WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 19 April 2023 7.30pm

Supported by the Rubinstein Circle

...car le songe est plus beau que la réalité... - Songs from the Gilded Age

Elsa Dreisig soprano Jonathan Ware piano

Alban Berg (1885-1935) From 7 frühe Lieder (1905-8)

Nacht • Die Nachtigall • Traumgekrönt • Liebesode

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) Asie from *Shéhérazade* (1903) Charles Koechlin (1867-1950) Le voyage Op. 84 No. 2 (1922-3)

Maurice RavelLa flûte enchantée from ShéhérazadeCharles KoechlinL'oiseau en cage Op. 84 No. 6 (1922-3)Maurice RavelL'indifférent from Shéhérazade

Interval

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) Was du mir bist? Op. 22 No. 1 (1928-9)

Mit Dir zu schweigen Op. 22 No. 2 (1928-9)

Welt ist stille eingeschlafen Op. 22 No. 3 (1928-9)

Amy Beach (1867-1944) In the Twilight Op. 85 (1922)

Springtime Op. 124 (1929) The Singer Op. 117 No. 1 (1925) Mine be the lips Op. 113 (1921)

Kurt Weill (1900-1950) Alabama Song from *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*

(1927-9)

Surabaya Johnny from *Happy End* (1929)

George Gershwin (1898-1937) The Man I Love (1924)
Kay Swift (1897-1993) Can't we be friends? (1929)

George Gershwin I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise (1922)

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Alban Berg's 7frühe Lieder ('7 early songs') were written in Vienna in 1905-8 when he was in his early 20s. This was Vienna's 'Gilded Age'; the Vienna Secession art movement, epitomised by Berg's friend Gustav Klimt's The Kiss, painted in 1907, was in full flight, and the 7frühe Lieder with their rich, extravagant and dreamlike musical language are written in the same style. The poems that Berg chose are mysterious, erotic and full of sensual imagery, and explore different facets of night and dreaming. In 1907 Berg met and fell in love with Helene Nahowski, rumoured to be the illegitimate daughter of Emperor Franz Josef I; he dedicated these songs to her, and they married in 1911.

One Thousand and One Nights is a collection of folk tales from across Asia and North Africa, brought together as the story of Shahryar, a ruler who discovers that his wife has been unfaithful and so has her killed. Deciding that all women are equally untrustworthy, he resolves to marry a virgin every day, and has each one executed the following morning before they have a chance to be unfaithful. The last available virgin, Scheherazade, believes she can outwit him. On their wedding night, she tells him a story, but doesn't finish it, promising to complete it the following night. Shahryar, curious to know how the story ends, agrees to postpone her execution for a day. Every night, Scheherazade begins a new story immediately after finishing the previous one. In this way she delays her execution for a thousand and one nights, after which Shahryar realises he truly loves her and they live happily ever after. Ravel had long been fascinated by these stories, and in 1898 had written an overture inspired by them. His cycle Shéhérazade, written in 1903, sets poems by his friend Tristan Klingsor, the pseudonym of Léon Leclère, who gave himself the names of a hero and a villain from Wagner's dream world. Charles Koechlin wrote two sets of Shéhérazade songs, in 1914-6 and in 1922-3. Tonight, two of his second set (his Op. 84) are interpolated between Ravel's three songs to expand the dream-like elements of the story.

The second half of this programme is devoted to the 'Roaring Twenties', when all of Europe and America erupted with exuberance, fun and artistic experimentation and creativity (or all those who lived in cities and could afford to did...) which burst forth as a reaction to and relief from the horrors of the Great War and continued until the Wall Street Crash of 1929 put a stop to the partying.

Both Erich Wolfgang Korngold in Vienna and Amy Beach in America found musical success in their teens; Beach enjoyed a substantial career as a concert pianist from the age of 16, and Korngold's ballet *Der Schneemann* ('The Snowman') was performed at the Vienna Court Opera when he was 11.

Both composers crossed the Atlantic - Beach moved to Germany in 1910 following the death of her husband, an eminent surgeon, who had tried to forbid her to play or compose on the grounds that being a working musician was 'unseemly' for the wife of a man of his status. Korngold fled the Nazis in 1934, moving to America where he became possibly the greatest composer to work in Hollywood. Beach moved back to America in 1914, becoming a mentor for young composers and an educator, setting up 'Beach Clubs' that made music available to children. Korngold's Op. 22 songs were written in 1928-9 and again, the subject matter of the poems is sleep, twilight and dreams. The four songs by Amy Beach in tonight's concert were written between 1921 and 1929 and are settings of poems that contrast a sinister twilit world with (real) life and tell that reality can be just as beautiful as dreams, especially if we sing about it!

Bertolt Brecht's Alabama Song was originally written for his Home Devotions, a satire on the collected sermons of Martin Luther. Kurt Weill set it to music in 1927 as part of Mahagonny, ein Songspiel. Mahagonny is a 'golden city' of dreams, but there are troubles even there. In 1930 Weill and Brecht expanded this into a full-scale opera; Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny ('Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny'). 'Surabaya Johnny' comes from Happy End, another Brecht/Weill collaboration, which opened in Berlin in 1929. The plot concerns criminal gangs, a Salvation Army band, and a long-lost husband, and does indeed have a happy ending.

New York in the 1920s was seen as a city where people could follow and achieve their dreams. **George Gershwin** and his brother Ira were examples of this, born into a Ukrainian-Jewish émigré family who moved to America to escape antisemitism. *The Man I Love* is from their musical comedy *Lady Be Good* (1924). *I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise* was written two years earlier for *George White's Scandals*, a series of Broadway revues that ran from 1919 to 1939.

Kay Swift began her career as a classical musician, studying piano and composition at the Institute of Musical Art in New York, now the Juilliard School. In 1918 she married James Warburg who, under the pseudonym Paul James, wrote the lyrics for many of her songs. She met George Gershwin in 1925; he encouraged her to explore the world of music theatre, and they became lovers around 1927. Their relationship continued through Swift and Warburg's divorce in 1934 until Gershwin's death in 1937. 'Can't we be friends?' was written in 1929 as an independent song, which was then introduced into the Broadway revue *The Little Show* and Iater recorded by Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Ella Fitzgerald.

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Alban Berg (1885-1935)

From 7 frühe Lieder (1905-8)

Nacht

Carl Hauptmann

Dämmern Wolken über Nacht und Tal. Nebel schweben. Wasser rauschen sacht.

Nun entschleiert sich's mit einem Mal.

O gib acht! gib acht!

Weites Wunderland ist aufgetan.

Silbern ragen Berge traumhaft gross,

Stille Pfade silberlicht

Aus verborg'nem Schoss.

Und die hehre Welt so traumhaft rein.

Stummer Buchenbaum am Wege steht

Schattenschwarz - ein Hauch vom fernen Hain Einsam leise weht.

Und aus tiefen Grundes Düsterheit Blinken Lichter auf in stummer Nacht. Trinke Seele! trinke Einsamkeit!

Die Nachtigall

O gib acht! gib acht!

Theodor Storm

Das macht, es hat die Nachtigall Die ganze Nacht gesungen; Da sind von ihrem süssen Schall. Da sind in Hall und Widerhall

Sie war doch sonst ein wildes Blut.

Die Rosen aufgesprungen.

Nun geht sie tief in Sinnen;

Trägt in der Hand den Sommerhut

Und duldet still der Sonne Glut

Und weiss nicht, was beginnen.

From 7 Early Songs

Night

Clouds loom over night and valley.

Mists hover, waters softly murmur.

Now at once all is unveiled.

O take heed! take heed!

A vast wonderland opens

silvery mountains soar dreamlike tall,

silent paths climb silverbright valleywards from a hidden womb.

And the glorious world so dreamlike pure.

A silent beech-tree stands by the wayside shadow-black - a breath from the distant grove blows solitary soft.

And from the deep valley's gloom lights twinkle in the silent night.

Drink soul! drink solitude! O take heed! take heed!

The nightingale

It is because the nightingale has sung throughout the night. that from the sweet

sound

of her echoing song the roses have sprung up.

She was once a wild creature.

now she wanders deep in thought;

in her hand a summer hat.

bearing in silence the sun's heat,

not knowing what to do.

Das macht, es hat die Nachtigall Die ganze Nacht gesungen; Da sind von ihrem süssen

Schall. Da sind in Hall und Widerhall Die Rosen aufgesprungen.

night, that from the sweet sound of her echoing song the roses have sprung up.

Traumgekrönt

Rainer Maria Rilke

Das war der Tag der weissen Chrysanthemen, -Mir bangte fast vor seiner

Pracht... Und dann, dann kamst du mir die Seele nehmen

Tief in der Nacht.

Mir war so bang, und du kamst lieb und leise, -Ich hatte grad im Traum an dich gedacht.

Du kamst, und leis wie eine Märchenweise

Erklang die Nacht...

Crowned with dreams

It is because the

nightingale

has sung throughout the

That was the day of the white chrysanthemums its brilliance almost frightened me... And then, then you came to take my soul at the dead of night.

I was so frightened, and you came sweetly and gently, I had been thinking of you in my dreams. You came, and soft as a

fairy tune the night rang out...

Liebesode

Otto Erich Hartleben

Im Arm der Liebe schliefen wir selig ein.

Am offnen Fenster lauschte der Sommerwind,

Und unsrer Atemzüge Frieden

Trug er hinaus in die helle Mondnacht. -

Und aus dem Garten tastete zagend sich

Ein Rosenduft an unserer Liebe Bett

Und gab uns wundervolle Träume.

Träume des Rausches - so reich an Sehnsucht!

Ode to love

night. -

in longing!

In love's arms we fell blissfully asleep. The summer wind listened at the open window, and carried the peace of our breathing out into the moon-bright

And from the garden a scent of roses came timidly to our bed of love and gave us wonderful dreams. ecstatic dreams - so rich

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Asie from Shéhérazade (1903)

Tristan Klingsor

Asie, Asie, Asie,
Vieux pays merveilleux des
contes de nourrice,
Où dort la fantaisie
Comme une impératrice
En sa forêt tout emplie de
mystères, Asie,
Je voudrais m'en aller avec la

Je voudrais m'en aller avec la goélette

Qui se berce ce soir dans le port,

Mystérieuse et solitaire,

Et qui déploie enfin ses voiles violettes

Comme un immense oiseau de nuit dans le ciel d'or.

Je voudrais m'en aller vers des îles de fleurs

En écoutant chanter la mer perverse

Sur un vieux rythme ensorceleur;

Je voudrais voir Damas et les villes de Perse

Avec les minarets légers dans l'air:

Je voudrais voir de beaux turbans de soie

Sur des visages noirs aux

dents claires; Je voudrais voir des yeux

sombres d'amour

Et des prunelles brillantes de joie

En des peaux jaunes comme des oranges;

Je voudrais voir des vêtements de velours

Et des habits à longues franges;

Je voudrais voir des calumets entre des bouches

Tout entourées de barbe blanche;

Asia, Asia, Asia,

ancient wonderland of fairy tales,

where fantasy sleeps

like an empress

in her mystery-filled forest, Asia,

I long to set sail with the schooner

which rocks this evening in the harbour,

mysterious and solitary,

and which spreads at last its violet sails

like a huge night-bird in the golden sky.

I long to set sail for isles of flowers

as I listen to the song of the wayward sea

with its old bewitching rhythm;

I long to see Damascus and the cities of Persia

with their airy minarets:

I long to see beautiful silken turbans

above black faces with white teeth;

I long to see eyes dark with love

and pupils sparkling with

sunk in skins as yellow as oranges;

I long to see velvet raiments

and long-fringed robes;

I long to see calumets in mouths

fringed about with white beards;

Je voudrais voir d'âpres marchands aux regards louches.

Et des cadis, et des vizirs Qui du seul mouvement de leur doigt qui se penche

Accordent vie ou mort au gré de leur désir.

Je voudrais voir la Perse, et l'Inde, et puis la Chine,

Les mandarins ventrus sous les ombrelles,

Et les princesses aux mains fines,

Et les lettrés qui se querellent

Sur la poésie et sur la beauté;

Je voudrais m'attarder au palais enchanté

Et comme un voyageur étranger

Contempler à loisir des paysages peints

Sur des étoffes en des cadres de sapin

Avec un personnage au milieu d'un verger;

Je voudrais voir des assassins souriant

Du bourreau qui coupe un cou d'innocent

Avec son grand sabre courbé d'Orient;

Je voudrais voir des pauvres et des reines;

Je voudrais voir des roses et du sang;

Je voudrais voir mourir d'amour ou bien de haine,

Et puis, m'en revenir plus tard Narrer mon aventure

aux curieux de rêves,

En élevant comme Sindbad Ma vieille pipe arabe

Du temps en temps jusqu'à mes lèvres

Pour interrompre le conte avec art...

I long to see grasping merchants with shifty looks,

and cadis and viziers
who with a single crook of

who with a single crook o the finger

dispense life or death on a whim.

I long to see Persia, and India, and then China, portly mandarins beneath

their sunshades, and princesses with

delicate hands, and learned men

disputing

about poetry and beauty;

I long to linger in enchanted palaces,

and like a foreign traveller

gaze at leisure on landscapes painted on fabrics in pinewood frames.

with a figure in the midst of an orchard;

I long to see assassins smiling,

as the executioner cuts off an innocent head

with his great curved Oriental scimitar;

I long to see beggars and queens;

I long to see roses and blood;

I long to see death for love or else for hate, and then to return later

and recount my adventures to those intrigued by dreams,

while raising like Sinbad my old Arabian pipe from time to time to my

lips, artfully to interrupt the tale...

Charles Koechlin (1867-1950)

Le voyage Op. 84 No. 2 The journey

(1922-3)

Tristan Klingsor

Mais non, mieux vaut rester ici.

Et conserver l'illusion charmante,

La nuit d'en vient avec sa mante

Toute brodée d'étoiles d'or;

Le ciel violacé s'obscurcit,

Et la ville, au bord de l'eau qui chante,

Mystérieusement s'endort.

Et moi aussi, ce soir d'automne,

J'écouterai dans mon sommeil,

Par la croisée la vieille mer

Et sa berceuse monotone

Tout bas jouée par d'invisibles instruments,

Et le merveilleux mensonge invent

Par l'enchanteur de cette heure brève

Me sera sans doute plus cher demain encore,

Car le songe est plus beau que la réalité,

Car les plus beaux pays sont ceux que l'on ignore,

Et le plus beau voyage est celui fait en rêve.

But no, it is better to tarry here

and preserve the charming illusion,

night arrives with its mantle

embroidered all over with golden stars;

the purplish-blue sky darkens,

and the town, on the shore of the singing water.

falls mysteriously asleep.

And I too, on this autumn evening,

shall from my casement window

listen in my sleep to the ancient ocean

and its monotonous lullaby, played very quietly by invisible instruments;

and the wondrous lie invented

by the enchantress of this brief hour

will be even dearer to me tomorrow,

for dreams are more beautiful than reality,

for the most beautiful countries are those we do not know.

and the most beautiful voyage is the one made in our dreams.

Maurice Ravel

La flûte enchantée from The enchanted flute Shéhérazade

Tristan Klingsor

L'ombre est douce et mon maître dort,

Coiffé d'un bonnet conique de soie,

Et son long nez jaune en sa barbe blanche.

Mais moi je suis éveillée encore

Et j'écoute au dehors Une chanson de flûte où s'épanche

Tour à tour la tristesse ou la joie, Un air tour à tour langoureux ou frivole

Que mon amoureux chéri joue,

Et quand je m'approche de la croisée,

Il me semble que chaque note s'envole

De la flûte vers ma joue Comme un mystérieux baiser. The shade is soft and my master sleeps,

a cone-shaped silken cap on his head,

and his long yellow nose in his white beard.

But I am still awake, listening to the song

of a flute outside that pours forth

sadness and joy in turn, a tune now languorous now lively,

which my dear lover plays,

and when I draw near the casement.

each note seems to fly

from the flute to my cheek like a mysterious kiss.

Charles Koechlin

L'oiseau en cage Op. 84 No. 6 (1922-3)

Tristan Klingsor

O jeune fille, ton corps délicieux

Est parfumé de lilas et de lys Comme un jardin de délices,

Et quand tu passes, les vieillards clignent des yeux

En devinant sous la robe de couleur.

Le trésor de ta croupe rose et large,

En se disant que l'amour est dans ton cœur,

Comme un oiseau en cage.

The caged bird

O young girl, your exquisite body is scented with lilac and lily like a garden of delights, and when you pass, the old men squint, discerning beneath your colourful dress the treasure of your rosy, wide behind, and tell themselves that love is in your heart, like a caged bird.

Maurice Ravel

L'indifférent from Shéhérazade

Tristan Klingsor

Tes yeux sont doux comme ceux d'une fille.

Jeune étranger, Et la courbe fine

De ton beau visage de duvet ombragé

Est plus séduisante encore de ligne.

Ta lèvre chante
Sur le pas de ma porte
Une langue inconnue et
charmante
Comme une musique fausse;
Entre! et que mon vin te
réconforte...

Mais non, tu passes
Et de mon seuil je te vois
t'éloigner
Me faisant un dernier geste
avec grâce
Et la hanche légèrement ployée
Par ta démarche féminine et

The indifferent one

Your eyes are soft like a girl's, young stranger, and the delicate curve of your handsome downshaded face

is still more attractively shaped.

Your lips sing at my door an unknown charming tongue, like music off-pitch; enter! and let my wine refresh you...

But no, you pass by and I see you leaving my threshold, gracefully waving farewell,

your hips lightly swaying in your languid feminine way.

Interval

lasse.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)

Was du mir bist? Op. 22 No. 1 (1928-9)

Eleonore van der Straaten

Was du mir bist?

Der Ausblick in ein schönes
Land,

Wo fruchtbelad'ne Bäume

ragen,

Blumen blühn' am Quellenrand.

Was du mir bist?
Der Stern' Funkeln, das
Gewölk durchbricht,
Der ferne Lichtstrahl,
Der im Dunkeln
spricht:

O Wand'rer, verzage nicht!

What are you to me?

What are you to me?
The sight of a beautiful country
where fruit-laden trees soar upwards
and flowers bloom at the water's edge.

What are you to me?
The twinkling star breaking through the cloud,
the distant ray of light which speaks in the darkness:
traveller, don't give up hope!

Und war mein Leben auch Entsagen, Glänzte mir kein froh Geschick, Was dur mir bist? Kannst du noch fragen?

Was du mir bist Mein Glaube an das Glück.

Mit Dir zu schweigen Op. 22 No. 2 (1928-9)

Karl Kobald

Mit Dir zu schweigen still im Dunkel, Die Seele an der Träume

Schoss gelehnt,
Ist Lauschen ew'gen
Melodien,

Ist Liebe ohne End.

Mit Dir zu schweigen in der Dämmerzeit Ist Schweben nach der Welten grossen Fülle, Ist Wachsen weit in die Unendlichkeit,

Entrückt in ew'ge Stille. And even if my life were one of renunciation, where no good luck came my way, what are you to me?

Do you need to ask?

What are you to me: my belief in happiness.

To be silent when I'm with you

To be silent when I'm with you in the dark, our souls reclining in the lap of dreams, is to hear eternal melodies, love without end.

To be silent with you at dusk, is to float towards the abundance of worlds, is to grow far into infinity, transported into eternal stillness.

Welt ist stille eingeschlafen Op. 22 No. 3 (1928-9)

Karl Kobald

Welt ist stille eingeschlafen, Ruht im Mondenschein Öffnen sich im Himmelshafen Augen, golden, rein.

Gottes Geige singt jetzt leis' Liebste, denk' an Dich, Wie im Traumboot geht die Reise, Such' in Sternen Dich.

Strahlen sel'ger Lieb erhellen Meines Herzens Raum. Zweisprach halten uns're Seelen, Küssen sich im Traum.

The world has gone to sleep

The world has gone to sleep, resting in the moonlight. In the haven of heaven eyes, golden and pure, open.

God's violin sings sweetly; my love, I think of you. Sailling in a boat of dreams, I seek you in the stars.

Beams of blissful love light up the whole of my heart.
Our souls, in rapt communion, kiss, in my dream.

Amy Beach (1867-1944)

In the Twilight Op. 85 (1922)

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The twilight is sad and cloudy, The wind blows wild and free, And like the wings of seagulls Flash the white caps of the sea.

But in the fisherman's cottage There shines a ruddier light, And a little face at the window Peers out into the night.

Close, close it is pressed to the window, As if those childish eyes Were looking into the darkness, To see some form arise.

And a woman's waving shadow Is passing to and fro, Now rising to the ceiling, Now bowing and bending low.

What tale do the roaring ocean, And the night-wind, bleak and wild, As they beat at the crazy casement, Tell to that little child?

And why do the roaring ocean,
And the night-wind, wild and bleak,
As they beat at the heart of the mother,
Drive the color from her cheek?

Springtime Op. 124 (1929)

Susan Merrick Heywood

White lilacs in the garden, White locust on the tree, Air with fragrance laden, Love is in life for me.

Golden the jonquil's chalice, Golden the visiting bee, Golden the sky at sunset, Love is the gold for me.

Clear as the song of showers, Or butterflies, made free, Clear as the rapture of Springtime Is the call of my love to me.

The Singer Op. 117 No. 1 (1925)

Muna Lee

I would sing with my lips
To the lips of a seashell,
I would sing to the thrush
And the cardinal bird,
I would sing though
The singing breezes heard me,
Though the tall field grasses and light rains heard.
For I have a song that is fit for the singing,
And a song unmatched till the world be done,
Though never a heart on the wide world heed it
But mine and another one,
Though never a heart
But mine and another one!

Mine be the lips Op. 113 (1921)

Leonora Speyer

If I could sing the song of the dawn, The caroling word of leaf and bird And the sunwaked fern uncurling there, I would go lonely and would not care.

If I could sing the song of the dusk, The stars and moon of glist'ning June, Lit at the foot and head of me, The Spinner might break the thread of me.

If I could sing the song of Love, Fill my throat with each sounding note, Others might kiss and clasp and cling, Mine be the lips that would sing!

Kurt Weill (1900-1950)

Alabama Song from Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny (1927-9)

Bertolt Brecht

Due to copyright reasons we are unable to reproduce the text for this song.

Surabaya Johnny from Happy End (1929)

Bertolt Brecht

Ich war jung, Gott, erst sechzehn Jahre Du kamest von Burma herauf

Due to copyright reasons we are unable to reproduce the original text for this song.

I was young, god, just sixteen years old; you came up from Burma and said that I should go with you it was all your idea.

It was all your idea.
I asked about your
position

and you said, as I stand here,

you had something to do with the railways

and nothing to do with the sea.

You said a lot of things, Johnny;

not a word was true, Johnny; you deceived me, Johnny, from the first hour.

How I hate you, Johnny; how you stand there and grin, Johnny;

take that pipe out of your mouth, you hound.

Surabaya Johnny, why are you so cruel?

Surabaya Johnny, my god, I love you so.

Surabaya Johnny, why aren't I happy?

You have no heart, Johnny, and I love you so.

At first every day was like Sunday

with you, until I went with you -

but after just two weeks I couldn't do anything right for you any more.

Up and down across the Punjab

along the the river to the sea;

in the mirror, I already look

like a forty-year-old.

You didn't want love, Johnny,

you wanted money, Johnny, but, Johnny, all I saw was your face;

you wanted it all, Johnny; I gave you more, Johnny. Take that pipe out of your mouth, you hound. Surabaya Johnny ...

I never thought to wonder why you had that name but all along the coast you were a well-known guest.

One morning in a flophouse
I'll hear the sea thundering and you'll go, without a word; your ship is down at the

dock.
You have no heart, Johnny,
you're a scoundrel, Johnny,
and now you're leaving,
Johnny, tell me why!
I still love you, Johnny,

like the first day, Johnny take that pipe out of your mouth, you hound!

Surabaya Johnny ...

Due to copyright reasons we are unable to reproduce the texts for the following three songs.

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

The Man I Love (1924)
Ira Gershwin

Kay Swift (1897-1993)

Can't we be friends? (1929) James Warburg

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise (1922)
Ira Gershwin

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