

About The Puzzle...

A codebreak is a cypher-based word puzzle in which clues are given in the form of numbers, and the challenge is to find out which numbers correspond to which letters, until the entire puzzle is solved. They were my favorite kind of puzzle as a child because they were far more interesting than sudoku, and far more logical than crosswords (which usually required deep cultural knowledge). Additionally, codebreaks allow an aspect of design in the selection of a theme, and the careful arrangement of that theme's words into a totally unique lattice. My grandma and I exchanged dozens of them, usually with one word spelled out as a starting hint.

This has been a momentous year in my life. I got a new job as an architectural designer/drafter/technician at SmithGroup, which has an office right on capitol square in Madison. Being right in the center of the city, it was finally convenient for me to go out to swing dance socials on a weekly basis, so the theme for this year's puzzle that unites all its words is SWING DANCE.

As usual, your objective is to find all the letters that correspond to each number, but!—every puzzle comes with a twist, and this year the twist is that each vowel (AEIOUY) is *double encrypted*. For example: [E] might be represented by #x or #y, in the same word, with no visual indication of which. In *addition*, one number is a HERALD—wherever it appears, its letter is whichever *consonant* comes next in the word. Thus “bib” and “google” might begin with the same number if that number is the HERALD.

Armed with your own knowledge of dance, letter frequency, the intersection and shape of the words, and the numerical clues, I hope you will find this year's puzzle a satisfying challenge. Still, feedback is appreciated! Text it to 1 608 843 2556 or email seamusbyrneriley@gmail.com. Puzzle retaliation is also encouraged.

P.S.

I received excellent feedback on last year's ARCHITECTURE-themed puzzle, with several people reporting that it was too difficult, several others solving it in 1-3 hours, and one person who happened to be a police detective reportedly solving in under 20 minutes. The first few puzzles that went in the mail actually contained a typo in cell 29 from the left, 13 from the top. My favorite feedback came from one early recipient who was so excited to solve the puzzle that they skipped reading the accompanying letter which gave the theme, and forgot about the DM that I'd sent to warn them about the typo. They jumped right in with no guidance, immediately identified the word LEVEL by the fact that it was a five-letter palindrome, and sent ME back the word that there was a typo, which they had found on their own.

