

*Special
Issue*

*The 24th
First Annual*

ANNALS OF

**IMPROBABLE
RESEARCH**



Ig[®] Nobel Prize Ceremony



**Slipperiness of Banana Peels,
Mental Danger of Owning a Cat,
Cured Pork as Treatment for Nosebleeds...**

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The features marked with a star (*) are based entirely on material taken straight from standard research (and other Official and Therefore Always Correct) literature. Many of the other articles are genuine, too, but we don't know which ones.



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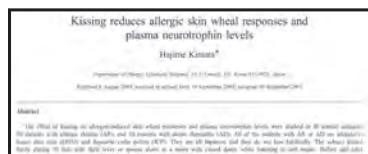
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TOP: Nobel laureates sample Spanish sausages, in honor of this year's Nutrition Prize-winning research. Photo: David Holzman.

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the Ig Nobel ceremony. Photo: Alexey Eliseev.

On the Front Cover

The thrilling conclusion to the mini-opera “What’s Eating You,” which premiered at



of Science with fellow chemist Joost Bonsel (not shown). Photo: Mike Benveniste.

On the Back Cover

Performing chemist Daniel Rosenberg performs one of the evening's two Moments

Some Coming Events

See WWW.IMPROBABLE.COM for details of these and other events:

November 28, 2014 Annual Science Friday Ig Nobel radio broadcast	February 2015 AAAS Annual Meeting San Jose, CA, USA	September 17, 2015 25th First Annual Ig Nobel Prize Ceremony, Cambridge, MA, USA & live webcast
January 2015 ARISIA, Boston, MA, USA	March 2015 Ig Nobel Europe Tour	September 19, 2015 Ig Informal Lectures Cambridge, MA, USA
January 2015 Vienna, Austria	June 2015 Tokyo, Japan	

EVERY DAY

Read something new and improbable
every day on the Improbable Research blog, on our web site:

WWW.IMPROBABLE.COM

LIBRETTO: WHAT'S EATING YOU

Story and Words: Marc Abrahams

Music: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart [from *Don Giovanni*]

The mini-opera *What's Eating You* premiered as part of the 24th First Annual Ig Nobel Prize Ceremony, at Sanders Theater, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, on September 18, 2014. Video of the performance, and of the entire ceremony, can be seen at www.improbable.com/ig/2014/.

Original Cast

Direction: Maria Ferrante

Assistant Direction: Robin Abrahams

Conduction: Paul Glenn

Arrangement: Henry Akona and Maria Ferrante

Costuming: Catherine Quick Spingler

Props: Eric Workman

Narrator: Karen Hopkin

Ramona: Maria Ferrante, soprano

Ray: Scott Taylor, baritone

The Microbe Choir: Kelsey Calhoun, Nicholas Carstou, Delphine Gabbay, Paul Goodwin, Clia Goodwin, Erika Hutchinson, Andrew B. Jones, Julia Lunetta, Sylvia Rosenberg, Daniel Rosenberg, Abby Schiff, Ted Sharp, Patrick Yacono, and Nobel laureates Carol Greider, Eric Maskin, Rich Roberts, and Frank Wilczek

Orchestra: the Concentrated Forces of Nature, a distilled orchestra composed entirely of biomedical researchers Patrick Yacono and Thomas Michel



Photo: David Holzman.

ACT 1

NARRATOR: Our opera tonight is about two wealthy individuals. Ramona and Ray expect to live forever. They have figured out the secret of immortality. They are going to stop eating the stuff called—what's that word?—"food." After some thought, and much preparation, Ramona and Ray are going to eat only essential nutrients—each and every essential nutrient, every day—in the form of pills. Let's join them as they stop eating food, food, food, and start eating pills, pills, pills.

SOPRANO: I will not eat food!

BARITONE: I will not eat food!

SOP: No more food! From today: no more food! Today we both stop eating food. Eating food is always fatal, to the grave, from the cradle.

BAR: Look at the death rate! Whether it comes on a fork, on a spoon, or on a plate. The folks who ate food perished. The folks who ate food perished. People should not eat food.

SOP: Ew!

BAR: There's a new way. Say, listen, there's a new way. Hey, there's a new way. I tell you, there's a new way. We've got a new way./ Give me your hand, dear cupcake.

Henceforth we eat just pills. Pills! No more bread or beefsteak. We will exclusively purchase pills!

SOP: Yes, honeybuns, exactly. Be not fed up with food!

Matter-of-factly, sugar, let's live forever chomping on only pills! A multitude—for us—of perfect pills!

BAR: Fed up with food! Stuff me full of pills!

SOP: Pills are the future. And they are delightful!

BAR: I will ingest just ingredients!

SOP: Yes, no more peaches—with their stones! No more steaks—with fat and bones. Oh—those trimmings are so wasteful...

BAR: Distasteful! Disgraceful! Food mostly gets excreted.

SOP: That fact should be repeated!

BAR: Most food goes out as waste!

SOP: Such food! Such waste! Such bad taste!

BAR: Bad taste! Oh, what a waste!

SOP: And pills possess a pretty pleasing taste.

BAR: Lutein, and caffeine!

SOP: And docosahexaenoic acid!

BAR: GABA, and L-Arginine!

continued >



Photo: Mike Benveniste.

SOP: And phosphatidylserine! Swallow it! A Paracetamol tidbit. Oh, and a gram of Geritol! Oh...

BAR: Just swallow! Just swallow!

SOP: Just swallow!

BOTH: These pills that we assort 'll make you and me immortal. Three hundred thirty-two pills per day.

SOP: More pills! More pills?

BAR: More pills!

BOTH: You've got to take more pills. I've got to take more pills. Oh, god! Let's purchase more pills!

ACT 2

NARRATOR: A long time has passed—six hundred and ten years!—and Ray and Ramona are in fine shape. But all of the other humans on the planet are gone. Ramona and Ray had bought all the farmland, and devoted it to producing pills for the exclusive use of Ramona and Ray. Ramona and Ray actually have a LOT of company, though: the zillions and zillions of microbes that live in their intestinal tract, and in and on the rest of their bodies. The microbes seem happy enough—they have even formed a chorus. Let's listen to those microbes—and then hear what Ramona and Ray have to say.



Photo: David Holzman.



Photo: Alexey Eliseev.

MICROBE CHORUS: Dine together. Don't care whether neighbor species dine on feces. Stuff we threw up they will chew up. Yum. Each community's opportunities basic'ly amount to potty luck. Others eat what we excrete. And they in turn have no concern... at others' taste for their foul waste.

SOP and BAR: For six hundred and ten years, we...

SOP: Subsisted on...

BAR: Stayed alive, we stayed alive with...

SOP and BAR: Nutrients, nutrients, nutrients! Yes!

SOP: No-thing that could bring on death—

SOP and BAR: Bring on death—or other little ills. Success! Success! So who needs food? Food is so cru-ude! Who... needs... food?

SOP: By the way... other people don't get fed, don't get hungry...

SOP and BAR: 'Cause they're dead. They died. They're dead.

SOP: We got their farms. Life has got its charms. Life has its charms!

BAR: They "bought the farm." Their food did them harm.



Photo: Alexey Eliseev.

