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Kari Turunen
CONDUCTOR



2021 / 22 SEASON

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VANCOUVER CHAMBER CHOIR

Artistic Director Kari Turunen began leading the Vancouver Chamber Choir - one of Canada's premier professional choral ensembles - in September 2019, its 49th concert season.

Jon Washburn founded the choir in 1971 and it has become

an amazing success story, ranking with the handful of North America's best professional choruses and noted for its diverse repertoire and performing excellence. The choir has presented concerts at home in Vancouver and on tour across Canada. International excursions have taken them to the USA, Mexico, Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Finland, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine.

Honoured with the Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence by Chorus America, the choir has performed countless concerts and broadcasts, released 36 recordings and received numerous awards. Foremost supporters of Canadian music, they are responsible for commissions and premieres of 334 choral works by 145 composers and arrangers, most of whom are Canadian. Over the years the choir has sung over 4,000 performances of works by Canadian composers, in addition to their extensive international repertoire.

The choir's award-winning educational programs include the *Conductors' Symposium* for advanced choral conductors, *Interplay* interactive workshops for choral composers, *Focus* professional development program for student singers, *OnSite* visitations for school choirs, the biennial *Young Composers Competition*, and many on-tour workshops and residencies.



KARI TURUNEN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The Vancouver Chamber Choir welcomed Kari Turunen in 2019 as its second-ever Artistic Director in 49 years. Prior to his arrival in Vancouver, Dr. Turunen was a versatile performer on the Finnish choral and vocal music scene. A former college-level teacher, he continues to be a full time conductor, clinician, adjudicator and lecturer in Vancouver, Finland and abroad.

As Artistic Director, he has led prominent Finnish choirs Akademiska Damkören Lyran (1998–2009), Akademiska Sångföreningen (2008–2019), Kampin Laulu chamber choir (2011–2019), the choir of the cantors of the Finnish Lutheran Church and Chorus Cantorum Finlandiae (2011–2019), Spira Ensemble (2012–2019), and the professional early music performers Ensemble Petraloysio and I Dodici, with which he continues to occasionally work. He has won numerous prizes at national and international festivals with his groups and was named choral conductor of the year in Finland in 2008.

Dr. Turunen is a founding member of Lumen Valo, a professional vocal ensemble of eight voices. Lumen Valo has been a driving force on the early music scene in Finland since its conception in 1993 and has made a name for itself in almost 250 concerts around Finland and Europe. The group has recorded nine CDs, all of them critically acclaimed for their fresh programming and quality of singing.

In addition to artistic activities, he has produced events as Artistic Director for the annual Aurore Renaissance Festival and the upcoming Finnish-Swedish Song Celebration in June 2021.

He was educated at the University of Helsinki and the Sibelius Academy where he studied choral conducting (MA). He holds a doctorate in early music performance practice from the University of the Arts, Helsinki.



The Vancouver Chamber Choir acknowledges that it operates and performs on the unceded Indigenous land belonging to the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səl̓ilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We are grateful for this privilege.

VANCOUVER
CHAMBER CHOIR

SOPRANOS

Emily M Cheung
Christina Cichos
Siri Olesen
Krista Pederson
Dolores Scott
Madeline Lucy Smith

ALTOS

Dinah Ayre
Tabitha Brasso-Ernst
Maria Golas
Britney Huynh
Fabiana Katz

TENORS

Eric Biskupski
Sam Dabrusin
Tom Ellis
Eric Schwarzhoff
Michael Stahl
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VANCOUVER CHAMBER CHOIR
KARI TURUNEN, CONDUCTOR

WASSAIL

Here are we in Bethlehem

Healey Willan
(1880-1968)

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

French, arr. Reginald Jacques
(1894-1969)

Krista Pederson and Dolores Scott, sopranos
Tabitha Brasso-Ernst, alto Sam Dabrusin, tenor

Jesus Christ the Apple Tree

Elizabeth Poston
(1905-1987)

Christina Cichos, soprano

Nova! nova!

Bob Chilcott
(b. 1955)

A spotless Rose

Becky McGlade
(b. 1974)

Away in a manger

Normandy tune, arr. Reginald Jacques

Now may we singen

Cecilia McDowall
(b. 1951)

The Three Kings

Healey Willan

INTERMISSION

A Boy was Born, Op. 3

Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

Theme: A Boy was Born
Variation I: Lullay, Jesu
Variation II: Herod
Variation III: Jesu, as Thou art our Saviour
Variation IV: The Three Kings
Variation V: In the Bleak Mid-winter
Variation VI (Finale): Noel!

Emily M Cheung, Christina Cichos and Siri Olesen, sopranos

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PROGRAM NOTES, TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

WASSAIL

I have long likened Christmas concerts to nativity scenes: the subject matter is familiar, but you never quite know what and who you will find gathered around the manger. At times, it is a very disciplined showing with only the usual suspects present, but in other cases, you might find the supporting cast as surprising as some of the Christmas light scenes in the front yards of Vancouver's residential areas. I like to approach Christmas concerts a little like the exhortation in our very first song: "Here are we in Bethlehem; There the stable door! Let us go and enter in." In this concert, beyond that door we find not only the child in a manger, but angels, Mary, the three kings, Herod, an apple tree, a falcon, and even a colourful Christmas setting of a 16th-century household. A special lighting is cast upon this motley crew by the abundance of medieval English texts.

Our Christmas concert this year is a very British affair. Even the Canadian great represented in the program, Healey Willan, was born and educated in England. The music covers just under a century, from the early 1930s to 2020. That said, there is plenty of diversity in the approach, style and choice of subject. Tradition is never lurking too far around the corner, even when the composers stretch the limits of the Christmas choral music idiom. With this concert we want to thank each and every one of you for your support of the choir during this difficult year and to wish you a wonderful holiday season and a truly Happy New Year!

HEALEY Willan

Here are we in Bethlehem

Before he emigrated to Canada in his early 30s, Healey Willan had been part of a movement that wanted to revive Gregorian chant. His love for chant is often audible in his choral works. *Here are we in Bethlehem* is a case in point: it has no set rhythmical meter, and the freely flowing music has a clearly modal flavour to it. The repetition of "Mary still is poor" at the very end is intriguing.

Here are we in Bethlehem;
There the stable door!
Let us go and enter in,
Mary's Babe adore.

See the Kings who come from far,
Bearing myrrh and gold,
Frankincense to offer him,
Treasure manifold.

Take we gifts as well as these,
At his feet to lay:
Clothes to shield him from the cold,
Toys that he may play.

For a baby still is he,
Mary still is poor.
Here are we in Bethlehem,
There the stable door.

(F. J. Moore)

French, arr. Reginald Jacques

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

The poem *Angels, from the Realms of Glory* is by Scottish poet James Montgomery and was first published in 1816. It was sung to many different melodies before the Oxford Book of Carols, published in 1928, attached it to the old French tune we now associate with the poem. The arrangement heard in this concert is by Reginald Jacques, an English conductor and arranger, and it was published in the 1960s.

Angels from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds in the field abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night:
God with us is now residing;
yonder shines the infant light.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations;
ye have seen his natal star.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Saints, before the altar bending,
watching long in hope and fear,
suddenly the Lord, descending,
in his temple shall appear.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Though an infant now we view him,
he shall fill his Father's throne,
gather all the nations to him;
every knee shall then bow down.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

(James Montgomery, 1816)

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Elizabeth Poston
Jesus Christ the Apple Tree

Jesus Christ the Apple Tree is a brilliant example of the depth of Christmas traditions. The poem itself is from the mid-1700s, probably by an otherwise little-known Rev. Richard Hutchins. The text appeared in hymnals in different melodic forms from the 18th century and several composers have later set it to music. The best known of these is this setting by Elizabeth Poston from 1967. The sparse, but warm composition gives the poem ample room. The apple tree metaphor could be a reference to some biblical passages (especially from the Song of Songs), but it might also arise from the wassailing tradition, in which both households and apple trees were wished well for the coming year on Christmas Eve.

The tree of life my soul hath seen,
Laden with fruit, and always green:
The trees of nature fruitless be
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel:
By faith I know, but ne'er can tell
The glory which I now can see
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought,
And pleasure dearly I have bought:
I missed of all; but now I see
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.

I'm weary with my former toil,
Here I will sit and rest awhile:
Under the shadow I will be
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,
It keeps my dying faith alive;
Which makes my soul in haste to be
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.

(Divine Hymns or Spiritual Songs, 1784)

Bob Chilcott
Nova! Nova!

Bob Chilcott made a name for himself as a tenor in the King's Singers, for whom he also arranged and wrote music. Since then, he has become a very popular choral composer who has a knack for writing accessible but rewarding music. *Nova! nova!* was written for the Bach Choir of London in celebration of the 80th birthday of Sir David Willcocks in 1999. It is set to a 15th-century poem that recounts the Annunciation and Mary's reaction to it. The work is snappy and energetic, built on ever-changing meters and bouncy rhythms.

Nova! nova! 'Ave' fit ex 'Eva'.
[The angelic greeting 'Ave' annuls the sin of Eve]

Gabriel of high degree,
he came down from Trinity
to Nazareth in Galilee.

He met a maiden in a place,
he kneeled down afore her face.
He said: 'Hail, Mary, full of grace!'

When the maid heard tell of this
she was full sore abashed *iwy* [surely]
and *wened* that she had done amiss. [feared]

Then said the angel: 'Dread not you;
you shall conceive in all virtue
a child whose name shall be Jesu'.
It is not yet six months ago
since Elizabeth conceived John,
as it was prophesied before.

Then said the maiden verily:
'I am your servant right truly.
Ecce ancilla Domini?' [I am a servant of the Lord]
(15th-century English)

thank
you

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of our performances.

Becky McGlade
A spotless Rose

Becky McGlade is an English composer and cellist who has begun making a name for herself as an interesting choral composer. The poem of *A spotless Rose* is the German 15th-century *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen*. The music reflects the medieval text in its duets, open intervals and harmonic restraint.

A spotless Rose is blowing,
Sprung from a tender root,
Of ancient seers' foreshowing,
Of Jesse promised fruit;
Its fairest bud unfolds to light
Amid the cold cold winter
And in the dark midnight.

The Rose which I am singing,
Whereof Isaiah said,
Is from its sweet root springing
In Mary, purest Maid;
For through our God's great love and might,
The Blessed Babe she bare us
In a cold, cold winter's night.

(15th-century German, translated by Catherine Winkworth)

Normandy tune,
arr. Reginald Jacques
Away in a manger

The text of *Away in a manger* appears for the first time in an American journal in 1882. It claims that the poem was originally written by Martin Luther, but the common consensus now is that the poem is of American origin. It has been sung to many melodies. Reginald Jacques' arrangement uses the 'Carl Mueller' melody that first appeared in 1887. The arrangement is a simple harmonization, but a handful of beautifully prepared dissonances make it memorable.

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven, to live with Thee there.

(Anonymous)

Cecilia McDowall
Now may we singen

Cecilia McDowall is one of the finest English composers of choral music. Her *Now may we singen* is, yet again, set to a 15th-century text combining English and Latin. The music is playful, changing rhythmic tack all the while. The drone notes and the parallel fourths and fifths make joyful reference to the origin period of the text.

This Babe to us that now is born,
Wonderful works He hath *ywrought*, [made]
He would not loss what was forlorn,
But boldly again it brought;

And thus it is, *Forsooth ywis* [in truth indeed]
He asketh nought but that is His.
Now may we singen as it is.
Quod puer natus est nobis. [For a Son is unto us born]

This bargain loved He right well,
The price was high and bought full dear.
Who would suffer and for us feel,
As did that Prince withouten peer?

(And thus it is...)

His ransom for us hath ypaid;
Good reason have we to be His.
Be mercy asked and He be prayed,
Who may deserve the heavenly bliss.

(And thus it is...)

To some purpose God made man;
I trust well to salvation.
What was his blood that from him ran,
But fence against damnation?

(And thus it is...)

Almighty God in Trinity,
Thy mercy we pray with whole heart,
Thy mercy may all woe make fell
And dangerous dread from us to start.

(And thus it is...)

Healey Willan
The Three Kings

The magi finally make an appearance in Willan's *The Three Kings*. The poem is by Laurence Housman, writer, illustrator and activist of the Victorian era. Willan tells the lovely little story by juxtaposing the high and low voices before a full, flowing central passage that takes us to a beautiful, calm ending.

'Who knocks tonight so late?'
the weary porter said.
Three Kings stood at the gate,
each with a crown on head.

The serving man bowed down,
the inn was full, he knew.
Said he, 'In all this town
is no fit place for you!'

A light the manger lit;
there lay the Mother meek.
Said they, 'This place is fit:
Here is the rest we seek!'

They loosed their latchet strings;
so stood they all unshod.
Come in, come in, ye kings,
and kiss the feet of God.

(Laurence Housman)

INTERMISSION

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The Christmas Recordings

- ❖ **A Dylan Thomas Christmas** * The Vancouver Chamber Choir's signature performance of *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, read by Welsh actor Russell Roberts with special carol settings by Jon Washburn.
- ❖ **A World Christmas** Carols and seasonal songs of many lands from guitarist and arranger Ed Henderson, the Worldfest Ensemble and the Vancouver Chamber Choir with Jon Washburn conducting.
- ❖ **The Miracle of Christmas** Christmas music with a colourful Central and South American flavour played by the ensemble Ancient Cultures with several tracks featuring the Vancouver Chamber Choir.

Benjamin Britten
A Boy was Born, Op. 3

Benjamin Britten composed *A Boy was Born* at the tender age of 19, whilst still a student at the Royal College of Music. It was first performed live on radio by the Wireless Chorus in February 1934. This 30-minute work is a series of variations on four notes heard immediately at the beginning (D-E-G-E). Britten's writing is instrumental, virtuosic, and wonderfully varied. It beggars belief that a 19-year-old would have the technical skills to pull off a work of this scale and ambition. Yet the most wonderful thing about *A Boy was Born* is not how skilled it is, but how full of emotion it is from heartbreaking beauty to rage and suspended tension to ecstatic climax.

The Theme is a simple choral setting that is followed by Variation 1, a dialogue between Mary (choir) and Jesus (soloist). Mary's rocking of the child is depicted with a falling motive ("Lullay"), while the child comforts the mother despite painting the picture of future woes to come. Variation 2 recounts the flight to Egypt and the slaying of innocent children. The tenors and basses tell the terrible story in twitching rhythms and melodies that distort the original theme. Variation 3 is scored for semi-chorus and soprano soloist. The static texture of the semi-chorus is punctuated four times by the soloist reaching for the heights.

Variation 4 paints a picture of the magi approaching Bethlehem. A constant, wordless figure moving from one voice to another creates a feeling of movement and the story is told in open, broad intervals. Variation 5 is scored for sopranos, altos and soloist. The choral texture is depictive and especially the falling snow is captured in a memorable way. The soloist sings an old, folk-like carol.

Variation 6 (Finale) is built of four sections: it begins with a jubilant, strengthening passage that plays with very few words ("Noel! Wassail! Good day, Sir Christēmas!"). In the second section the choir brings a bubbling domestic Christmas scene in front of our eyes while the soloist introduces the theme that will, in time, dominate proceedings. After a frenetic ending to the section, we move to a becalmed world during which we hear all the themes of work thus far almost as reflections from the past in the solo part. Out of this static world grows the last section, in which the chorale-like melody revealed earlier takes precedence and leads us to a broad and rousing ending.

Theme: A Boy was Born

A Boy was born in Bethlehem;
Rejoice for that, Jerusalem!
Alleluya.

He let himself a servant be,
That all mankind he might set free:
Alleluya.

Then praise the Word of God who came
to dwell within a human frame:
Alleluya.

(16th-century German, translated by N.S.T.)

Variation I: Lullay, Jesu

Mine own dear mother, sing lullay!
Lullay, Jesu, lullay, lullay!
Mine own dear mother, sing lullay!

So blessed a sight it was to see,
How Mary rocked her Son so free;
So fair she rocked and sang 'by-by'.

'Mine own dear son, why weepest Thou thus?
Is not Thy Father King of bliss?
Have I not done that in me is?
Your grievance, tell me what it is.'

'Therefore, mother weep I nought,
But for the woe that shall be wrought
To me, ere I mankind have bought.'

'Ah, dear mother! yet shall a spear
My heart in sunder all to-tear;
No wonder though I careful were.'

'Now, dear mother, sing lullay,
And put away all heaviness;
Into this world I took the way,
Again to (heaven) I shall me dress,
Where joy is without end ay,
Mine own dear mother, sing lullay!
Lullay, Jesu, lullay, lullay!
Mine own dear mother, sing lullay!

(Anonymous, before 1536)

Variation II: Herod

Noel!

Herod that was both wild and *wode*, [mad]
Full much he shed of Christian blood,
To slay the Child so meek of mood,
That Mary bare, that clean *may*. [maid]

Herod slew with pride and sin,
Thousands of two year and within;
The body of Christ he thought to win
And to destroy the Christian *fay*. [faith]

Mary with Jesu forth *yfraught*, [laden]
As the angel her taught,
To flee the land till it were sought,
To Egypt she took her way.

Now Jesus that didst die for us on the Rood,
And didst christen innocents in their blood,
By the prayer of Thy mother good,
Bring us to bliss that lasteth ay.

(Anonymous, 15th century)

Variation III: Jesu, as Thou art our Saviour

*Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, Jesu,
Save us all through Thy virtue.*

Jesu, as Thou art our Saviour
That Thou save us fro dolour!
Jesu is mine paramour.
Blessed be Thy name, Jesu.

Jesu was born of a may,
Upon Christēmas Day,
She was may befor and ay,
Blessed be Thy name, Jesu.

(Anonymous, 15th century)

Variation IV: The Three Kings

There came three kings from Galilee
Into Bethlehem, that fair city,
To seek Him that should ever be
by right-a,
Lord and king and knight-a.

They took their leave, both old and ying,
Of Herod, that moody king;
They went forth with their offering
by light-a,
By the star that shone so bright-a.

Till they came into the place
Where Jesus and His mother was,
Offered they up with great solace
in fere-a [together]
Gold, incense, and myrrh-a.

Forth then went these kinges three,
Till they came home to their country;
Glad and blithe they were all three
Of the sight that they had see
bydene-a. [together]
(Anonymous, 15th century)

Variation V: In the Bleak Mid-winter

In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan;
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.
(Christina G. Rossetti)

*Lully, lulley, lully, lulley,
The falcon hath borne my make away.*

He bare him up, he bare him down,
He bare him into an orchard brown.

In that orchard there was an hall
That was hangēd with purple and pall.

And in that hall there was a bed,
It was hangēd with gold so red.

In that bed there lieth a knight,
His woundēs bleeding, day and night.

By that bedside kneeleth a may,
And she weepeth both night and day.

And by that bedside there standeth a stone,
Corpus Christi written thereon.
(Anonymous, 15th century)

Variation VI (Finale): Noel!

Noel! Wassail!

*Good day, good day,
My Lord Sir Christēmas, good day!*

*Good day, Sir Christēmas our King,
For every man, both old and ying,
Is glad of your coming.
Good day.*

*Godēs Son so much of might
From heaven to earth down is light
And born is of a maid so bright.
Good day.*

*Noel! Our King!
Hosanna!
This night a Child is born.*

(Anonymous, 15th century)

*Get ivy and hull, woman, deck up thine house,
And take this same brawn for to see the and to souse;
Provide us good cheer, for thou knowest the old guise,
Old customs that good be, let no man despise.
At Christmas be merry and thank God of all,
And feast thy poor neighbours, the great and the small.
Yea, all the year long have an eye to the poor,
And God shall send luck to keep open thy door.
Good fruit and good plenty do well in thy loft,
Then lay for an orchard and cherish it oft.
The profit is mickle, the pleasure is much;
At pleasure with profit few wise men will grutch.
For plants and for stocks lay aforehand to cast,
But set or remove them, while Twelve-tide do last.*

(Thomas Tusser, 16th century)

*Welcome be Thou, heaven-king,
Welcome born in one morning,
Welcome for whom we shall sing
Welcome Yule.*

*Welcome be ye that are here,
Welcome all, and make good cheer,
Welcome all another year!
Welcome Yule.*

(Anonymous, 15th century)

*Glory to God on high, and jolly mirth,
‘Twixt man and man, and peace on earth!*

*Wassail, Wassail!...
Lully, lullely, lully, lullely,...*

*Noel! Noel!...
Herod that was so wild and wode.*

*Mine own dear mother...
Jesu, Jesu!...*

*This night a Child is born;
This night a Son is given;
This son, this Child
Hath reconciled
Poor man that was forlorn,
And the angry God of heaven.
Hosanna, sing Hosanna!*

*Now, now that joyful day,
That blessed hour is come,
That was foretold
In days of old,
Wherein all nations may
Bless, bless the virgin's womb.
Hosanna, sing Hosanna!*

*Let heaven triumph above,
Let earth rejoice below;
Let heaven and earth
Be filled with mirth,
For peace and lasting love
Atones your God and you.
Hosanna, sing Hosanna!*

(Francis Quarles, 17th century)



**Vancouver Chamber Choir
voted
Best Classical Vocal Ensemble**

W I T H O U R T H A N K S

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this spring!

Kari Turunen
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

2022 SPRING SEASON

明月



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MOON

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Saturday, Jan. 29 at 7:30pm at Fraserview Church



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2021 / 22 SEASON

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DIXIT
DOMINUS



2021 / 22 SEASON

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at the Orpheum Theatre



2021 / 22 SEASON

Friday, Apr. 22 at 7:30pm
at St. Andrew's-Wesley United Church

NORDIC
SOUNDS

2021 / 22 SEASON

Friday, May 13 at 7:30pm
at Pacific Spirit United Church

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