



Ferenc **FARKAS**

Orchestral Music Volume One Music for Chamber Orchestra

**Concertino all'antica
Trittico concertato
Lavotta Suite
Divertimento
March Suite
Maschere**

**Miklós Perényi, cello
MÁV Symphony Orchestra
Péter Csaba, conductor**

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

FERENC FARKAS: ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME ONE – WORKS FOR CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

by László Gombos

Ferenc Farkas (1905–2000) was one of the most popular figures in twentieth-century Hungarian music. His popularity was due in equal measure to his relaxed manner and balanced personality, to his unique pedagogical abilities and to his music, which found its way to the hearts of a broad range of music-lovers. He was active throughout his exceptionally long life, and constantly in contact with people: teachers and students, amateur and professional musicians, writers, painters, sculptors and film-directors. He was not one to shut himself away in the ivory tower of the privileged, and only towards his ninetieth year did he retire from public life, though he continued composing to the last day of his life. He taught several generations, as a legendary professor of composition at the Budapest Music Academy, his students including almost all the important Hungarian composers of the second half of the twentieth century, including György Kurtág and György Ligeti, who formed part of the international *avant-garde*.

His music, though, reflects the same accord he realised in his own everyday life: ever the optimist, he always concentrated on beauty and harmony, and loved every second of his 95 years. This approach, at least, is indicated by his works and his relationship with the outside world: he concealed, resolved and transfigured suffering and tragedy through music, as Mozart and Mendelssohn had done before him. He was drawn not only towards art and the beauties of nature: he was famed also for his expert knowledge of food and drink. Among the countless constraints of his century, he attempted to resolve what was perhaps the biggest contradiction of the art of his era: to be new, individual and modern and yet not to abandon the public to whom he addressed his works. And Farkas' public is extremely diverse, because his music is incredibly varied. He composed in almost every genre and style, from arrangements of folk-music and historical music evoking the distant past, to Neoclassical and dodecaphonic compositions; from simple pieces for amateur choirs, children studying music or youth orchestras, through light *Singspiele*, radio plays and operettas to demanding chamber works, modern cantatas and operas.

The works on this disc paint a characteristic portrait of Ferenc Farkas, although it is necessarily only one side of this multifaceted master. He was barely 25 when at the beginning of 1930 he composed the *Divertimento*, during two academic years he spent in Rome, from autumn 1929, in Ottorino Respighi's master-class at the Academy of Santa Cecilia. His lodgings were in Palazzo Falconieri, the property of the Hungarian state, which as part of the Collegium Hungaricum network provided accommodation for young Hungarian artists. Farkas wrote of his study years:

The Roman environment made a life-long impression on me. It was particularly the artist residents of the Hungarian Academy in Rome who drew my attention to the early arts [...]. I have them to thank for my discoveries in sculpture and architecture as well as painting. For several months I visited museums and sites in a frenzy, then I set firmly to work composing, following what was known as the 'novecento' style, which was close to me.¹

To the end of his life he made frequent mention of his Italian maestro; he was captured less by his music than by his character:

Respighi's extraordinary personality captivated his students: he was a genuine man of the world, he spoke many languages, he loved telling anecdotes and funny stories. He was very well-informed and erudite, and had wide-ranging knowledge of a whole host of topics.²

The lightness of mood and Mediterranean sunshine of the *Divertimento* show the influence of his time in Rome, but the work already bears the typical traits of Farkas' music. The five movements are clearly and transparently formed. They are built on brief, logically structured sections, like most of Farkas' compositions, and the instrumentation bears witness to an outstanding sensitivity to tone colour. The light first movement, *Allegro leggiero* [1], cast in something akin to traditional sonata form, has a main theme which is passed around all the parts several times; the gracefully bowing second subject conjures up a Rococo mood. The playful and cheery second movement, *Allegro giocoso* [2], is an outstanding compositional achievement, born of a moment when the composer uses the simplest and most ordinary means to state boldly something that is common knowledge to all. Yet the effect it has is that of novelty, as if nobody had said it before him. A lyrical middle section provides contrast, as happens in the *Tempo di Minuetto*, too [3]. The fourth movement, *Intermezzo* [4], lasts hardly a minute, and fits into this alternating

¹ *Vallomások a zenéről. Farkas Ferenc válogatott írásai*, ed. László Gombos, Püski, Budapest, 2004, p. 220 (English translation, *Ferenc Farkas on Music: Selected Writings, 1930–95*, forthcoming from Toccata Press).

² *Ibid.*, p. 220.

pattern of fast and slow as if it were nothing but a bridge to the rondo-structured final *Allegro* [5].

Farkas dedicated the piece to Respighi, who suggested holding the premiere in the vast hall of the Augusteo in Rome. For some unknown reason this performance never took place, and the young composer returned to Budapest, where he submitted the *Divertimento* to the Ferenc Liszt competition, in which it was ranked among the top three works. The prize-winning works were conducted by Ernő Dohnányi on 11 February 1933 in the Múcsarnok ('Art Hall'), at the opening of an exhibition held in memory of the Minister of Culture, Kuno Klebelsberg. By strange coincidence, Klebelsberg, who had died in 1932, created the Collegium Hungaricum network and scholarship that had enabled Farkas to write the work, and the exhibition commemorating him gave occasion for the premiere.

Respighi influenced Farkas not only in the adoption of a Neoclassical style, but in the rediscovery of earlier eras, as is evident in the *Concertino all'antica*, the title of which refers to Respighi's series of *Antiche danze ed arie*; a similar composition on this disc is the *Lavotta Suite*. When a twentieth-century composer of the order of Farkas or even Respighi writes new works in the guise of an old master, it becomes far more than a simple game or stylistic exercise. The work never fits into the style of any particular earlier composer, or even into the style of any one period; only some of its traits and the artistic creed of the creators are reminiscent of the music of several centuries ago. Farkas was particularly fond of donning a mask adorned with archaic elements, but his own individuality always shines through whatever mask he happens to be wearing, and his 'all'antica' pieces can never be mistaken for the work of any Baroque, Classical or Romantic composer.

In the form heard here, the *Concertino all'antica* is a three-movement cello concerto for string orchestra, with the mood conjuring up earlier times. It was originally written for a special Baroque instrument now almost forgotten, the baryton gamba, with harpsichord accompaniment, and entitled *All'antica*. In 1962 the cellist János Liebner commissioned Ferenc Farkas to write a piece for the instrument, for which Joseph Haydn had written over a hundred works in the 1760s and '70s. Haydn's employer, Prince Nicolaus Esterházy, himself played this instrument, which is slightly smaller than a cello; in addition to seven bowed strings, it also had eleven resonating strings running behind the fingerboard, which could be plucked with the thumb. Farkas wrote archaic music suitable for the instrument, and tried to exploit the possibilities afforded by the baryton: for instance, instead of quadruple stops written for the four strings of the cello, he could write chords of up to seven notes. He said:

When János Liebner commissioned me to write a piece for the revived, or reborn, baryton, I began to study the instrument. [...] While composing I noticed that the new piece was becoming an old piece;

I had immersed myself in the character of the instrument so completely that in my composition I had conjured up the olden times.³

But in order that more people might play and hear the piece, Farkas made three alterations in 1964. He tailored the baryton part, with minimal changes, to the cello, orchestrated the accompaniment and added some new orchestral sections. This concerto version was premiered on 19 January 1966 in Marseilles, again with János Liebner as soloist.

With its rocking rhythms and lyrical melody, the first movement, *Pastorale* [6], differs from the *de rigueur* opening movement of a concerto focussing on the soloist. The main protagonist has no virtuoso cadenza either here or in the third movement; indeed, a cadenza would be out of place in this light and intimate mood, and the composer gives no opportunity for one to be improvised. Formally speaking, it resembles a concerto only in the alternation of solo and tutti passages, which the composer effected by adding an orchestral introduction and interlude to the original chamber work. The slow second movement, an *Aria con variazioni* [7], is more lyrical in character. Its song-like melody is first sounded not by the soloist, but by the principal violist accompanied by *pizzicati* from the soloist, and the harmonic background is closer to Impressionist music than to the Baroque. If it were not for the reference to the form in the title, it might not be noticed that the movement is a theme and variations, so refined are the means by which the composer has loosened the rigid traditional formal framework. The soloist does not have the main melody of the movement until the third and final variation. The fast closing movement, *Giga* [8], is full of stylistic elements of the Baroque, with voices answering one another in imitation and various rhythmic games.

While he was crafting the cello-concerto version in 1964, Farkas also wrote another cello concerto, entitled *Trittico concertato*. The latter work is the opposite of the former in both character and sound: a brilliant virtuoso piece, in a true twentieth-century style. Although it, too, is shot through with Baroque motion and rhythmic figures, its melodies and entire motivic system are built on the supple elements so typical of Farkas, which in each small section uses the entire chromatic scale. The *Trittico concertato* was also written to commission. In October 1963 the Pablo Casals cello competition was held in Budapest, and Ferenc Farkas was asked to chair the jury. In the international jury, the composer later recalled,

I met the excellent Spanish cellist Gaspar Cassadó. He invited me to lunch, and told me that he would like to commission a concerto from me, to be premiered with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra. At first I

³ Typewritten manuscript in the estate of the composer.

protested that I didn't know the wiles and stratagems of extended virtuoso cello technique. He answered that the composer's job was to write, and the performer's to figure out how to perform it.⁴

The work was completed the following year, and premiered on 11 September 1965 in the Teatro La Fenice as part of the Venice Biennale. The soloist at the Hungarian premiere in 1967 was Vera Dénes, whom Farkas had already consulted for advice on the cello part while the work was being written.

The first movement, *Allegro moderato* [19], is broadly a sonata form, and the third, *Allegro vivace* [21], a rondo. The second, slow movement, *Passacaglia con Dedicazione* [20], is unusual. The first half is a Baroque variation, in which the bass theme of eleven notes, repeated throughout, derives from the name of Gaspar Cassadó. Under the notes the composer wrote: 'G-As-p-A-R C-As-S-A-D-ó' ('As' being A flat), indicating the 'musical' letters with a capital (R was interpreted as D as in absolute solmisation, p was replaced by C sharp, and ó by F sharp). The second half of the movement, the 'dedication', is linked to the dedicatee's name only by the starting notes (G, A flat).

The *Lavotta Suite* is, as mentioned, another piece that draws on older music; it has its genesis in the incidental music Farkas wrote in 1950 for András Dékány's radio play *Kóbor hegedűs* ('The Stray Violinist'), which presented the life of János Lavotta (1764–1820), a famous figure in Hungarian *verbunkos* music, once used in recruiting soldiers. As he worked, Farkas studied Lavotta's extant works, both in manuscript and contemporary publications, intending to use them as authentic sources. But because only short excerpts could be inserted in the radio play, in 1951 he made an independent orchestral suite from the compositions he had discovered and arranged. He said of his intentions:

Already in earlier works I tried to popularise the extant notated works of nameless Hungarian composers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with modern art-music arrangements, attempting to create a non-existent 'Hungarian Baroque'. Continuing in this vein, I discovered the fiddler-composer János Lavotta, whose themes, motifs and fragmentary ideas I considered suitable to use to develop an image of the Hungarian 'early Biedermeier'. I am not the only composer of our time to be fond of hiding behind masks of the past. In this 'pasticcio' there is no irony, no grimace; I have attempted to place the simple but inventive motifs in the type of formal frame Lavotta would have done, if he had mastered the most developed compositional techniques of his time.⁵

The five movements of the *Lavotta Suite* bear programme-like titles. The first [9] and fourth [12] are *verbunkos* dances, merely entitled 'Magyar' ('Hungarian Dance', labelled 'Ungarisch' in the orchestral

⁴ *Vallomások a zenéről, op. cit.*, p. 282.

⁵ Typewritten manuscript in the estate of the composer.

score), the third [11] is a 'March to Pannonia'⁶ which may refer to Lavotta's return from Vienna to Hungary. The second movement, a *Menuet* [10], is an 'alien' courtly dance, but altered to Hungarian tastes: in spite of its non-Hungarian 3/4 time, it abounds with Hungarian accents and motifs, and the anacrusis typical of the minuet is omitted. The final rondo, 'Merrymaking in the Tavern' [13], is based on motifs from Lavotta's most famous work, a programme suite written to commemorate the nobles' uprising of 1797.

Allusions to earlier periods also characterise *Maschere*, though its style is utterly individual and twentieth-century. It was originally written for wind trio (oboe, clarinet and bassoon), because Farkas felt these instruments would best be able to conjure up the rather abstract, 'masked' world of the 'actors' of the movements. These three instruments also have an important role in the version for chamber orchestra on this disc. The genesis of the work was a meeting of past and present: while he was still a student in Rome, Farkas' attention was caught by a book in which included illustrations of the Pierrot figures by Gino Severini (1883–1966), and in 1983 Severini's centenary provided an opportunity for composing:

I wrote my piece *Maschere* (Masks) in memory of and for the centenary of the Italian Futurist and later Neoclassical painter. Severini was fond of painting the figures Pulcinella and Arlecchino with masks. The movements of *Maschere* conjure up the traditional figures of the *Commedia dell'arte*: the pugnacious captain [14], the disgruntled old Pantalone with his affectations [15], the flirtatious Colombina [16], Pulcinella and his poor family [17], and the crafty Harlequin [18].⁷

The composition of the *March Suite* is also linked to a centenary. Written in December 1947 to celebrate the revolution and war that broke out in March 1848, it won a prize in a music competition advertised for the occasion. The political mood of the years after the Second World War did not look favourably on musical experimentation: the closure of the borders and the real and intellectual 'iron curtain' sealed Hungary off from new international trends. In the 1940s Farkas was one of the first in Hungary to experiment with a unique application of dodecaphonic music, but even without the changes around him, he would probably have returned to his own former path by the end of the decade. Under Soviet pressure, composition of 'easily understandable' music and a constantly optimistic mood was soon made compulsory, but Farkas had already moved, or rather returned, to this path. The liberated cheerfulness of this work is sincere and heartfelt, as apparent from the first hearing. According to the composer's analysis,

⁶ Pannonia was originally a province of the Roman empire, occupying part of present-day western Hungary, eastern Austria and the top of the former Yugoslavia.

⁷ Typewritten manuscript in the estate of the composer.

the first movement (*Allegro moderato, ma con slancio*; small sonata form [22]) is characterised by the sound of enthusiasm, the second (*Elegy; quasi lento*, ternary form [23]) is a lament for fallen heroes, the third (*Allegro vivace*; rondo [24]) is a bustling battle scene, with horn and trumpet calls.⁸

László Gombos, born in 1967, is a Hungarian musicologist, graduating from the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest in 1990 (as chorus-master) and in 1995 (in musicology), and 1995–98 took part in the Musicological PhD Program of the Liszt University of Music. Since 1990 he has taught music history, at the University of Debrecen from 1998 to 2002, and since 1995 he has been a professor at the Béla Bartók Conservatory in Budapest. Since 1994 he has been a member of the research staff at the Institute for Musicology in Budapest. His main area of interest is Hungarian music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

⁸ Typewritten manuscript in the estate of the composer.

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'the music is extremely appealing, superbly crafted and warmly expressive.[...] I thoroughly enjoyed this generously filled, superbly played and well recorded release. Why is music such as this not heard more often, let alone recorded? Where would we be without all these smaller, independent and enterprising labels who bravely record unfamiliar, but generously rewarding repertoire? In short, full marks to all concerned. A really lovely disc to be enjoyed from first to last'

Hubert Culot, MusicWeb International

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The brilliant and internationally praised Hungarian cellist **Miklós Perényi** was born in 1948 into a musical family and began cello lessons at the age of five with Miklós Zsámboki, a student of David Popper. He excelled from the beginning and at age seven his exceptional talent was recognised when he was admitted to the cello department of the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, where he studied under Ede Banda. At nine he gave his first concert in Budapest and went on to study between 1960 and 1964 in several master-classes with Enrico Mainardi in Rome. Further studies at the Accademia Santa Cecilia brought him a degree in 1962 and the following year he was a prize-winner at the Casals International Violoncello Competition in Budapest. Pablo Casals invited him to his master-classes in Zermatt and Puerto Rico in 1965 and 1966, which was followed by invitations to perform at the Marlboro Festival for four consecutive years.



In 1974 Miklós Perényi joined the faculty at his *alma mater*, the Ferenc Liszt Academy in Budapest, where he has held a professorship since 1980. He was honoured with the Kossuth Prize in 1980 and the Bartók-Pásztory Prize in 1987. Academic life has permitted him to further develop as a performer. He is recognised as one of the outstanding cellists of his generation, with a distinctive, subtly nuanced sound matched by extraordinary musicality. He has appeared in the world's major musical centres, performing regularly around Europe, in Japan and China and in North and South America. His festival engagements have included Berlin, Edinburgh, Hohenems, Kronberg, Lucerne, Prague, Salzburg, Vienna, Warsaw and the Pablo Casals Festival in Prades in France, as well as in the USA, where, most recently, he performed at the Carnegie Hall in their Centenary Jubilee series.

The conductor **Péter Csaba** was born in 1952 in Romania, into a family of Hungarian musicians.

He began to study the violin, composing and conducting in his hometown and later in Bucharest at the Ciprian Porumbescu Conservatoire of Music. Prize-winner of several national and international competitions, namely the Competition Niccolò Paganini in Genova, he started a successful international career with intensive tours in Europe and Asia including several recordings for radio, television and international record companies.



He has lived in France since 1983, becoming a professor at the National Conservatoire of Music and Dance in Lyon, soloist at the Lyons Opera House and often conducting at the National Orchestra of Lyon.

From 1993 until 2002, he was Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Musica Vitae Chamber Orchestra in Sweden and Artistic Leader of the Euro Musica Vitae Festival, which he created for young European talents. In 1986 he founded the chamber orchestra Virtuosi di Kuhmo in Finland, and also acted as Artistic Director of the Lapland Festpiel in Sweden.

Since 2001 he has been Artistic Director of Encuentro de Musica y Academia in Santander in Spain, which

provides the opportunity for young musicians to meet and perform together with world-famous artists in more than sixty concerts.

For his remarkable contribution to the development of Swedish musical life, and for the quality of his artistic work with the Musica Vitae orchestra, in 2002 he was elected a member of the Royal Academy of Sweden and received the prestigious Spelman Prize.

Péter Csaba has recorded for Ondine, Hungaroton, BIS, Praga, Harmonia Mundi, Caprice and other labels. A CD of music for strings by Sibelius recorded with the Virtuosi di Kuhmo (including the *Impromptu*, *Rakastava*, *Suite champêtre*, *Humoresques* Nos. 3 and 4 and *Andante festivo*, released on Ondine ODE 830-2 in 1994) was chosen by National Public Radio in the USA as the best classical record of 1995. His recording of Shostakovich's *Chamber Symphony* with Musica Vitae, with music by Arensky, Dvořák and Janáček (on the Chamber Sound label, CSCD95012, released in 2011), is considered one of the best made of this piece.

Péter Csaba has been the Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the MÁV Symphony Orchestra since September 2012.

The **MÁV Symphony Orchestra** was founded in 1945 by the Hungarian State Railways (Magyar Államvasutak). Shortly after the Second World War, it established its name carrying a series of concerts to war-damaged towns all over the country. As time passed, the orchestra developed a wide-ranging repertoire from Baroque to contemporary music, and is currently ranked among the best professional ensembles in Hungary.

MÁV SO concerts take place in the most respected concert halls of the country, like the Music Academy, the Palace of Arts or the Italian Cultural Institute (the former venue of the Hungarian parliament) in Budapest. Besides full-orchestra concerts, it regularly performs chamber music, youth concerts and participates in the famous Budapest Spring Festival.

Throughout its history, the orchestra has established close connections with famous Hungarian and international artists. The conductors with whom the Orchestra has worked include Moshe Atzmon, Herbert Blomstedt, János Ferencsik, Franco Ferrara, Lamberto Gardelli, James Levine, Kurt Masur, Uri Mayer, Yuri Simonov, Hans Swarowsky and Carlo Zecchi. Among the soloists to have performed with the Orchestra are Lazar Berman, José Carreras, Jeanne-Marie Darré, Roberto Díaz, Plácido Domingo, David Geringas, Jenő Jandó, Zoltán Kocsis, Luciano Pavarotti, Miklós Perényi, Dezső Ránki, Ruggiero Ricci, Kiri Te Kanawa and Tamás Vásáry.

The MÁV SO has performed in every European country, across South America as well as in Lebanon, Hong-Kong, Japan, China and Oman. One of the most memorable appearances was a special concert in 1988 for Pope John Paul II at his summer-residence in Castelgandolfo. The Orchestra played in the legendary 'Three Tenors' production in the Tokyo Dome in 1999, with 32,000 people and members of the Imperial Family attending, and performed on Pavarotti's Farewell Concert Tour, too – over the course of two years, they presented ten concerts with the *bel canto* tenor across Europe.



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FERENC FARKAS *Orchestral Music, Volume One*

Divertimento for orchestra (1930)* 18:42

- | | | | |
|---|-----|--------------------------|------|
| 1 | I | <i>Allegro leggiero</i> | 4:19 |
| 2 | II | <i>Allegro giocoso</i> | 4:39 |
| 3 | III | <i>Tempo di Minuetto</i> | 4:59 |
| 4 | IV | <i>Intermezzo</i> | 1:22 |
| 5 | V | <i>Allegro</i> | 3:23 |

Concertino all'antica for cello and string orchestra (1964) 11:24

- | | | | |
|---|-----|----------------------------|------|
| 6 | I | <i>Pastorale</i> | 5:07 |
| 7 | II | <i>Aria con variazioni</i> | 4:20 |
| 8 | III | <i>Giga</i> | 1:57 |

Lavotta Suite for chamber orchestra (1951)* 17:13

- | | | | |
|----|-----|------------------------------|------|
| 9 | I | <i>Ungarisch</i> | 2:40 |
| 10 | II | <i>Menuet</i> | 3:47 |
| 11 | III | <i>Marsch nach Pannonien</i> | 3:18 |
| 12 | IV | <i>Ungarisch</i> | 3:15 |
| 13 | V | <i>Im Wirtshaus</i> | 4:13 |

Maschere for chamber orchestra (1983)* 8:27

- | | | | |
|----|-----|--------------------------|------|
| 14 | I | <i>Il Capitano</i> | 1:15 |
| 15 | II | <i>Pantalone</i> | 2:05 |
| 16 | III | <i>Colombina</i> | 1:19 |
| 17 | IV | <i>Povero Pulcinella</i> | 1:54 |
| 18 | V | <i>Arlecchino</i> | 1:54 |

Trittico concertato for cello and string orchestra (1964) 13:46

- | | | | |
|----|-----|-------------------------------|------|
| 19 | I | <i>Allegro moderato</i> | 4:56 |
| 20 | II | <i>Passacaglia con dedica</i> | 4:56 |
| 21 | III | <i>Allegro vivace</i> | 3:54 |

March Suite for chamber orchestra (1947)* 10:28

- | | | | |
|----|-----|----------------------------|------|
| 22 | I | <i>Allegro moderato</i> | 3:31 |
| 23 | II | <i>Elegia, quasi lento</i> | 4:06 |
| 24 | III | <i>Allegro vivace</i> | 2:51 |

TT 80:00

*FIRST RECORDINGS

Miklós Perényi, cello [6–8], [19–21]
MÁV Symphony Orchestra
Péter Csaba, conductor



This first release in a series of recordings of orchestral music by the Hungarian composer Ferenc Farkas (1905–2000) highlights the characteristics that make his works so appealing: catchy tunes, transparent scoring, buoyant rhythms and a fondness for Baroque forms and folk-dances.



TOCC 0176



FERENC FARKAS Orchestral Music, Volume One

1	<i>Divertimento</i> for orchestra (1930)*	18:42
6	<i>Concertino all'antica</i> for cello and string orchestra (1964)	11:24
9	<i>Lavotta Suite</i> for chamber orchestra (1951)*	17:13
14	<i>Maschere</i> for chamber orchestra (1983)*	8:27
19	<i>Trittico concertato</i> for cello and string orchestra (1964)	13:46
22	<i>March Suite</i> for chamber orchestra (1947)*	10:28

Miklós Perényi, cello 6–8, 19–21

MÁV Symphony Orchestra

Péter Csaba, conductor

TT 80:00

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