, I would point out that the poem in that puzzle was a Shakespearean sonnet. This sonnet is Petrarchan, which is totally different. Also, the earlier puzzle contained anagrammed cities, not operas or presidents.

This puzzle might be difficult if you’re not up on your operas (or your presidents). Let me know if you solve it without help from a reference source. Also tell me if you solve it in less than 15 minutes. Otherwise, just send me the names of the six operas and the eight presidents.

Solutions may be e-mailed to Thomas.Toce@ey.com. In order to make the solver list, your solutions must be received by July 31, 2011.

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The diva sang her heart out on the coast,
To aid a voter turnout effort there.
The President—vote-loser—did his share,
By showing tan and serving as the host.
Five maids on tiptoe saw Nijinsky’s ghost.
“He called us fat,” they said, “but we don’t care.”
The backstage crew gave Geritol to Cher,
Who hit the lows in all her songs, almost.

Observe as mad Lucia plays her scene!
As fatties count to ten, then pirouette!
And Cher—ah, yes!—concludes her Farewell Tour!
Tout Rand and folks may think that you’re just mean.
The last Progressive Age ran up the debt.
Nijinsky says, “No more, mon Dieu, no more!”

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Answers to Previous Issue’s Puzzle—Some People

1	M	A	S	S	5	O	L	E	S	9	R	A	M	P	S
14	A	R	C	A	15	P	U	L	P	16	A	R	E	A	S
17	I	R	O	N	18	A	R	I	A	19	M	A	L	L	S
20	M	O	R	T	21	A	L	I	T	22	T	A	B	L	E
23	S	W	E	A	24	D	E	S	K						
				25	S	L	O			27	O	R	E	L	S
33	B	O	A		36	E	I	G	H	39	E	L	I	A	S
41	A	N	N	42	U	A	L	S	T	43	A	T	E	M	E
44	S	C	O	T	45	U	S	U	A	46	L	S	E	A	
47	T	E	N	E	48	T	S			49	W	E	B		
					51	H	E	A	R	55	C	R	E	S	T
				59	L	I	F	E	E	63	X	P	E	C	T
64	T	A	C	E	65	I	O	T	A	66	I	D	O	L	
67	A	R	O	M	68	T	R	I	G	69	D	U	N	E	
70	B	A	N	A	71	L	S	T	A	72	Y	S	E	E	R

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