

# Stephen DODGSON

## CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME FOUR MUSIC FOR WINDS I

TRIO FOR OBOE, BASSOON AND PIANO  
FIVE MINUTES FOR WIND QUINTET  
SONATA FOR HORN AND PIANO  
SONATA FOR WIND QUINTET  
WIND IN THE REEDS  
GIPSY SONGS

Kate Howden, mezzo-soprano  
Magnard Ensemble

FIRST RECORDINGS

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by Lewis Foreman

Stephen Dodgson was born in Chelsea on 17 March 1924, into a middle-class artistic family: his father was the painter and art-teacher John Dodgson (1890–1969). Stephen received a public-school education at Berkhamsted School and Stowe. He left school in the middle of the Second World War, and found himself conscripted. Soon he was in the Royal Navy, serving as a sub-lieutenant on the frigate HMS *Bentley* on Atlantic patrols. Once demobbed, he studied composition with Bernard Stevens, while earning a living with temporary teaching posts. In April 1947 he became a student at the Royal College of Music. The horn was Dodgson's first study, with the well-known orchestral player Frank Probyn. But Dodgson's main interest was composition, which he studied with R. O. Morris and Patrick Hadley. He won a Cobbett prize for a *Fantasy String Quartet* while still a student and, thanks to an Octavia Travelling Fellowship, was able to go to Italy after he left the RCM in July 1949. In Venice he shared a flat with Luigi Nono, then at the start of a very different composing career.

Dodgson composed music in most of the traditional forms, and although his huge output for guitar has tended to pigeon-hole him in that specialism, he wrote extensively for many other instruments, not least his own, the French horn. He had a typical portfolio musical career: very much a Royal College of Music man, he taught at the RCM, beginning in the Junior Department before becoming professor of composition and theory in 1965, a position he held for seventeen years; he was made a Fellow of the RCM in 1981. A second strand of his musical life revolved around the BBC: he was probably best-known to the wider public as a familiar voice on the Third Programme/Radio 3, not least on *Record Review* and then its successor, *CD*

*Review.* Throughout this time he maintained a constant output of new music, most of it commissioned, usually with a specific artist in mind, and over his sixty-year career he generated a catalogue of some considerable substance.

He enjoyed a number of early orchestral successes, among them two works that won prizes from the Royal Philharmonic Society: a set of orchestral variations in 1949, followed in 1952 by a Symphony in E flat for chamber orchestra, notable for its slow movement, a ‘romantically inclined’<sup>1</sup> passacaglia. The Symphony had a Patron’s Fund rehearsal in 1952 and a concert performance by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra at the Wigmore Hall in June 1954. Later that year a public rehearsal by the London Symphony Orchestra in the Royal Festival Hall (under the aegis of the Society for the Promotion of New Music) gave Dodgson’s ‘romantic overture’ *Taras Bulba* (1950) a well-received airing. But this early orchestral music is unknown to audiences today, and Dodgson was soon attracting commissions for chamber and instrumental music. He had an especial fondness for the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in good measure the result of his marriage to the harpsichordist Jane Clark in 1959, and the structures of many of his chamber works, usually a sequence of short movements, reflect this enthusiasm.

There were also two operas, two striking choral works (*Te Deum* and *Magnificat*) and incidental music for a succession of BBC drama productions, among them George Farquhar’s *The Beaux’ Stratagem* (1961), William Congreve’s *Love for Love* (1965) and *The Old Bachelor* (1966). There followed music for more than a dozen plays, among them Plautus’ *Mostellaria* (1969) and Ben Jonson’s *The Silent Woman* (1974). Dodgson’s music for John Ford’s *Perkin Warbeck* (1970) was distinguished by David Munrow’s recorder-playing.

Although the major achievement of Dodgson’s output of chamber and instrumental music is a cycle of nine string quartets, written between 1984 and 2006, he wrote six piano sonatas and much music for wind instruments from early in his career until late in life (he died in Barnes on 13 April 2013).

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 11 June 1954, p. 10.

Written during the early spring of 1977, the *Sonata for Wind Quintet* was commissioned by the Vienna Wind Quintet. Although it is unusual to find such a work labelled ‘Sonata’, this one falls into Dodgson’s customary sequence of short movements, the second and third playing without a break. Although the music is unarguably tonal, it is also fluid. ‘Everything I write is certainly strongly tonal’, Dodgson wrote; ‘But it is difficult to say, except at certain points, precisely what that tonality is.’<sup>2</sup> The first movement, *Vivace* [1], presents the three principal motifs of the movement in succession – a fanfaring dotted rhythm rising from D to E, followed by a perky motif and a falling phrase. These elements dialogue throughout the quintet, the discussion punctuated from time to time by a solemn sustained note or chord, usually in the lower register of horn and bassoon. The slow movement, *Lento e sostenuto* [2], is notable for the use of long note-values in  $\frac{3}{2}$ , a speciality of Dodgson, who admitted that ‘they allow for duple/triple time ambiguity as  $\frac{6}{4}$  is juxtaposed with  $\frac{3}{2}$ ’. Here the composer establishes the contrast of the mysterious, solemn, slow music with the running semiquavers on the flute, and later bassoon. When all but the horn play the fast music in unison, the horn is left dramatically punching through the texture above the stave (treble clef), followed by a return to the slow note-values of the mysterious opening, and then running straight on into the *Allegro non troppo, giocoso* of the rhythmic, light-hearted and brief finale [3], pointing to Dodgson’s confession that he ‘feels cheated by music which lacks a rhythmic undercurrent’.

The *Gipsy Songs* for mezzo-soprano, clarinet and piano (1976), setting words from Ben Jonson’s masque *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*, are dedicated to Raymond Raikes, the producer who commissioned a variety of music from Dodgson for BBC productions of Restoration drama, and with whom he enjoyed a long and sympathetic collaboration. Jonson’s masque had itself been commissioned by George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham (a court favourite of James I), to celebrate his marriage to Lady Katherine Manners; it was first performed on 3 August 1621, with music by Nicholas Lanier, and was seen twice again at court entertainments soon after. It was notable for giving many of its speaking roles to courtiers rather than actors, when Buckingham and his family took the roles of gypsies, with Buckingham as their captain.

<sup>2</sup> All quotations from Stephen Dodgson’s writings and commentary are from the Dodgson archive, courtesy of Jane Clark Dodgson.

In scoring the songs with an accompaniment including clarinet as well as piano, Dodgson provided himself with a distinctive tone-colour, effectively another character on the platform, to punctuate and comment on the vocal line, sometimes in the manner of a brief prelude or interlude, or to comment on the words. The songs are heard without break.

The opening song [4] is effectively a sales pitch for the ‘tattered’ Gypsy nation and their offering of fortunes told. The ‘Doxies and dells’ in the second song [5] are prostitutes and virgins. The third song [6] returns to the offering of fortunes told and comments on the scene in the masque where the gypsies read the fortunes of the assembly, including members of Buckingham’s family. Dodgson writes in a programme note:

Jonson’s jibes at ministerial office and human frailty are thinly disguised as soothsaying. The nobility themselves took part, ‘metamorphosed’ with blackened faces, thereby adding extra spice to an entertainment too topical to be completely appreciated today. The Lord Treasurer’s Fortune, however, hardly requires modification to be read from the palm of Mr. Nigel Lawson. My other selections belong to that part of the masque supplied by the few professionals, from which an evocation of Jacobean Gipsy life emerges so strong you can almost smell it. My settings are primarily concerned to reflect this pungency and atmosphere – often dark and uncertain, with sudden flashes, and all the musical treatment with the quality of an incantation. There are consequently obsessive motifs and verbal repetition in plenty.

For his fourth song [7] Dodgson ran together two songs for Patrico, the leader of the gypsies and chronicler of the action. In this song in particular, some of the vocabulary requires some explanation. The fire-drake (possibly a shooting star or meteorite) is a sign of ill-omen, and the boy with the bow would have been an armed escort to a band of thieves, his name parodying Cupid. In the second verse ‘To the witty, all clear mirrors’, Jonson approves of clever people, finding their astuteness appreciated by a knowledgeable audience; whereas the ‘dark errors’ refers, in fact, to foolish folk who favour their own delusions.

The songs were written for Trio la Serata, and commissioned by Luton Music Club to mark its 30th season in a concert on 1 November 1976. The commission was one of many funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

#### **[4] I A Tattered Nation**

Be not frightened with our fashion  
Though we seem a tattered nation  
We account our rags our riches  
So our tricks exceed our stitches.

Give us bacon, rinds of walnuts,  
Shells of cockles and of small nuts,  
Ribbons, Bells, Ribbons, Bells  
and Saffron'd linen,  
All the world is ours to win in.

All your fortunes  
We can tell ye  
Be they for your back or belly.

All the world is ours to win in  
All your fortunes we can tell ye  
All your fortunes we can tell ye  
Be they for your back or belly  
In the moods too, and the tenses  
That may fit your fine five senses,  
All your fortunes we can tell ye.

#### **[5] II Ptolemy's Bells**

Sweet Doxies and Dells  
My Roses and Nells  
Scarce out of your shells;  
Your hands! Your hands!  
Your hands nothing else,

– Your hands! Your hands!  
Your hands nothing else – Your hands!  
We ring you no knells  
With our Ptolemy's Bells  
though we come from the fells,  
but – bring your good spells,  
bring your good spells,  
With our Ptolemy's Bells  
and tell you some chances  
in midst of your dances  
that fortune advances  
to Prudence or Francis.

To Sisley or Harry,  
To Roger or Mary,  
Or to Peg of the dairy  
To Maudlin or Thomas,  
Then do not run from us.  
Your hands! – Your hands!  
nothing else, Your hands!

Al-tho' we look tawny –  
We are healthy and brawny  
What e'er your demand is  
We'll give you no jaundice.

### [6] III The Lord Treasurer's Fortune is Told

I come Sir to borrow  
And you'll grant my demand, Sir,  
Since 'tis not for money;  
Pray lend me your hand, Sir  
And yet this good hand if you please –  
to stretch it,  
had the errand been money could easily fetch it.

You command the King's Treasure  
And yet o'my soul,  
You handle not much for your palm is not foul.  
Your fortune is good  
and will be to set the Office up right  
and the King out of debt  
to put all that have pensions soon out of their  
pain –  
By bringing th' Exchequer in credit again.

### [7] IV The Faery Beam upon You

The faery beam upon you,  
The stars to glisten on you;  
A moon of light,  
In the noon of night,  
Till the fire-drake hath o'er-gone you!  
The wheel of fortune guide you,  
The boy with the bow beside you;  
Run aye in the way,  
Till the bird of day,  
And the luckier lot betide you!  
To the old, long life and treasure;  
To the young, all health and pleasure;  
To the fair, their face  
With eternal grace;  
And the soul to be loved at leisure.  
To the witty, all clear mirrors,  
To the foolish their dark errors;  
To the loving sprite,  
A secure delight:  
To the jealous his own false terrors!

Composed in 2009 for his friend and colleague composer Joseph Horowitz, *Wind in the Reeds* is a trio for oboe, clarinet and bassoon; this recording is also its first performance. These brief miniatures are very much a celebration of the distinctive sound of the oboe, clarinet and bassoon. The first [8] is marked 'Lively and accented; moderately fast' and in less than two minutes juxtaposes a theme which is nothing more than a rhythmically repeated E flat with a marching bassoon and punctuated by rising arpeggios and scales in the distinctive sound of the clarinet. Later, all is elaborated in rhythmic passage-work over the burbling bassoon. The plaintive second movement, marked 'Songful and expressive' [9], exchanges two elegiac ideas between oboe and clarinet underpinned by the steady tread of the bassoon. The brilliant and rhythmic

third movement [10], inscribed 'Bright and playful', alternates dancing sections in  $\frac{9}{8}$  and  $\frac{6}{8}$ , in what is, in fact, an inspired encore running barely a minute.

Dodgson's three-movement **Sonata in A minor for Horn and Piano** dates from 1967 and was first performed on BBC Radio 3 on 3 April 1970, when it was played by Ifor James (horn) and Wilfrid Parry (piano). Its first concert performance, by the same artists, followed in the Purcell Room, on the London South Bank, on 19 March 1971. It is a substantial score, running to nearly twenty minutes, in which the composer celebrates his own instrument. The first movement, *Allegro non tanto* (i.e., fast but not too fast) [11], opens quietly with a preludial rising octave and semitone droop from the unaccompanied horn, immediately underpinned by piano octaves on F and B flat, the feeling of F major immediately compromised by the rising arpeggios on the black notes of the piano, but all done in a fluid and piquant way. The first theme is a long melody, starting at the fourteenth bar, which ends with three repeated notes, a motif that recurs throughout the movement. Although the piano writing is texturally widely spaced, it has a substantial role maintaining the rhythmic onward thrust of the movement. At the central climax the horn fanfares insistently before a lyrical interlude. The close comes as a quiet reverie, all passion spent.

The curiously static middle movement [12] is characterised by the repeated use of an expressive repeated note which takes the solo line onwards. The music starts quietly, the piano at first providing a tinkling atmospheric background. As it grows, the piano becomes more insistent, but the horn only gradually builds to a climax before cutting off, as if the window on some winter landscape has been shut. In typical Dodgson style, the third movement [13] is by far the longest and consists of an eighteen-bar theme, largely in marching crotchets, followed by four substantial and contrasted variations: Var. 1, *Poco Allegro*; Var. 2, *Lo stesso tempo*; Var. 3, *Al tempo del principio*; Var. 4. *Poco più tranquillo*.

The **Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano** was written in 1973 for the Athenaeum Ensemble, which gave the first performance at the Purcell Room in November 1975. The work is in a distinctive form, in which the first two movements are short – indeed, preludial in character – and are followed by a substantial set of variations getting on



for twice the length of the first two put together. The very open textures of the opening Prelude give it a French feel, perhaps owing something to Poulenc and Les Six. It is mainly a dialogue between oboe and bassoon, the piano remaining relatively in the background until near the end.

Dodgson wrote about this Trio:

I had the idea of making the three instruments independent, only being forced into ensemble at certain points and at the end. I wrote it in a free way in which each have their own rhythm, the bassoon basically slow, the oboe very fast, and the piano uncertain which it is. They follow cues from each other. None of the barlines are together anywhere. And finally it co-ordinates. Now I've been doubtful ever since I wrote that. It was very difficult to do and the players [...] were very inclined to get lost somewhere in the middle. I came to the conclusion that probably I could have produced the same extempore effect and yet have written it all out so that they had barlines in common and could still produce the sense of freedom. And I think this is true of a lot of pieces intended to produce an extempore effect.

In expressing these reservations, Dodgson was probably primarily thinking about the second movement, which has the title 'Fly-by-Night' [15]. Dodgson described it as a 'nocturnal scherzo'. He went on: 'the three instruments largely go their own ways; the oboe in hectic figuration (representing "flight") and the bassoon in rather brooding lines (representing "night"); the piano is never sure which of them to side with'. The finale is a theme with six variations. The movement [16] is launched by the bassoon stating the opening expressive sixteen-bar theme as a solo. When the texture is joined by the statement of the theme by the oboe, the change is signalled by the piano sustaining the note D held across three octaves. Dodgson described the variations as follows:

More adventurous variations then begin: first, over a drumming motif in the piano; then a jocular chatter-box with rhythms tossed between wind and piano; next a rich chorale-like variant in the piano (slow notes in the wind) leads directly to a variation of angular imitation between oboe and bassoon. The next variation is virtually a cadenza, making free with the basic melody and also full of reference to the *Fly-By-Night* movement. Out of

this wilderness comes the insistent, somewhat fandango-like rhythm of the final variation, which keeps close to the melody throughout.

**Five Minutes**, a light-hearted sequence of short movements for wind quintet, dates from 2008 and was written purely for the composer's own enjoyment. Indeed, the title could well be Dodgson's literary joke against himself, quoting from Hannah Cowley's play *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780): 'Five minutes: Zounds: I have been five minutes late all my life'. As with *Wind in the Reeds*, this recording is also its first performance. Reinforcing the programmatic titles, the opening evocation of a spring dawn [17] is clear from the tempo indications: 'Sustained, Songful; becoming radiant'. The second movement, 'Scamper' [18], is marked 'Lively, but controlled; boldly accented'. Here the held notes on horn sound out like some watchman calling the hour while the woodwind chatter around. Eventually the horn proclaims a slow theme, but the chattering crowd continues unabated. It is not clear why Dodgson gave the middle movement a French title – 'Sommeil' (Sleep) [19]. But this gentle 'smooth and sleepy' piece perhaps suggests the gentle rocking of a hammock in a summer garden. The fourth movement, 'Mischief' [20], becomes scherzando but with a steady pulse: 'With movement, but firm' says the composer, and indeed the interplay is mercurial and witty and never becomes anything other than light-hearted. The most interesting and unexpected of all five movements is the finale, 'Pigeon Chorus' [21], the opening music evoking the softly rhythmic cooing of pigeons (1–2–3 da dee), generating a motif that passes among the instruments of the quintet, to which end Dodgson writes in the time-signature of  $\frac{11}{8}$  (i.e., 7+4).

Lewis Foreman has published over 30 books on music and musicians, including the standard biography of Bax, now in an expanded third edition. His authoritative booklet notes for many recording companies have a reputation of their own, and he has written programme notes for leading orchestras and ensembles, the London Symphony Orchestra and The Nash Ensemble among them. For many years he wrote music- and record-industry obituaries for *The Independent newspaper*.

Since 2012 the **Magnard Ensemble** has built a reputation for delivering both high-quality concert performances and dynamic educational projects. During the 2014–15 season, the quintet simultaneously held a Chamber Music Fellowship at the Royal Academy of Music, as well as the inaugural joint fellowship between the RAM Open Academy and Wigmore Hall Learning. The Ensemble made its international debut at the Culture & Convention Centre in Lucerne in January 2017. Currently the musicians of the Ensemble are selected artists for the Cavatina Chamber Music Trust, the Tillett Trust Young Artist Platform and the Tunnell Trust.

The members of the Magnard Ensemble are also known for their passion for new music. They have premiered works by emerging composers, such as Leo Geyer for the Lord Mayor's Composition Prize, and Ewan Campbell for Listenpony, and were invited to be the resident ensemble for the East Anglia Young Composer Competition 2018.

The players all follow their own professional performing careers, appearing as soloists, chamber musicians and with orchestras, among them the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Southbank Sinfonia, Royal Northern Sinfonia, the BBC orchestras and the major UK opera orchestras.

During 2016 their project 'Revolting Rhymes and Marvellous Music' was launched nationwide to celebrate the centenary of Roald Dahl's birth, in partnership with Paul Patterson, Martin Butler, the City Music Foundation and Music Link International. Featured on *In Tune* on BBC Radio 3 in September 2016, the Ensemble has delivered concerts and workshops at festivals and venues across the country, including the Wigmore Hall, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, National Centre for Early Music in York, and the Hay, Thaxted and Aberystwyth festivals, as well as Repton School, Roald Dahl's alma mater.

[www.magnardensemble.org](http://www.magnardensemble.org)

**Suzannah Clements** (flute) was awarded a first-class honours degree from the Royal College of Music, where she studied with Sue Thomas and Jaime Martin, winning both the flute and overall woodwind prizes during her time there. She then went on to gain a Masters from the Royal Academy of Music under the tutelage of Karen Jones and Sam Coles. She was the recipient of the Chris Taylor flute prize and graduated with the DipRAM, the highest diploma awarded by the Academy. Suzannah now freelances with numerous orchestras across the UK, including the Philharmonia, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and City of London Sinfonia. She has also worked as a deputy on acclaimed West End shows such as *The King and I* and *Miss Saigon*.



The Japanese oboist **Mana Shibata** moved to England at the age of thirteen to study at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester and then at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was awarded several prizes, including the Evelyn Rothwell/Barbirolli Prize. After completing her Masters with Distinction at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, supported by the Leverhulme Trust, Mana won a Craxton Memorial Trust Award and was a prize-winner at the 2014 Barbirolli International Oboe Competition. As well as enjoying an orchestral career across the UK, including trials with the Orchestra of Scottish Opera and City of London Sinfonia, Mana strives to develop her expertise in the performance of contemporary music. She is part of the inaugural 'Next' programme of the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, and has performed with Psappha and the Octandre Ensemble.



After studying at Wells Cathedral School, Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and the Royal Academy of Music, the clarinettist **Joseph Shiner** performs as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia and Aurora Orchestra. He is the recipient of the Hattori Foundation Senior Award, the Making Music Philip and Dorothy Green Award, the Worshipful Company of Musicians' Prince's Prize and the Royal Academy of Music Buffet Crampon Clarinet Prize. A selected artist for Making Music and the City Music Foundation, he was featured as *BBC Music's* 'Rising Star' for August 2016.



**Jonathan Farey** is a freelance horn-player, based in London since completing a Masters at the Royal Academy of Music with distinction, and an undergraduate in Maths and Music at Cardiff University. Recent engagements include performances with the Royal Opera House, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Jonathan is also on trial with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra for their fifth horn seat. His passion for chamber music has led him to concerts with the European Union Chamber Orchestra, Schubert's *Auf dem Strom* alongside Ailish Tynan and Simon Lepper, as well as to the Brahms Horn Trio with the Peddibi Trio.



**Catriona McDermid**, bassoon, graduated from Lincoln College, Oxford, with first-class honours in music and subsequently received a distinction for her Masters degree at Royal College of Music, where she studied with Joost Bosdijk, Andrea de Flammeis, Julie Price and Wouter Werschuren. She now freelances as both a modern and Baroque bassoonist, recently playing with ensembles such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Florilegium. As a soloist Catriona has given several concerto performances, and is currently a recitalist for the Countess of Munster Musical Trust and Handel House Talent Scheme.



Having completed her undergraduate degree at King's College London, **Suling King**, piano, undertook an MA at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was supported by the Stanley Picker Trust and Winifred Christie Trust. Suling has since been working as a pianist for the University of Edinburgh and King's College London, alongside performing all over the world on Cunard Line cruise ships as a recitalist. In addition, she has a diverse freelance career in the UK, such as accompanying the Bach Choir in outreach projects across London, and collaborating with instrumentalists from all of the top UK orchestras.



The Australian mezzo-soprano **Kate Howden** recently sang Baba the Turk in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* under conductor Barbara Hannigan with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. Other operatic roles include the title role in the versions of *Cendrillon* by Massenet and Isouard, Isolier in Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*, Bianca in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, La Ciesca in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and La suora zelatrice in his *Suor Angelica*, and Cherubino and Annio in Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*. She performed the eponymous role in a scene from Massenet's *Cendrillon* in the Royal Opera House Jette Parker summer showcase 2017, on the ROH main stage with the house orchestra.

Recent solo performances include appearances at the Canberra International Music Festival, in Mark Antony Turnage's *Twice through the Heart*, and a worldwide tour of Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* with the contemporary circus group Circa, with venues including the Barbican Theatre and the Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley. She toured Scotland with the 'Opera Highlights' tour of Scottish Opera and performed the complete songs of Henri Duparc with Sachika Taniyama at Julius Drake's Machynlleth Festival.

She was the winner of the Jean Meikle Prize for a Duo (with pianist Sachika Taniyama) at the 2015 Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation International Song Competition. Kate studied at Trinity Laban with Ameral Gunson, the Royal Academy of Music with Elizabeth Ritchie and the National Opera Studio. She looks forward to performing at the Ojai Festival in California this summer, and to performing and recording the eponymous role in Dodgson's *Margaret Catchpole* at Snape.

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