

*Expanding the future of Opera
through development, mentoring and advancement of volunteer service*

Opera Volunteers INTERNATIONAL

www.OperaVolunteers.org



The Opera Volunteer Voice

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OVI Welcomes Student Volunteer Groups *Universities Opera Groups Need Support Too!*

When we think “opera volunteers” we think opera companies” and clearly OVI represents supporters of these companies throughout the U.S.A and Canada. We foster the sharing of information, ideas, knowledge, resources, experience, expertise and wisdom about opera-related volunteerism. We assist in the formation and growth or revitalization of support groups. We acknowledge excellence through our awards and provide assistance through matching grants.

College and University Opera programs need support as well and many of us who don't have nearby opera companies do have school music departments in close proximity. That is why University of Georgia Hugh Hodgson School of Music joined OVI in February of 2012. Soon afterwards, in April University of Montevallo (AL) joined.

This issue features an article by Professor Charles Wood, Director of Opera at Montevallo and also recounts his students' sojourn from Alabama to Oregon this January for the National Opera Association Collegiate Opera Scenes Competition. OVI Regional Coordinator Peggy Paulk cheered them on in Alabama, and Portland, Oregon volunteers sent welcome offerings when they arrived to compete.

We look forward to more University music programs seeing the wisdom of coordinated volunteer efforts and taking advantage of OVI's offerings to help.

Opera Now Magazine online digital version now available free to members of OVI

Opera Now would like all the members of OVI to experience the critically acclaimed publication for opera lovers worldwide, absolutely free with no obligation.

Enjoy their unique and all-encompassing perspective on the international opera scene through a lively and colorful mix of news, reviews, interviews, travel articles and commentary.

To Access the digital content simply visit their website:

www.rhinegold.co.uk/ondigital

Register once and create a password. Your access code is: ovi12



Opera Now is a wonderful resource for music lovers everywhere. With its inviting layout and vivid photography, it makes us feel as though we were there
Renée Fleming

Find us on the internet at www.OperaVolunteers.org



How to Contact Our Membership Vice-President:

Changed your address?
Moving soon?
Make sure you let Rhonda know at:
membership@operavolunteers.org
(713) 522-1669

If we do not have your email address, please let us have it in order to keep you up-to-date between newsletters.

OVI 2012 – 2013 Directory On Its Way!

If you are one of those who renewed your membership already, THANK YOU!! You should have receiving your Membership Directory by now which will help you connect with our Board, your Regional Coordinator, others in your Region, as well as find the key contacts for other opera support groups.

For those of you who have not yet mailed in your dues, please do so now! Otherwise, this will be your final newsletter, and we don't want you to miss a thing, including volunteer news and opportunities for Matching Grants, Volunteer Recognition, and informative Teleseminars! You may renew your membership online, using our website **www.OperaVolunteers.org**. Online entry of your information, including secure payment by credit card, is very quick and easy! If you prefer, you may also return the membership form (or print it from the website), along with your check or credit card information as you have always done. Whichever way you choose, I hope you will renew quickly and invite a friend or two to join you!

OVI's members and membership meetings are the best part of our organization! We share great ideas with each other about fundraising, education, opera boutiques, and use of new technologies to improve communications with our members. Through our newsletter, you will stay up-to-date on upcoming meetings and find out what others are doing to celebrate and recognize volunteers!

Join with us as we celebrate the importance of those who volunteer in support of opera across North America!

Rhonda Sweeney,
Vice-President of Membership

Congratulations to Rhonda Sweeney

.... on being recognized for her service to the Houston Grand Opera Guild. She will be guest of honor at their April 6 event "Riverboat Revelry Live Upon the Wicked Stage."

March 1st deadline for PROJECTS of SPECIAL MERIT

OVI is pleased to invite its Support Group members to share projects they have undertaken in support of their opera company, or to encourage the appreciation of the art form in the communities in which they reside. The Projects of Special Merit is a wonderful opportunity to share your successful projects with other support groups and to encourage them in their efforts to support and develop opera in every community.

Please look for the letter with Project of Special Merit details and Entry Forms which will be mailed to the Presidents of your support groups in January. The deadline for receipt of your forms is March 1st. Certificates recognizing your achievements will be given at the Opera Conference in Vancouver BC Canada, May 7-11, 2013.

Stacey Johnson

Questions or additional information may be submitted to jhnsn@buffalo.edu, or call 716-885=2486.

You are invited:

**to join OVI for its 2013 trip to Italy
to celebrate Verdi's Bicentennial**



OVI President,
Julie Benson

Opera Volunteers International is pleased to announce a spectacular **eight-day trip to Italy** from **October 8 through October 15, 2013**, to celebrate the Bicentennial of the great Giuseppe Verdi in the heart of Verdi country in Parma and Busseto. We will attend the black tie premiere of Verdi's masterpiece, *Don Carlo*, at La Scala; see the performances at the world-renowned **Verdi Festival** in Parma or Busseto, Italy, plus visits to all the important Verdi landmarks in the area. This trip will also include extensive touring of cities in the surrounding area and spectacular dining as well as free time on your own to explore these historic and bustling locations.

Our trip will be led by Rob and Barbara Seaver of Request Italy, who have spent their adult lives living in Italy and have the inside track on wonderful hotels, restaurants and ticket opportunities. This trip is absolutely limited to no more than 15 people. The deadline for signing up for this trip and placing deposit is February 15, 2013, but if you wait, the trip will probably be sold out, so please act quickly if you wish to join us!



Full Details and itinerary are on the OVI website: www.operavolunteers.org

If you have any questions please e-mail Rob Seaver, at roberteseaver@yahoo.com or call him at (785) 505-7001.

MATCHING GRANTS - deadline is April 1, 2013

The purpose of Opera Volunteer International's Matching Grants program is to encourage the expansion and development of programs that recruit, develop and train volunteers for service in their communities and for participation in all phases of opera company support.

Application Guidelines

Awards up to and including \$2,000 are available to member support groups, member organizations and member opera companies which create and/or support such programs. Recipients must match each grant award with funds which may be held currently in the organization's treasury or raised as new money.

Grant requests up to \$2,000 may be made for more than one project. Recipients of awards may not receive subsequent awards for similar projects.

The wide range of programs that have been awarded OVI grants have used many different techniques to train docents and volunteers in assisting their opera companies in areas such as advertising, education, public relations, audience development and production. Special consideration is given to programs directed toward and involving disadvantaged or under-served groups, multi-cultural communities and/or those who have not been traditionally associated with opera.

PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE - deadline is April 1, 2013

We want to show off your super volunteers, your innovative and successful programs and projects, your major milestones and minor miracles. OVI believes that these efforts deserve to be celebrated throughout the opera volunteer community and we're going to do just that at our awards dinner at Opera Conference 2013.

Read more about these awards at:

<http://operavolunteers.org/awards-recognition>

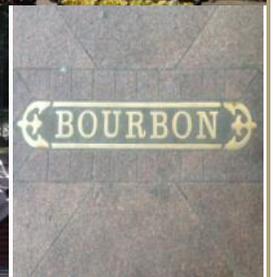
Contact memberservices@operavolunteers.org to have application material sent to you.



OVI in "The Big Easy"

Though the purpose for the New Orleans get-together was a meeting of OVI Board Members from across the country it was definitely not all business!

The November 16 - 18 weekend included dining at the Palm Court Jazz Café, and at famed Galatoire's, Sunday brunch at The Court of Two Sisters, backstage tour at Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts and a matinee performance of The Barber of Seville. ...And what better location than the Royal Sonesta Hotel in the heart of New Orleans' historic French Quarter?



OVI extends a great big Thank You to all our new friends in New Orleans for hosting a wonderful Board Meeting Weekend. Special thanks to Constance Cowart for organizing events to give us all a taste of the city and of the rich cultural life of New Orleans.



Attend Opera Conference 2013 in Vancouver May 8-11

Ready to experience 'Opera Out of Bounds'?

If you have never been to Vancouver, or even if you have been before, you are in for a treat this May. Join us at Opera Conference 2013, where we will explore the theme, *Opera Out of Bounds*. Discuss the best ideas for increasing accessibility to the art form of opera through real community engagement. Details on our OVI sessions will be posted on our website, so watch for more information at www.operavolunteers.org as they become available.

Grab your passport (you will need one to go to Vancouver British Columbia, of course) and bring your best ideas to share with opera support groups, volunteers and opera companies throughout North America.

Our OVI Board of Directors' meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 8th in the morning at the Hyatt Regency, the conference hotel. Plan on arriving May 7th because the time zone changes will mean that your flight arrival may well be in the late afternoon. After the board lunch on the 8th, the Opening Session and Keynote Address will be featured. Enjoy the host company reception on a cruise of Vancouver later that evening, and enjoy a late supper for the OVI Awards dinner afterwards.

OVI sessions on Thursday (5/9/13) and Friday (5/10/14) will precede the Vancouver Opera Performance of Tan Dun's *'Tea: A Mirror of the Soul.'* A new works sampler and closing remarks will be presented on Friday evening, allowing for return flights out of Vancouver early Saturday. Or, spend the weekend and take an optional Victoria, BC, excursion. The conference will offer many opportunities to interact, converse and enjoy. Don't miss it!

Registration for the Opera Conference 2013 begins January 15th. Check www.operaamerica.org/content/conference for details and instructions for registration. OVI members will receive a discount of \$100 for early bird registration which lasts until April 1st, 2013. We are also entitled to an additional group discount of 30%. To obtain this discount enter the discount code **OVI2013**. As with our reservations last year, Opera America asks that you first register with your local opera company if they are sending a contingent so that your reservation might help them to obtain the group rate. Hotel reservations may be made directly at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Reserve your ticket for the Canadian premiere of *'Tea: A Mirror of Soul'* which fuses western opera with eastern mythology. Check the Opera Volunteers website for more information, and if you have questions please email Mary at marketing@operavolunteers.org.



by Dr. Charles Wood,
Director of Opera at The University of Montevallo

Learn the Volunteer Rule!

How You Can Be an Effective Volunteer For Schools and Small Opera Companies

I need help! (Well, maybe some “professional help” too, but we can discuss that later!) I teach applied voice and opera at a small, state-supported liberal arts university, the University of Montevallo near Birmingham, Alabama. We have a flourishing music program that boasts undergraduate musicians, some of whom rival those at the top schools in the country. I enjoy the support of my colleagues and administrators for our opera program. I love my job! So, why do I need volunteers?

I need them because I created a monster! I wanted to build an active opera program at UM and now we have one. We do an opera scenes concert each fall and a full production each spring. That means I am always in production while teaching applied voice, acting classes, opera history...you name it! For each production, I teach the music (with the help of a marvelous pianist), I stage the operas, I design and build the set, I procure the costumes, I hire the orchestra, and I conduct the performances. Understand, we do not do small children’s operas. We perform full operas double cast whenever possible. Now you see why I need help! My colleagues are just as busy. So volunteers are not only wanted, they are needed.

I have been fortunate to have volunteers in the past. Now, thanks to OVI, I look forward to having more help. Did you know, even the smallest thing you do can save a director hours of worry? It’s true. But you have to know *how* to volunteer to be the type of help you intend to be. If not, you may actually create *more* work for the directors. You have to learn “The Volunteer Rule”.

**The most
important
help you can
provide is
free. Talk
about us!**

♪ The Volunteer Rule ♪:

Volunteer for a task you can do *from start to finish*. That last part is very important. If you don’t finish the task, you create even more work for the organization.

How can you help?

There may be ways you can help, but haven’t thought about. Ask a director, and you may get a million new ideas. Here are some ideas that you might find easy to fulfill, but remember to follow “The Volunteer Rule”!

- **Dressers** – Can you sew a button, style a wig or, perhaps tie a corset?
- **Storage and Transport** - Do you have storage space or building space or truck or van to transport set pieces?

Financial Help - Some Different Ideas.

Of course, we always need financial assistance, but not everyone can donate cash. There are other profound ways to help and some that do not cost much money.

- **Tickets** – Can you buy a block of tickets and bring several friends? Help us fill our seats. That might spur more sales in the future and inspire more people to volunteer!
- **Sponsor a player** - Small schools like mine have to hire some of the orchestra players (one of my largest expenditures.) If you could sponsor a player, that would free up that money for other uses. You could ask the director to name the gift in honor of someone you choose. The program might list the Concertmaster’s name with the title “Jane Doe Artist”. The name of Jane Doe would be the name of your choice.
- **Pay one night in the theater** – Theater space is brutally expensive. If you can swing it, plain to pay from \$800 - \$2000 a night. That is not for everyone!
- **Feed the animals** – On a smaller scale, offer to buy pizza for the cast after a long night of rehearsal. But, be there to tip the delivery person when the pizza arrives!
- **Printing** – Another less expensive way to help would be to pay for the printing of the posters and/or programs. Offer to take the order to the printer and pick it up when it is finished. Then the director has nothing to worry about. (Prices may vary, so ask what the director envisions before you agree to pay!)

Other Ideas That Don’t Cost Money

- Can you sell tickets at the box office one or more nights?
- Do you have building skills or power tools sitting around?
- Can you paint?
- Can you help with publicity? Identify publications that will print a notice of the opera performances. Then contact them and give the required information.
- You can be the contact person for publicity. Ask the director if you can schedule newspaper or local television interviews.

The Most Important Help

But above all, the most important help you can provide is free. Talk about us! Seriously! Mention our productions to people. “Word of mouth” is always the best publicity! Make us the talk of the town. Eventually, it gets back to our administrators who love hearing people talk about their schools. That translates into a pat on the back for the students and the Director.

Those of us at small schools and small companies have big plans, but we need help. It isn’t just a matter of funding. It is also a matter of volunteer service. Remember the Volunteer Rule and see if you can find a task you can complete. Now, about that “professional help”...

Competing at the NOA Collegiate Opera Scenes Competition

By Marie Brewer, Mezzo-Soprano

We began singing the trio from Ambrose Thomas' *Hamlet* as friends who were chosen by our Director, Dr. Charles Wood, to submit a video to the National Opera Association Collegiate Opera Scenes Competition. By the night of the competition on January 3rd, the three of us formed an unbreakable bond of friendship when we won the national finals in the competition.

This was The University of Montevallo's second time in as many years to make the finals under the direction of Dr. Charles Wood. Needless to say, we were more than delighted when we advanced to the finals again this year! Dr. Wood pointed out how flattering it was to be named a finalist again among such flagship schools. A few days later, we found out our Department Chair, Dr. Alan Goldspiel, found the funding to send us. We were very grateful to him and the university.

It took three flights and about 12 hours to reach Portland from Birmingham. We were exhausted but so thankful when we found OVI member, Mary Sveta, provided individual fruit baskets which greeted us when we checked in the hotel. After the long trip and a midnight rehearsal, nothing could have been more refreshing!

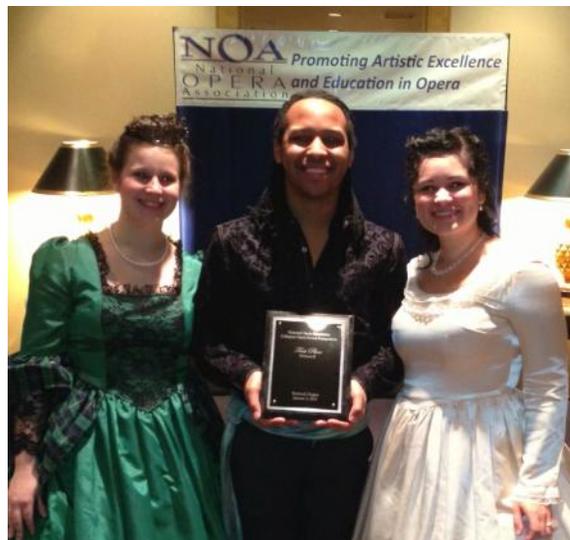
The competition itself was the next night and it was very intense. We were next to last and saw almost all the other scenes. They were all so excellent. Dr. Wood told us time and again to stay focused on each other, to listen to each other and respond to what we were hearing as though we never heard any of it before. When singing on stage at the competition, I could truly feel the intensity growing between us. (For me, the best part of it all was singing the scene with my best friends!)

Nidia Riley (Soprano, "Ophelia") remembers, "After they called the third place and then the second place winner, I looked at Marie and thought 'Well, Portland was a wonderful city. At least we got to come and experience something new.' But when it was announced that we had won, my mouth fell wide open in shock! It was an amazing moment and absolutely unforgettable."

Devin Burton (Baritone, "Hamlet"), was mindful of those who came before him and worked hard to help build the opera program at Montevallo. "Our win tonight is a tribute to those students who came before us and a new standard to those in the future."

Congratulations! to Stuart Holt!

Education Director for Nashville Opera and a member of their Guild, on his new position with Metropolitan Opera Guild, as Director of Programs and Strategic Partnerships



ProProfessor Wood's "young giant slayers"
National Final Winners
Maria Brewer, Devin Burton, Nidia Riley

U of Montevallo wins National Opera Competition

The University of Montevallo Opera Ensemble, under the direction of Associate Professor Charles Wood, has won the National Opera Association Collegiate Opera Scenes Competition. Soprano Nidia Riley (senior), mezzo-soprano Marie Brewer (junior) and baritone Devin Burton (senior) were featured in a trio from Ambrose Thomas' operatic setting of *Hamlet*. The scene was accompanied on the piano by Dr. Laurie Middaugh, Staff Accompanist at Montevallo. The students performed live before a panel of distinguished opera general managers and stage directors at the NOA National Conference, held Jan. 3-5 in Portland, Ore.

"The University of Montevallo competed against some of the largest, flagship schools in the country," said Wood. "We were honored just to be named among such programs, all of which were graduate programs. But, if our students were intimidated, they never showed it. They were stellar in their performance."

Wood credits the support of his colleagues and administrators for success on the national level. "It is great that our administrators support our efforts and see the value of the performing arts. To see UM's name in print at these national conferences and listed among the finalists and winners on their website is an honor and great publicity. It reflects the fine work of the University as a whole."

Summarizing a comment from Burton, Wood agrees that this win is a tribute to the students who came before and a new standard for the ones who will follow. Looking forward, he added, "We are enjoying the victory, but we must move on to our challenging spring production of *Albert Herring*."

Chattanooga Performing Arts League Celebrates National Opera Week 2012

Submitted by Judith Hepplewhite

The Chattanooga Performing Arts League was organized to promote youth involvement in dance, drama, and music. Classical vocal and opera has been emphasized in our programs. One of our public programs was an operatic "Spontaneous Cultural Event" bursting into arias, duets, and choruses in the food court of our highest traffic mall, Hamilton Place. This program celebrated Opera Week on November 3, 2012.

On cue from Harv Wileman, professional singers dressed as Mall workmen, food vendors, and shoppers scattered around the food court singing selections from Carmen and other operas. Hundreds of shoppers and children stopped eating, or scurrying on their shopping route to listen, mesmerized. The acoustics of the food court glass atrium are near perfect. One little girl was frightened by the clear, high decibel sound. But, as the performance continued, she emerged, tentatively smiling in wonderment. We touched hundreds of people that day, many of whom had never heard or at least listened to these enduring masterpieces. The impact was immeasurable. Future classical vocal programs include a Vocal Competition, opera concerts and



From left: Ann Allen, Barbie Standefer, Mary Earl, Judith Hepplewhite, Pat Daniel, Donna Weeks

Nashville Opera Guild Goes Country



The Nashville Opera Guild took a new approach to fund raising while looking to expand their audience with the event **Opera @ the Loveless – Dining, Dancing, Doyle & Debbie** this past September.

Supporting Nashville Opera's music education and outreach program, the country themed party was held at the Loveless Barn, a popular local venue.

The comedy duo Doyle and Debbie sang humorous, original songs in an act they developed just for the event, poking fun of the opera with a nod to country music.

Everyone enjoyed a country style buffet and the elaborate décor reflecting the 'southern country' theme. A silent auction had guests bidding on everything from trips to items donated by local vendors.

It was a unique event that gave many attendees an opportunity show off their western attire. There were a lot of new faces and excellent coverage by the local press. The fun-filled evening lifted everyone's spirits and served as another reminder of the importance of the Nashville Opera Guild's mission to bring music and performing arts to schools around the city.

ELLEN KING, beloved arts enthusiast, activist and philanthropist and longtime friend, patron and founder of many organizations supporting opera, died on January 7, 2013. She served as a member of the Chairman's Forum and Trustee of the Austin Lyric Opera; a member of the Executive Committee of the Austin Lyric Opera; a Vice-President and member of the Austin Lyric Opera Guild

Ellen won the OVI Partners in Excellence Award and served on the committees at Austin Lyric Opera that welcomed OGI and OVI at meetings and conferences in Austin.

Ellen King has been honored for her contributions to the world of opera. She was given the Outstanding Volunteer Award from the Opera Guilds International; the Opera Bravo Award from the Austin Lyric Opera; the Outstanding Opera Board Trustee of the Year by the Austin Lyric Opera; and the 20th Season of the Austin Lyric Opera was dedicated to her and her late-husband, Alfred. Austin Lyric Opera has also honored them both by setting up an Endowment Fund called the Ellen and Alfred King Society.



Fargo Moorhead Opera Joins OVI, Celebrates New Initiatives

By David Hamilton, FMO General Director



Between the fall production of *The Barber of Seville*, January's *The Face on the Barroom Floor*, and next spring's *The Marriage of Figaro*, the leadership of the Fargo Moorhead Opera Company (FMO) hosted the first annual Snowball Gala and launched two new partnerships with OVI and the Twin Cities Opera Guild (TCOG) aimed at expansion.

After 44 years it's time to formally acknowledge the remarkable pool of volunteer talent that serves this organization by creating a new guild as an official part of the company. We joined OVI and TCOG to access ideas about how to create an organization that can grow along with us.

FMO has applied for an OVI matching grant to help organize its own guild in 2013. Board leaders are appointed to head the process along with administrative staff. We anticipate a series of organizational meetings early in the year.

A meeting in November with representatives of the TCOG secured a pledge of support from that organization along with a 2013 education outreach grant of \$1500 plus royalty fees to produce two operettas composed for young voices in the Moorhead, MN Public Schools. The company has long offered education and outreach activities throughout the region geared to introduce the art form to K-12 students and adults. A close association with Concordia College in Moorhead assures a steady stream of young musicians for the stage, orchestra, and as office interns.

My work as General Director of the company combines well with my position as Professor of Voice at Concordia College. I find the multiple connections between the college and the opera company to be essential to the quality of productions and enhances the education of our students.

Founded in 1968, FMO is the only professional opera company between Minneapolis and Billings going east and west; and Omaha and Winnipeg going north and south. The sprawling Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area is the smallest city in America to support a full-season professional opera company, thanks to loyal members and patrons who often travel great distances to attend performances. The current programs of the FMO include two mainstage productions – one in the fall and one in the spring with a smaller chamber opera produced during the winter. The company has also made a commitment to touring rural areas in Minnesota and North Dakota – unusual in a time when most opera companies have stopped touring due to financial constraints.

What we need now are great models to short-cut the investment of time and money setting up our guild.

- Specifically, FMO is seeking:
- Model Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws;
- Volunteer Training Manuals in print or online;
- Volunteer Scheduling systems, including online calendar;
- Volunteer Screening and background check policies and procedures;
- Access to confidential review of staffing and budget information for small or start-up volunteer organizations.

For more information, or to offer ideas and other forms of support, contact David Hamilton at director@fmopera.org

Note to David:

Opera Volunteers International's website contains tools, and guidance for forming or enhancing your guild or volunteer support group with the following publications.

- * **How to Form an Opera Guild**
- Recruiting and Training the New Generation of Opera Volunteers**
- Volunteer Group/Company Relationships – 5 Different Examples**
- What OVI Can Do For You**
- An Opera Boutique**

**You are invited to join Opera Volunteers International
October 2013 Trip to Italy to celebrate Verdi's Bicentennial**



Premiere of Don Carlo at La Scala featuring superstar bass **Rene Pape as King Phillip** plus **Bicentennial Gala Concert at Teatro Regio** and two additional performances at the world famous Verdi Festival *plus* visits to Verdi birthplace; Villa Verdi & Teatro Verdi; fabulous food and wine and *much more!* **details inside P.2**

Parma - Milan – Mantua – Cremona Busseto – Soragna – Fontanellato

Make your plans now for May 2013

Join hundreds of creators, artists and administrators
In beautiful, dynamic and diverse Vancouver., B.C., Canada for:

Opera Conference 2013: Opera Out of Bounds

You'll learn new skills, build relationships and be inspired to achieve richer connections with your communities. **details inside p.7**

or at www.operavolunteers.org and at www.ooperaamerica.org/content/conference

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