

2021 ANNUAL REPORT





mission

Opera Theatre's mission is to shape the future of opera and to connect diverse audiences through its power and beauty. To accomplish our mission, we produce a world-class opera festival, we champion new works, we build new audiences, we educate and engage our community, and we nurture the finest opera artists, artisans, and administrators of each generation. By doing so, we strengthen the cultural and economic vitality of the St. Louis community.

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from the GENERAL DIRECTOR





If I could use one word to sum up Opera Theatre's 2021, it would be this one: determination. After cancelling our 2020 Festival Season due to COVID-19, we were determined to return to live performance safely. To achieve this, our team reinvented nearly every aspect of our work and moved the opera season outdoors, creating a beautiful opera house in a parking lot. The Outdoor Festival Season was a triumph, and I am deeply proud that we could return to live performances in such an innovative way. We were determined to stay connected to our community, so we pivoted to digital content for much of our educational programming resulting in another triumph: nearly 88,000 students worldwide streamed our recorded version of *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Our determination extended to our efforts to make Opera Theatre a more equitable place to work and create. The success of the first class of Clayco Future Leaders Fellows heralds an exciting future for the program. Through all this, the guidance and leadership of our Board Chairman Noémi Neidorff was reassuring and inspiring, and I am grateful to her for extending her tenure as we navigated so many new frontiers. I am also especially grateful to our donors who made all these accomplishments possible. Your encouragement and generosity make all the difference.

Andrew R. Jorgensen

General Director

This was a year of brilliant reinvention at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and I am so deeply grateful for all who made this season possible.

The 2021 Outdoor Season transformed a parking lot into a completely magical setting for Opera Theatre's first live performances since the start of the pandemic. Throughout the year, education programs online and in-person continued to be a lifeline of joy and connection for students in St. Louis and across the country. The critical work of Opera Theatre's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee also continued, compelling accountability and action across every facet of our company.

From my first day as Chairman of Opera Theatre's Board of Directors, I have been constantly amazed by the extraordinary artistry, ingenuity, and resilience of this team of artists, volunteers, staff, community partners, supporters, and audience members. Despite all the challenges of recent years, our beloved company has emerged stronger than ever and with a very bright future. As I conclude my time as Chairman, I am excited to continue our work together in the years ahead.

Thank you for all you do to support Opera Theatre and this spectacular team!

Noémi K. Neidorff

Chairman of the Board of Directors





A photo of our outdoor stage during a beautiful sunset taken by OTSL photographer Eric Woolsey made the cover of the summer 2021 edition of OPERA America Magazine!

OPERA IN BLOOM: the 2021 outdoor festival season

After a cancelled 2020 season, Opera Theatre was determined to return to the stage. With careful planning, consultation from our COVID medical team, and brilliant work from our Production and Operations staff, we built a stage right on a Webster University parking lot! Our season outdoors had its challenges: heat, cold, environmental noise, and the ever-looming threat of rain made for an unpredictable summer. But we made it happen, and we welcomed sold-out audiences back to hear the beautiful music that we had all missed so much. We also captured the season for digital streaming, an innovation for OTSL that allowed us to share this unique season with a larger audience, offsetting the limited capacity of our outdoor venue.



GIANNI SCHICCHI

HIGHWAY 1, U.S.A.



Our opening production, Gianni Schicchi, was a welcome moment of levity to kick off our 46th season. After the difficulties of 2020, the lighthearted joy of the Puccini classic was a lovely respite. As St. Louis Magazine said of the premiere, "Last night's performance was exuberant. It was fun." Just what we needed to start the season right.



Made possible with leadership gifts from the Berges Family Foundation and Sally S. Levy & & Family.

Highway 1, U.S.A. was an intense drama about family, love, and the limits of devotion. Though our production of *Highway 1, U.S.A.* was not the first performance of the opera, it was the first major revival in several years. William Grant Still, often called the "Dean of African American Composers," was a prolific artist, creating over 200 original works including nine operas, five symphonies, and four ballets. However, his operas are rarely staged today. In producing Highway 1, U.S.A., OTSL hoped to bring light to the legacy of an important composer whose profound work is often overlooked.



Made possible with leadership gifts from Noémi & Michael & Neidorff, the Steward Family Foundation, and the Whitaker Foundation. Major production support is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, William T. Kemper Foundation, and Commerce Trust Company. Generous support also provided by Husch **Blackwell, LLP** and by donors to the **Voices Fund**. Community programming for *Highway 1, U.S.A.* is made possible by PNC Arts Alive.











Another of William Grant Still's operas, Troubled Island, was the first by a Black composer to be performed by a major American opera company in 1949, and the first to be televised.

LA VOIX HUMAINE



"Heartbreak in motion" is how Patricia Racette, the star of *La voix humaine*, described this work. With sole accompaniment provided by pianist Sun Ha (Sunny) Yoon, *La voix humaine* was a stripped-down version of the Poulenc monodrama. Racette's wrenching performance as Elle, a woman desperately clinging to a love affair gone sour, reminded us of opera's unique ability to portray the complexity of human emotion.

Major production support provided by Rex Singuefield in honor of Dr. Jeanne Singuefield.

NEW WORKS, BOLD VOICES LAB

The launch of the New Works, Bold Voices series with the 2013 world premiere of *Champion* marked a new Opera Theatre commitment to commissioning operas by American composers that tell the stories of our time. The operas commissioned as part of the New Works, Bold Voices series continue to have a life past the Opera Theatre stage, adding to the canon of 21st century American operas.

As a response to COVID restrictions, we adapted the program in 2021 to a new format called the *New Works, Bold Voices Lab* and asked three composer/librettist teams to compose oneact, 25-minute operas responding to the events of 2020. The three new works premiered during the 2021 Outdoor Season, and created a new template for innovative, powerful work that can be produced more efficiently.



Leadership support provided by **Noémi & Michael Neidorff** with commissioning support from **Tim & Robin Wentworth** and major production support from **Emily Rauh Pulitzer**. This project was made possible in part by the **National Endowment for the Arts**, the **Fred M. Saigh Endowment** at Opera Theatre, and by the **Sally S. Levy Family Fund for New Works**, which provides support for contemporary opera and related community engagement activities. This project was also supported by **Armstrong Teasdale LLP**, **Buckingham Strategic Wealth**, and by donors to the **Voices Fund**.









I DREAM A WORLD: a celebration of juneteenth-





I Dream a World featured

"briefly on the nature and

expediency of promises."

composed by Joshuah Brian Campbell,

Grammy, Oscar,

"Stand Up" from

the film Harriet.

and Golden Globe

nominee for his song

an original commission,

Thoughtfully curated by
Nicole Cabell and Will Liverman,
I Dream a World was a journey
through the landscape of Black
music. The concert marked
our inaugural commemoration
of both Juneteenth, a holiday
memorializing the emancipation
of the last Black Americans
enslaved in Texas, and Black
Music Month. We were grateful
to collaborate with the Missouri

Historical Society to honor the contributions of Black artists to musical history and look forward to many more community celebrations in the future.

Opera Theatre gratefully acknowledges presenting sponsors **Noémi & Michael & Neidorff**. Generous support also came from major production sponsors **Kim & Tim Eberlein** and production underwriters **Nancy & Ken Kranzberg**. Commission underwriting for "briefly on the nature and expediency of promises." by Joshuah Brian Campbell came from **Crystal & Patrick Dallas**. Video capture of the *I Dream a World* concert was possible thanks to a gift made in honor of Sally S. Levy's 95th birthday by her children: **Lucy & J. David Levy**, **Diane & Paul Jacobson**, and **Karen & Mont Levy**.



Center Stage is OTSL's hottest ticket every year for a reason: it's a one-night-only showcase of up-and-coming opera talent. In 2021, we watched rising stars under the stars on our outdoor stage. Even a dramatic lightning storm wasn't enough to dampen spirits as our audience enjoyed lively performances from our Gerdine Young Artists! A rousing rendition of "The Champagne Song" from *Die Fledermaus* ended the night on a high note.

Made possible with major production support from **Leigh & Jean Mason**. Generous support for the year-long expansion of the Gerdine Young Artist Program came from **Lori & Ted Samuels** in honor of **Phoebe & Spencer Burke**.

INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY

39%

of Phyllis' Seats users were new to Opera Theatre! 19%

of users were under the age of 50

"I had two **Phyllis' Seats**. They were incredible. I appreciated being able to be in the second row, a price point I would never have been able to meet in previous OTSL seasons."

- AUDIENCE MEMBER

"THANK YOU for the creation of **Phyllis' Seats**. I am excited to be able to now
become a long-term fan of OTSL, where
in the past I have not previously been
able financially to dip my toe into the
world of opera."

- AUDIENCE MEMBER

Making opera more welcoming and accessible is a core value of Opera Theatre. In 2021, we introduced two significant new initiatives to increase accessibility to our work: free tickets and audio-described performances.

Phyllis' Seats, our new free seats initiative, is a tribute to the late Phyllis Brissenden, a beloved friend and generous supporter of our company. Phyllis loved bringing new friends to the opera and this program continues her legacy. In 2021, we offered 30 free tickets per performance, and that number will expand to 50 tickets per performance in 2022 and beyond, a first for the national opera scene.

In partnership with **MindsEye**, a local company that translates visuals into audio for the blind and visually impaired, we now provide audio description service on select dates for each production in our season. We are proud to make OTSL a more open and welcoming space for our community.

RAVE REVIEWS for the outdoor festival season

"What we saw last night was the expression of remarkable natural talents that have been finely tuned by intense training. These young artists are ready to shine on the world's finest opera stages. It was glorious!"

— STEVE CALLAHAN, BROADWAY REVIEW

"OTSL's La voix humaine is impeccably staged and is a personal triumph for Patricia Racette..."

- CHUCK LAVAZZI, KDHX

"This summer, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis truly reawakened, putting on William Grant Still's Highway 1, U.S.A. Rarely staged (or even recorded) since its 1963 premiere, this one-act...is a compact, entertaining, and beguiling piece."

— SETH COLTER WALLS, THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Comedy or drama, one thing's clear: OTSL's outdoor season is not one to miss."

— AMANDA WOYTUS, ST. LOUIS MAGAZINE

"I really have been very impressed with the two
performances I have been able to view, both in the quality
of pieces, the actors, voices, and the music. And the way
everything was set up and handled, from the efforts to keep
everyone safe to all the extra little touches like water and
the cute bags at the seats, was perfect. Thanks for some
delightful evenings!"
— AUDIENCE MEMBER

"The staff is amazing and so welcoming; the atmosphere was perfect. The high quality we expect from the performance and production was spot on."

— AUDIENCE MEMBER

2021 OUTDOOR FESTIVAL SEASON BY THE NUMBERS

5,373 *tickets sold*

19
performances

260

seats in our outdoor "theater"

0

number of times we were rained out!

2021 **GERDINE**

At Opera Theatre, we are committed to nurturing the artists, artisans, and administrators of the future. The Mabel Dorn Reeder Foundation Young Artist Education & Development Programs help aspiring opera professionals develop their skills and fuel their creativity. OTSL is a top destination for young people to learn and grow through the power of art.

YOUNG ARTISTS















Ryan Bryce

Johnson







Evan

Lazdowski



 $-advancing\ the\$ next generation of opera



Rob

2021 GERDINE YOUNG ARTISTS



Avery **Boettcher**

Terrence Chin-Loy

Helen Zhibing Huang

Andrew René

Chance

Jonas-O'Toole

Lindsey Reynolds

Tesia

Kwarteng

Angel Riley

Moisés Salazar

15



Ganson

Salmon

Schyler **Vargas**

Kyle Miller

Bianca Orsi

Geoffrey Peterson

Meridian Prall

advancing the NEXT GENERATION OF OPERA

Our Gerdine Young Artist (GYA) and Gaddes Festival Artist (GFA) programs allow early career singers to take their talents to the next level while gaining important professional experience. Members have an opportunity to perform, learn from established instructors, and collaborate with peers.



of Belleville, IL graduated from the Bayer Fund Artists-in-Training Program (AIT) in 2014 and became a GYA in 2021. She

performed in *I Dream a World*, the chorus of *Highway 1, U.S.A.*, and sang the role of Mabel for the Opera on the GO! digital presentation of *The Pirates of Penzance*. Riley will return to OTSL in the 2022 Festival Season as Papagena in *The Magic Flute*.



Mezzo-soprano

■ MACK WOLZ
started with OTSL
during their senior
year at Eureka
High School.
After joining
AIT, Wolz was

awarded GYA and GFA positions, and won the Metropolitan Opera Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition in 2019. Wolz appeared as Amore in *The Coronation of Poppea* (2019), and their first principal role with OTSL was in *On the Edge*, one of this season's *New Works*, *Bold Voices Lab* commissions. They will join us once again in 2022 as Anne Kronenberg in *Harvey Milk*.



JERMAINE SMITH, a member of our very first AIT class in 1990 and a former GYA, is now an integral part of our community. With his AIT scholarship

winnings, he became the first in his family to attend and graduate from college. Smith is now paying it forward as a teaching artist for our Arts Intensives at Sumner High School. Smith's work was so impressive that St. Louis Public Schools hired him to lead the district's Arts Pathway Program. He also sang the role of Gherardo in *Gianni Schicchi* during the 2021 Festival Season.

We could not be happier that our programs for young artists have had such an impact!

- advancing the NEXT GENERATION OF OPERA BUILDING FOR BRIGHT FUTURES

It's important for young people to know about the variety of careers available to them in the arts world, both on and off the stage.

The Emerson Behind the Curtain Program and Browning Technical Fellowship give an opportunity for students interested in stagecraft to learn and hone their skills in a professional environment.

In 2021, we awarded scholarships totaling \$10,500 to outstanding students in our technical training programs.

EMERSON SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Vanessa Tabourne, Costume Shop Assistant – Vanessa will be designing costumes and stage managing for Shakespeare in the Park in summer 2022.

Robert Julga, Deck Crew – Robert is continuing his studies at Webster University and plans to join the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees union (IATSE) to work professionally after he graduates in 2024.

Gabriella Buchholz, Props Crew – Gabriella aspires to be a prop master following graduation from Lindenwood University in 2023.

Audrey DeHaan, Prop Shop – Audrey worked at Virginia Opera in summer 2021, using her sewing and resin fabricating skills.



GOLDBURG TECHNICAL SCHOLARSHIP

Savannah Gipson, Audio Crew – Savannah managed the sound board for *Center Stage* and hopes to join IATSE and continue her work in audio.

BROWNING FELLOW CAREER GRANT AWARD

Alycia Martin, COVID Protocol Manager – Alycia made sure that all COVID safety procedures were followed properly. She now works as an Assistant Stage Manager for Chicago Opera Theater.

ARTISTIC EDUCATION in focus

OPERA ON THE GO

Our digital presentation of *The Pirates of Penzance* was viewed by:

87,318 students

across 488 schools

in all **50** states

on **5** continents

in **10** countries

(Canada, Germany, China, Guyana, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Singapore, South Africa, England, and Spain)

our teaching artists made

62 virtual classroom visits

That is more than ten times the usual reach of the program before 2020!



In 2021, we continued our education programming virtually.

Thousands of K-12 students in St. Louis and beyond streamed our digital content and took part in interactive lessons online through programs such as our Virtual Opera Camp for Kids.

Despite the separation, our education programs connected more kids and families to opera than ever before!

BAYER FUND ARTISTS-IN-TRAINING PROGRAM

23 high school students received training and mentoring from local voice teachers and participated in master classes with acclaimed opera singers Kevin Short and Nicole Cabell.

VIRTUAL SPRING BREAK OPERA CAMP

After viewing *The Pirates* of *Penzance*, campers wrote, composed, designed, directed, and starred in their own original opera scene with guidance from OTSL teaching artists.

MUSIC! WORDS! OPERA! FOR EDUCATORS

 $advancing\ the\ { t NEXT}\ { t GENERATION}\ { t OF}\ { t OPERA}$

In collaboration with Central City Opera, teachers from six states participated in a virtual training workshop. They created original operatic pieces, learning how to facilitate the creation and production process for their students.

TRAILBLAZERS IN OPERA

This new interactive lesson series spotlights accomplished Black artists from opera's past and present, and serves as an entry point to an artform that many students may never have explored on their own. Students learned about such luminaries as Marian Anderson, Sissieretta Jones, and the Hyers Sisters.

expanding our commitment to equity -

In 2021, Opera Theatre undertook a thorough assessment of our policies and practices around equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Following an industry-wide re-evaluation of opera's responsibility after several troubling, national incidents of racial injustice the previous year, it was more important than ever to understand OTSL's progress towards ensuring equity in our company. We conducted an audit of our work through surveys, data analysis, and in-depth interviews with 230 constituents inside and outside of OTSL.

KEY LEARNINGS

- > 7.5% of creative leadership since 2015 have been BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color)
- ▶ 20% of our Board and 6% our Executive Committee identified as BIPOC
- Only 10% of our staff perceived racial and cultural equity amongst staff

FROM OUR FINDINGS, WE HAVE CREATED A PLAN OF ACTION AND IMPLEMENTED MEASURES TO MOVE FORWARD.

- We have formed a standing Board-level EDI Committee comprised of Board, staff, and artists
- All annual staff participated in a series of EDI training sessions with World Trust
- Every company member of the 2021 Festival Season completed anti-discrimination and anti-harassment training
- We held a two-day symposium, "Belonging in Opera: Learning from our Past, Engaging with our Future," led by Dr. Naomi André and presented in partnership with Washington University's Center for Study of Race, Ethnicity, and Equity
- Working with Racial Equity Consultant Dr. Derrell Acon, the EDI Committee began developing a robust institutional EDI plan, including metrics for measuring progress and methods of reporting to hold ourselves accountable to this work moving forward

OTSL has made important progress, but we know there is still work to be done to truly foster EDI principles at every level of our company.



The Clayco Future Leaders Fellowship has a crucial purpose: to cultivate leaders in arts administration from backgrounds typically underrepresented in the field, in particular those who identify as BIPOC.

In 2021, OTSL welcomed our first class of Fellows as members of our annual team. While the purpose of the program was for them to gain new skills, we learned just as much (if not more) from them. These Fellows brought invaluable perspectives to our daily work, long-term strategic planning, and our Outdoor Festival Season. At the conclusion of their fellowships, they all moved on to bright futures at other companies across the arts world.



Lyanne Alvarado.

Administration Fellow, went on to a role at Houston Grand Opera (HGO), served as Artistic Apprentice for The Glimmerglass Festival, and was recently named Assistant Manager of Rehearsal Planning and Artist Services at HGO.

21

Chandler Johnson.

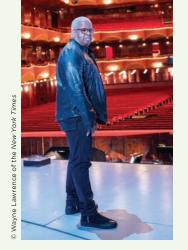
Artistic Fellow, went on to roles with LA Opera and Santa Fe Opera. He was recently named Artistic & Casting Associate with the Santa Fe Opera.

Quentin Beverly,

Advancement Fellow, graduated with a Master's in Arts Administration in May 2022. He continued with OTSL as the Institutional Giving Assistant and is now the Sustainable Programs Manager at the Harmony Project in Indianapolis.

FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES at the Met





One of our proudest moments this year was the success of *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* at the Metropolitan Opera. The opera was commissioned from composer Terence Blanchard and librettist Kasi Lemmons by Opera Theatre and co-commissioned by Jazz St. Louis as a part of OTSL's New Works, Bold Voices series. Following its much-lauded world premiere at OTSL in 2019, the Met selected *Fire* to open its 2021–22 season, the first production to grace the Met's stage after a 19-month shutdown due to COVID-19. Opera Theatre's Artistic Director James Robinson played a pivotal role in *Fire*'s success, workshopping the opera's development, directing OTSL's production, and co-directing the Met's expanded performing version.

The production was the first opera by a Black composer to be staged at the Met in its 138-year history, a long-overdue debut. It is our hope that this is just the first in a long line of works by Black artists to take the spotlight, not just at the Met, but across the world of opera. As Blanchard stated, "The key to all this for me is, I don't want to be the token. I want to be the turnkey."

23

To mark the occasion, Opera Theatre staff and patrons traveled to watch the premiere in New York. It was truly thrilling to witness the opera performed on such a grand scale, and we look forward to seeing it at Lyric Opera of Chicago in spring 2022. OTSL has received tremendous industry accolades for our role in bringing this powerful tale to the stage. We are grateful to be a part of such a momentous event in opera history.



Former Gerdine Young Artist Terrence Chin-Loy (far left) made his Met stage debut in Fire Shut Up in My Bones.

FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION*

ASSETS

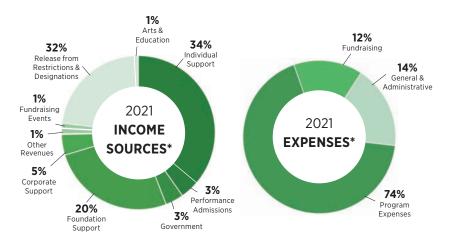
ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$3,808,306
Investments	\$97,904,291
Contributions receivable, net	\$2,637,199
Bequests receivable, net	\$1,045,000
Notes and other receivables	\$641,122
Beneficial interest in lead trust	\$445,318
Prepaid expenses	\$643,895
Right of use asset - operating lease, net	\$643,582
Facilities and equipment, net	\$3,684,433
Total assets	\$111,453,146

LIABILITIES

LIADILITIES	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$377,937
Box office liability	\$87,038
Deferred revenue	\$497,948
Annuity liability	\$27,876
Operating lease liability	\$737,543
Notes payable	
Total Liabilities	\$1,728,342

NET ASSETS

Total liabilities and net assets	A
Total net assets	\$109,724,804
With donor restrictions	\$99,039,426
Without donor restrictions	\$10,685,378



*As of September 30, 2021

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES*

REVENUES AND SUPPORT	w/o Donor Restrictions	w/Donor	Total
		Restrictions	
Grants, contributions, and bequests	\$4,634,620	\$1,098,692	\$5,733,312
Performance admissions	\$211,838	0	\$211,838
Benefits	\$17,734	0	\$17,734
Program advertising	\$7,325	0	\$7,325
Rentals and other activities	\$110,329	\$1,401	\$111,730
Change in value of split interest agreements	\$561	(\$3,421)	(\$2,860)
Net assets released from restrictions	\$3,238,688	(\$3,238,688)	0
Total Operating Revenue and Support	\$8,221,095	(\$2,142,016)	\$6,079,079
EXPENSES			
Program services	\$6,465,106		\$6,465,106
General and administrative	\$1,223,222		\$1,223,222
Fundraising	\$1,098,064		\$1,098,064
Total Expenses	\$8,786,392		\$8,786,392
NON-OPERATING REVENUE & EXPENSES			
Employee Retention Credit	\$468,316		\$468,316
Paycheck Protection Program forgiveness	\$875,690		\$875,690
Investment return, net	(\$32,284)	\$16,685,534	\$16,653,250
Total non-operating revenue & expenses	\$1,311,722	\$16,685,534	\$17,997,256
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$746,425	\$14,543,518	\$15,289,943

*As of September 30, 2021

2021 PATRONS AND FRIENDS OF THE FESTIVAL

This list represents all contributions of \$1,000 or more made to the Annual Fund in fiscal year 2021 (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021). We are deeply grateful to our donors at all levels — and to those who have supported capital and endowment projects — and we regret that we do not have the space to recognize all donors here.

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE: \$100,000+

Anonymous Donors (3)

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Foundation

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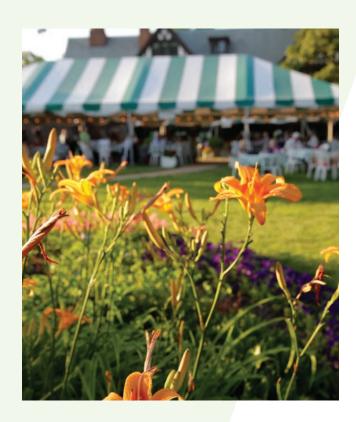
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