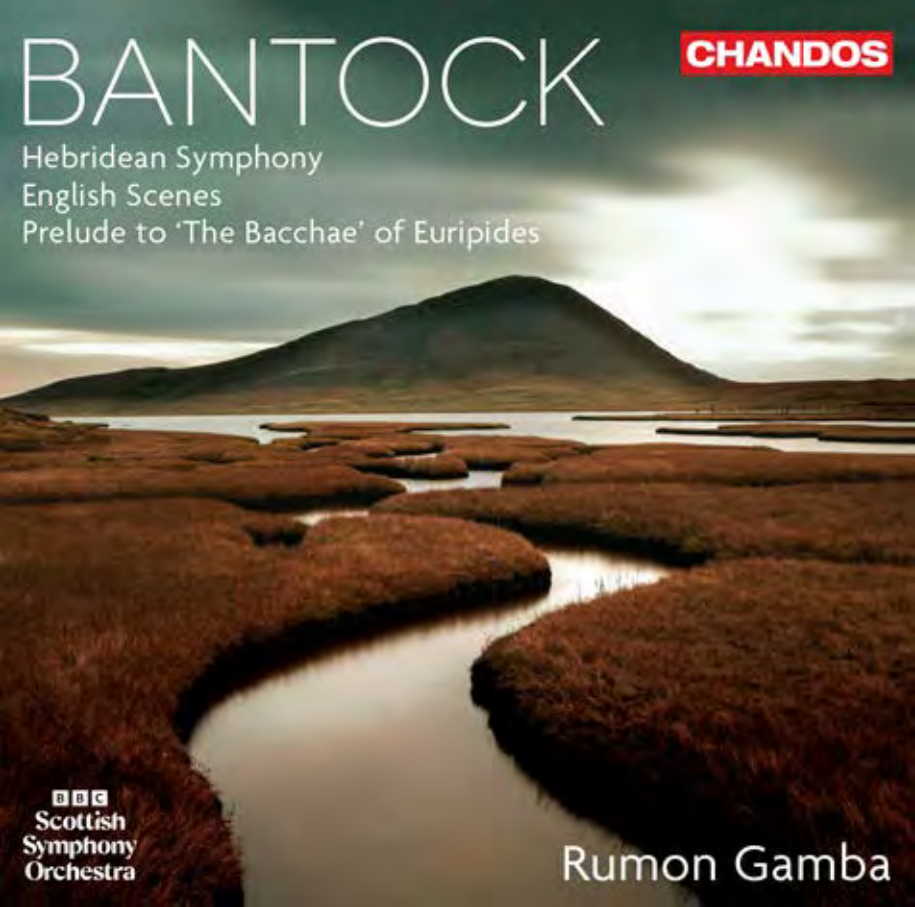


BANTOCK



CHANDOS

Hebridean Symphony

English Scenes

Prelude to 'The Bacchae' of Euripides

BBC
Scottish
Symphony
Orchestra

Rumon Gamba



Lewis Foreman Collection (personal gift of the composer's son)

Granville Bantock, Birmingham, 1924, at the first production of his opera 'The Seal Woman', with the conductor Adrian Boult, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, librettist and cast member (as the Cailleach, or old Crone), and Paul Shelving, stage designer

Sir Granville Bantock (1868 – 1946)

Hebridean Symphony (1913 – 15)

33:33

for Orchestra

From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us and the waste of seas.
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

To Marjory Kennedy-Fraser

- | | | |
|-----|--|-------|
| [1] | Tranquillo, molto sostenuto – Soave, <i>lento</i> –
Cantabile sostenuto – Più sostenuto –
Cantabile animando – Più moto – Più animando –
Moderato – A Piacere – Con moto – Più Andante –
Poco animando – Con moto –
Largamente misterioso – A tempo, sempre misterioso –
Meno allegro e <i>lento</i> – Poco <i>lento</i> – | 13:58 |
| [2] | Con moto – Con fuoco – Più moto – Meno vivo – Molto vivo –
Meno vivo – Molto vivo – | 3:04 |
| [3] | Animando – Con spirito – Molto largamente – Risoluto –
Majestico – Sostenuto – Più allegro – Con moto agitato –
Animando molto – Poco largamente – Animando –
Con più moto – Affrettando – Più mosso – Più stretto –
Trionfale – Maestoso – | 7:47 |
| [4] | Poco <i>lento</i> – Tranquillo – Dolcemente – Sostenuto –
Cantabile Andantino – Risoluto – Largamente –
Lento molto sostenuto – Più <i>lento</i> – Allargando – Placido | 8:43 |

5

Prelude to 'The Bacchae' of Euripides

(1934, 1939, revised 1945)

6:19

(*The Bacchanals*)

for Orchestra

Presto – Allegro molto – Con moto –

Allegretto cantabile – Liberamente – Poco animando –

Con moto – A piacere – Animando – Con moto – Affrettando –

Con fuoco – Largamente maestoso

English Scenes (1901)

25:25

Suite for Large Orchestra

- | | | | |
|------|---|--|------|
| [6] | 1 | Pastorale. In the Country. Moderato non troppo – Poco meno mosso – A tempo, piacevole – Giocoso – Risoluto – | 3:44 |
| [7] | 2 | Episode. Scherzando ma lugubre, con malincolico [<i>sic</i>] (Scene. A drunken clarinet player and an old fiddler outside. The village inn.) – | 1:05 |
| [8] | | Tempo I – Giocoso | 1:22 |
| [9] | 2 | Romance. The Trysting Place. Andante cantabile – Poco vivo – Tempo I – Meno mosso | 5:10 |
| [10] | 3 | Intermezzo. Fairyland. Allegretto giocoso – L'istesso tempo – Tempo I | 2:53 |
| [11] | 4 | Benedictus. In Church. Solenne – Largo – Poco più mosso – Largo – Poco più mosso – Più moto – Largo – Tempo I | 7:35 |
| [12] | 5 | Hornpipe. Sailors' Dance. Allegro vivo – Più Allegro molto – Più stringendo quasi presto – Prestissimo | 3:23 |

TT 65:24

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

Kanako Ito leader

Rumon Gamba

Bantock:

English Scenes; Hebridean Symphony; Prelude to 'The Bacchae' of Euripides

Introduction

From a well-off London family (his father was a renowned Scottish gynaecologist with a top central London practice), the young Granville Bantock (1868 – 1946) was perfectly located for experiencing a wide range of musical influences. This was true not only in London, for in the summer of 1888 he was able to visit Germany and hear Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and *Parsifal*. The family was living within walking distance of London's Royal Academy of Music, then located off Hanover Square, where his student days, between 1889 and 1893, were characterised by various attempts to promote his increasingly ambitious works. His overture *The Fire Worshippers* was heard at an Academy concert in December 1890, and in July 1892 he oversaw an orchestral concert devoted entirely to his own music, the second half consisting of his one-act opera *Caedmar*.

Even a well-off young man such as Bantock needed a job and on entering the professional musical world he took an

appointment as the conductor of one of the touring companies of George Edwardes, playing a repertoire of light operas and musical comedies, among them Sidney Jones's celebrated show *A Gaiety Girl* which he took on a world tour. No flying in those days, so the tour took Bantock away for 431 days and allowed him to see the world at an impressionable age – stops included Asia and the Middle East, powerful encounters which would be reflected in his later music.

Back in England, in December 1895, he had to accept another conducting appointment, this time taking Stanford's Irish comic opera *Shamus O'Brien* on a provincial tour. It was his growing reputation as a conductor of shows which secured him the way out to his wider career, for in 1897 he was offered the post of Music Director of the New Brighton Tower, a resort located on the opposite side of the Mersey from Liverpool. The Tower, which was never completed, was intended to upstage the Eiffel Tower, and featured a palatial ballroom / concert hall. Here his new employers expected

Bantock to conduct programmes of the typical music that might be heard at seaside resorts across the country: light music, show tunes, and dance music. But in a remarkable parallel to what Dan Godfrey did with a similar seaside band at Bournemouth, Bantock quickly expanded the orchestra from pier band to symphony orchestra. He developed the repertoire so quickly and so ambitiously that by July 1899 he was sufficiently established to be able to invite Elgar and his wife to stay and present one of the earliest performances of the 'Enigma' Variations.

This activity put Bantock on the national musical map and, on Elgar's recommendation, he became the first Principal of the new Midland Institute School of Music, in Birmingham, and within seven years had succeeded Elgar as Peyton Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham, where he remained until 1934.

In 1951 the choral conductor Charles Kennedy Scott reminisced:

From the first Bantock was regarded by his young contemporaries as a musical leader; the critic Ernest Newman reporting how 'Those of us who were "young" and "modern" regarded Bantock as of much more importance than Elgar'. Indeed it was Elgar himself who said that Bantock had 'the most fertile musical brain of our time'.

Bantock became famous for works on an enormous scale and in the first decades of the twentieth century these included (with orchestral accompaniment) the *Sappho* songs, a complete setting of Fitzgerald's English version of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (recorded by Vernon Handley on Chandos CHSA 5051(3)), and *The Song of Songs* – the full bible text set as a Lyrical Drama in five substantial scenes.

English Scenes

Bantock achieved success in his day with many very large-scale works, often for chorus and orchestra, but he also produced popular short pieces suitable for amateur or local orchestras, which were published as piano conductor scores and sets of orchestral parts. A notable achievement in 1899 had been his *Russian Scenes* which clearly appealed to the many local orchestras active in the years leading up to the First World War. It seems likely that this led his publisher to commission a second suite, this time an English-themed one, which was in proof before *Russian Scenes* was actually published. It finally appeared in 1904, a version for piano following in 1910. This does not seem to have been so successful at the time, and in 1909 it was supplanted by Bantock's *Old English Suite* (modern

orchestrations of pieces from the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*), from a different publisher, which tended to be supplied in response to requests because of its similar title. In fact, at many moments in the earlier music of Bantock its Englishness is not readily apparent, coming from the same stable as that which produced *Russian Scenes*. It is, nevertheless, remarkably effective and one can imagine several of these movements finding an individual living presence as concert overtures or encores.

Bantock's suite is in five movements. The titles of all the movements are given in three languages, English, French, and German. So the first scene, 'Pastorale', called 'In the Country', becomes 'Au Village' in French. Bantock's vision is fairly literal, a sixteen-bar repeated middle section leading to what Bantock calls an 'Episode' – the composer adds: 'Scene. A drunken clarinet player and an old fiddler outside. The village inn.' The fiddler is actually a solo viola and the score tellingly headed 'Scherzando ma lugubre, con malinconico [sic]'. The end of the movement, making us all jump, is marked by a loud bang on the bass drum.

The 'Romance' (in English 'The Trysting Place', in German 'Stelldichein') is a charming lyrical treatment from a pre-cinema age. The 'Intermezzo' ('Fairyland' and 'Im Feenreich'), in

3/8, could easily be a ballet movement and is strikingly memorable for its muted strings, chiming triangle, and charming melody on the horn. The 'Benedictus' ('In Church' and 'In der Kirche') is possibly the most impressive movement of them all, but also the least British in imagery. A slow processional underpinned by the sonorous E from the bell and including brief brass chorales, it has an impressive momentum.

Bantock had planned to end his suite with a Wedding March, but his publisher, to whom it was a purely commercial exercise, insisted on replacing it with a 'Hornpipe'. Bantock was far from pleased, venting his irritation to his friend the critic Ernest Newman: 'a confounded & damnable "Hornpipe" in place of a "Wedding March".' But Bosworth & Co. insisted and such was Bantock's ready facility that the 'Sailors' Dance' ('Matrosentanz') was duly delivered and is delightfully effective, especially as Bantock had no orchestral model to inspire him. One wonders whether Bantock had had his eye on the potential spin-off performances which a Wedding March might have achieved, and which the Hornpipe, though eminently suitable, certainly failed to produce. Is it possible that Bosworth was seeking a competitor to the as yet unheard similar movement in Henry Wood's *Fantasia on British Sea Songs*, which Chappell & Co. would publish the following year?

Hebridean Symphony

In his music, Bantock was given to enthusiasms, which led him to write, sometimes on an expansive scale. It is worth remembering that when he met his future wife, a self-proclaimed poet, he promptly asked her to write some verses for him to set. Not for Bantock a song or two – he immediately suggested a cycle of six sets of *Songs of the East*, each containing six songs, and when the poems arrived, his settings quickly followed and in short order were published by the leading music publisher of the day, Breitkopf & Härtel. Bantock certainly knew how to impress his girlfriend.

It was a friendship with Marjory Kennedy-Fraser and her daughter, Patuffa, who had undertaken to collect and perform Hebridean work songs, that led Bantock to advise and take on an editorial role, particularly in relation to the second collection of these *Songs of the Hebrides*. But the *Hebridean Symphony*, which originated as a tone poem with the provisional title 'Among the Western Isles', largely took as its source material work songs from Volume 1 of their collection, which had been published in 1909.

The Symphony itself appears to have had its beginnings in 1913, but was mainly composed in 1915, the completed short score sketch dated 20 June that year. Bantock dated

the completion of the four sections of the full score respectively 23 xi 15; 4.2.16; 19 II 16; and 27 iv 16. He must have prepared manuscript orchestral parts before the orchestral score was finished because we know of a performance in Glasgow on 14 February 1916. Bantock then submitted the score to the newly established music publishing competition of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, or CUKT, where it was received on 18 January 1917. The Symphony was accepted for publication and returned to the composer on 18 May. The CUKT scheme was assessed by Donald Tovey, Henry Hadow, and Dr (later Sir) Hugh Allen. Tovey's comments set the positive tone: 'I heard the first performance of this, & took off my hat' (he was alluding to Schumann's celebrated assessment, in the voice of Eusebius, of Chopin). Tovey continued:

Opinions may differ about this & that; but it's ridiculously obvious that we must publish this: & it's a blessed relief that one modern composer has given the scheme a chance.

As soon as the score was in proof, Tovey promoted two performances (21 and 28 February 1920) using manuscript parts and a score made up of proof sheets. Once it was published, it became attractive for orchestras to give repeated performances, for ownership of the performing materials

gave rights to performance without payment. It was thus heard at Bournemouth on 31 March 1921, and six more times up to 1932. Adrian Boult, then at Birmingham, performed it in the autumn of 1920, and it was widely heard after that. Bantock almost immediately was invited to join the CUKT panel of assessors, on which he served in the subsequent years of the competition (which lasted until 1928).

Although it is nominally a one-movement piece which plays continuously, the four movements of a conventional symphonic structure can be heard. Much of the commentary about the music tends to be based on the programme that Bantock's secretary and general factotum, H. Orsmond Anderton, published at the outset; he prefaced the music with that anonymous verse which first appeared in *The Edinburgh Book of Scottish Verse*:

From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us and the waste of seas.
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is
Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

This is essentially descriptive programme music, the moods of the sea off the Western Isles being the principal subject evoked. Bantock's friend the critic Ernest Newman described it as 'surely the most beautiful sea-

music ever written'. The extended quiet slow introduction (*Tranquillo, molto sostenuto*) features elements of the Hebridean song 'The Seagull of the Land-under-waves', elements of which are heard again in the second and fourth sections. The bird appears after forty-seven bars as an arpeggiated chromatic semiquaver phrase, falling and then rising on the flute. The movement proper follows, *Cantabile sostenuto*, Anderton describing it as 'the coast of Skye at early morning, the sunlight breaking through diaphanous mists'. Trevor Bray, in his pioneering PhD thesis on Bantock, draws our attention to the orchestra's

complicated structure of chords in fourths
representing the opaque depths of the
sea... one of G.B.'s most original and
successful ideas for the accompaniment
of a folksong.

It is worth noting that throughout, Bantock divides his double-basses, half tuned down to a low B.

A *Poco animando* middle section suggests the sea rising – perhaps a distant storm before the mood of the opening returns and an extended viola solo runs into the second movement.

This is a scherzo in all but name, an orchestral build-up suggesting the storm is upon us. But Bantock holds off

with several minutes of stillness – as sometimes precedes a squall – and fragments of the seagull as a quiet interlude. Then the vivid orchestral storm breaks over us, heightened by threatening horns at the climax, Bantock clearly visualising marauding raiders from the sea. His *The Sea Reivers*, from much the same time, takes them as the subject of a short orchestral encore (which according to 'Grove V' was originally intended as part of the symphony). Anderton heard 'Norwegian galleys looming large through the mist, with their glittering spearmen lining the bulwarks'.

The third movement is a battle, the Hebridean song 'Kishmul's Galley' vivid on unison horns above a 'mist of tremolo strings'. Battle music follows before a three-note trumpet motif rings out, repeated over many bars (a feature needing a stage-wide space, where it is notably effective in a live performance). It is the *Pibroch of Donuil Dhu* summoning the clans to repel the invaders. Eventually the motif is extended downwards and the movement ends in a great climax as the pibroch is 'thundered out in exultation'.

The world of the opening returns (*Poco lento*) as the sea and mist are evoked again, though with distant echoes of the 'Kishmul' tune. Bantock's strings generate a slowly

moving sea-swell as the horns announce the symphony's fourth Hebridean tune, the 'Harris Love Lament', which quickly forms the glorious climax before the long fade-out. The ghost of the seagull and 'Kishmul' are heard again and the music dissipates in a *ppp* passage in which three chords mingled give 'a peculiar iridescent haze'.

In recognition of her role in the music's genesis, Bantock dedicated the Symphony to Marjory Kennedy-Fraser ('Marsailidh nam Orain' on the manuscript).

Prelude to 'The Bacchae' of Euripides

Bantock wrote music for productions of classical Greek plays by Bedford College, London in 1909, and for Sophocles's *Electra*, seen at the Court Theatre, London on 16 December 1909 and at London's Scala Theatre in 1914. In 1910 he wrote five choral songs and dances for *The Bacchae* in the translation by Professor Gilbert Murray. It seems likely that there was a performance, but the music disappeared and was not published for over twenty years.

Bantock had a long-standing history of responding to Greek plays with orchestral scores – probably best known is his *Overture to a Greek Tragedy* which, in fact, was inspired by *Oedipus Coloneus*, by Sophocles, and first heard at the Three Choirs Festival in 1911. We

find him renewing his interest in Greek plays when a prelude to what he called *The Bacchanals*, by Euripides, appeared in a piano score dated 17 August 1934, using motifs from his earlier choruses. Later came the comedy overture *The Frogs*, based on the play by Aristophanes. Dated 27 August 1935, it was written for the 1936 season of Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts, and was also arranged for brass band.

Bantock revisited the *Bacchae* score soon after war broke out, in 1939, and the orchestral full score is dated 26 December the same year. During the war he wrote three more orchestral paraphrases of Greek drama: *Agamemnon* (1940), *Overture to a Greek Comedy* ('The Woman's Festival' – *Thesmophoriazousae* (1941)), and his last completed work, the comedy overture *The Birds*, after Aristophanes (1946). In his last years, his friend the music publisher Cyril Neil, joint owner of the publisher Paxton, issued a long series of 78rpm discs and commissioned these from Bantock as a means of providing the impecunious old composer with an income. *The Bacchanals*, as Bantock continued to refer to it, was ready as the next to be recorded (the score is dated 31 – 12 – 45) but Bantock died before the sessions could be scheduled. It only finally surfaced in 2010, in a concert in New York.

The Bacchae of Euripides is a tragedy that tells of the 'wild women' of Thebes, the Bacchae (or 'Maenads'), the female followers of Dionysus, who when the Dionysiac cult is opposed by King Pentheus are worked up to an orgiastic dancing frenzy and tear the King apart. Although he never outlines any plot or scenario, Bantock seems, in his orchestral paraphrases of Ancient Greek plays generally, to have presented a series of dramatic episodes. But in the case of *The Bacchanals*, although titled as a Prelude to the play, this succession of orchestral episodes appears to concentrate on evoking the frenzied women, the Bacchae.

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The **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** celebrated its ninetieth anniversary throughout its 2025 / 26 concert season. From Oban to Osaka – as part of BBC Proms Japan – it has performed across Scotland and around the world, its concerts regularly featured on BBC Radio 3, Radio Scotland, Sounds, and BBC TV and iPlayer. Opening eyes and ears with ambitious repertoire beyond any benchmark, the Orchestra is Scotland's leading champion of new music and across nine decades has commissioned works by the most original voices of its time. It presents an annual

Tectonics Festival of new and experimental music alongside Ilan Volkov, its Creative Partner. The Orchestra runs projects that inspire creativity and connection with families, schools, and communities across Scotland and, through a close association with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, mentors the next generation of conductors, composers, and instrumentalists. Ryan Wigglesworth, one of the foremost composer-conductors of his generation, began his tenure as Chief Conductor in September 2022 and has directed a wide range of repertoire, including the ballets of Stravinsky, major works by Elgar, and UK premières of works by György Kurtág and Hans Abrahamsen. Following her BBC Proms début, in September 2025, Delyana Lazarova assumed the role of Principal Guest Conductor. A regular presence at the Proms and Edinburgh International Festival, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra is the recipient of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award and four *Gramophone* Awards. www.bbc.co.uk/bbcscso

Chief Conductor of the Oulu Sinfonia since January 2022, the British maestro **Rumon Gamba** has previously served as Principal Conductor and Music Director of NorrlandsOperan (2008 – 15), Chief Conductor of Aalborg Symfoniorkester (2011 – 15), and Chief Conductor and Music Director of the

Iceland Symphony Orchestra (2002 – 10). He regularly leads the BBC orchestras and has appeared at the BBC Proms on a number of occasions. A champion of new music, he has conducted several high profile premières, including the world premières of Nico Muhly's *Two Boys*, at English National Opera, and Brett Dean's *Viola Concerto*, with the composer as soloist and the BBC Symphony Orchestra; the national premières of Poul Ruders's *Dancer in the Dark* and Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Blood on the Floor* and *Scherzoid*, with NorrlandsOperan; and the Australian première of the original version of Sibelius's Symphony No. 5, with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. To celebrate the status of Umeå as European Capital of Culture, he conducted NorrlandsOperan in a critically acclaimed epic outdoor production of *Elektra*, with the Spanish theatrical group La Fura dels Baus. In 2016 he conducted Mats Larsson Gothe's *The African Prophetess* with the orchestra of NorrlandsOperan and Cape Town Opera Chorus as part of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra's Composer Week.

Rumon Gamba is a sought-after guest conductor by orchestras such as the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, Brussels Philharmonic, Helsingborgs Symfoniorkester, Romanian Radio National

Orchestra, Göteborgs Symfoniker, Kristiansand Symfoniorkester, Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, Lahti Symphony Orchestra, Warsaw Philharmonic, WDR Funkhausorchester Köln, and Münchner Rundfunkorchester. He has conducted a successful Stravinsky ballet double bill for Finnish National Opera and Ballet and a production of *Die Zauberflöte* at Oulu City Theatre where, celebrating the European Year of Culture in Oulu, he recently conducted a new commission of a Sámi opera entitled *Ovllá*. During the 2025 – 26 season he also conducted the first performances in Finland of Bernstein's *Mass*, in Oulu.

He has recorded exclusively for Chandos Records for over twenty years, his projects including a series devoted to orchestral works

by d'Indy with the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, the first of which was nominated for a Grammy Award. His Chandos discography also includes, as well as more than a dozen albums with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, recordings of works by the Swedish composer Dag Wirén, British overtures and tone poems with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Finnish overtures and other orchestral works with the Oulu Sinfonia, and works by Malcolm Williamson, Sir Malcolm Arnold, Miklós Rózsa, and Ruth Gipps. He is now launching a new recording project with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. The Royal Academy of Music recognised his contribution to music by making Rumon Gamba an Associate, in 2002, and a Fellow, in 2017.



Rumon Gamba

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**BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, with its Chief Conductor,
Ryan Wigglesworth**

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