
SEATTLE PRO MUSICA
KAREN P. THOMAS, CONDUCTOR

Songs for the People

Guest composer, Melissa Dunphy

November 12, 2022

Welcome to *Songs for the People*, the second concert of our 50th anniversary season! We're delighted to welcome you to our year of celebration—the second of our five-concert “New American Composer Series.”

This year, Seattle Pro Musica marks our 50th anniversary by celebrating our past while also looking forward to our next 50 years. In this spirit of re-imagining the future of choral music, we have commissioned five exciting young composers to write new works for our anniversary. Tonight, we feature Melissa Dunphy, with a performance of five of her choral works, complemented by pieces by Dale Warland, Eric Tuan, Péter Louis Van Dijk, and Pärt Uusberg.

We've enjoyed having Melissa in Seattle this past week to work with the singers of Seattle Pro Musica, and to share her knowledge and talent with students in the Greater Seattle area via our Education and Engagement Program.

We are certain you will enjoy hearing Melissa's music, as well as her insights about her compositional process and the place of new choral music in the world today. Please join us for a meet-and-greet following the concert!

Born to refugee parents and raised in Australia, **Melissa Dunphy** immigrated to the United States in 2003 and has since become an award-winning and acclaimed composer specializing in vocal, political, and theatrical music. She first came to national attention in 2009 when her large-scale choral work *The Gonzales Cantata* was featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, *Harper's Magazine*, *National Review*, *Comedy Central*, *FOX News*, and MSNBC's *The Rachel Maddow Show*, where host Rachel Maddow described it as “the coolest thing you've ever seen on this show.”

Dunphy has been composer-in-residence for the Immaculata Symphony Orchestra, Volti Choral Arts Lab and Choral Institute, and the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus. She is the recipient of a 2020 Opera America Discovery Grant for *Alice Tierney*, a new opera commission by Oberlin Conservatory, set to premiere in 2023. In addition to her concert and choral music, she is a Barrymore Award-nominated composer and sound designer working with Philadelphia-area theaters, and she has been Director of Music Composition at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center National Puppetry Conference since 2014. Dunphy has a Ph.D. in Music Composition from the University of Pennsylvania, and is a lecturer in composition at Rutgers University.



Of her work, she writes:

“As a composer, I believe that music is not only a form of expression but a means of communication. My primary mission is to connect with my audience so that they discover and understand the ideas, emotions, and narratives in my music.

“I want my music to be relevant to the world around it and exist in that world. It is inspired by and explores real-world issues of social justice and personal relationships.

“I am deeply committed to bringing the voices of women and minorities to the stage, either by telling their stories, or telling stories from their perspective.”

For her Seattle Pro Musica commissioned work, Melissa has chosen *Songs for the People*, a text by the Black American poet, abolitionist, and suffragist, Francis Ellen Watkins Harper.

SEATTLE PRO MUSICA
KAREN P. THOMAS, CONDUCTOR

Songs for the People

Guest composer, Melissa Dunphy
New American Composers Series

November 12, 2022 | Seattle First Baptist Church

CHROMA

Soprano-Alto Ensemble

Nocturne

Eric Tuan (b. 1990)

Set to the love poem “*Puedo escribir*” by Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, written when he was only 19 years old.
Sung in Spanish.

Wild Embers

Melissa Dunphy (b. 1980)

“We are the descendants of the wild women you forgot. We are the stories you thought would never be taught.”
Sung in English.

ORPHEON

Tenor-Bass Ensemble

N-400 Erasure Songs, #2

Melissa Dunphy

Inspired by the N-400, the application form that foreign-born “aliens” submit to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to become citizens of the United States. Text of the N-400 is selectively blacked out and rearranged to uncover new meanings.
Sung in English.

VOX

Mixed-Voice Ensemble

Horizons

Péter Louis Van Dijk (b. 1953)

This lullaby-like song, filled with sounds of the African veldt, includes images of the natural world before the arrival of Europeans in southern Africa—and the destruction that resulted when European ships finally did come.
Sung in English.

SEATTLE PRO MUSICA

Songs for the People WORLD PREMIERE

Melissa Dunphy

Commissioned by Seattle Pro Musica in celebration of our 50th Anniversary Season, this anthemic work is set to a rousing poem by the poet, journalist, and anti-slavery activist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper.
Sung in English.

Muusika

Pärt Uusberg (b. 1986)

Music—*muusika* in Estonian—is a vital part of Estonian identity, as movingly told in the 2008 documentary, *The Singing Revolution*. Music played an important role in the largely peaceful protests in 20th-century Estonia when the tradition of communal singing saw the Estonian people through the darkest days of oppression by the Nazis, and later the USSR.

Sung in Estonian.

American DREAMERS

#UndocuJoy

#UnitedWeDream

Melissa Dunphy

Written in 2018 to bring light to the stories of immigrants:

“This is where we found our home away from home

This is where we belong...

This is where you belong, Dreamer!”

Sung in Spanish and English.

Always Singing

Dale Warland (b. 1932)

A lush, pastoral song celebrating the joy of singing throughout our lives.

Sung in English.

I am the World

Melissa Dunphy

Commissioned by BBC Radio 3 for a program marking International Women’s Day with a live broadcast of music by leading women composers of the 21st Century.

Sung in English.

OUR MISSION

To enrich and inspire our audiences, singers, and community through the experience of choral artistry, and to increase access to and appreciation of choral music.

OUR STATEMENT ON CULTURAL EQUITY

Everyone deserves equal access to a full and vibrant creative life, and this access is essential to a free and healthy society. To support the creative life of our community, Seattle Pro Musica commits to policies and practices of cultural equity that foster equal access, inclusion, and justice.

We recognize cultural equity as a framework of values, policies, and practices that ensures arts institutions serve the needs of all people, especially those who have historically been underserved based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, size, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion.

As we pursue our artistic mission, we will hold ourselves accountable to cultural equity. By acknowledging and challenging inequities, both as an individual arts organization and in partnership with others, we can and will make change happen.

These performances are supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, ArtsFund, ArtsWA, Chorus America, 4Culture, Classical KING FM 98.1, and the City of Seattle, Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs.

Please mute all cell phones and electronic devices. No photography during performances. Thank you.

Program notes, texts, and translations

Recognized for his adventurous programming and passion for musical excellence, **Eric Tuan** brings a wealth of experience in the choral and keyboard arts to the concert stage. He currently serves as Artistic Director of the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir, where he oversees a choral program of 250 singers and leads the performing choirs in a diverse array of collaborations, concert tours, and commissions. Tuan has sung professionally with Volti, Cappella SF, and the Philharmonia Baroque Chorale, and has received acclaim for his sensitive work as an organist, collaborative pianist, continuo player, and répétiteur. His choral music has been widely performed by leading ensembles in Europe, the UK, Canada, and the United States.

The composer writes:

"**Nocturne** is a melancholy reflection on the end of a relationship, inspired by the words of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Neruda's evocative collection of love poems, *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* ("Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair"), was written when he was only 19 years old, and would become the best-selling book of poetry in the Spanish language. My musical setting traces the stream of consciousness of the poet, as the sounds and scenes of the starry night evoke memories of his lost love.

Puedo escribir

Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.
Escribir, por ejemplo: "La noche está estrellada,
y tiritan, azules, los astros, a lo lejos."
El viento de la noche gira en el cielo y canta.
Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.
Yo la quise, y a veces ella también me quiso.
En las noches como ésta la tuve entre mis brazos.
La besé tantas veces bajo el cielo infinito.
Ella me quiso, a veces yo también la quería.
Cómo no haber amado sus grandes ojos fijos.
Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.
Pensar que no la tengo. Sentir que la he perdido.
Oír la noche inmensa, más inmensa sin ella.
Y el verso cae al alma como al pasto el rocío.
Qué importa que mi amor no pudiera guardarla.
La noche está estrellada y ella no está conmigo.
Eso es todo. A lo lejos alguien canta. A lo lejos.

— Words: © Copyright by Fundación Pablo Neruda. Used by permission.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
Write, for example, "The night is starry and the blue stars
shiver, in the distance."
The night wind revolves in the sky and sings.
Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
I loved her, and at times she loved me as well.
During nights like this one I held her in my arms.
I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.
She loved me, at times I loved her as well.
How could I not love her great, still eyes.
Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
To think that I do not have her. To feel that I have lost her.
To hear the immense night, more immense without her.
And the verse falls to the soul as dew to the pasture.
What does it matter that my love could not keep her.
The night is filled with stars and she is not with me.
This is all. In the distance, someone is singing. In the
distance.

— Translation: © Copyright by Alice Del Simone. Used by permission.

Wild Embers and **N-400 Erasure Songs** are by **Melissa Dunphy** (bio on page 1).

Wild Embers is set to a poem by British-Indian poet Nikita Gill, a Kashmiri Sikh writer born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and raised in Gurugram, Haryana, in India. Dunphy perfectly captures the undercurrent of barely controlled rage in the text, using body percussion sounds to drive the powerful imagery.

Wild Embers

We are the descendants
of the wild women you forgot
We are the stories you thought
would never be taught.

They should have checked the ashes
of the women they burned alive.
Because it takes a single wild ember
to bring a whole wildfire to life.

—Nikita Gill (2017). Text used with permission of the poet.

N-400 Erasure Songs

Erasure poetry is created by blacking out portions of a pre-existing text to create a new work. Each of the poems in this cycle uses and reshapes text from the N-400, the application form that foreign-born "aliens" submit to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to be naturalized and become citizens of the United States. In this poem, the text of the N-400 is selectively blacked out and rearranged to uncover new meanings.

N-400 (an erasure)

Text by Laurel Chen

i.
notice: any immigration
notice: hearing
notice: see
notice: you

ii.
to the immigrant:
homeland is
a process
delayed.

iii.
fingerprints disposable
a number unpermitted
immigrants: are
all of the above

iv.
about the United States:
do not
support
the criminal history

v.
you are what you have
abandoned

vi.
identify: alien
copy: self

vii.
separate your
open wounds in the
process

viii.
verify:
all has
been destroyed

ix.
naturalization can not capture
your free
can not level
your personal
for political

x.
this application simplified
is persecution of
your own safety
to ensure social security

xi.
reschedule
reschedule
reschedule
a time
time
time
again time
time
date and
time

xii.
resubmit
resubmit
resubmit

xiii.
please

xiv.
you will
never
belong

Horizons was written by the Cape Town-based composer, **Péter Louis Van Dijk**, at the request of the King's Singers for the group's 1995 South African tour, and it was commissioned for the singers by the Creative Arts Foundation of South Africa.

The composer writes:

"In a cave, somewhere in the Western Cape region of South Africa, is a well documented San (Bushman) painting of a Dutch (or perhaps English) ship resplendent with flags and sails, rounding the cape. The painting dates back to the early 1700s and serves as a poignant reminder of the incredible powers of observation of a now virtually extinct people. Sadly, the very people the San saw as 'gods'—certainly in terms of stature and relative opulence—were to become their executioners. This lullaby-like song, filled with sounds of the African veldt, includes images of the natural world: the sky, the eland (a large antelope), the hunting for food – and then the arrival of the European ship and the destruction that follows."

Horizons

Sleep, my springbok baby,
Sleep for me, my springbok child,
When morning comes I'll go out hunting,
for you are hungry and thirsty.

Small moon, Hai! Young moon,
When the sun rises you must speak to the Rain,
Charm her with herbs and honeycomb,
O speak to her, that I may drink, this little thing...
She will come across the dark sky:
Mighty Raincow, sing your song for me
that I may find you on the far horizon.

O Star, Hai! Hunting Star,
When the sun rises you must blind with your light
The Eland's eyes,
O blind his eyes, that I may eat, this little thing...
He will come across the red sands:
Mighty Eland, dance your dance for me,
that I may find you on the far horizon.

They will come across the waters:
Mighty saviours in their sailing ships,
And they will show us new and far horizons.
And they came, came across the waters:
Gods in galleons, bearing bows of steel,
Then they killed us on the far horizon.

Songs for the People by **Melissa Dunphy** (bio on page 1) is the second of five new works commissioned by Seattle Pro Musica, in honor of our 50th anniversary.

The composer writes:

"When I was asked to write a new song for Seattle Pro Musica, I jumped at the opportunity to set a poem by Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, an extraordinary Black writer, abolitionist, suffragist, and progressive activist from the 19th century who ought to be a household name alongside figures such as Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass. 'Songs for the People,' from an 1895 poetry collection, is a hymn to the power of music to energize, heal, and bring communities together; I could not resist adding music to these words, which are just as relevant today as we face our modern struggles as they were during the turmoil of Reconstruction and the inequalities of the Gilded Age."

Born in Baltimore, poet, journalist, and activist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825–1911) was the only child of free African American parents. After teaching for two years in Ohio and Pennsylvania, she embarked on a career as a traveling speaker on the abolitionist circuit. She helped slaves escape through the Underground Railroad and wrote frequently for anti-slavery newspapers, earning her a reputation as the mother of African American journalism. She was also actively involved in the movement for Women's Suffrage, and was the first African American woman to publish a short story. A prolific writer, Harper published many collections of poetry, including the rousing *Songs for the People*.

Songs for the People

Let me make the songs for the people,
Songs for the old and young;
Songs to stir like a battle-cry
Wherever they are sung.

Not for the clashing of sabres,
For carnage nor for strife;
But songs to thrill the hearts of men
With more abundant life.

Let me make the songs for the weary,
Amid life's fever and fret,
Till hearts shall relax their tension,
And careworn brows forget.

Let me sing for little children,
Before their footsteps stray,
Sweet anthems of love and duty,
To float o'er life's highway.

I would sing for the poor and aged,
When shadows dim their sight;
Of the bright and restful mansions,
Where there shall be no night.

Our world, so worn and weary,
Needs music, pure and strong,
To hush the jangle and discords
Of sorrow, pain, and wrong.

Music to soothe all its sorrow,
Till war and crime shall cease;
And the hearts of men grown tender
Girdle the world with peace.

Pärt Uusberg is an Estonian composer, conductor, and actor. He grew up singing in children and youth choirs, and founded the chamber choir Head Ööd, Vend. **Muusika** ("music") is a vital part of Estonian identity, as movingly told in the 2008 film *The Singing Revolution*. Before and after World War II Estonians used a tradition of communal singing to see them through the darkest days of oppression by the Nazis and then the USSR—not only as a comfort, but as a subversive way of maintaining their culture and of uniting their people.

The text is a poem by Juhan Liiv (1864–1913), one of Estonia's most famous poets. He was born into the extreme poverty of 19th century serfdom in Estonia, and his hardships translated into insightful understandings of the world around him. Since the 1920s, he has generally been recognized as one of Estonia's greatest lyrical poets.

Muusika

Kuskil peab alguskokkukõla olema,
kuskil suures looduses, varjul.
On tema vägevas laotuses,
täheringide kauguses,
on tema päikese sära sees,
lillekeses, metsakohinas,
emakõne südamemuusikas
või silmavees –

kuskil peab surematus olema,
kuskil alguskokkukõla leitama:
kust oleks muidu inimese rinda
saanud ta –
muusika?

Somewhere the original harmony must exist,
hidden somewhere in the vast wilds.
In Earth's mighty firmament,
in the far reaches of swirling galaxies,
in sunshine,
in a little flower, in the song of a forest,
in the music of a mother's voice,
or in teardrops –

somewhere, immortality endures,
and the original harmony will be found.
How else could it have formed
in human hearts –
music?

American DREAMers by **Melissa Dunphy** (bio on page 1) was commissioned by the Philadelphia community choir PhilHarmonia (Mitos Andaya Hart, Director) to bring to light the stories of immigrants in the wake of anti-immigrant rhetoric during and after the 2016 election. Five texts from five young Americans who were brought to America as children were chosen—Marlene Rangel, Javier Zamora, Janine Joseph, Julia Montejo, and Claudia D. Hernández—and those texts were woven into a multi-movement work that honors their story and inspires hope, empathy, and action. Tonight we perform two movements from the complete work.

#UndocuJoy

So today, remember that you are beautiful.
You are creators, you are laughers, you are lovers,
you are lights of hope and joy.
Take the time you need to feel the pain.
Know that even existing in the spaces you occupy is resistance.
Know that, as we fight this battle for our dignity,
you are souls of strength and power,
but you're allowed to feel vulnerable at times.
Know that every moment of self-care you can find
is still part of fighting this fight.
Know that every time you paint your nails,
dance in your room, eat a treat,
laugh with your friends, run in the woods,
or do anything that gives you joy,
you are resisting a system
that thinks we're not worthy of even smiling.
I believe in us.
Together, we will overcome.

—Julia Montejo

#UnitedWeDream

Aquí estamos.
This is where we found our home away from home.
This is where we belong.
Mother Earth, who feeds us all,
takes our roots,
their roots,
no matter how long,
how short—
she's whispering:
this is where you belong.
RESIST! RESIST!
Pelea con diente y madre!
This is where you belong, Dreamer!

—Claudia D. Hernández

Dale Warland has made an indelible impression on contemporary choral music, nationally and internationally. In a quarter-century with the Dale Warland Singers (DWS), he shaped an all-professional a cappella ensemble lauded for its exquisite sound, technical finesse, and stylistic range. From that platform, Warland not only offered stunning performances of traditional repertory but also commissioned and premiered some 270 works from composers around the globe. In his mid-80s, he remains sought after as conductor, composer, and teacher.

Always Singing

There was such a lot of singing and this was my pleasure, too.
The boys all sang in the fields, and at night we all sang.
The chapels were full of singing.
It was singing, singing all the time.
I have had pleasure.
I have had singing.

—Text by Fred Mitchell (paraphrase by the composer)

I am the World is by **Melissa Dunphy** (bio on page 1). It was commissioned by BBC Radio 3 and first performed by the BBC Singers in March 2022 at Temple Church, London. The program marked International Women’s Day with a live broadcast of music by leading women composers of the 21st century. The text is a poem by Dora Sigerson Shorter (1866–1918), an Irish poet and sculptor. She was a leading member of the Irish Literary Revival, which was associated with a renewal of interest in Ireland’s Gaelic heritage and the growth of Irish nationalism from the middle of the 19th century through the early 20th century.

I am the World

I am the song, that rests upon the cloud;
I am the sun:
I am the dawn, the day, the hiding shroud,
When dusk is done.

I am the changing colours of the tree;
The flower uncurled:
I am the melancholy of the sea;
I am the world.

The other souls that, passing in their place,
Each in their groove;
Out-stretching hands that chain me and embrace,
Speak and reprove.

"O atom of that law, by which the earth
Is poised and whirled;
Behold! you hurrying with the crowd assert
You are the world."

Am I not one with all the things that be
Warm in the sun?
All that my ears can hear, or eyes can see,
Till all be done.

Of song and shine, of changing leaf apart,
Of bud uncurled:
With all the senses pulsing at my heart,
I am the world.

One day the song that drifts upon the wind,
I shall not hear;
Nor shall the rosy shoots to eyes grown blind
Again appear.

Deaf, in the dark, I shall arise and throw
From off my soul,
The withered world with all its joy and woe,
That was my goal.

I shall arise, and like a shooting star
Slip from my place;
So lingering see the old world from afar
Revolve in space.

And know more things than all the wise may know
Till all be done;
Till One shall come who, breathing on the stars,
Blows out the sun.

—Poem by Dora Sigerson Shorter (1866–1918)

Seattle Pro Musica



Danielle Barnum Photography

Seattle Pro Musica Singers

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Helen Anderson +
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Julia Bezems *+
Ellie Bridge
Sylvie Busch
Marisa Dahlman *+
Ashley Mialon
Katie Skovholt *+
Jenny Spence *+
Camille Watson *+

SOPRANO II

Lillian Balmforth
Jonna Farley
Elly Hale +
Carole Jones
Katherine Lu
Tami McTaggart
Teresa Nemeth
Jenn Newland
Ada Ng *+
Amy Peer *+
Kristin Percy Calaff
Inge Pham-Swann
Christa Phillipson
Joy Portella
Jan Strand +
Judy Williams

ALTO I

Audra Anderson
Raka Banerjee
Heidi Blythe *+
Jordan Brattain
Lauren Cree
Fiona Hatfield
Nancy Haver
Meaghan Leferink +
Teena Littleton +
Rose Morrison
Emi Nakamura *+
Susan O'Brien *+
Corina Rahmig
Marit Trelstad

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Gail Broder
Cathy Federici *+
Karen Maneman
Liz Reed Hawk *+
Elizabeth Sanders
Katy Sarff
Karen Segar
Anna Snyder-Kelly

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Jacob Buys *^
David Dodman *^
Matthew Li

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David Johnson
Kevin Kelly
Danny Szydlo *^
Vésteinn Þórsson
Robert Wade

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David Carpman *^
Ryan Gao *^
Peter Hemmen
Matthew Johns
Lee Maneman *^
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Soloists

Nocturne – Jenny Spence, soprano
N-400 Erasure Songs – Jacob Bernado, tenor;
Lee Maneman, baritone
Horizons – Jacob Bernado, tenor; Ryan Gao, baritone;
Julia Bezems, soprano

Acknowledgements

Darren Hochstedler, Seattle First Baptist Church

Land Acknowledgement

Seattle Pro Musica acknowledges that we gather on Indigenous land: the traditional territory of Coast Salish peoples, specifically the dxʷdəwʔabš, or Duwamish, 'The People of the Inside.' We are grateful to the land and its people, and we offer our support through Real Rent Duwamish (realrentduwamish.org). For more information about the Duwamish, visit duwamishtribe.org.



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Seattle Pro Musica's Education and Engagement Program

Seattle Pro Musica seeks to inspire singers and audiences of the future. For our 50th anniversary season (2022–2023), we have commissioned five composers to write new works for us, and to be in residence in Seattle for their premieres. As part of this program, the composers will lead workshops with student choral musicians, ranging from primary school through college. They will visit schools in the Greater Seattle area throughout the season, leading experiences for students that allow for intentional cultural exchange, demonstrative and hands-on workshops, and group singing. The participating students and their parents will be invited to SPM's "New American Composer Series" concerts at no cost.

Additionally, we will create opportunities for our audiences to meet and engage with the five composers at our concerts this season. Each of our "New American Composer Series" concerts will include a pre-concert talk with the composer, audience members, and SPM Artistic Director Karen P. Thomas. Following the concerts, we will hold a "Meet & Greet" for audience members and the composer in residence.

Each of the five composers you will hear this season has a specialized area of expertise in addition to their work as composers:

- **Marques L. A. Garrett** has done extensive research on traditional music of the African diaspora, as well as contemporary choral music by Black composers.
- **Melissa Dunphy's** compositional work focuses on themes of social justice and gender equality.
- **Shruthi Rajasekar** is a performer of traditional Indian Carnatic (Southern India) music, and composes music influenced by Carnatic traditions.
- **Saunder Choi's** specialties include Filipino choral music, both folk traditions and contemporary choral composition.
- **Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate** is a classical composer, citizen of the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma, and is dedicated to the development of American Indian classical composition.

We hope you will join us for all of these events this season—we're excited to introduce you to five amazing and gifted composers from across the country!

Seattle Pro Musica is grateful to Chorus America for its generous support of this 50th Anniversary education program.

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