

GUILD NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF OXFORD THEATRE GUILD



May 2005
60p (.90 Euro) where sold



OXFORD THEATRE GUILD
50th ANNIVERSARY PRODUCTION
THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

19 - 30 JULY 2005,
MERTON COLLEGE FELLOWS' GARDEN

Rehearsals are well underway for Merry Wives and great fun is being had by all. The play gets better and better with each reading - the cast are all bringing out nuances they never knew possible! It promises to be an absolute riot.

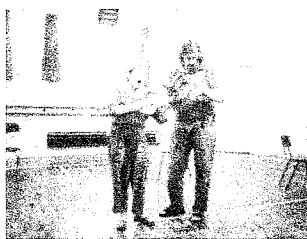
Thanks to all who came along to the auditions. All directors say this, but it was a tricky casting process. If only Shakespeare had written more roles for women - there is so much talent out there. The cast list is as follows:

Sir John Falstaff - Peter Mottley
Fenton - (Kane Sharpe)
Shallow - Kevin Elliott
Slender - Christopher Outen
Ford - Tim Younger
Page - Tim Eyres
William Page - Max Dorey (also playing Robin)
Sir Hugh Evans - Michael Ward
Doctor Caius - Colin Burnie

Host of the Garter Inn - Michael Dacre
Bardolph - Marco Ward
Pistol - Michael Curran (also playing Rugby)
Nim - Steve Wright (also playing Robert)
Simple - (tbc)
Mistress Ford - Meriel Patrick
Mistress Page - Alex Reid
Anne Page - Susanne Sheehy
Mistress Quickly - Barbara Denton



Working hard in the rehearsals



By the time we get to July, we promise you a night to remember - full of music, mirth and merriment. A fitting tribute to fifty years of Guild excellence.

Simon Tavener (Director)

If you are interested in getting involved with the production side of things - set-building, publicity, props, costumes, make-up - please get in touch with Gareth Morris, Stage Manager (gareth.morris@oxfordtheatreguild.com, 01865 873882). I am certain that he will be delighted to hear from you.

Booking opens in early June - tickets will be available from Tickets Oxford
(01865 305305, www.ticketsoxford.com) priced £10 & £14

50th Anniversary Launch Party



Over 60 guests gathered in the TOP room at the Oxford Playhouse on 3 May to celebrate the start of the 50th anniversary season of Oxford Theatre Guild.

They included past Chairs of the Guild, past Directors, early members who could be traced and current Committee, as well as some representatives from the Oxford drama and cultural scene such as David Parish, Artistic Director of Creation Theatre, Rupert Rowbotham, Education Director for Oxford Playhouse, Professor Graham Upton, Chair of the Oxford Playhouse Board of Directors, and members of Oxfordshire Drama Network's committee.

Thanks to the 50th anniversary Committee, especially Felicity Peacock, Sheila McKean and Tim Eyres, for organising the event. (Photos by Felicity)



(left) Founding director Daphne Levens talks to Prof Graham Upton

(below) OTG Directors Belinda Beasley, Jenny Wiles, Polly Mountain and Georgina Ferry



(above) Speech by David Long, current Chair OTG

(right) Phil Allen, June & Gerry Warner, Mary and Ian Walker (all members from the first years)



The Seagull

Oxford Playhouse

3 - 7 May 2005

Reviews and Production Pictures

Oxford Times

'Pull yourself together!' If used to be a phrase uttered by doctors and schoolteachers when you felt depressed. Singularly ineffective as a form of pick-me-up it was too. But nonetheless 'pull yourself together' is a phrase that can come to mind when you meet the characters contained in Chekhov's play *The Seagull*, which Oxford Theatre Guild presents at the Playhouse this week.

There is elderly Sorin, who constantly bemoans the fact that he has never married, or risen above the lowest ranks of the civil service. But why not? He is obviously intelligent, and still looks handsome, so you can't help feeling that he has simply never put any effort into achieving his ambitions. Then there's Konstantin: "I've no talents, and no money," he wails. He even botches his first attempt at committing suicide. The message comes through loud and clear: Chekhov strongly believed that every individual's responsibility is to change and to improve their own life.

"There's nothing to do in the country," is another of Konstantin's whinges. So he writes a monologue, which is declaimed from a makeshift stage by Nina, an aspiring actress. Needless to say, the occasion is a disaster - although it should be an entertaining disaster, for here Chekhov is surely poking fun at over-earnest theatrical performances.

Fun? Argument has long raged about whether *The Seagull* is a comedy or a tragedy. Chekhov himself called it a comedy. In this production, Polly Mountain slightly sits on the fence by letting the humour filter through gently - for instance, she resists the temptation to ham up the theatre scene with extravagant hand gestures, or voices quivering with emotion. She takes much the same approach with the character of Arkadina (Cathy Oakes), an actress of indeterminate vintage, who hasn't worked for years. Apart from the occasional tantrum, this Arkadina is rather understated, you'd hardly know she was ever on the stage. She must have

been a big star once, for (in another Chekhovian dig at the theatrical profession) she is notoriously mean with her considerable fortune.

Elsewhere, *The Seagull* provides plenty of opportunities for vivid characterisation, which are eagerly seized by the Theatre Guild cast. Kane Sharpe is suitably tortured as Konstantin, and Colin Burnie declaims Sorin's lifelong woes in sonorous tones. Nina Lucy Wylde and Jamie Gaw are nicely contrasted as Nina a young actress who wants to achieve something with her life, and Masha, a girl who finds most things a tense challenge. Hovering around, rather like leeches, are Sorin's barely honest steward (rumbustious David Guthrie), ne'er do well novelist Trigorin (Simon Vail), and complaisant doctor (Nick Quartley).

Perhaps the fact that the real tragedy can come out of strong comedy could have been a little more emphasised, but nonetheless this production constitutes a strong state to this, the Theatre Guild's 50th anniversary year.

Giles Woodforde

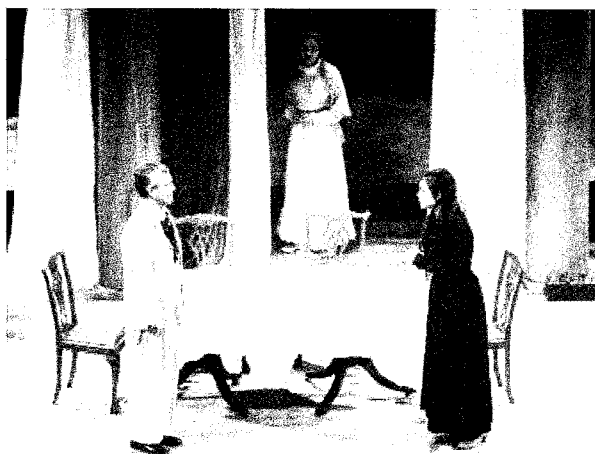
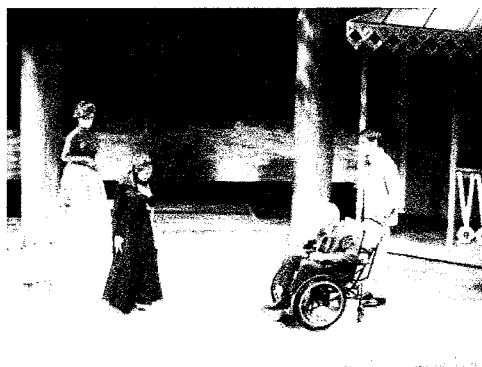
Daily Information

Chekhov himself described this play as a comedy in four acts. Since then, however, there has been some debate over to what extent this play is a comedy or a tragedy. This production seemed to place more emphasis on the comic elements of the play and generated more than a few laughs from the audience - often from the melodramatic actress, Arkadina, played brilliantly by Cathy Oakes, and her brother, the ageing Sorin (Colin Burnie).

The story centres around Konstantin, the frustrated writer who stages a play in the first act which stars Nina, the beautiful aspiring actress, and love of Konstantin's life. The play is not greatly received, and Nina, who is at first enamoured with Konstantin, turns her affections towards Trigorin, his mother's lover. Konstantin is increasingly devastated. He leaves the house and returns with a seagull that he has shot and

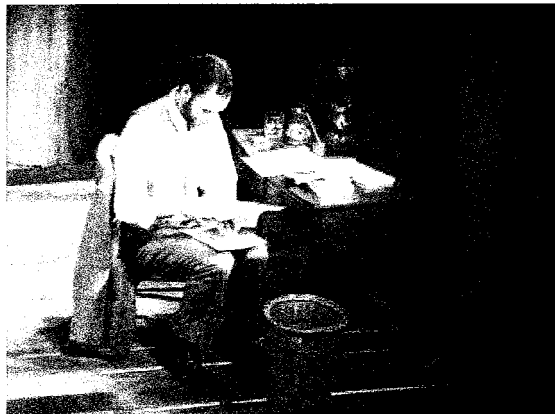
presents it to her. Nina is confused by his actions and presumes that the seagull is a symbol of something she can't understand; and this is where their relationship ends. Later in the play when Konstantin's writing begins

to be published and his career ensues, he still mourns the loss of his Nina. His melancholy seems to be reflected in his work which is continually noted for its lack of "any living thing" and is described by Trigorin as being "formless". At this point, we wonder if the shooting of the seagull is almost like a sealing of his



fate; that some part of him died with the seagull - he cannot live either through Nina or through his lifeless work.

As the play continues it appears that most of the characters in some form can be related to the seagull. There is an overwhelming feeling of unrequited love and loss. Masha,



frustrated that her love for Konstantin isn't reciprocated, begins the play dressed in black "mourning for her life". Sorin, now old and partly crippled, mourns the fact that he hasn't achieved the two things he ever wanted in life; to be a "literary man", and to marry.

Medvedenko mourns his poverty, and finally Nina mourns her unsuccessful career and her love for Trigorin. When she returns to Konstantin at the end of the play it is not to rekindle their romance, but only to affirm her love for Trigorin who has since left her. She refers to herself as the seagull, drawing a parallel between Konstantin ending the life of the seagull, and Trigorin being the man responsible for ending her life as it once was.

The play closes with an awful tragedy. The finale was both powerful and emotional, a successful end to a very successful performance all round. Hugely enjoyable, this was a great play to celebrate 50 years of the Oxford Theatre Guild.

Chloe Anderson

BBC Oxford Online

Set on a late nineteenth-century Russian country estate, *The Seagull* tells the story of a group of characters whose lives are dominated and blighted by love and art. The central figure is Konstantin, son of the celebrated actress, Arkadina. He is in love with Nina, who herself dreams of a life on the stage. Trouble brews when Nina meets Arkadina's lover, the celebrated author Trigorin. The jaded writer and the spirited young girl fall for each other, with ultimately tragic consequences.

With delicacy and insight, the play develops a sad story of unrequited passion, melancholy and despair. There is little action, and much debate and soul-searching. Throughout the play, the characters discuss the exhilaration and agony of dramatic expression and literary creation. They also ponder the sadness of life: its unrealised dreams and frustrations. And above all they are concerned with the destructive force of love, which ruins the lives of those who cannot keep it at bay or uproot it.



While undoubtedly serious, the play is far from pretentious or depressing. There are plenty of comic touches (Chekhov himself described this apparently tragic work as a comedy) and the dialogue is witty, elegant and lyrical. The cast do a fine job. Kane Sharpe engages our sympathy as the troubled Konstantin. Cathy Oakes stands out as his self-centred but loving mother, constantly seeking attention with theatrical displays, and Nina Lucy Wylde is an excellent Nina, convincingly portraying the transformation of the spirited girl of the opening scenes into the confused but resilient woman of the final act.

This classic of the stage has been done justice by the Oxford Theatre Guild, making for a slightly sombre but thought provoking and highly enjoyable evening.

George Tew

Theatreworld Internet Magazine

The Oxford Theatre Guild celebrates fifty years of dramatic capering this week with a very solid production of Chekhov's *The Seagull*. The play centres on the unrequited love of several characters whose deepest desires are never fulfilled.

The action opens on Sorin's country estate in August. Near the moonlit lake at the edge of his property, his aimless and troubled, nephew Konstantin stages a play he has written. Konstantin's mother, Arkadina, a famous aging actress, is in the audience with her toy boy lover, Trigorin, a famous writer. Konstantin reveals his jealousy of Trigorin, not only for his success as a writer, but also for Arkadina's infatuation with him and his success. And so, our oedipal triangle is set up.

Trigorin, meanwhile, becomes infatuated with the object of Konstantin's affection, Nina, a budding young actress and star of Konstantin's play. She spurns Konstantin and follows Trigorin to Moscow where he destroys the innocence that so attracted him to her.

The juxtaposition of the idealism of the young couple, Nina and Konstantin, with the superficiality of the older couple, Arkadina and Trigorin, is the pivot around which the play turns.

Cathy Oakes really shines as the bombastic Arkadina, blustering, bustling and panting around the set in various stages of ennui. She is at times hilarious, and reminded me more than a little of Jennifer Saunders in

Absolutely Fabulous. Colin Burnie as the ageing and benevolent Sorin and Nick Quartley as the rational doctor were also completely convincing in their roles. The costumes and set were superbly thoughtful and worthy of any professional production.

Michelle Jordan

**Our grateful thanks go to the hardworking and talented Production Team
who helped make The Seagull the success it was:**

Director Polly Mountain
Stage manager Gareth Morris
Deputy stage managers Stephen Ashworth,
Max Dorey
Production management Janet Bolam, Tim
Eyres
Properties Chris Edwards, Diana Kilburn
Voice coaching Anita Wright
Lighting design David Long
Stage design Peter Ledwith, David Long,
Roberta Catizone
Set construction Brian Plater, David Long,
Steve Whitaker, Steve Wright, Louis Spiteri,
Max Dorey, Michael Ward, Ray Dennehey,
Michael Curran, Gareth Morris
Set painting and dressing Roberta Catizone,
Sandra Szasz, Frances Wells

Lights and sound David Long, Matt Boulton,
Jason Cowell, Costa Cambanakis, Greg Cebula
Flyman Brian Plater
Driver Stephen Ashworth
Costumes Catherine McNeill, Helen Wilcox
Costume assistance Sue Tibbles
Make-up Catherine McNeill, Helen Wilcox
Wigs Sheila Robbins
Musicians Glynne Butt (piano), Peter Willis
(baritone)
Sound effects and recording Bill Moulford
Poster design Joe Kenneway
Publicity co-ordinator Felicity Peacock
Publicity Kevin Elliot, Sophie Ruggiero
Photography Mark Brome, David Long
Programme Bill Moulford



Coming Soon to a theatre near you...

26 - 28 May: Didcot Phoenix Drama Group
presents **Cash on Delivery** by Michael Cooney at
Didcot Civic Hall. Tickets from 01235 210600.

26 - 28 May: Kennington amateur Dramatic Society
presents **A Supper Show** at Kennington Village
Centre. Tickets from 01865 736257.

1 - 4 June: Sinodun Players presents **Abigail's
Party** at the Corn Exchange, Wallingford.

5 - 11 June: **ODN Theatre Festival** at the Unicorn
Theatre, Abingdon.

29 June - 2 July: Old Gaol Theatre Company
presents **Humble Boy** by Charlotte Jones at the
Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon.

6 - 8 July: Domino Players presents **The Priest
Hole** by Peter Mottley at Wantage Parish Church.

6 - 9 July: Abingdon Drama Club presents **Les
Liaisons Dangereuses** by Christopher Hampton at
the Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon.

7 - 9 July: St Peter's Players presents **Anniversary
Supper Show** at Wolvercote Village hall.

19 - 30 July: Oxford Theatre Guild
presents **The Merry Wives of Windsor**
in the Fellows' Garden, Merton College.

19 - 31 July: Sinodun Players presents **Anne of
Green Gables** at the Corn Exchange, Wallingford.

20 - 23 July: Studio Theatre Club presents **Antony
and Cleopatra** at the Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon.



OUG&S Society Presents

ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD

By Jacques Offenbach (English Translation by Jeremy Sams)

Oxford Playhouse 1 - 4 June

Box Office: 01865 305305

www.oxfordplayhouse.com

Directed by Simon Tavener (of GN and Merry Wives fame)



50th Anniversary Events

In addition to the hugely successful launch party at the Playhouse (see page 2 for photographs), we have a wide range of other events to celebrate 50 years of the Guild:



Celebration Dinner on Saturday 21 May at Brookes Restaurant: over 40 past and current members are attending a sparkling event which includes champagne cocktails on arrival, a delicious dinner at this renowned venue, and ends with a unique entertainment provided by some of our most talented members, some of whom are rarely seen treading the boards these days!

Workshop events: To celebrate our anniversary season, two special workshops in the WOT programme have been sponsored by the Guild. There was a very successful workshop with Alexander Massey on "Voicing the text" on 3 April. David Tudor will lead a workshop on "Directing from Planning to Performance", for actors and directors, on Sunday 29 May at Holton Village Hall. Further details from Felicity.

50th Anniversary Tea Party will be held on Saturday 23 July in the Mure Room at Merton College between the matinee and evening performances of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. ALL MEMBERS, PAST AND PRESENT, WILL BE WELCOME! This will be another chance for old friends to get together and reminisce and for newer friends to come and celebrate the success and longevity of the Theatre Guild. A special anniversary cake is planned... If you'd like to come, please let Felicity know. We hope you'll also buy tickets for either the matinee or the evening performance (or both!) of *The Merry Wives* at Merton College if you're coming to the party.

And of course, to celebrate the first production of *THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR* in Worcester College Gardens in 1955 by the drama group which became the City of Oxford Theatre Guild, there is our new production of *THE MERRY WIVES* in the Fellows' Garden at Merton College from 19 to 30 July. Tickets will be on sale at the Oxford Playhouse Box Office from the start of June.

GUILD ARCHIVE DVD: *Access 50 years of local drama via the Guild archives!* A multimedia DVD (playable on a computer DVD drive) has been produced which includes a wealth of documents from the past 50 years of Guild productions. You can look up programmes, posters and reviews for most of the plays put on since 1955, and in some cases also view video clips and listen to music from the production. You can listen to interviews with some of the interesting characters who have taken an active role in the Guild. And all this is yours absolutely **FREE** as part of our anniversary promotion. Please let Felicity know if you'd like a copy (felicity.peacock@oxfordtheatreguild.com) specifying whether you want a version for PC or an Apple Mac.

The historical documents which have been gathered together will be passed into the safe keeping of the Oxfordshire Record Office. But since additional material is turning up all the time, we're planning another edition of the DVD in due course which will include yet more of the historical record, as well as bringing the archive up to date with our latest productions. So if you still have material tucked away in the back of a cupboard which you'd like included, please let David Long know!

A **GLOSSY ILLUSTRATED EDITION OF GUILD NEWS** will be available in July, which will include more stories and anecdotes of the past 50 years, together with a selection of items from the archive (so that those who can't run a DVD in a computer won't feel left out!). This special edition will be edited by Bill Moulford.



GUILD AUTUMN PRODUCTIONS

O'REILLY THEATRE, Keble College
1 - 5 November 2005

Truth or Dare

World premiere of a satirical comedy
by Mike Coleman

directed by Aldyth Thompson

Watch for details
of audition dates
in the next Guild
News

OLD FIRE STATION STUDIO THEATRE
7 - 12 December 2005

first amateur production of
**Sherlock Holmes and the
Limehouse Horror**
by Philip Pullman

directed by Jackie Keirs

WOT - Workshops on Theatre

Oxford Theatre Guild 50th Anniversary Programme

To mark the 50th Anniversary of the Oxford Theatre Guild, the Guild is sponsoring workshops on Acting and Directing during the current season, including the workshop by David Tudor on 29 May, for which there are still a few places left.

DATE	LEADER	TITLE	VENUE	WOT ORGANISER
Sunday 29 May	David Tudor	Directing from planning to performance	Holton Village Hall	Felicity Peacock 01865 376215 felicity.peacock@which.net
Sunday 3 July	Peepolykus	Eccentric characters through physical states	Chadlington Village Hall	Sheila McKean 01235 763178 Sheilamckean@btopenworld.com
August (to be confirmed)	Creation Theatre	Master class on A Midsummer Night's Dream	Culham	Susi Dalton 01865 820196 susietal@tesco.net
September (to be confirmed)		Handling crowds on stage	tba	
Saturday 8 October	David Thomas	Acting for beginners	tba	Susi Dalton 01865 820196 susietal@tesco.net
Sunday 27 November	Sue Haffenden	From page to stage: Ibsen	Chadlington Village Hall	Tim Eyres 01865 513700 tim.eyres@ntlworld.com

Further information on any of these events can be obtained from the relevant organiser

WOT workshops are supported by Oxfordshire Drama Network and Oxford Theatre Guild.



Guild People - Felicity McCormack & Sarah Wilkinson

Congratulations to Felicity for her success in being shortlisted for the Bristol Old Vic and Birmingham School of Speech and Drama.

Congratulations are also due to Sarah who has been offered a place at Cambridge University to read English.

We look forward to hearing how things progress for them both.

Peter Mottley

GUILD NEWS

As editor of Guild News, I am always on the look out for interesting articles, anecdotes and news about activities in the area. Please email them to me at simon.tavener@gmail.com or give me a call on 07973 636844 or 018656 452407.

GUILD E-MAILING LIST

If you would like to be included on the e-mailing list of Guild members and supporters to receive up-to-date information on forthcoming Guild and other local drama events, special offers, requests for actors for films and stage etc, please let Felicity know (felicity.peacock@oxfordtheatreguild.com).

Annual General Meeting - April 2005

A good number of Guild Members turned up to the AGM (I am sure the promise of cheese and wine had nothing to do with the high turnout) and enjoyed the usual mixture of social and Guild-related conversations.

After the official reports (all of which were extremely positive and encouraging), the floor was opened up for general discussion. A particularly lively exchange took place on the subject of the various smaller theatres in Oxford - the Old Fire Station, the O'Reilly and the Headington theatres. This was followed by an equally animated examination of the problems of marketing productions in and around Oxford. The passion and the commitment of Guild members was evident for all to see!

As you can see from the list below, there have been a few changes to the Committee for the forthcoming year. We must extend our thanks and bid farewell to Janet Bolam, Lauren O'Connell, Sophie Ruggiero and Nick Quartley. Hearty congratulations to our new committee members - Estelle Buckridge, Kevin Elliott, Tim Eyres and Cathy Oakes - and special mention to Gareth Morris who has risen to the exalted rank of Vice-Chair of the Guild. I am certain that we are set for another successful year.

GUILD GRANTS FOR WORKSHOPS

If you want to improve your skills in a particular technical area you can apply for a grant to cover the cost of the workshop fee.

It would be particularly useful to extend the number of members able to help with lighting, sound or make-up, so if you are interested please contact Felicity Peacock.

DIRECTORS ARE INVITED

to put forward proposals for the Spring 2006 production at the Oxford Playhouse. Exam syllabus texts preferred.*

Please contact David Long by 6 June with details of your chosen play and why you have chosen it.

*list can be provided on request

GUILD BURSARIES

Guild bursaries are open to mature students who have a place at an accredited drama school which will qualify them to work in the professional theatre. To be eligible for an OTG Bursary, you should already have been involved in theatre in Oxfordshire and be able to demonstrate your ongoing commitment to helping others in the area via drama workshops or activities with local drama groups. The Bursary Panel is independent of the Guild. For further details contact Bill Moulford.



Oxford Theatre Guild Committee 2005-2006

Chair: David Long, 01865 513864,
e-mail david.long@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Vice-Chair: Gareth Morris, 01865 873882,
e-mail gareth.morris@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Secretary: Felicity Peacock, 01865 376215,
e-mail felicity.peacock@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Treasurer & Membership Secretary: Bill Moulford,
01235 528016,
e-mail bill.moulford@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Web site: Steve Whitaker, 01235 819759,
e-mail steve.whitaker@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Minutes Secretary / Hall Bookings: Diana Kilburn,
01865 512223,
email diana.kilburn@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Non-portfolio: Estelle Buckridge, 01865 556773,
e-mail estelle.buckridge@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Non-portfolio: Kevin Elliott, 01865 723533,
e-mail kevin.elliott@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Non-portfolio: Tim Eyres, 01865 513700,
e-mail tim.eyres@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Non-portfolio: Colin Macnee, 01608 678705,
e-mail colin.macnee@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Non-portfolio: Cathy Oakes, 01865 316825,
e-mail cathy.oakes@oxfordtheatreguild.com

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