



Carsten Schmidt, artistic director

2009 Summer Sounds

Gala Dinner and Concert

Saturday August 22 at 7pm
President's House, Mary Baldwin College

This concert has been underwritten by
Virginia Arnold.

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for their generosity in hosting this evening's event.

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With

Gabriel Dobner, piano
Michael Haag, bass
Erin Keefe, violin
Vladimir Mendelssohn, viola
Diane Pascal, violin
David Schrader, harmonium
James Wilson, cello

PROGRAM

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Selected Lieder
<i>Wie Ulfru fischt</i>
<i>Auf der Donau</i>
<i>Gruppe aus dem Tartarus</i>
<i>Ganymed</i>
Haag, Dobner | Franz Schubert (1797-1828) |
| Madrigals for violin and viola
Pascal, Mendelssohn | Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959) |
| Selected Lieder
<i>Im Spätboot</i>
<i>Ach weh mir unglückhaftem Mann</i>
<i>Heimliche Afforderung</i>
Haag, Dobner | Richard Strauss (1864-1949) |
| Five Bagatelles, op. 47
Keefe, Pascal, Wilson, Schrader | Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904) |

NOTES

SCHUBERT

1823 must have been a very difficult year in Schubert's life. In terms of the illness, syphilis, which eventually brought him to an early grave, 1823 marked the onset and a turning point in his own awareness of mortality. By February he was already showing signs of the disease that was highly contagious and socially embarrassing. Confinement away from society was necessary but painful. Schubert's greatest consolation may have been the additional time for composing without having to pay endless social calls. This remained a very productive time for Schubert, including the completion of several significant piano compositions, songs, and worked for the last time on several opera projects (a genre he never was able to establish himself in). Late in the year he completed his first song cycle, *Die schöne Müllerin*.

Before that, in June 1823, Schubert published his opus 21, three water-themed songs by poet Johann Mayrhofer. (Tonight's selections include the first and third songs from op. 21.) Schubert's friendship with Mayrhofer dates back to December 1814, and, indeed, these three songs were actually composed in the spring of 1817. Why publish them now, seven years later? At the end of 1820 Schubert and Mayrhofer's friendship cooled considerably. Hence it is entirely plausible—though not provable—that the composer promoted these works for publication in 1823 as a kind of peace offering to Mayrhofer.

The set begins with "Auf der Donau," a bleak rhapsody that ruminates on man's inability to achieve anything of permanence. Mayrhofer sets out nostalgic visions of a glorious past as a chimera; the images appear literally as "castles in the air" as one floats down the Danube. Despite the inviting start, all is doom and gloom within two lines. Schubert captures the chimerical tone through evaded cadences and a minimal establishment of the opening key, E-flat major, which yields quickly to C-flat major. Remarkably, at least for 1817, Schubert never gets back to the home key once he leaves it: the third stanza is set to a varied reprise of the opening but in F-sharp minor, bringing the song to an utterly pessimistic and barren conclusion.

"Wie Ulfru fischt," the third song in op. 21, is also set in a minor key, though Schubert manages to sound less despairing. The song operates from the simplest of all possible formal structures: a strophic design (meaning that all stanzas are set to the same music) with an identical piano prologue and epilogue. Mayrhofer touches on a Viennese interest in folk charm—the charm of rustic living—merged with the "urban" philosophical musings over mortality and life's paradoxes. Schubert obviously felt the personal connection to such bittersweet thoughts during that summer of 1823, when he was facing an uncertain future, alone, and thumbing through past songs to put together for publication. Mayrhofer had written, "The earth is surpassingly beautiful, but safe it is not." The heavy hand of Fate is always just a step behind you. Schubert's letters, and in par-

ticular a poem he wrote early in 1823, show just how despondently he looked to the future. But he had not given up; like Ulfru, Schubert is a survivor and he would go on to write works that forever altered the course of music history.

When Schubert set Schiller's poem "Gruppe aus dem Tartarus" in 1817, it was the second time he worked with that text. The earlier setting bears no comparison to the second, far more mature and dramatic version. That year—as we can see by virtue of the preceding songs heard this evening—was an extremely productive one, particularly in song composition. And "Gruppe aus dem Tartarus" shows Schubert taking definitive steps beyond the lieder he had written to date. He pushes aside the strophic expectation for the poem's three stanzas, writing instead an evolution from one stanza to the next. The opening tremolos in the piano establish the somber mood and create demonic outbursts that often overwhelm the declamatory vocal line. Lingered on a set pitch level, the voice drones menacingly, moving just enough to keep pace with the rising tonal scheme. Somewhat crudely but effectively, Schubert elects to build the entire song on a series of key changes ratcheting up by half step (as the tortured souls creep slowly from the depths). The change to the major mode at "Ewigkeit" (eternity) brings a moment of welcome relief from the turbulent minor; a glimmer of hope, perhaps, but the end of Schiller's poetic hell is never in doubt.

The musical structure of "Ganymed" is close to "Auf der Donau" without the general despairing tone. Goethe wrote the poem in 1774 to celebrate the amorous, all-consuming, and quasi-erotic love relationship between man and Nature: a striving for oneness, the urge toward unity with all living things that became so critical to 19th-century aesthetics. In myth Ganymede was the most beautiful youth alive. He was chosen by Zeus, king of gods and men, to be a royal cupbearer, though the implications of Zeus' fondness for the boy hardly stop there. Homosexual feelings inherent in the myth and its subsequent use among classical authors may but need not be transplanted to help explain the motivations of either Goethe (in writing the poem) or Schubert (in setting it to music). Such correlations are debatable and not always instructive for understanding the piece of work facing us. What cannot be argued, however, is how successfully Schubert embodies the poem's theme of continual striving with a through-composed tonal narrative. Starting in A-flat major, he sets off on a journey through at least eight different keys (!), crisscrossing the universe of tonal centers to end, finally, in F major. Schubert decides to portray Ganymede as a spirited youth: the mincing accompaniment undercuts Goethe's overt sexuality. And although the pictorial rising melodic lines (at the text's "Upwards! Strive upwards!") could have been expected, the way in which Schubert avoids a final cadence in F major for so long offers a beguiling and affecting "delayed gratification."

MARTINŮ

Younger by two generations than his countrymen Antonin **Dvořák** (heard later in the program) and **Leos Janáček**, Czech composer Bohuslav **Martinů** would inevitably come under the influence of these elder masters. **Dvořák's** shadow looms largest over Bohemian music of the late 19th century, while **Janáček**—with his great gift for opera—lived long enough (d. 1928) to stake a claim to the 20th. **Martinů** worked hard to carve a niche for himself, achieving a measure of public success with his many chamber works. Having mastered the violin at an early age, **Martinů** made a living for many years playing in the Czech Philharmonic. Such surroundings helped channel his burgeoning compositional ambitions into string-based genres, such as quartets, trios, quintets, solo sonatas, and—apropos of tonight's selection—duos.

Somewhere along the way Martinů developed a particular fascination for the style of the Renaissance *madrigal*, a form of poetry that inspired some of the most polished and experimental musical settings by Monteverdi, Marenzio, Willaert, and others. Martinů used the term “madrigal” in the title of at least six distinct compositions. *Three Madrigals*, composed in February 1947, had a more direct inspiration. Martinů began attending the new Musicians' Guild in New York City that winter. At the first meeting of the Guild, whose mission to encourage live performance of chamber music also gave special attention to new music, Martinů was completely captivated by the playing of sibling duo Joseph and Lillian Fuchs. So impressed was he that Martinů proudly presented to Fuchs with the manuscript for *Three Madrigals* just three weeks later. Premiered at the Musicians' Guild in December 1947, the work earned critical praise from the start and quickly garnered a prominent place in the violin/viola duo repertory.

Three Madrigals is laid out in three movements conventionally organized like a classical sonata: fast-slow-fast. The first movement comes crashing out of the gate, but soon settles down enough to make room for a more lyrical theme that passes from one instrument to the other. **Martinů's polyphony is tight**—a feature enhanced by the similarity of register between violin and viola—though the writing is never so dissonant as to feel confrontational. Action flits quickly from idea to idea, **yet Martinů manages to maintain a thread of dramatic connection.** Not for a moment does either player get a chance to catch their breath; this is more than just a colloquial metaphor, for such a headstrong, continuous texture could never have been written the same way for a woodwind duo.

The slower middle movement takes its central idea from the trill, an ornament involving rapid oscillation around a basic pitch. **Martinů enjoys setting the trills in tumbling descents that convey a sense of the ominous.** The movement's second theme, still relying largely on trills, nicely introduces a folk style strummed accompaniment. Overall, the harmonic language and form ensure the movement a gracious reception, and I would wager that the *Madrigals'* accessibility was a major reason for its critical success early on.

The vibrant finale draws directly on older music; there are Baroque cadential rumblings, as well as an overt quotation from Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757). One might compare such moments to the neo-classical works of Stravinsky or Poulenc, which also quote and then develop themes from past masters. **Martinů even withdraws** in this finale to an episode of austere Bachian counterpoint, which, like so many moments in *Three Madrigals*, gets just enough time to present itself before trills come along to wipe the slate clean. **Martinů was clearly not lacking** for thematic ideas when he dashed these pieces out. Their composition nicely balances inspiration from past centuries as well as the powerful impact of great performers.

STRAUSS

Richard Strauss' reputation among current music lovers is primarily based on his operas (e.g., *Salome* and *Der Rosenkavalier*) and large symphonic tone poems (*Zarathustra*, *Don Juan*). However, he produced a great deal of music in many genres, and a fuller picture of the man and composer must take those other creations into account. In fact, some critics hold the opinion that Strauss' lieder provide a better, more intimate picture of the man than do his compositions for large ensemble. These songs show Strauss in the milieu of the *fin-de-siecle* salon, a place where he was comfortable to be himself and reveal a penchant for striking oppositions: noble and intellectual but prone to low humor, reserved but at times giving vent to strong sensual impulses. After achieving local recognition for some of his early song sets, Strauss garnered wider acclaim with his op. 27 collection (1894), four songs written as a wedding gift for his wife and which includes *Im Spätboot*.

The scene put forth in *Im Spätboot* is typically vivid. The poem picks up on a familiar motif—the sweet sleep of death—and details the final boat ride. We are in Charon's hands now, and Strauss keys in on the motion of the boat as it conveys all travelers to their final destination. Strauss sinks much of the vocal writing deep in the darkness. All indications of a single sustained emotion are undercut by unexpected dissonant resolutions and deceptive harmonic progressions, creating a sense of tension that must navigate across successive peaks and troughs.

In *Ach weh mir unglückhaftem Mann*, op. 21 no. 4, Strauss provides a wonderfully apt depiction of the poem's imagery, which centers on a young lover's flights of fancy: "If only I had money," he says, "I would harness four white horses and lead them to you in a trot." And sure enough, after the initial despairing chromatic ideas have run their course, the piano accompaniment plays the horses' trotting rhythm and the mood brightens considerably. Direct echoes of Schubert's lieder can be heard. Such romantic sentiments as the poem deals with are hardly novel, though Strauss takes great pains to invigorate each fleeting emotion with descriptive music.

Dominated by a rolling piano accompaniment, which carries the voice along as if on floodwaters, *Heimliche Aufforderung*, op. 27 no. 3, was also written in 1894. The

hyperactive, hyperexpressive texture and melodic action accord with the poem's unrestrained eroticism. His turbulent marriage that year to Pauline de Ahna may help explain some of the "over the top" expressivity encountered in several of these songs. Quick modulations help portray the protagonist's drunken anticipation, building every instant until the final line, which Strauss wisely repeats.

These three songs provide just a glimpse into a very complex and multi-faceted musical personality, ranging from youthful orchestral works in imitation of Schumann and Wagner all the way to the modernist operas written under the Nazi regime. Strauss' *Four Last Songs* (1948) are a concert favorite, testifying to the importance the vocal genre held in his output from start to finish.

DVOŘÁK

A work of such quality as the Bagatelles, op. 47, shows how much **Dvořák**—for all his relative stature among cognoscenti of classical music—may still be underappreciated. Like several of his *Slavonic Dances*, the Bagatelles capture a folk spirit that **Dvořák** could channel better than any of his contemporaries. Indeed, in the twelve days he took to write the Bagatelles in May 1878, **Dvořák** was also wrapping up his first collection of *Slavonic Dances* (op. 46). The cross fertilization made a deep impact on the Bagatelles. Impeccably crafted, rhythmically vibrant (the dance traditions of central Europe are never far from the surface of **Dvořák's** music), the Bagatelles also demonstrate the composer's natural melodic gifts. **Dvořák** had already written at least nine string quartets as well as several trios and quintets, and the comfort he felt with string textures is evident. This can be heard, for instance, in the assured counterpoint featured in the slow fourth movement—which, not insignificantly, is set in the same key (E major) as the composer's brilliant Serenade for Strings, op. 22 (1875).

The Bagatelles were intended primarily as "house music" to be performed by talented amateurs. The inclusion of a harmonium, rather than a more conventional piano, was dictated by the particular ensemble of friends **Dvořák** had in mind. Still, the piece demands more than most talented amateurs can muster; in other words, it requires more experience and professional skills to make such pieces sound "natural" and "simple." Just as in the case of Beethoven's late piano pieces entitled "Bagatelles," often translated as "Trifles," **Dvořák's** set never equates small scale with small ambitions. His overarching aim is to unite the movements with motivic coherence, for instance the way in which the main theme is hinted at, and sometimes directly quoted, in the third and fifth movements. The Minuet (second movement) and Andante (fourth movement) are placed for contrast. Yet through everything runs the composer's brilliant and apparently effortless lyricism, which makes his music so enduringly popular.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Schubert Lieder

Wie Ulfru fischt

Die Angel zuckt, die Rute bebt,
Doch leicht fährt sie heraus.
Ihr eigensinn'gen Nixen gebt
Dem Fischer keinen Schmaus.
Was frommet ihm sein kluger Sinn,
Die Fische baumeln spottend hin;
Er steht am Ufer fest gebannt,
Kann nicht ins Wasser, ihn hält das Land.

Die glatte Fläche kräuselt sich,
Vom Schuppenvolk bewegt,
Das seine Glieder wonniglich
In sichern Fluten regt.
Forellen zappeln hin und her,
Doch bleibt des Fischers Angel leer,
Sie fühlen, was die Freiheit ist,
Fruchtlos ist Fischers alte List.

Die Erde ist gewaltig schön,
Doch sicher ist sie nicht.
Es senden Stürme Eiseshöh'n,
Der Hagel und der Frost zerbricht
Mit einem Schlage, einem Druck,
Das gold'ne Korn, der Rosen Schmuck;
Den Fischlein unter'm weichen Dach,
Kein Sturm folgt ihnen vom Lande nach.
—J. B. Mayrhofer

Auf der Donau

Auf der Wellen Spiegel schwimmt der Kahn,
Alte Burgen ragen himmelan,
Tannenwälder rauschen geistergleich,
Und das Herz im Busen wird uns weich.

Denn der Menschen Werk sinken all',
Wo ist Turm, wo Pforte, wo der Wall,
Wo sie selbst, die Starken, erzgeschirmt,
Die in Krieg und Jagden hingestürmt?
Wo? Wo?

How Ulfru Fishes

He shakes the hook, he jerks the lure,
But nothing's on the line;
The water sprites are making sure
The fisherman won't dine.
They love to foil his schemes and scoff
At him as they scoot smartly off;
Bound to the bank, the helpless clown
Cannot pursue them or he'll drown.

The glassy surface ripples where
The scaly tribes below
Perform gymnastic feats from sheer
High spirits, to and fro.
The fisher rues his empty creel
While trout are jumping just to feel,
As they let loose, what freedom is,
Pooh-poohing Ulfru's artifice.

The earth is wildly beautiful
But not as safe as we suppose;
Its evil storms with ice and hail
Can bruise the wheat and crush the rose:
But careless, playful and aloof,
The little fish have a soft, smooth roof
To shield them from the upper air -
No storm from land can reach them there.
—Translation © T. P. Perrin

On the Danube

Upon the waves' mirror floats our boat;
Old castles tower up toward heaven,
Pine forests rustle ghost-like,
And the hearts in our bosoms melt.

For man's work fails ever:
Where is tower, where gate, where wall,
Where are they, these armored strongholds, that
were besieged in war and in hunt?
Where? Where?

Auf der Donau (cont.)

Trauriges Gestrüppe wuchert fort,
Während frommer Sage Kraft verdorrt:
Und im kleinen Kahne wird uns bang,
Wellen drohn wie Zeiten Untergang.
—J. B. Mayrhofer

On the Danube (cont.)

Sad undergrowth proliferates,
While the strength of pious words fades:
And in the small boat, we become timid:
Waves, like Time, threaten impending death.
—Translation © Emily Ezust

Gruppe aus dem Tartarus

Horch - wie Murmeln des empörten Meeres,
Wie durch hohler Felsen Becken weint ein Bach,
Stöhnt dort dumpftief ein schweres, leeres
Qualerpreßtes Ach!

Group from Tartarus

Hark - like the murmuring of the angry sea,
like a brook weeping through hollow, rocky gul-
lies, you can hear over there, deeply muffled, a
heavy, toneless groan, extracted with torment!

Schmerz verzerret

Ihr Gesicht, Verzweiflung sperret
Ihren Rachen fluchend auf.
Hohl sind ihre Augen, ihre Blicke
Spähen bang nach des Cocytus Brücke,
Folgen tränend seinem Trauerlauf.

Pain contorts

their faces, despair opens
their jaws with curses.
Hollow are their eyes: their gaze
rests anxiously on Cocytus' bridge,
and they follows Cocytus' sad course with tears.

Fragen sich einander ängstlich leise,
Ob noch nicht Vollendung sei!
Ewigkeit schwingt über ihnen Kreise,
Bricht die Sense des Saturns entzwei.
—F. Schiller

They ask one another softly with fear
whether the end has not yet come!
Eternity whirls above them in circles,
breaking Saturn's scythe in two.
—Translation © Emily Ezust

Ganymed

Wie im Morgenglanze
Du rings mich anglühst,
Frühling, Geliebter!
Mit tausendfacher Liebeswonne
Sich an mein Herze drängt
Deiner ewigen Wärme
Heilig Gefühl,
Unendliche Schöne!

Ganymede

How in the morning light
you glow around me,
beloved Spring!
With love's thousand-fold bliss,
to my heart presses
the eternal warmth
of sacred feelings
and endless beauty!

Daß ich dich fassen möcht'
In diesen Arm!

Would that I could clasp
you in these arms!

Ach, an deinem Busen
Lieg' ich und schmachte,
Und deine Blumen, dein Gras
Drängen sich an mein Herz.

Ah, at your breast
I lie and languish,
and your flowers and your grass
press themselves to my heart.

Ganymed (cont.)

Du kühlst den brennenden
Durst meines Busens,
Lieblicher Morgenwind!
Ruft drein die Nachtigall
Liebend nach mir aus dem Nebeltal.
Ich komm', ich komme!
Ach wohin, wohin?

Hinauf! strebt's hinauf.
Es schweben die Wolken
Abwärts, die Wolken
Neigen sich der sehnenen Liebe.
Mir! Mir!
In eurem Schosse
Aufwärts!
Umfangend umfassen!
Aufwärts an deinen Busen,
Allliebender Vater!
—J. W. von Goethe

Ganymede (cont.)

You cool the burning
thirst of my breast,
lovely morning wind!
The nightingale calls
lovingly to me from the misty vale.
I am coming, I am coming!
but whither? To where?

Upwards I strive, upwards!
The clouds float
downwards, the clouds
bow down to yearning love.
To me! To me!
In your lap
upwards!
Embracing, embraced!
Upwards to your bosom,
All-loving Father!
—Translation © Emily Ezust

STRAUSS LIEDER

Im Spätboot

Aus der Schiffsbank mach ich meinen Pfühl.
Endlich wird die heiße Stirne kühl!
O wie süß erkaltet mir das Herz!
O wie weich verstummen Lust und Schmerz!
Über mir des Rohres schwarzer Rauch
Wiegt und biegt sich in des Windes Hauch.
Hüben hier und wieder drüben dort
Hält das Boot an manchem kleinen Port:
Bei der Schiffslaterne kargem Schein
Steigt ein Schatten aus und niemand ein.
Nur der Steurer noch, der wacht und steht!
Nur der Wind, der mir im Haare weht!
Schmerz und Lust erleiden sanften Tod.
Einen Schlummerer trägt das dunkle Boot.
—Conrad Meyer

In the Last Boat

The boat's bench I make my pillow.
Finally is my hot forehead cool!
O, how sweetly does my heart grow colder!
How softly joys and pains are stilled!
Above me the black smoke from the funnel
sways and wavers in the breath of the breeze.
Over here and then over there
the boat puts in at many a small port:
by the dim glow of the ship's lantern a shadow
disembarks and no one comes on board.
Only the helmsman is left, standing watching!
Only the wind, that ruffles my hair!
Pain and joy die a gentle death.
The dark boat bears away this sleeping man.
—Translation © Emily Ezust

Ach weh mir unglücklichem Mann
Ach weh mir unglücklichem Mann,
daß ich Geld und Gut nicht habe,
sonst spannt' ich gleich vier Schimmel an
und führ' zu dir im Trabe.

Ich putzte sie mit Schellen aus,
daß du mich hörst' st von weitem,
ich steckt' ein'n großen Rosenstrauß
an meine linke Seiten.

Und käm' ich an dein kleines Haus,
tät' ich mit der Peitsche schlagen,
da gucktest du zum Fenster 'naus:
Was willst du? Tät' st du fragen.

Was soll der großen Rosenstrauß,
die Schimmel an dem Wagen?
Dich will ich, rief' ich, komm heraus!
Da tät' st du nimmer fragen.

Nun, Vater, Mutter, seht sie an
und küßt sie rasch zum Scheiden,
weil ich nicht lange warten kann,
meine Schimmel wolln' s nicht leiden.

Ach weh mir unglücklichem Mann,
daß ich Geld und Gut nicht hab' .
—Felix Dahn

Heimliche Aufforderung

Auf, hebe die funkelnde Schale
empor zum Mund,
Und trinke beim Freudenmahle
dein Herz gesund.
Und wenn du sie hebst,
so winke mir heimlich zu,
Dann lächle ich und dann
trinke ich still wie du...

Und still gleich mir betrachte
um uns das Heer
Der trunknen Zecher -- verachte sie
nicht zu sehr.
Nein, hebe die blinkende Schale,
gefüllt mit Wein,
Und laß beim lärmenden Mahle
sie glücklich sein.

Alas, I am an unlucky man
Alas, I am an unlucky man,
to have neither money nor goods;
otherwise I would quickly harness four
white horses and lead them into a trot.

I would adorn them with bells,
so that you could hear them from afar;
I would stick a large bouquet of roses
on my left side.

And when I came to your little house,
I would snap my whip, and you
would look out of your window:
"What do you want?" you would ask.

"What are you doing with this large bouquet of
roses, and white horses and carriage?"
"It is you I want," I would cry; "Come out!"
And then you would ask no more questions.

"Now, Father, Mother, gaze at her
and kiss her quickly in farewell,
for I cannot wait much longer -
my horses won't tolerate it."

Alas, I am an unlucky man,
to have neither money nor goods!
—Translation © Emily Ezust

Secret Invitation

Up, raise the sparkling cup
to your lips,
And drink your heart's fill
at the joyous feast.
And when you raise it,
so wink secretly at me,
Then I'll smile and drink
quietly, as you...

And quietly as I, look around
at the crowd
Of drunken revelers -- don't think
too ill of them.
No, lift the twinkling cup,
filled with wine,
And let them be happy
at the noisy meal.

Heimliche (cont.)

Doch hast du das Mahl genossen,
den Durst gestillt,
Dann verlasse der lauten Genossen
festfreudiges Bild,
Und wandle hinaus in den Garten
zum Rosenstrauch,
Dort will ich dich dann erwarten
nach altem Brauch,

Und will an die Brust dir sinken,
eh du's gehofft,
Und deine Küsse trinken, wie ehemals oft,
Und flechten in deine Haare der Rose Pracht.
O komm, du wunderbare, ersehnte Nacht!

—John Henry Mackay

But when you've savored the meal,
your thirst quenched,
Then quit the loud gathering's joyful fest,
And wander out into the garden,
to the rosebush,
There shall I await you,
as often of old.

And ere you know it shall I sink
upon your breast,
And drink your kisses, as so often before,
And twine the rose's splendor into your hair.
Oh, come, you wondrous, longed-for night!

—Translation © Lawrence Snyder and
Rebecca Plack

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