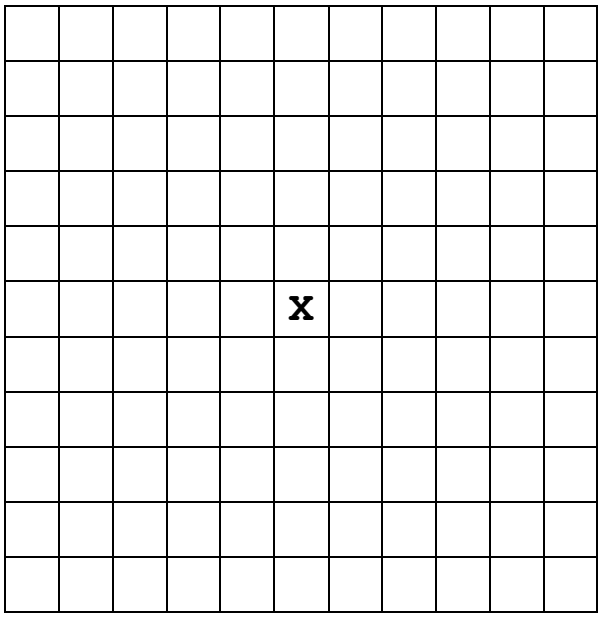
Puzzle #199—December, 2017 "Finale"

Instructions: Guess the words defined by the cryptic clues (answers vary in length from three to eight letters, and six are capitalized) then enter them in the grid one after another in the same order as their clues, starting in the upper left corner. Across words that don't end at the right continue on the next row, and down words that don't end at the bottom continue in the next column. Four across words and four down words won't fit in the grid unless one of their letters is omitted. Those eight letters, taken in order as they occur in across and down words, spell a word related to the **X** in the middle of the grid, the significance of which solvers must determine. Thanks to Kevin Wald for test-solving and editing this puzzle.



Across

1. Cheer about British automaton
2. Oil producers cope badly
3. U.S. camera breaking down around one
4. Mother is without regular companion
5. Debtor, single, and a loafer
6. Fish is hot and gaudy
7. Tired, worn, and lacking energy, in filth
8. Strong river shelter
9. Celebrate about a show
10. Wrong letters in framework
11. Model target has triangular shape
12. Count Peter replaces father of guard
13. Badly need a rabbi to get to be liked
14. Cut small, Latin dessert
15. Weight of unit in a body of water
16. Silly farce captures nephew Anatole
17. Swear to include old order
18. Stuff in ceramics
19. Harry treats right leavening material
20. To signal, run road around island
21. Table with wings? About time!
22. A crane flying in secret
23. Criminal type drops mark for large sea creature
24. Stake rotates around volcano

Down

1. Split money
2. Morning in Paris endlessly coupling
3. Alone, legislator is without number
4. Supersede fabric with yarn
5. Ultimate reality to a bull
6. Sizable Old Testament for narrow-minded believer
7. Agreement involving copyright sticker
8. Cabot wrongly traps base feline
9. Pert or saucy narration
10. Eye of lead beginning to emerge
11. See about university jet
12. A word in French turned up for *jot*
13. Mean in mind
14. Last electron underground
15. Pater's cooked a meal
16. Allen seen with a piece of glass
17. Scarce inside for a reason
18. Improperly rated her earring
19. Went back and sowed again, so to speak
20. Carter worked with fine angle
21. A river's flowing reaches an end
22. Bar a dance around Serbian mountain
23. Added large mushroom
24. Northbound chicken, e.g., is a layer