



Saturday, March 2, at 7:30 pm
and Sunday, March 3, at 2 pm

Worley Barton Theater at Brentwood Christian School
11908 North Lamar Blvd., Austin (see map, pg. 8)

Advance purchase tickets: \$20 for adults, \$15 for
students over 18, \$8 for 18 & under; VIP tickets \$50

from www.gilbertsullivan.org

or call 512-474-5664, or buy at the door (higher price)

Ahoy! On March 2 and 3, *H.M.S. Pinafore* will dock once again in Austin at the Worley Barton Theater at Brentwood Christian School. This Gilbert & Sullivan comic opera has been a firm favorite with audiences since its premiere in England 1878. While billed as a “concert production,” GSA Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.** won’t be able to refrain from bringing some staging to the work, collaborating once again with Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**—who will have another role to play, too. (See below.)

H.M.S. Pinafore will be presented in its entirety, with principals and chorus and grand-piano accompaniment provided by **Jeanne Sasaki**.

After something of a rocky start in London, *H.M.S. Pinafore* took the English-speaking world by storm in 1878-79—especially in this country where “*Pinafore* mania” was seen in frequent quotations (“What, *never?*”) in the popular press, toys (“Little Buttercup’s Dolly Clothes Pins”) and various household products (from hams to German Laundry Soap!) linked with the various characters. Gilbert and Sullivan and their impresario Richard D’Oyly Carte even traveled to New York to present the authentic version, with Sullivan’s original orchestrations and Gilbert’s irresistible staging. And it has delighted countless audiences ever since.

Featured in the production are some of your favorite GSA Savoyards, with **Arthur DiBianca** playing Sir Joseph Porter (“the ruler of the Queen’s navee”) and **Robert LeBas** as Captain Corcoran (who “never swears a big, big D”). **Reagan Murdock** will be the dastardly Dick Deadeye, and **Bruno Barbosa** and **Scott Poppaw** will play Bill Bobstay and Bob Becket.

Josephine, the captain’s daughter, will be played by **Chantal Freeman**; her Ralph Rackstraw will be—**Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**! **Abigail Adams** will be Cousin Hebe, and **Bonnie Bogovich** will play Little Buttercup, that pivotal person whose past resolves the plot and clears the path to true love for Josephine and Ralph—and two other couples—and, by implication, the chorus, too! That chorus will be composed of about a dozen sailors, sisters, cousins, and aunts, almost all of them familiar to our regular audience, but with some welcome newcomers, too. Both performances will have surtitles.

Iolanthe Auditions

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin will hold auditions for *Iolanthe* on Saturday, February 23, from 10 am to 6 pm, and on Sunday, February 24, from 1:30 pm to 6 pm, at Abiding Love Lutheran Church, 7210 Brush Country Road (west of MoPac, south of US 290). **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.** and **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** will be Artistic and Music Directors, respectively, and **Bill Hatcher** returns as production manager. Please see Stage Director MacPhail’s audition notes on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter for a description of the opera and its characters.

Auditions are approximately ten minutes long and are by appointment only. Call Sarah Slaughter at (806) 557-0306 between 7 am and 8 pm or email audition@gilbertsullivan.org to reserve a time slot. All roles are open for casting, including principals and chorus. All performers will be compensated.

Those auditioning should **memorize** a song from Gilbert & Sullivan or something similar that will show their voice and range to best advantage. **It is mandatory to provide a copy of the music for the accompanist. Please note that no unaccompanied (a cappella) or self-accompanied auditions will be heard.** Although an accompanist will be provided, singers are welcome to bring their own if they wish. Please visit our website at www.gilbertsullivan.org/SummerProduction.htm for a libretto. A completed audition form (available from the site) is required, and a résumé and headshot are requested.

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The Sing-Along by Mary Hendren



"Yes, you can sing. If I can sing, you can sing. It's just communication."

With this encouragement and some friendly cajoling, **Robert L. Schneider** drew the audience, those with outstanding voices and we who make a joyful noise, into a few vocal exercises that prepared us for our part in the show. It was a great show and a great audience with visitors from as far away as Massachusetts. **Steve McCary**, the new president of the Houston G&S Society, drove to Austin for the event and invited us to come to Houston for their Society's summer production of *The Mikado*.



*Houston G&S Society
Pres. Steve McCary*

What would we sing?

"Only what's in the red letters!"

With lyrics projected on a screen, and our chorus parts in red, it was easy to relax and get into the comic joy of things.



Bob — "Getting to know you"



Bob — "My gallant crew"

When Bob donned a three-cornered hat and became Captain Corcoran of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, he sang "My gallant crew." We challenged his boast "of never using 'the big, big D'" with "What, *never?*" and

finished off the musical query by praising the good captain.

Later **Sam Johnson** picked up the same hat, adjusted it to a jaunty tricorne, and convinced us that "it is a glorious thing to be a Pirate King." We, the pirate crew, sang our approval of a foray into piracy. It was a sweet moment for us all when his daughter **Dorothy** called out clearly as he returned to his chair, "You did good, Daddy!"



Sam as the Pirate King

The GSA singers and audience members seemed to go above and beyond what was asked for the occasion. Bob Schneider challenged **Jeanne Sasaki** to a double-time encore after his rendition of "I am the very model of a modern Major General." **Gary Hallock** wore a clever costume; ever the master of puns, he quipped, "I thought it was a costume party. And you know

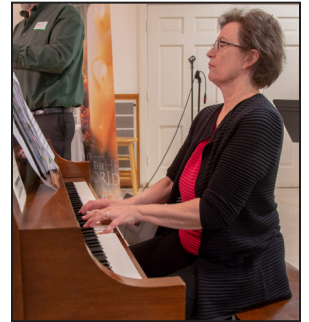


*Gary — "Time was,
when love and I were well
acquainted"*

the costumer is always right." When we were about to skip "He is an Englishman!" because the planned singer did not arrive, Sam Johnson called out, "I'll do it!" and did it in a remarkable fashion. **Chuck Antonie**, who manages our concession table at major productions, contributed a generous array of refreshments.

When the audience was not singing, we listened to solos, duets,

and trios from *The Mikado*, *Trial by Jury*, *Princess Ida*, *The Sorcerer*, *Iolanthe*, and *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Thanks to **Jeanne Sasaki** for her skillful accompaniment (ably assisted by page-turner **Zimm Davis**) and to the talented performers who entertained us with some of the Gilbert & Sullivan selections: **Sam Johnson**, **Susan Johnston Taylor**, **Iona Olive**, **Jacob Williams**, **Wayne Davis**, **Bethany Ammon**, **June Julian**, **Steven Long**, **Bill Hatcher**, **Gary Hallock**, and **Loel Graber**.



Pianist Jeanne Sasaki



Bob — "The twelve days of Christmas"

Bob casually divided the audience into 12 groups and orchestrated our singing of "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Each group had to sing what gift was given on its day. Accompanying himself on the guitar, Bob began the song with gusto. But we, as the voices of each day, got off to a rocky start. After much laughter and friendly ribbing, the audience finished the song. It must be confessed that Bethany Ammon saved the day for the "Five Golden Rings" group...well, in fact she stole the show!

We ended the afternoon by singing two favorites: "Hail, Poetry" and "Now to the banquet we press," the lyrics of which are a fitting invitation to friendly conversation at the refreshment table.



All join "Hail, Poetry"



*The
banquet
table*

More Views of the Sing-Along



President Libby Weed welcomes all



Bill — “If you give me your attention”



Iona and Gary — “Dear friends, take pity on my lot”



Bethany — “Alone, and yet alive”



Wayne — “When first my old, old love I knew”



Major-General Bob



Steven — “A more humane Mikado”



Iona and Jacob — “Things are seldom what they seem”



Susan — “The hours creep on apace”



Iona, June, and Bethany — “Three little maids from school are we”



June — “The sun, whose rays are all ablaze”



Loel — “The Law is the true embodiment”



Bob — “As some day it may happen”



Sam — “He is an Englishman”



Producer/Director Janette Jones

*photos here and the Board photo on page 6 courtesy Steve Schwartzman
see more at gilbertsullivanatx.smugmug.com*

Audition Notes on *Iolanthe*

by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.



Iolanthe; or, The Peer and the Peri (1882) is almost universally regarded as the most beautiful and fanciful of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas, and one of their most popular works with Savoyards who love them all; its première followed the “three P’s”—a string of hits that included *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and *Patience*. Sullivan’s score is

sometimes compared with Mendelssohn, and Gilbert’s libretto is filled with political satire, for which he was becoming famous, and irresistible comedy—especially when the fairy world comes into conflict with the mortal one.

Iolanthe was written for the actor-singers at the Savoy (it was the first Gilbert & Sullivan work to première there), most of whom had created roles in earlier Gilbert & Sullivan productions. So there are roles for tenor and soprano, mezzo and baritone, heavy baritone and contralto. But Gilbert, as usual, brought new wrinkles to character types, as I hope will be seen below.

Set in an Arcadian Landscape (Act I) and in Palace Yard, Westminster, outside the Houses of Parliament with Big Ben prominent (Act II), the story moves from a sunny, rural fairyland to a romantic and iconic urban setting by moonlight as the mortal world and fairy world “mix it up” with irresistibly comic results.

In Act I, we meet the fairies

Tripping hither, tripping thither,
Nobody knows why or whither.

The formidable Fairy Queen appears, and her band request that she pardon their sister-fairy Iolanthe, who had been banished 25 years earlier for the crime of marrying a mortal! The Fairy Queen relents, and Iolanthe appears rising from the bottom of a stream where she has lived (ugh!) among the frogs since her banishment. In short order, Iolanthe is reunited with her son Strephon, an Arcadian shepherd who (because of his parentage) is half-fairy and half-mortal. Strephon, we learn, is in love with a fully-mortal shepherdess named Phyllis, but the smitten Lord Chancellor of England is against the union, for he has eyes for Phyllis himself.

The fairies leave, assuring Strephon of their help if needed with his amour, just as Phyllis appears. Strephon learns that the entire House of Lords is in love with Phyllis, but Phyllis assures Strephon that “None shall part us from each other” in a lovely duet.

Enter the entire House of Peers (“Loudly let the trumpet bray! Tantantara!”) in their ceremonial finery, and finally the Lord Chancellor with his train-bearer. The entrance of mortals into fairyland leads to complications many and humorous, culminating in Act I with the Fairy Queen declaring vengeance on the Lord Chancellor who insultingly “took her for the proprietor of a Ladies’ Seminary”!

In Act II, Strephon has been sent to Parliament by the Fairy Queen. We meet Private Willis, a contemplative sentry, outside the Houses of Parliament. And we learn that Iolanthe’s husband was the Lord Chancellor, and so Strephon is his son! Iolanthe begs his mercy, and the Fairy Queen is astounded to learn that her fairies have fallen

in love with the Peers! She threatens death to them all, which is in accordance with Fairy Law, but the Lord Chancellor suggests that a slight alteration in the wording of the law would solve the problem—and it does!

This bare-bones synopsis doesn’t even address the comic wooing of Phyllis by Lords Mountararat and Tolloller, the Lord Chancellor’s famous patter-song, Private Willis’s musings on life’s ironies, and so many other delights such as the magnificent choruses, beautiful solos, lovely duets and trios, and funny ensembles with sometimes quirky little dances that are hallmarks of Gilbert & Sullivan productions. The Act I finale is regarded by many—myself included—as the best of these extended musical delights in the series.

My purpose below is to provide information for performers concerning the auditions and the characters in *Iolanthe*. If you’re planning to audition, please read this in its entirety. And even if you’re *not*, please read it anyway: I hope you will find it interesting—and that it will give you a foretaste of the delights coming in June!

Auditions will be held on Saturday and Sunday, February 23rd and 24th. Music Director and Conductor **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** and I request that auditionees memorize a song from Gilbert & Sullivan or something similar that will show their voice and range to best advantage. It is also mandatory to provide a copy of the music for the auditions accompanist. No a cappella auditions will be heard and the song must be in English. An accompanist will be provided, but singers will be welcome to bring their own accompanist if they wish.

If *Iolanthe* is not in your library, you can read or download the libretto from Gilbert & Sullivan Austin’s website (www.gilbertsullivan.org; click on “Summer Production”). The Gilbert & Sullivan Archive has additional material at <http://math.boisestate.edu/gas/>, where you will be able to read a plot synopsis, see vintage images, or download audio files. Go to GSOpera (www.gsopera.com/opera/54/lexicon) for other good information on the work.

Iolanthe is filled with roles that are fun to play and sing; much of the delight of the work is in the basic conflict of the fairy world meeting mortals—in this case, members of the House of Lords. Confusion results from the fact that fairies “never age” (lucky them!). In addition, the male chorus of Peers has one of the most famous and memorable of all entrances, and the female chorus gets to flit about with their fairy wings and wands, ultimately setting the House of Lords on its ear.

The Chorus of *Iolanthe* is composed of the **Chorus of Peers** (the gentlemen) and the **Chorus of Fairies** (the ladies). **The Men** can be of assorted ages and body-types and must be able to march; however **the women** should be—well, they describe themselves as “dainty little fairies”—and should be able to move balletically.

***Iolanthe* offers ten principal singing/speaking roles and one female chorus role with a short speaking part. The chorus will be composed of 12 men and 12 women.**

About thirty years ago, my friend Jim Ellis (the editor of the definitive edition of Gilbert’s *Bab Ballads*) put together some helpful, if general, “character sketches” for the Valley Light Opera (of Amherst, Massachusetts) *Newsletter*, and he and the editor Bill Venman have given me permission to reproduce it. Jim notes that none of these descriptions are absolute prerequisites (and I agree, of course). He

had recently seen, for instance, a Pooh-Bah who was tall, limp, fey, who was “exceedingly good.” *Quote:*

Iolanthe (mezzo-soprano) – a figure of pathos or tragedy who has wandered into a G&S opera; elegant of movement; capable of sustained emotional highs and lows; poses like the figures on a Greek grave stele.

Phyllis (soprano) – clear, flute-like voice; picturesque; Dresden china doll; naturally temperamental (like spring days of sun and showers); perfectly matched with Strephon; delicately determined.

Fairy Queen (contralto) – commanding presence; powerful voice and gestures; fearful yet lovable; a cross between Margaret Dumont and Brünnhilde, but far more attractive and amorous.

Celia (soprano) – perhaps small and quick; airy and flitty; delicate gestures; staccato (but not shrill) in voice and manner.

Fleta ([chorister with a] speaking part) – should be fleeter, no doubt, than her fellow fairies; all three of the principal fairies should be good dancers.

Strephon (high baritone) – resonant, clear voice; broadly graceful; “inclined to be stout”; confident; unabashed; your all-round Arcadian shepherd, good on the pipes.

Lord Chancellor (baritone) – flawless, effortless diction; stamina; perfect timing; “a clean old [gentle]man”; gouty but agile; deliberate yet ebullient; irascible yet benign.

Lord Mountararat (baritone) – rich, full voice; perhaps a bit of the walrus or Colonel Blimp about him; slightly ponderous; possibly drawly; discreetly arrogant.

Lord Tolloller (tenor) – aristocratic to the point of effiteness; supercilious; possibly stiff-necked and myopic; one of these two lords should, ideally, have the classic equine physiognomy (horse face) of the English aristocracy.

Private Willis (bass) – not like the Lords; low-born, possibly cockney; imperturbable; matter-of-fact; perhaps lacking a marble or two; good, but stiff, bearing; not necessarily tall. *Close Quote.*

The Lord Chancellor’s Train Bearer (non-speaking/singing) – A male (but could be female) child, 9-10 years of age, who appears once in the middle of Act I and once at the end of Act II. Follows the Lord Chancellor, holding his train, and performs a little dance with him.

Now you can see why I remembered this after all these years. And you can also now realize why I’m looking forward to auditions and the rehearsal cycle and performances with such keen anticipation.

If you have questions, please send email to RafeMacPhail@Yahoo.com.

On page 1 of this newsletter are details on how you can sign up for an audition slot, so please do it today, and then please encourage a friend or two to audition so that even *more* can share the delight of Gilbert & Sullivan. *Iolanthe* is truly a musical, visual, and comedic delight, and I eagerly anticipate working on the show in this new year.



Esther the Clever Queen

Produced by Congregation Agudas Achim

March 17 at 7 pm

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin members **Janet Forman**, **Steven** and **Mark Long**, and **Gil Zilkha** are appearing with **Rabbi Neil Blumofe** and members of the Congregation Agudas Achim Choir in *Esther the Clever Queen*, a Gilbert & Sullivan inspired show based on the biblical book of Esther. The one-night only production takes place Sunday evening, March 17, at 7 pm at Congregation Agudas Achim, 7300 Hart Lane. The libretto for the one-act show was written by Gilbert & Sullivan member **Ira Forman**, with music from *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *The Mikado*, *Ruddigore*, and *Princess Ida*.

Visit <https://theaustinsynagogue.org/queenesther/> for tickets and more information.

I Live Here
I Give Here

Amplify Austin

Participate in Amplify Austin Day

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin is a partner of **I Live Here, I Give Here**, and will participate in **Amplify Austin Day**. Amplify is a homegrown giving day for donors to support local nonprofit organizations. It is a 24-hour celebration of donors and organizations, running from 6 pm Thursday, February 28, to 6 pm Friday, March 1. Don't miss it—please visit our Amplify webpage at www.amplifyatx.org/organizations/gilbert-sullivan-austin and help us reach our goal of \$2500 during this event.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed



As has become a GSA tradition, we held our required annual elections in January at the start of our sing-along musicale. On January 6, after a brief report on an outstanding year, Gilbert & Sullivan Austin re-elected ten continuing board members and welcomed two new ones. What a great collection of experiences and interests these two bring us!

Sue Ricket Caldwell is anything but new to our group, as she was one of our founding members back in 1976. Sue has sung in the chorus of numerous shows and has served in a number of positions on the board in former years. More recently, she is the editor who publishes our newsletters throughout the year (since 2008) and the programs for all of our musicales and productions (since 2011). A computer programmer and software engineering manager professionally, Sue is not easily pigeonholed. She is very active in taekwondo (5th degree black belt), and is an avid reader of mysteries and sci-fi/fantasy. She and her late husband Jim are parents of three grown children and five grandchildren, the youngest of whom keeps Sue busy as a regular charge.

Michelle Vanecek first became involved in GSA when she sang in the chorus for *The Sorcerer* and then for several musicales. She has become a regular volunteer in the lobby at our shows. A microbiologist with the Texas Department of State Health Services and a former chemistry teacher, Michelle has been involved in some fascinating lab investigations that you have heard about in the news. She also lends her lovely voice to the Austin Harmony Chapter of Sweet Adelines, where she sings baritone. Other interests range widely to include volunteering at the animal shelter, political advocacy, needlework, puzzles, and reading. Michelle's husband is Michael Solis, and her daughter Tegan is a Doctor of Pharmacy doing a residency at the Battle Creek VA Medical Center in Michigan.

These two remarkable women join the continuing members of the board of directors: **June Julian, David Little, Michael Meigs, Diane Radin, Robert L. Schneider, Sarah Slaughter, Charles Smaistrle, David Treadwell, Dave Wieckowski**, and yours truly.

At the same time, we say a wistful farewell to **Rosa Mondragon Harris** and **Kent Smith**, stepping down from their roles on the board at this time—but we are counting on seeing them often and enjoying their continuing support. Thank you for your service, Rosa and Kent!

To find out all about the sing-along part of that January event, see the article on page 2. You will notice a new byline. **Mary**

Hendren and her husband **Jack**, parents of board member Sarah Slaughter, have been among our strongest volunteer supporters for the past several years. We are delighted that Mary will lend her ability to paint a charming word picture and bring an event to life on the page by writing this column in coming newsletters.

I hope to see you at *H.M.S. Pinafore*!

Libby Weed



GSA's 2019 Board of Directors (l-r): Robert L. Schneider, Diane Radin, Dave Wieckowski, Charles Smaistrle, Sarah Slaughter, Libby Weed, David Treadwell, Michael Meigs, David Little, and June Julian. absent: Michelle Vanecek, Sue Ricket Caldwell

Wand'ring Minstrels

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin's Wand'ring Minstrels love kid shows! If you would like to have the Wand'ring Minstrels perform at your school, retirement center, civic club, business meeting, or private party, please see our web site, www.gilbertsullivan.org, for information.



Wand'ring Minstrels coordinator Robert L. Schneider with children at a show at Gateway Baptist Church

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive near the end of April; the deadline for submissions will be April 12. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

We encourage you to join our Society. If you are a member, please check your membership renewal on the top of the mailing label. If expired or near expiration, your membership needs to be updated! To correct your address, renew your membership, or become a member, complete this form, and mail it to us with your check, payable to "GSA," or call to join (512) 472-4772 (GSSA).

Please check a membership category:

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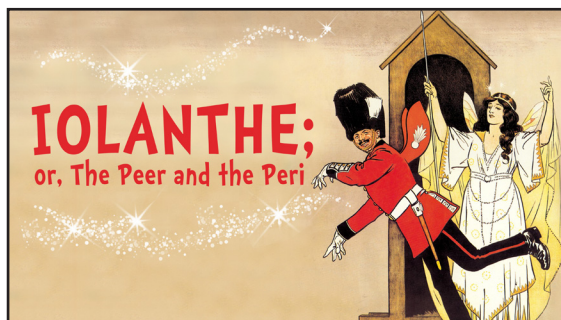
We are proud to list our members in our programs, but if you would prefer NOT to be listed in our programs, please check here: ☐

Iolanthe's Fractured Fairy Tales

Starring the cast of *Iolanthe*

Sunday, May 19, 2 pm
at the Jewish Community Center
7300 Hart Lane

Don't miss the latest example of Janette Jones' creative talent! She has been thinking about *Iolanthe*, who chose to live at the bottom of the stream to be near her son. She must have told him bedtime stories. Feeling a bit sceptical about "happily ever after," she doubtless told him *fractured* versions of the fairy tales.



9 performances - June 13-23



Dr. Jeffrey Jones-Ragona
Music Director, Gilbert & Sullivan Austin
Principal Conductor, Gillman Light Opera

To G&S Austin, the company formerly known as The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin,

The production of *H.M.S. Pinafore* this February marks my 25th anniversary with the Society and is, coincidentally, the first G&S opera I conducted for the Society! It has been my great privilege to work with and for G&S Austin for this quarter-century, and to watch it grow and prosper as it has, under the leadership of our very able boards and of course, Ralph MacPhail, Jr., our much loved Artistic Director. I'm doubly excited about this performance, for not only is it a significant chronological milestone, it's my first chance to 'tread the boards' under Rafe's direction, something I have been wanting to do since his first show with us in 1998. I'm very excited to be playing the role of Ralph Rackstraw in what has become one of my favorite comic operas and certainly among my "top three" of G&S (the other two are *Patience* and *The Yeomen of the Guard*, in case you are wondering).

I'm even more excited that a few people who were around at that first performance (Janette Jones, Libby Weed, and Arthur DiBianca to name three) will be on hand to help me celebrate this wonderful time.

My deepest thanks and gratitude to G&S Austin for a wonderful period of professional and artistic growth and satisfying performances.

Jeffrey



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FEBRUARY-MARCH 2019



Map to
H.M.S. Pinafore
mid-season
concert
production
(see page 1)

Coming Events

- Feb. 23-24 ***Iolanthe*** Auditions
Mar. 2-3 Mid-season concert production:
H.M.S. Pinafore
May 19 ***Iolanthe's Fractured Fairy Tales***
Musical
June 13-23 ***Iolanthe*** summer production

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin

Entertaining and educating Texas audiences since 1976, Gilbert & Sullivan Austin is dedicated to spreading the topsy-turvy humor and joyful music of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan.

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