

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE BACH/KODÁLY LEGACY:
THE SOLO CELLO'S THREE-HUNDRED-YEAR
EVOLUTION

Gozde Yasar, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2013

Directed By: Professor Evelyn Elsing, School of Music

This dissertation project is comprised of three recitals that share similar qualities: all the works performed are unaccompanied, employing implied or actual bass accompaniment under lyrical lines, open-string sonorities, and the use of scordatura—techniques which early composers, most notably Johann Sebastian Bach, pioneered. For some two hundred years, the concept of utilizing the cello as a solo instrument lay dormant, until Zoltán Kodály, with his magnificent *Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 8*, opened the door to the cello's infinite range of possibilities, inspiring composers of future generations to explore its powers through boldly complex or freely-improvised rhythms, exotic or multi-tonalities, and an almost infinite array of special effects.

The first recital features the *Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 8* by the Hungarian Zoltán Kodály, and works by two young American composers: *A Solo for Cello*, by Suzanne Farrin; and *Darkbloom*, by Chad Robinson. I have chosen to combine and perform them as one entity without intermission.

The second recital highlights Turkish composers. Ahmed Adnan Saygun represents the first generation of the Turkish-Western contemporary music with his *Partita*. İlhan Usmanbaş's *Music for Solo Cello*, Mehmet Aktuğ's *Bis* and *Scherzo*, and Kamran İnce's *MKG Variations* will also be presented, exploring more modern compositional styles with current cello technique.

The third recital focuses on the works of American composers, with one exception: the American works are *Sonata for Solo Violoncello* by George Crumb; *Figment for Cello 1994* by Elliott Carter; *For Cello Solo* by Leon Kirchner, and *Carpo di terra* by Suzanne Farrin. *Requiem*, by the Australian Peter Sculthorpe, concludes the dissertation presentations with a pure early-church-music quality, employing a striking low B-flat open string resonance throughout the piece.

The recitals were performed on 10 December, 2012 in the Ulrich Hall; 08 May, 2013; and 04 November, 2013 in the Leah M. Smith Hall of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. The recitals were recorded on compact discs and are archived within the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM).

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THE SOLO CELLO'S THREE-HUNDRED-YEAR
EVOLUTION

By

Gozde Yasar

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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of the requirements for the degree of
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I would also like to thank my committee members; Kathrine Murdock and Rita Sloan for their chamber music coachings, David Teie for inspiring me during his pedagogy classes, and Drew Baden for his time and support in coming to my recitals.

I really owe my deepest gratitude to both my mom and dad for their never ending love and patience during my life time; none of this would be possible especially without my mom. Thank you for your encouragement that has been truly precious throughout my life.

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PROGRAMS

Dissertation Recital I
December 10, 2012 8:00pm
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
Ulrich Recital Hall

Gozde Yasar, cello

A Solo for Cello (2002)

Suzanne Farrin (b. 1976)

“Darkbloom” (2010)

Chad Robinson (b. 1982)

(tuning)

Sonata for Violoncello Solo, Op. 8 (1915)

Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967)

1. Allegro maestoso ma appassionato
2. Adagio (con grand' espressione)
3. Allegro molto vivace d'Arethuse

Dissertation Recital II
May 8, 2013 5:00pm
Leah M. Smith Hall

Gozde Yasar, cello

“Bis” (Encore) for Solo Cello (1986)

Mehmet Aktuğ (1959–2009)

Scherzo for Solo Cello (1988)

Partita for Solo Cello (1954)

Ahmed Adnan Saygun (1907–1991)

INTERMISSION

Music for Solo Cello (1994)

İlhan Usmanbaş (b. 1921)

MKG Variations (1998)

Kamran İnce (b. 1960)

Dissertation Recital III
November 4, 2013 8:00pm
Leah M. Smith Hall

Gozde Yasar, cello

Solo Sonata for Violoncello (1955)

George Crumb (b. 1929)

1. Fantasia. Andante espressivo e con molto rubato
2. Tema pastorale con variazioni
3. Toccata. Largo e drammatico - Allegro vivace

Figment for Cello 1994

Elliott Carter (1908–2012)

“Carpo di terra” (Flesh of the Earth) (2012)

Suzanne Farrin (b. 1976)

INTERMISSION

Solo for Cello (1986)

Leon Kirchner (b. 1919)

Requiem for Cello Alone (1979)

Peter Sculthorpe (b. 1929)

1. Introit
2. Kyrie
3. Qui Mariam
4. Lacrimosa
5. Libera me
6. Lux aeterna

CHAPTER 1: Recital No. 1 Program Notes

Chad Robinson (b. 1982), *Darkbloom*

Darkbloom for solo cello by the young American composer Chad Robinson uses multiple musical materials within the piece. During the year Robinson composed this work (2010-11,) he was searching to find his artistic compositional voice. I premiered the piece at the Klasik Keyifler Music Festival in Cappadocia, Turkey.

In one of his writings he says: “Even postmodernism is a reaction against modernism but by keeping this quality of reaction against the old, it is maintaining a very strong aspect of modernism in the very core of its nature. This more than begs the question: How can one create new music that is modern but does not maintain the exhausted quality of being inherently reactionary?” We can see that the composer aims for the success through the creation of an expressive language that simultaneously moves towards and away from tradition. Therefore, this one thirteen-minute-long piece is a work that still searches and questions these ideas through its two contrasting motives, technical and vocal, in a convincing way. Robinson likely used the *flautando* technique to convey a sense of wandering throughout the work. This work relates to the other two works performed on the first program with its very expressive and contrasting style, along with its intervallic relationships throughout; it is especially similar to Kodaly’s compositional style in this sense. It also shows some similarity to Farrin’s work in mood by employing pedal points during the middle part. The harmonic qualities of this work do not rely on specific modes or pitch sets but instead on intervallic relationships. Robinson’s work has an unusual

opening, due to its unsettled but still beautiful sixteenth-note *tremolo* turns, which have an exotic feel. The end of the work transitions very nicely into Farrin's work.

Suzanne Farrin (b. 1976), *A Solo for Cello*

A Solo for Cello (2001) by Suzanne Farrin is a student piece having only one movement lasting around four to five minutes. In one of my conversations with her, she directly expressed herself saying: "I was very intrigued by the way of J. S. Bach's suites. How could he make an instrument its own accompaniment? That happens through the *pizzicato* in my work." The work moves like a slow pendulum that swings forward, then retreats back to a place close to where it started, slightly transformed. She thought of it as a meditation; this might have been why she marked the beginning "Very free, like a lament with long, endless phrases (*rubato* throughout)." Therefore, we hear in this piece many different methods of expression, which bear similarities to compositions of both Robinson and Kodály, with *glissandos* and *pizzicatos* during the piece. At the time, Suzanne Farrin was also starting to experiment with the colors of microtones (quarter-tones); so, each phrase was a step further into that world between tempered pitches, which can be heard especially during the free *tremolos*.

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), *Solo Sonata for Cello, Op. 8*

Arguably, the *Solo Sonata for Cello, Op. 8* by Zoltán Kodály is his most ambitious, ingenious and original work among his string oeuvre. Belá Bartók in one of his 1921 articles, titled "The New Music of Hungary," states that there was no work similar to this type; Kodály here achieved a brilliant cello work with surprising vocal effects in a most

unusual and original style. World War I had an important impact on this work. After Kodály was declared unfit for the military service,¹ he renewed his interest in Hungarian folk music. The premiere of the Sonata had to wait three years because of the war.

The unaccompanied cello found a new voice with Kodály's solo sonata, after a wait of nearly two hundred years since J.S. Bach's six great cello suites. It is a big question whether it was because the important cellists of the day were advancing the technical boundaries of the instrument, or because the romantic piano and cello duo trend was already capturing audiences with its beautiful repertory.

Kodály conceived many of his original ideas for solo cello with respect for the traditional form within his free compositional style. An example of this comes at the beginning of the first movement where he emphasizes B on both top and bottom strings. It seems Kodály took advantage of the *scordatura* idea from J.S. Bach's fifth suite; in this sonata he turns down the two lower strings (normally tuned to G and C) to F# and B; subsequently the B chord could ring freely. Kodály emphasizes modal scales and pentatonic scales, both of which are common in Hungarian folk music; he clearly believes in strong relationships between tonic and dominant, which is evident in this work. Two different Hungarian dance types can easily be felt either in the intimate, vocal slow folk song character in *parlando-rubato* rhythm, or the fiery and dance-like character in *tempo giusto* throughout the sonata's three movements. The composer marked *espressivo* so that the performer actually sounds free and musical just following the composer's indications. Likely, this original idea came from the pedagogical instinct he had; Kodály seems to communicate every single idea cleanly to the performer, in a sense

¹ Morrison, Chris. "Zoltán Kodály Sonata for solo cello, Op. 8." Accessed December, 2012. <http://www.allmusic.com/composition/sonata-for-solo-cello-op-8-mc0002364231>

teaching musicality through his expressive markings such as articulations, dynamics, tempos and musical terms.

CHAPTER 2: Recital No. 2 Program Notes

This solo recital presents the unaccompanied cello compositions by Turkish composers: Ahmed Adnan Saygun, representing the first generation; İlhan Usmanbaş, representing the second generation; and finally Mehmet Aktuğ and Kamran İnce, representing the third generation of Turkish-Western contemporary music.

Mehmet Aktuğ (1959–2009), *Bis* and *Scherzo*

Mehmet Aktuğ was born in İstanbul and began his music studies as a violin student at the İzmir State Conservatory along with his composition studies in the class of the famous Turkish composer Muhammer Sun. Upon his graduation the young composer made his way to Germany where he enrolled at the Düsseldorf Music Academy. After coming back to Turkey, he was invited to teach harmony, analysis and composition at the State Conservatory in İzmir. I will be playing his compositions *Bis* and *Scherzo* without any break. The composer has a very sweet way of composing for a string instrument; his sound expectation in these two solo cello pieces might have originated from his violin studies since he employs a very high register in a lyrical way. Especially *Bis*, which means encore (composed in 1986) shows a wide use of the cello fingerboard. The composer gives freedom to the performer by indicating *Ad libitum* at the beginning of the piece, though he still indicates a regular meter (4/4) (similar to İlhan Usmanbaş in his work) to prevent the performer from going off the pulse too much. The note C is very important in this work since each gesture ends with this note and connects to the next small section following a comma. I have chosen to open the recital with

this piece instead of using it as an encore, due to its intimate, sweet and also free compositional style.

The *Scherzo*, composed in 1988, has a very furious and lively character in a speedy tempo. The middle part follows a chromatic outline around minor thirds and octaves within several rhythmic gestures, *glissandos* and *tremolos*. The sudden Legato part uses the open D string on the bottom to create a mysterious melody before the vivid section comes back. The composer ends the work by almost quietly disappearing; however, he surprises the audience and uses a very strong *Bartók pizzicato* at the end after a long crescendo.

Ahmed Adnan Saygun (1907–1991), *Solo Partita, Op. 31*

The Turkish ‘Five’, encompassing Saygun, Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Cemil Reşit Rey, Hasan Ferit Alnar and Yalçın Tura, achieved great success outside Turkey. Ahmet Adnan Saygun was the first advocate of change in musical reforms leading Turkey to embrace Western compositional techniques over Classical Ottoman Turkish composition in the 1920s. Saygun traveled to France after receiving a grant from the Turkish State and studied counterpoint, harmony, orchestration, organ and composition. After his student years in France, French impressionism played a big role in his compositions.

Saygun and Bartók became great friends when Béla Bartók visited Turkey in 1936 for lectures, concerts and a two-week expedition to rural parts of southern Anatolia to make recordings and transcriptions of folk music.¹ Saygun accompanied Bartók and Kodály on their travels around the country, collecting and transcribing folk songs all through Anatolia. Saygun was heavily influenced by Bartók’s music during this period, especially by his string quartets. Saygun also wrote and published many books about teaching music as an

¹ Woodard, Kathryn. “Western Music in Turkey from the Nineteenth Century to the Present.” Accessed April, 2013. <http://www.newmusicon.org/v11n1/v111turkey.html>

ethnomusicologist and a teacher. He greatly influenced the development of western music in Turkey, and helped to establish several new music institutions.

The *Solo Partita, Op. 31*, written in 1954, is a perfect example for Saygun's interest in Western art. The work is comprised of five movements. The first movement, Lento, is based on its first two measures' motives; both rhythmic and intervallic relations introduced at the beginning haunt the whole movement. The open C string sonority is heard continually throughout the movement. The second movement, Vivo, uses different modal scales within various rhythms; 5/8 and 9/8, as very traditional Turkish rhythms, are very dominant in this movement. The Adagio presents a very linear, breathless melody within a modal structure that utilizes pentatonic scales. The thirty-second ascending and descending technical passages still denote the sensitivity and the intensity of this beautiful movement. The Allegretto uses the modal scales in a very original style; the intervallic relation between G and C-flat gives an authentic feeling to this folk song. In the final movement, the materials presented in the first two measures can be heard throughout the movement. There are also references to the first and fourth movements. It prepares the end with the Lento coming back from the beginning of the *Partita* ending the whole work the way it started; as though the C-string sonority never disappeared.

İlhan Usmanbaş (b. 1921), *Music for Solo Cello*

İlhan Usmanbaş is one of the second generation of Turkish composers who came after the 'Five.' He studied composition with Adnan Saygun though his style embraces freedom of form and density, with techniques that include neo-classicism, chance music, twelve tone, serialism, and minimalism. He has won awards including commissions from the Koussevitzky Foundation in the United States. The composer wrote *Music for Solo Cello* in 1994 in memory of Witold Lutosławski. The work represents contemporary compositional technique,

and follows the Pointillist approach employing several techniques on the cello with much dynamic and character contrast. In this piece, even though the composer reminds us to heed the bar lines in the notation (3/8), he invites a free style so that each performance may feature different qualities and interpretation each time it is played. I have experimented in voicing the colors and the unique articulations emphasized by the composer, observing his notation from my perspective.

Kamran İnce (b. 1960), *MKG Variations*

American and Turkish composer Kamran İnce was born in Montana in 1960. After moving to Turkey in 1966, he started his cello and piano studies at the Ankara Conservatory, and took composition lessons from İlhan Baran.

MKG Variations, which had its debut in 1999 by Steven Ross, harbours sonorous qualities of ringing open strings (especially G) on the cello. The first material introduced is very calm and fragile which in its variations exhibits different moods such as: a percussive pizzicato section, furious and expressive lines, ascending scalar motions, and strikingly dark qualities. After having so much to say in a delicate and patient manner, the work closes with a final presentation of the original theme, before dissolving into silence.

The composer explains his piece with his own words:

“MKG Variations for cello is commissioned by Marlene Guzman. The work takes advantage of the sonorous qualities of the open strings on the cello. The piece stems out of a spiritual impulse. The first idea, an idea of calm yet anticipatory stasis, acts as a theme which is then varied in a string of variations. The variations range from a passionate expression of the theme to a percussive one; from an angry one to an extremely delicate one; from one that is somewhat Bach-like to one that is fleeting, but

frozen in time; to one that is more raw and unforgiving. The work closes with a final presentation of the original theme, dissolving into silence, where it once originated from.”²

² İnce, Kamran. “MKG Variations (cello version) (1999).” Accessed April 20, 2013. <http://kamranince.com/html/compositions.php?id=80&page=1>

CHAPTER 3: Recital No. 3 Program Notes

George Crumb (b. 1929), *Solo Sonata for Violoncello*

American composer George Crumb (b. 1929) studied in his early days in Berlin, on a scholarship with Boris Blacher at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik.

The spirit of Bach (particularly the Bach of the Suites for Unaccompanied Cello) hovers over this *Cello Sonata*, which shows a debt to that earlier master in its form, clarity of expression, and classical balance.¹ It is in three movements, a fantasia (which corresponds to the Praeludium of the Bach suites), a series of variations, and a toccata. In the opening movement, Crumb employs the descending thirds and dissonant pizzicato chords with a controlling theme. The second movement is a theme and three variations with a coda: He describes the central melody as a Tema pastorale and asks that its first statement be *Grazioso e delicato*. Toccata, the energetic and a virtuoso closing movement, is based on stacked minor triads. The movement begins with a dramatic Largo recitative, opening with a startling octave double stop, then rushes ahead acting as the perfect foil for the driving, unrelenting Allegro vivace. Allegro vivace concludes with a powerful inversion of its opening material, and with its contrasting almost lyrical middle section, forms a palindrome-like structure.

Elliott Carter (1908–2012), *Figment for Solo Cello 1994* (no. 1)

American composer Elliott Carter, who was born in 1908. Of this work he writes:

“The idea of composing a solo cello piece had been in the back of my mind for many years, especially since many cellists had been urging me to do so. When Thomas Demenga asked me for this at my 85th birthday concert in Basel (in 1994) for a concert he was giving sponsored by the Naumburg Foundation

¹Washington Performance Arts Society. “George Crumb, Sonata for Solo Cello.” Accessed November 8, 2013. <http://www.wpas.org/calendar/view.aspx?id=1955>

in New York, I soon set to work. Thomas Demenga had already impressed me greatly when he played some of my chamber works at my 80th birthday concert in Badenweiler, Germany and especially by his wonderful recording of these works for ECM, New Series. *Figment*, for solo cello, presents a variety of contrasting, dramatic moments, using material derived from one musical idea.’’²

By the time Carter studied with Mlle. Boulanger, the composers like Scriabin and Debussy had ceased to interest him very much, but by that time he had also come to admire Bartók and Hindemith, who were both contrapuntal composers to him. Boulanger also led Carter and the other students through many of the Bach cantatas during the three years he was in Paris; each week he’d read through two or three of them. So, he was very much influenced by different sources, and had already become an accomplished well-known composer by the time he wrote this short piece. Here, Carter employs melodic expressive lines, rhythmic gestures, and pizzicatos that punctuate the phrases elegantly. The delicate lines often return to the large intervals of a 10th and a 12th. The composer asks the performer to sustain both notes of these large intervals (towards the end), something very rarely found in the cello repertoire.³

Suzanne Farrin (b. 1976), *Carpo di terra (Flesh of the Earth)*

Young American composer Suzanne Farrin’s *Carpo di terra* was premiered, and the CD was also released in the winter of 2012, and I happened to see the debut at Columbia University. I was already interested in Suzanne Farrin’s earlier work, *A Solo for Cello*, and performed it in my first dissertation recital. I really like how the composer uses the silences, and how extreme points come along suddenly, and dialogues are very exposed within one part. She uses the scordatura in *Carpo di terra* tuning the A string to G (remembering J. S. Bach’s 5th Cello Suite tuning) which gives darker tone colors and sonorities to the cello sound. The dynamic

² Edwards, Allen. *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds: A Conversation with Elliott Carter*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1972

³ Quartet, Momenta. “Elliott Carter.” Accessed by November 2, 2013. <http://www.momentaquartet.com/staying-up-late/>

palette includes crescendos to deliberate screaming distortion, circling around central pitches in a series of expanded gestures alternating with contemplative harmonics and silences, almost encouraging exploration of the inner life of sound as it disintegrates into silence.

According to Suzanne Farrin, her new composition addresses memory, reflected in nostalgic allusions to the baroque allemande through figurations, trills, and glissandi. Pitched worlds submerge and resurface transformed, extended or untouched as the texts swoop in and out of utterance, as memories are not fixed, but rather take a life of their own.

Leon Kirchner (1919–2009), *For Solo Cello*

Leon Kirchner's *For Cello Solo* is a demanding work musically. Technically: it is not traditionally idiomatic because it does not have a primary key or significant central pitch. Because of its lack of idiomatic writing, it has a unique sound and is a uniquely challenging unaccompanied cello work. In the piece, Kirchner opens the work with an energetic set of thirty-second notes that becomes a thematic gesture throughout the work. Kirchner uses a grand staff to clarify for the performer the idea of two voices, one often accompanying the other. The performer can magnify the difference between voices for the audience by changing the tone color. Kirchner also provides explicit directions for timing to differentiate the two voices by employing varying fermati.⁴ Because the work (composed by a pianist) was originally conceived for the violin, it is uniquely challenging for cellists.

Peter Sculthorpe (b. 1929), *Requiem for Cello Alone*

Peter Sculthorpe was born in the Island State of Tasmania in 1929, and has become one of Australia's best-known composers. Several other of his major works produced in the late 1970s represented a belated flowering of his 'love affair' with Japan, including the

⁴ Ludwig, Aaron B. *Lonely Cello: A Performer's Analysis of Leon Kirchner's "For Cello Solo"* (PhD diss., University of Miami, 2011)

incantatory *Requiem for Solo Cello* (1979).⁵ This Requiem's sections are comprised of a Mass for the Dead; melodic material of each movement is drawn from Gregorian chant. The long, contemplative lines of the music and the inventive harmonic support (including tuning the bottom C string of the cello to a B-flat) create high lyrical moments in character.

According to the composer, the idea of using the Plainsong Mass as source material for a work has interested him for some years. It seems to be especially appropriate in writing for the particular tumbrel and expressive qualities of the cello; an added richness of sonority is gained by lowering the pitch of the fourth string.

For the most part, the music reflects the words of the chosen parts of the Latin text, so that where the text is in the third person, singular or plural, Sculthorpe has used plainchant, and where it is in the first person he has used a more personal music. The work, therefore, alternates between the coolness and objectivity of plainchant, and the war as written as his words in the first page of his published sheet music.

⁵ Skinner, Graeme. Peter Sculthorpe: The Making of an Australian Composer. Sidney: UNSW Press, 2007

Recital CD No. 1 – Track Listings

Chad Robinson (b. 1982)

1. Darkbloom 12:59

Suzanne Farrin (b. 1976)

2. A Solo for Cello..... 4:20

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)

Sonata for Solo Cello (1915)

3. Allegro maestoso ma appassionato..... 11:15
4. Adagio (con grand' espressione) 13:06
5. Allegro molto vivace d'Arethuse 13:07

Gozde Yasar, cello

Recorded December 10, 2012 in the Ulrich Recital Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland School of Music, College Park
Recorded and Mastered by Opusrite™ Audio Productions
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Recital CD No. 2 – Track Listings

Mehmet Aktuğ (1959-2009)

1. “Bis” (1986)..... 3:56
2. Scherzo (1988)..... 2:43

Ahmed Adnan Saygun (1907-1991)

Solo Partita for Cello (1954)

3. Lento 4:52
4. Vivo 2:45
5. Adagio 6:29
6. Allegretto 4:08
7. Finale 4:23

İlhan Usmanbaş (b. 1921)

8. Music for Solo Cello (1994) 10:24

Kamran İnce (b. 1960)

9. MKG Variations (1998)..... 13:38

Gozde Yasar, cello

Recorded May 8, 2013 in the Leah M. Smith Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center,
University of Maryland School of Music, College Park
Recorded and Mastered by Michael Mermagen.
mermagen@cua.edu

Recital CD No. 3 – Track Listings

George Crumb (b. 1929)

Sonata for Solo Violoncello (1955)

1. Fantasia 4:20
2. Tema pastorale con variazioni 5:19
3. Toccata 2:52

Elliott Carter (1908-2012)

4. Figment for Solo Cello (1994) 6:38

Suzanne Farrin (b.1976)

5. Carpo di terra (2012) 10:47

Leon Kirchner (1919-2009)

6. For Solo Cello (1986) 13:17

Peter Sculthorpe (b. 1929)

Requiem for cello alone (1979)

7. Introit 2:31
8. Kyrie 2:21
9. Qui Mariam 4:25
10. Lacrimosa 2:17
11. Libera me 2:42
12. Lux aeterna 4:28

Gozde Yasar, cello

Recorded November 4, 2013 in the Leah M. Smith Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland School of Music, College Park

Recorded and Mastered by Opusrite™ Audio Productions

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