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Up In Lights

From homeschool to *Hamilton*: Gray-native **Sam Bagala** takes us on his journey on tour with the world's biggest musical.

BY SARAH MOORE

HOW DO YOU LAND the role of a lifetime before you've even passed a quarter century? If you're **Sam Bagala**, you start young. At 13, the precocious musician from Gray had his first paid gig playing keys for Lyric Theater's production of *Beauty and the Beast*. By 17, he was thrown before a cast of Broadway stars as the teenage Musical Director at Maine State Music Theater. Less than a decade later, he was "riding a tour bus somewhere through the Midwest" when a voicemail across the airwaves delivered the news he'd been waiting for: Bagala had won his spot on *Hamilton*—the Broadway Box-office-smashing hip hop musical by Lin-Manuel Miranda that tells the all-singing, all-dancing, all-rapping story of the birth of our nation through a culturally diverse lens.

A graduate of the Boston Conservatory and USM's Early Study program, Sam Bagala is now on the road with the *Hamilton* troupe for the play's first excursion beyond Broadway. This month alone, he'll bounce

from California to Georgia and on to Nevada. After that? "I've lost track," he says. Bagala is the show's full-time musical associate, splitting his talent between the orchestra pit and backstage. "I love the diversity of my job," he says. "Once a week, I'll conduct the entire evening performance." With his back to the vast audience, Bagala's baton steers the 10-piece orchestra and cues the singers through the play's 46 soaring musical numbers. On other days, "I play first or second keys." Outside of per-

formances, he "might lead music rehearsals with new cast members, teaching them the scores and lyrics." Five months into the role, Bagala knows the *Hamilton* playbill like a first language. Behind the scenes, he's been every character on the cast. "I play five to six dance rehearsals a week, performing the number for the dancers to follow." The genre-bending *Hamilton* score features a musical spectrum that ranges from show tunes to hip hop. A one-man rendition takes vocal gymnastics to a new level. "I can be playing the piano while simultaneously rapping three different parts. Watching as I play the keys and cover the three-part female harmony and rap in 'The Schuyler Sisters' is particularly funny to experience."

EARLY INSPIRATIONS

Childhood in Maine sounds like "Marley, Springsteen, Buena Vista Social Club—and plenty of world music," Bagala says. "My parents aren't musicians [he outstripped his mother's piano tutelage at five], but our



THE ARTS



family loves music. I remember plunking away on my grandma's piano in Rumford every Christmas. I actually played the *Hamilton* score on her out-of-tune keys last holidays after I learned I'd landed the job!" Homeschooled until 13, Bagala's cacophony of influences left its mark on both himself and his brother, Marcus—a score-writer for TV and film. A classically trained pianist, Bagala was regularly playing paid

gigs at community theaters, and later professional theaters like MSMT and Ogunquit Playhouse, throughout his young years. "It was a great feeling to be a teenager and get paid for playing the piano. I realized I wanted to make a career out of this." During this time, the limelight called out for a moment—"I starred in the ensemble at the Lyric, Portland Stage, and Hackmatack"—but Bagala ultimately decided his destiny would be below the footlights. Unlike Anna Kendrick, his Maine musical theater peer, Bagala didn't shoot off to New York and LA at a young age. By his twenties, he'd become a seasoned veteran of summer stock theater across the state. "I feel so lucky to grow up in such a small and supportive community where I had so many opportunities to learn," he says when asked if he felt he grew up far from stage school. Bagala's personal bio ballparks around 800 performances with Maine State Music

Theater between high school and his early twenties from 2009 to 2015.

On the snatched moments he's not on the road with *Hamilton* or the shows that preceded it, *Rent* and *Elf: The Musical*, Bagala lives in New York City. He tries to escape to Maine whenever he can. "The *Hamilton* tour comes to Boston in September. I'm hoping to get a week off to come back and see my family in Gray and visit Ogunquit Playhouse and Maine State Music Theater." Then it's back on the highway bound for North Carolina and a new state every week thereafter. Can he conjure a dream beyond touring with the world's musical-of-the-moment? "It's funny, someone on the cast said that the other day: 'What do you do after you've done *Hamilton*?' It could tour for another 20 years. I'd love to write my own shows and work with other musicians. I spend most of my time at the piano composing. It's the most rewarding and organic process, and I want to continue to be as creative as I can." ■

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SUMMER THEATER PREVIEW

Carousel Music Theater, 196 Townsend Ave., Boothbay Harbor. *100 Years of Broadway*, Jun. 21 - Jul. 21; *All Hands On Deck*, Jul. 24 - Aug. 9; *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*, Aug. 12 - Sept. 2. 633-5297.

Celebration Barn Theater, 190 Stock Farm Rd., South Paris. *Work Bash Weekend*, May. 19 & 20; *Bouffon*, Jun. 4-9; *Retreat with the Show Doctor*, Jun. 11-16. 743-8452

Cold Comfort Theater, The Crosby Center, Belfast. *The Boys Next Door*, Jun. 7-16; *The Tempest*, Jul. 20-29; *Love Letters*, Aug. 29. 930-7244

Enchanted April, May 4-20; *The Producers*, Jul. 20-Aug. 5. 282-0849

1932 Criterion Theater, 35 Cottage St., Bar Harbor. *Tanglewood Marionette's Dragon King*, Jun. 30; *Tanglewood Marionette's Sleeping Beauty*, Jul. 21; *The Maine Comedy AllStars*, Jul. 21. 288-0829.

Deertrees Theater, 156 Deertrees Rd., Harrison. *A Betrothal and The Universal Language*, Jul. 12 & 20 & 27; *The Amazing Adventures of Louis de Rougemont (As Told By Himself)*, Jul. 14 & 19 & 27 & Aug. 4; *The Turn of the Screw*, Aug. 9. 583-6747

Fenix Theatre Company, at Deering Oaks Park, Portland. *Three Sisters*, Jul. 13-



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SUMMER THEATER PREVIEW

Aug. 5. 400-6223

Footlights Theater, 190 US-1, Falmouth. *The Ladies' Guide to Life & Laughter*, Jul. 10-Aug. 30. 747-5434

Freeport Community Players, 30 Freeport Performing Arts Center, Holbrook St., Freeport. One-Act Showcase, Jul. 12-29; *I'll Be Back Before Midnight*, Sept. 13-30; 865-2220

Good Theater & St. Lawrence Arts, 76 Congress St., Portland. Opera Maine presents *Three Decembers*, Jul. 13. 885-5883

Hackmatack Playhouse, 538 Route 9, Berwick. *Lend Me a Tenor*, Jun. 15-30; *All Shook Up*, Jul. 4-21; *The Bridges of Madison County*, Jul. 25-Aug. 11; *Dial M for Murder*, Aug. 15-Sept. 1. 698-1807

Heartwood Regional Theater Company, Lin-

coln Academy, Newcastle. *Bloomsday*, May 11 & 12; *Down Along the Cove*, Jun. 29-30 & Jul. 1 & 6-7; 563-1373

Gaslight Theater, Winthrop St., Hallowell. *Witness for the Prosecution* by Agatha Christie, Jun. 15-17 & 22-24; *Marriage Murder*, Aug. 24-26 & 31, Sept. 1-2; 626-3698

Lakewood Theater, 75 Theater Rd., Madison. *Women in Jeopardy*, May 24-27, 30-31, Jun. 1-2; *Incorruptable*, Jun. 7-10 & 13-16; *Little Shop of Horrors*, Jun. 21-24 & 27-30; *Jenny's House of Joy*, Jul. 5-8 & 11-14; *The Irish...and How They Got that Way*, Jul. 19-22 & Jul. 25-28; *The Legend of George McBride*, Aug. 2-11; *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, Aug. 16-19 & 22-25; *Anne of Green Gables*, Aug. 30-31 & Sept. 1-8. 474-7176



Get ready for high-octane excitement when **STOMP** comes to Merrill Auditorium, May 17-19.

8-25. 725-8769

Mayo Street Arts, 10 Mayo Street, Portland. Harry Jameson-Pieman Theater Co., through May 20; *Bellatrix with Einstein*, Little Homonculus, Jun. 8. 879-4629

Nasson Little Theatre, 457 Main St., Springvale. NYT presents *Princess and the Pea*, May 11-20; *The Edwards Twins*, Jun. 2; Jon Stetson, Jun. 8; Good Theater presents *Underwater Guy* Jun. 23-24. 842-0800

Merrill Auditorium, 20 Myrtle St., Portland. *Dirty Dancing*, Jun. 18-19; *The Marriage of Figaro*, Jul. 25 & 27. 842-0800

Ogunquit Playhouse, 10 Main St., Ogunquit. *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, May 16-Jun 9; *Oklahoma!* Jun. 13-Jul. 7; *An American in Paris*, Jul. 11-Aug. 4;

Lyric Music Theater, 176 Sawyer St., South Portland. *The Foreigner*, Jun. 8-17. 799-1421

Lewiston-Auburn Little Theatre, 30 Academy St., Auburn. *12 Angry Men*, Jun. 8-17; *Young Frankenstein*, Aug. 10-19. 799-1421

Mad Horse Theatre, 24 Mosher St., South Portland. *The Explorer's Club*, May 3-20. 747-4148

Maine State Ballet Theater, 348 U.S. Rte. 1, Falmouth. *Dancer's Choice*, Jun. 20-21; *Hansel and Gretel*, 9-18; *The Magic Toy Shop*, Oct. 6-14. 781-7672

Maine State Music Theatre, Pickard Theater, 1 Bath Rd., Brunswick. *Million Dollar Quartet*, Jun. 6-23; *Beauty and the Beast*, Jun. 27-Jul. 14; *Saturday Night Fever*, Jul. 18-Aug. 4; *Singin' in the Rain*, Aug.

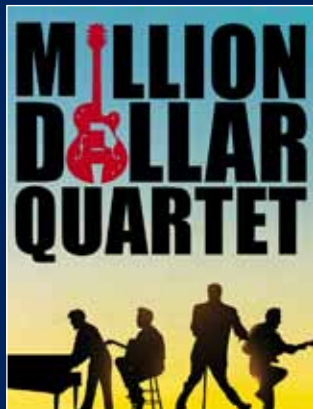
FROM LEFT: JUNISHI TAAKASHI; SOKVONNY CHHOUK

2018 Season

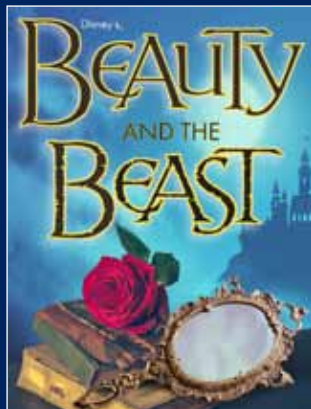
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Grumpy Old Men: The Musical, Aug. 8-Sep. 1. 646-5511

Penobscot Theatre Company, Bangor Opera House, 131 Main St. *The Spitfire Grill*, through May 13. 942-3333

Portland Fringe Festival, downtown Portland.

Over 125 performances throughout downtown Portland, June 16-23.

The Portland Players, 420 Cottage Rd., South Portland. *Titanic*, May 18 - June 3. 799-7337

Portland Stage, 25 Forest Ave. *Sex and other Disturbances*, through May 20.

774-0465

Public Theatre, 31 Maple St., Lewiston. *The Midvale High School 50th Reunion*, May 4-13.; *Everybody Loves Pirates!* May 20. 782-3200

Saco River Theater, 29 Salmon Falls Rd., Buxton. *Hiroya*, May 25; *A Bridge Under A Sound Under A Town*, Jun. 2. 929-6472.

Schoolhouse Arts Center, 16 Richville Rd., Standish. *Once Upon a Mattress*, May 18-20; *Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep*, Jun. 1-3; *Seussical*, Jul. 12-19. 642-3743

Theater at Monmouth, 796 Main St., Monmouth. Season 49: *ROAR! The Year of the Woman*. 933-9999

ART

Bates College Museum of Art, Olin Arts Center, 75 Russell St., Lewiston.

Senior Thesis Exhibition 2018, through May 27; 786-6158

Bowdoin College Museum of Art, 245 Maine St., Brunswick. Art from the Northern Plains, through July 8; *AEGYPTUS: Egypt in the Greco-Roman World*, through July 15. 725-3275

Center for Maine Contemporary Art, 21 Winter St., Rockland. Jacob Hessler + Richard Blanco: *Boundaries*, through May 27; Screen: Adam Lampton: *Museums*, through May 27; KJ Shows: *Portrait of an Artist*, through June 3; John Moore: *Resonance*, through June 17. 701-5005

Colby College Museum of Art, 5600 Mayflower Hill Dr., Waterville. *City of Ambition*, through Aug. 26; 859-5600

Farnsworth Art Museum, 16 Museum St., Rockland. Andrew Wyeth: *Temperas and Studies from the Wyeth Collection*, through - Oct. 21; Ai Weiwei: *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads*, Mar. 24 - Dec. 30; Andrew Wyeth in Rockland, Apr. 7 - Nov. 4; Maine: *The Farnsworth Collection*, opens May 12. 596-6457

First Friday Art Walk, downtown Portland. Visit local galleries, studios, and museums. May 4; June 1.

Greenhut Galleries, 146 Middle St. Two Person Exhibition: Matt Blackwell and Kathi Smith, through June 2; John Whalley, Jun. 7-30; David Driskell Solo Exhibition, Jul. 5 - 28. 772-2693

Maine Historical Society, 489 Congress St. Longfellow's Cocktail Party & Magical History Tour, May 11-12; Beer in



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EXPERIENCE

the Garden: Crime and Punishment May. 15. 774-1822

Maine Maritime Museum, 234 Washington St., Bath. BIW: Building America's Navy, May 18-Dec. 31. 443-1416

MECA, 522 Congress St., Portland. 2018 MFA Thesis Exhibition, May 11-Jun. 8, 775-3052

Portland Museum of Art, 7 Congress Sq. The 2018 Portland Museum of Art Biennial, through June 3; The Robbers: German Art in a Time of Crisis, through July 15. 775-6148

Richard Boyd Art Gallery, 15 Epps Street. Paintings in Oil, through Apr. 29; A Walk in the Woods: American Landscapes, through May 29. 221-4499

UNE Art Gallery, 716 Stevens Ave. Opening Reception for Inside The

Cube: Looking Back Over 40 Years, through July 15. 221-4499

MUSIC

Aura, 121 Center St. Jonathan Davis, May 11; 1964: The Tribute, May 17; Third World, May 18; Rising Appalachia, May 22; Andrew McMahon and Friends, Jun. 08; Awolnation, Jun. 20; Sara Evans, Jun. 30; Voyage: A Journey Tribute, Jul. 06. 772-8274

Blue, 650 Congress St. Irish Nights, every Wed.; The Happy Hour, every Thurs.; Jazz at Blue, every Sat.; Remy Dinosaur, May 17; Dark Hollow Brewing Co., May 20; The Ghosts of Johnson City and Sassquatch, May 25; The Middle Eastern Jazz Project, May 26. 774-4111

Darling's Waterfront Pavilion, 1 Railroad St.,

Bangor. Jason Aldean, May 27; Imagine Dragons, Jun. 8; Logic, Jun. 9; Foreigner, Jun. 15; Paramore, Jun. 21. 358-9327

Empire, 575 Congress St. Rich Vos, May 18; Jahrieffe & JAH-N-I-Roots Band, Jun. 8; Southern Culture on the Skids, Jun. 27. 747-5063

Jonathan's Ogunquit, 92 Bourmes Ln., Ogunquit. Suede, May 26. 646-4526

Maine Academy of Modern Music, 125 Presumpscot St. May 6; 2017 MAMM Slam: Finals, May 12; The MAMM stage at the Old Port Festival, Jun. 10; MAMM Presents: The Kids Are Alright Series- Dustin LeVasseur & Andrew Hodgkins Jun. 10. 899-3433

Merrill Auditorium, 20 Myrtle St. STOMP, May 17-18; Darci Lynne, Jun.



Trixie Mattel will bring the glamour to State Theatre on May 18.

24; Lindsey Stirling, Aug. 2. 842-0800

One Longfellow Square, 181 State St. Matthew Logan Vasquez, May 15; THE BAND Band, May 18; Louis Apollon, May 23; The Sea The Sea, May 30; Caroline Cotter, Jun. 6; Eric Betten-court, Jun. 7; Dar Williams,

Jun. 10 761-1757

Port City Music Hall, 504 Congress St. Fleetmac Wood Presents Rumours Rave, May 11; Citizen, May 24; Parquet Courts, May 25; Always, May 29; Hop Along, Jun. 1; David Wax Museum, Jun. 2; Typhoon, Jun. 3; Lez Zep-

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EXPERIENCE

pelin, Jun. 6. 956-6000
Portland Symphony Orchestra, 20 Myrtle St. The Return of Norman Huynh, May 21-22; . 842-0800
Space Gallery, 538 Congress Street. Broken Shadows, May 17; Amy Reid, May 25; La Luz with Gymshorts, Jun. 5. 828-5600
State Theatre, 609 Congress St. Mister Wives, May 16; Trixie Mattel, May 18; Apocalyptica, May 25; Tash Sultana, May 30; Belle and Sebastian, May 5; The Decemberists, Jun. 10. 956-6000
Stone Mountain Arts Center, 695 Dug Way Rd. Séan McCann, May 18; John Gorka, May 19; Keb' Mo' Band, May 23; DuoDuo Quartet, May 25; Harry Manx, May 26; Rodney Crowell, May 27; Alejandro Escovedo, Jun. 2; Rose Cousins and Mark Erelli, Jun. 8. 935-7292
Waterville Opera House, 93 Main St. 3rd Flr., Waterville. Seussical, Jun. 15-17 & 22-24; The Bolshoi Ballet: Coppelia, Jul. 1, 873-7000

COMEDY

Andy's Old Port Pub, 94 Commercial St. Nick Crowley, Kevin Neales, & Krystal Kamenides, May 5. 874-ANDY
Blue, 650 Congress St. Portland Comedy Co-Op Presents Worst Day of the Week, every Mon. 774-4111
Bull Feeney's, 375 Fore St. Portland Comedy Showcase, every Wed. 773-7210
Empire, 575 Congress St. First Friday Comedy, first Fri. of every month; Sunday Night Stand Up!, every Sun.; 558-2279
Lincoln's, 36 Market St. Laugh Shack Comedy, every Thurs.
Jonathan's Ogunquit, 92 Bournes Ln., Ogunquit. "Nick is Right" Comedy with Nick DiPaolo, May 4. 646-4526
Johnson Hall, 280 Water St., Gardiner. Capital City Improv, Apr. 28; Maine Event Comedy, May 19. 582-7144
One Longfellow Square, 181 State St. Bob Marley, May 19. 761-1757
Somerset Abbey, 98 Main St., Madison. Maine Event Comedy: Stand Up, May. 11. 696-5800
Space Gallery, 538 Congress Street. Gina Yashere, May 18. 828-5600
Stone Mountain Arts Center, 695 Dug Way Rd. Bob Marley, May 17. 935-7292

TASTY EVENTS

Aurora Provisions, 64 Pine St. Two to three free tastings each month on Tuesdays. 871-9060
Gourmet Gala, Ocean Gateway. A celebration of food featuring samples from local

restaurants and caterers, wine, and beer. Plus: Corporate Chopped Challenge live cooking event. Apr. 10.

Leroux Kitchen, Portland. Free wine tastings on the 2nd Saturday of each month, 1-3 p.m. 553-7665

Local Sprouts, 649 Congress St., Portland. Music Brunch with Sean Mencher and friends, every Sun.

Lolita Vinoteca + Asador, 90 Congress St., Portland. Tapas Mondays, every Mon. 3:30-10:30; wines paired with small plates. 775-5652

Rosemont Markets, Portland and Yarmouth. Two to three free tastings each month on Fridays. 774-8129

Sweetgrass Farm Old Port Tasting Room, 324 Fore St. Whiskey Wednesday, weekly. 761-8GIN

Wine Walks with Erica Archer, Old Port. Delicious Italy, May 19; Wine & Food Walk in Portland's West End: Spain, May 26; Wines & Oysters Walk in Portland, ME, May 27; Wine & Food Walk in Portland's East End: French Reds, Jun. 2; White Wine & Oyster Shucking Social, Jun. 2; Wine & Food Walk in Portland, ME: Loire Valley, Jun. 9. 619-4630.

FILM

Portland Museum of Art, 7 Congress Sq. RBG, May 18-20. 775-6148

LITERARY EVENTS

LFK, 188 State St. Word Portland, a monthly reading series featuring original writing from authors on the first Mon. of every month. 899-3277

Maine Historical Society, 489 Congress St. Portland Monthly First Friday Fiction, May 4; Jun. 4. 774-1822

Print: A Bookstore, 273 Congress St. Best-selling authors Jacqueline Sheehan, Randy Susan Meyers, and Ellen Meeropol present their latest works, May 16; Owen Laukkanen presents *Gale Force*, May 17; Tommy Pico on *JUNK* and Joseph Osmundson, *Inside/Out*, May 21; Ada Calhoun presents *Wedding Toasts I'll Never Give*, May 21; Julie Falatko presents *Two Dogs in a Trench Coat Go to School*, May 29; Alan Lightman presents *Searching for Stars on an Island in Maine*, May 30. 536-4778

DON'T MISS

Annual May Day Festival, Downtown Kennebunk. Craft markets, live music, climbing wall, and a parade to celebrate spring, May 5. 604-1341

Bug Light Kite Festival, 55 Bug Light Park, South Portland. Presented by the South



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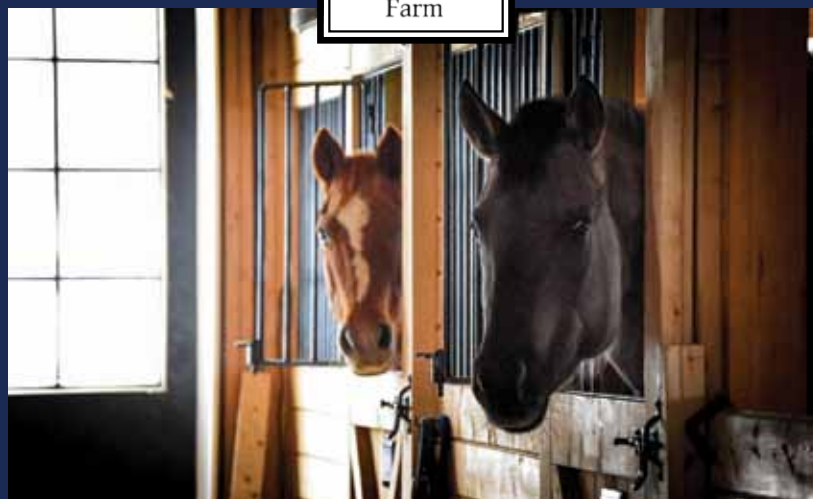
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EXPERIENCE

Portland Historical Society, this annual festival features live music, a fundraising barbecue, demonstrations, and an impressive kite-flying spectacle, May 19. 767-7299

Damariscotta Oyster Celebration, Downtown Damariscotta. Tour and taste the best of the region's oysters, Jun. 14-16

Hard Cider Run, "Dash through the Eastern Promenade in pursuit of hard cider," a 5K presented by Urban Farm Fermentory, May 12. 773-8331

Mother's Day Garden & Tea Open House, Neziscot Farm, Turner. Enjoy tea, explore the greenhouses and gardens, and indulge in brunch and lunch specials, May 12-13. 225-3231

Sugarloaf Marathon and 15K, 5092 Access Rd., Carrabassett Valley. Sugarloaf Marathon and 15K, a Boston Marathon qualifying race, May 20. 800-THE-LOAF

Stand Up Paddleboard Sunset Tour, Portland Paddle, East End Beach. Take a leisurely paddle along the Portland waterfront, topped off with a panoramic view of the sun setting over the city, starting May 25. 370-9730

-Compiled by Sarah Moore and Mira McKenney. To submit your own event listing, visit: portlandmonthly.com/portmag/submit-an-event/

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