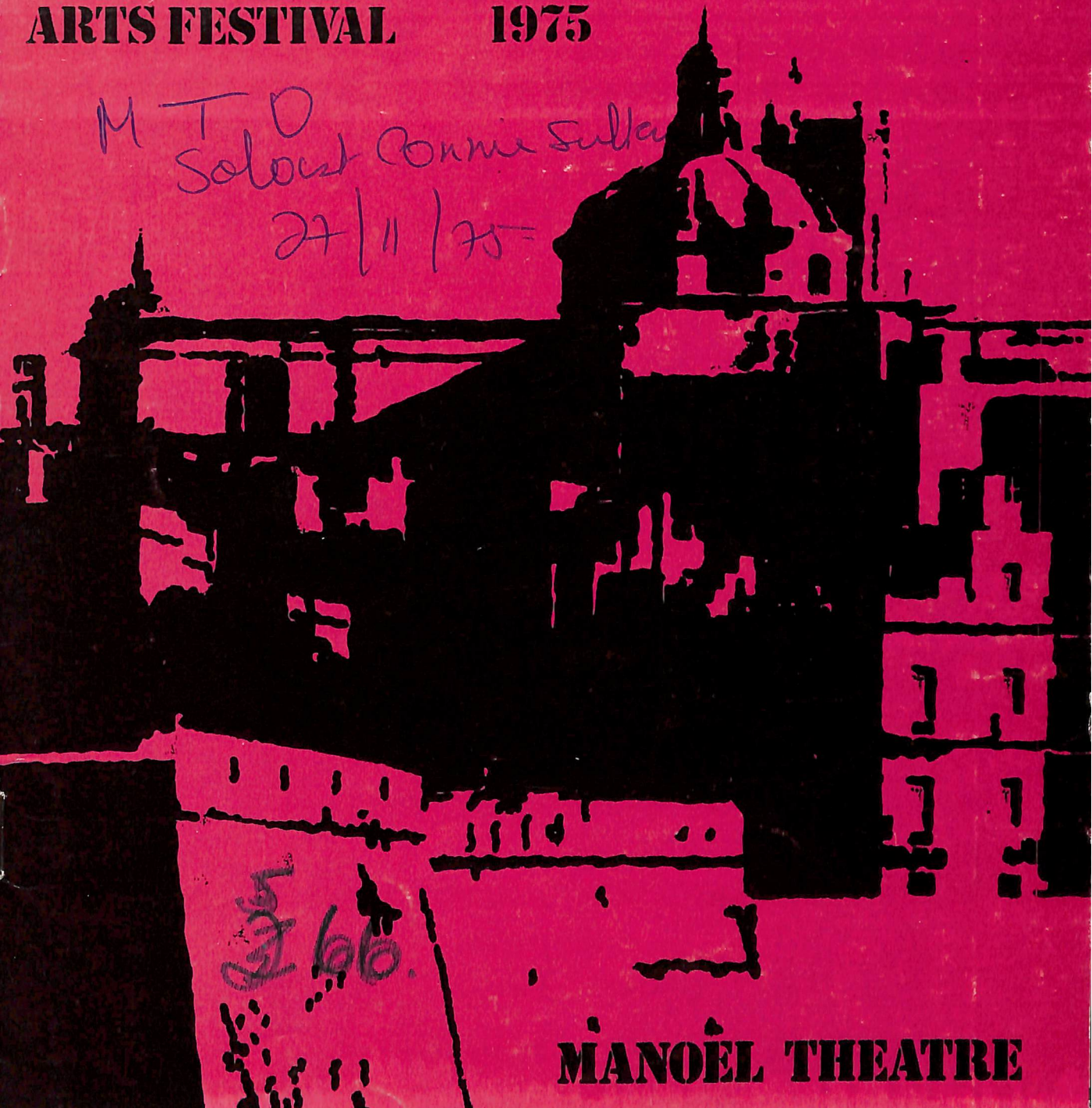


**MALTA INTERNATIONAL
ARTS FESTIVAL 1975**

M T D
Solovist Connie Sullan
27/11/75



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MANOËL THEATRE

The International Arts Festival 1975

is organised by the

Manoel Theatre Management Committee

on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture

Management Committee: Hon. President, G Muscat-Azzopardi

Chairman, A Agius Ferrante

Hon. Treasurer, Miss M L Bonnici, LRSM L.Mus.LCM FLCM

Consultants: Richard England, Michael Ellul and

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Festival Director of Publicity: Victor Lewis FIPR (Tel 73912)

Programme cover design by Richard England.

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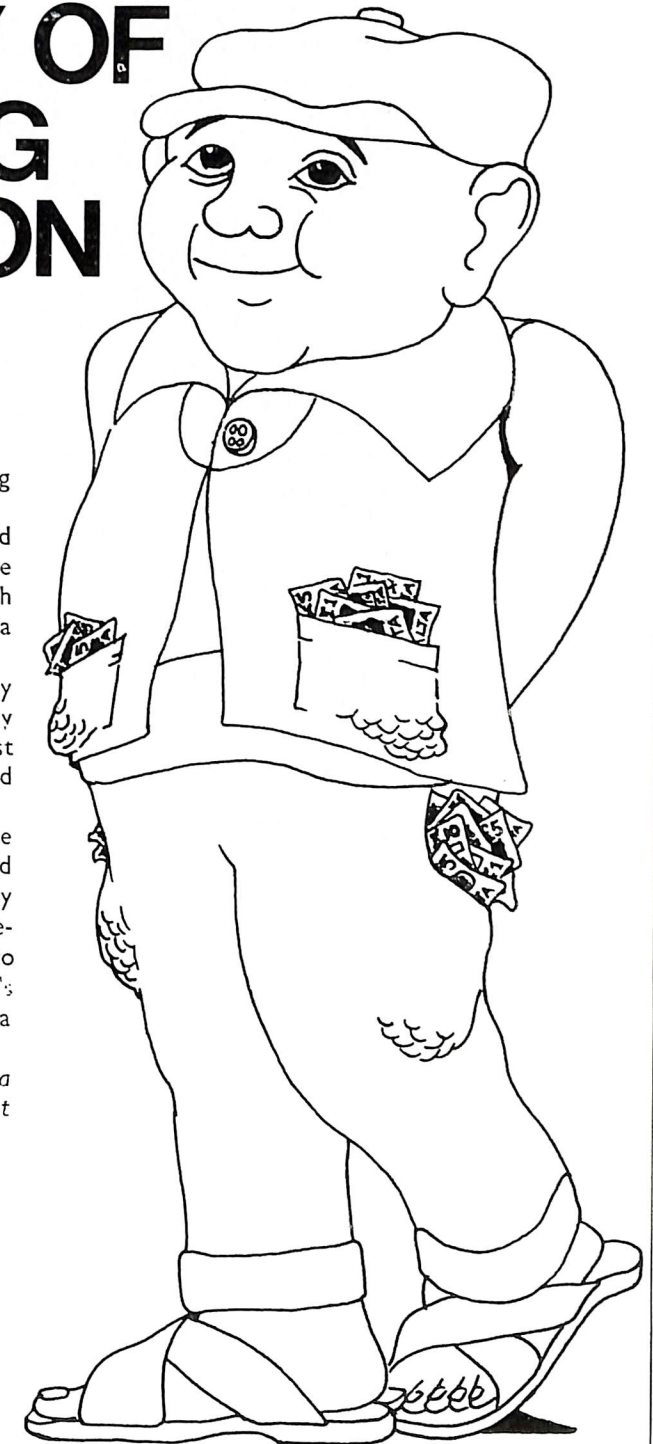
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MALTA
INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL 1975

THE MANOEL THEATRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
in association with
THE KURSAAL COMPANY LTD.
(Owners of the Dragonara Hotel and Casino)
present

AN ORCHESTRAL CONCERT

by the
MANOEL THEATRE ORCHESTRA

Conducted by

JOSEPH SAMMUT

SOLOIST

CONNIE SULTANA

PIANOFORTE

ORCHESTRA LEADER: **GEORGE SPITERI**

The Manoel Theatre
Thursday 27 November 1975
at 7.30 pm



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CONNIE SULTANA

was born in Malta and started her musical education when very young. In 1947 she was admitted a Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music (Performer) under the guidance of Giovanna Bascetta, qualifying first in order of merit. Shortly afterwards she was recommended for a Commonwealth Scholarship in London.

It was during this period that Connie Sultana emerged as a pianoforte performer of promise. She gave a number of public performances, as well as several recitals over the Rediffusion network.

In January 1949 she had the distinction of being invited by Maestro Cantoni, a leading Italian musical authority, to play at the Manoel Theatre during a special concert to raise funds for the construction of the Malta Catholic Institute.

Connie Sultana



In 1950 Connie Sultana went to London, where she lived for some years and where she became music advisor and teacher at St. Anne's Convent, Ealing.

Last year she returned to the stage of the Manoel Theatre, playing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor with the Manoel Theatre Orchestra conducted by Maestro Sammut — a 'comeback' which was received with enthusiasm.



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PROGRAMME

OVERTURE FIDELIO OP. 72

BEETHOVEN

Beethoven composed four different overtures for 'Fidelio', concerning the chronological order of which come confusion exists.

The Leonore Overture No. 2 Op. 72 was the one which served as the prelude for the original performance of the opera. In his extensive revision Beethoven discarded this Overture and wrote an entirely new one built on the same thematic material — the Leonore Overture No. 3 Op. 72, now considered one of his mightiest orchestral works.

The Leonore Overture No. 1 Op. 138 is a simplification of No. 3 and was probably intended for a Prague performance of the opera which, in fact, never materialised. When 'Fidelio' was revived in Vienna in 1814, Beethoven composed a fourth Overture, this time with entirely new thematic subjects. This is today known as the Fidelio Overture Op. 72.

PIANO CONCERTO IN A MINOR OP. 16

GRIEG

Allegro molto moderato: Adagio:

Allegro moderato e marcato

Soloist: CONNIE SULTANA

Grieg wrote this Concerto during a summer holiday when he was twenty-five and newly wed. No doubt his personal happiness and confidence at the time was responsible for the warm-hearted and unclouded quality of the music.

The first movement is often thought to be something of a self-portrait — the ardent and enthusiastic voice of a young artist ready to realise himself. A roll of kettledrums and a loud piano chord, an outburst by the entire orchestra and descending octaves in the solo piano set the stage for the main theme — a march-like tune given first by the woodwind and then by the piano.

The second important theme is introduced by two phrases in the 'cellos; it is a poetic song in the piano. The development introduced by a gentle passage on the flute gives free play to the two main themes and leads

up beautifully to the pianist's virtuoso ambitions. The cadenza is written out in full and descending and ascending octaves carry the movement to a dynamic end. The adagio is purely lyrical in feeling and gently scored with muted strings which announce the theme. The piano embellishes it with a soft commentary from the strings. After a climax in the piano the song returns, amplified and dramatised. When the agitation subsides the movement ends peacefully.

The finale is the most 'national' part of the work, with cheerful folk dance-like melodies unaffectedly strung together and finally worked up in a passage of increasing intensity to a shower of double octaves with which the soloist introduces the triumphant coda. An extended scale passage and some forceful chords provide a fitting end to a dramatic movement.

INTERVAL

SERENADE FOR SMALL ORCHESTRA

MATHIAS

Allegretto: lento ma con molto:

Allegro con slancio

This work by William Mathias was commissioned by the Carmarthenshire Education Authority and is dedicated to Elfred Morgan and the Carmarthenshire Youth Orchestra.

SYMPHONY IN C MAJOR

BIZET

Allegro vivo: Adagio: Allegro vivace:

Allegro vivace

This Symphony, it is strange to say, fell into oblivion. The Glasgow music writer, D C Parker, called the attention of General-Musikdirektor Felix von Weingartner to the autograph of the work, which is preserved in the library of the Paris Conservatoire; whereupon Mr Weingartner conducted the world premiere of the work in Basel on 26 February 1935.

THE MANOEL THEATRE

IT IS VARIOUSLY CLAIMED that the Manoel Theatre in Valletta, focal point of this International Arts Festival after the opening concerts in Mdina, is 'the third oldest theatre in Europe' and 'the oldest theatre in the Commonwealth'. However that may be, the fact is it dates back to the earlier decades of the eighteenth century, when the Grandmaster of the Knights of St John of that time, one Antonio Manoel de Vilhena, decided one March day of 1731 to build a public theatre — mostly out of his own pocket — 'for the honest recreation of the people', a purpose which is recorded to this day in a Latin inscription above the main entrance.

That there was a demand for such an institution was certain, for drama and opera had flourished — and continued to flourish — through all the years of the Sovereign Military Order's rule over the island. The vows of charity and chastity to which the Knights were committed did not prevent them from indulging in theatrical activities and it is on record that at the various Auberges (headquarters), and in the open, pageants, operas and dramatic offerings were put on by amateurs and professionals and a love for the theatre had spread through the population.

Grandmaster de Vilhena was no time waster and the building of the theatre started the very day the deed of transfer for the site was signed. In ten months the job was finished. The original interior, constructed entirely of wood, was similar in design to the Palermo theatre of that time and is generally believed to have been modelled on it, being semi-circular with straight sides projecting to the stage. There have, of course, been many alterations through the years, bringing the auditorium to its present effective oval shape.

Originally it was called, prosaically, 'Public Theatre'. Later it bore the title of 'Theatre Royal' but eventually and rightly, in 1866, in tribute to its founder, it became and has remained the Manoel Theatre.

The first night of all first nights was on 9 January 1732 with a presentation of 'Merope', a grand tragedy in the classic style, by Scippione Maffei. The setting was designed by Francois Moudion, who was the architect of the Order of St John, and it was played by the Knights.

The theatre was run by a Senior Knight of the Order, who bore the title of 'Protettore' and managed the house generally, approved each season's programme of plays (in the main lyric opera and French tragedy), acted as censor and dealt with 'difficulties' which arose from time to time betwixt impressario, performer and subscriber. Maltese playwrights and opera composers gradually earned their place alongside foreign authors and it was a Maltese — Nicolò Isouard, also known as Nicolò di Malta — who eventually became Commissioner (new name for Protettore) during the French occupation of Malta in the last two years of the eighteenth century.

Despite his great faith in the power of the stage Isouard was fighting a losing battle. For a time the theatre carried on notwithstanding the near starvation of the garrison and the besieged population, and 'despite the occasional shots from the Maltese mortars that passed over the roof of the building'. But there came the time when the players could no longer bear the strains of war as their dwindling wages proved insufficient for survival, let alone for the rigour of singing and acting. An amateur group, fired by the desire to keep up morale, took over and 'the show went on' until the siege was raised. But dark days followed for the Manoel.

With the arrival of the British the Theatre came to life again and throughout the first half of the nineteenth century there was a nine-months season of opera each year from September to May. There were nights of splendour, like the fourth of December 1838, when this jewel-box of a theatre shone in all its pristine glory when Queen Adelaide, widow of King William IV, came with cheers, anthems and a guard of honour to see a performance of 'Lucia di Lamermoor'.

Strangely it was the very prosperity of the latter years of the nineteenth century which brought the eclipse of the Manoel Theatre. The large garrison, the fleet, and an increasing number of tourists, rendered the theatre inadequate. In 1861 it became private property. With the proceeds of the sale a new Opera House was built and Grandmaster Antonio Manoel de Vilhena's little house fell into disuse. For a period it was a doss-house for beggars. And then, suddenly, some of the old glory returned when the Royal Opera House was destroyed by fire in 1873. Grand opera replaced the evicted beggars until the Opera House was reconstructed and then the once loved little place in Theatre Street looked to be on its deathbed. It served, fitfully, as dance hall and, in this century, as cinema.

But then, once more, the fate of the Opera House brought revival to the Manoel. The former was completely destroyed in the Second World War. Dreams of bringing the Manoel back to

life turned to reality when the Malta Government acquired the building in response to public appeals. Experts from Britain and Italy were called in and under their supervision and with loving care the delicate process of restoration was carried out by Maltese artisans.

All sorts of technical improvements were made on stage and back stage, with the lighting and an enlarged orchestra pit. Comfortable stalls replaced the old wooden seats and there was a rearrangement of boxes. But, in particular, the once lovely decoration of the auditorium was restored from behind the grime and white wash and even paint which had for so long hidden the theatre's beauty. Inch by inch the great ceiling with its 22 carat gilding was restored; the dozens of tiny attractive panels and paintings which decorated the tiers of boxes were brought to life again. This jewel box of great warmth and beauty glowed with a radiance deeply moving to those who had seen their theatre in distress. More than two hundred thousand pounds sterling were spent on re-acquisition and restoration.

Came one splendid December night in 1960 and a grand opening performance — the famous Ballet Rambert company's presentation of 'Coppelia'. And on all sides there were gasps of delight as the audience walked in to find this new and shining jewel in Malta's national heritage.

'The Manoel' is now officially Malta's National Theatre. The duties of the early Protettores are now entrusted to a Management Committee who run the theatre on a non-profit basis. Under their guidance the theatre has maintained a very high standard. International celebrities who have graced its stage include the like of Yehudi Menuhin, Rostronovitch, Boris Christoff, Leon Goosens, Richter, the Berlin State Opera Ballet; Sir Donald Wolfitt, Margaret Rutherford, John Neville, Louis Kentner, Moura Lympany, John Ogdon, Ram Gopal and a host of others, to say nothing of a great deal of local talent including distinguished concerts by the Manoel Theatre's resident orchestra.

By the end of this International Arts Festival a whole gallery of famous names will have been added to those who have graced the Manoel — solo performers and companies from many nations taking part in this Festival organised for the Ministry of Education and Culture by the theatre's Management Committee whose only reward is the satisfaction of their devotion to the furtherance of that enterprise first created by Grandmaster Manoel de Vilhena 'for the honest recreation of the people'.

Victor Lewis.

FESTIVAL DIARY

Saturday 29 November to
Tuesday 2 December

CARL CLOPET PRODUCTIONS present the London comedy hit, "THERE'S A GIRL IN MY SOUP". At 7.30 each evening.

Thursday 4 December and
Saturday 6 December

CARL CLOPET PRODUCTIONS present Francis Durbridge's "SUDDENLY AT HOME". At 7.30 each evening.

PLEASE NOTE, THERE WILL BE NO PERFORMANCE ON FRIDAY 5 DECEMBER

Sunday 7 December

Two further performances of "SUDDENLY AT HOME". At 4.30 p.m. and 8.30 p.m.

Monday 8 December

Concert by the WOMEN'S CHAMBER ORCHESTRA OF SOFIA (Bulgaria)

Sunday 14 December

THE GERMAN OPERA BALLET COMPANY

Monday 15 December

PIANOFORTE RECITAL by THERESE DUSSAUT, presented in association with the French Embassy in Malta.

Tuesday 16 December to

Thursday 18 December

THE GERMAN OPERA BALLET COMPANY, presented in association with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

PLEASE NOTE, THIS COMPANY WILL PRESENT TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PROGRAMMES.

programme 1 will be presented on 14 and 17 December, and Programme 2 on 16 and 18 December.

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Spiro will entertain you
on the Grand Piano

Dinner Dancing

Every Wednesday and Saturday
in the Mediterranean Room
Music by the Black Sorrows

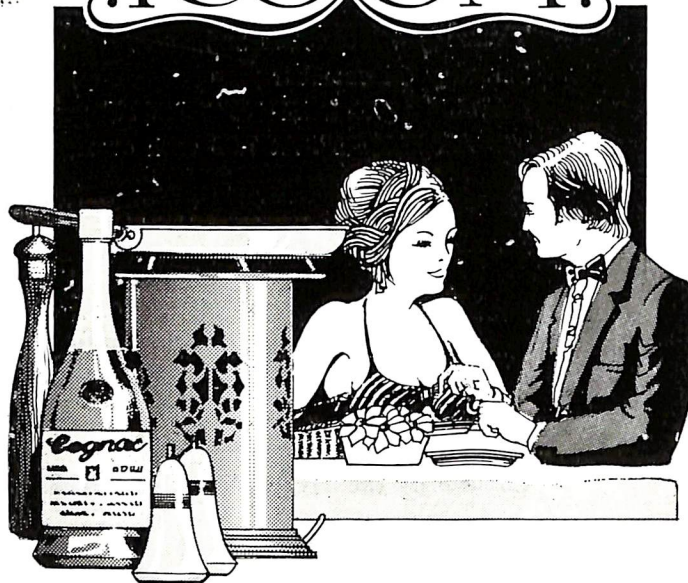
Afternoon Teas

Daily in the Grapevine
between 4 and 5.30 p.m.

Tamarisk Bar

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THE MARQUIS ROOM



*Dine à la carte by candlelight and
dance until the small hours with
the Spiro Zammit Trio.*

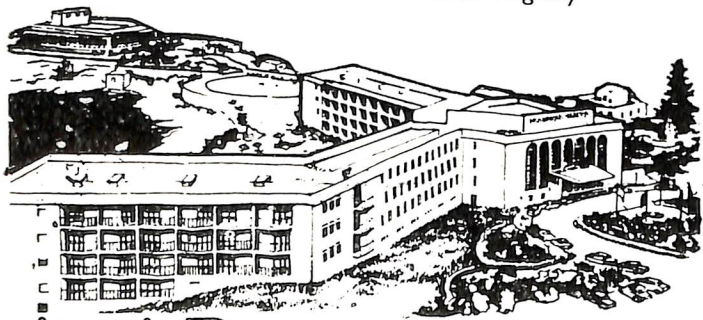
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