

Saturday, March 11, 2017, 8pm Hertz Hall

Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

Michael Bosch and Xenia Löffler, oboe Anna Fusek and Xenia Löffler, recorder Bernhard Forck, concertmaster/solo violin

Ensemble

Bernhard Forck violin (concertmaster)

Kerstin Erben violin

Anna Fusek violin/recorder*

Clemens Nuszbaumer violin

Dörte Wetzel violin

Gabriele Steinfeld violin

Sabine Fehlandt viola

Anja R. Graewel viola

Ian Freiheit cello

Walter Rumer double bass

Michael Bosch oboe*

Xenia Löffler oboe*/recorder*

Christian Beuse bassoon

Michele Pasotti lute

Raphael Alpermann harpsichord

*soloists

The generous support of the Goethe-Institut makes this tour possible.

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PROGRAM

Georg Philipp TELEMANN (1681–1767)

Suite for Strings and Basso Continuo in B-flat Major, TWV 55:B5, *Les Nations*

Ouverture

Menuet I (alternativement) -

Menuet II. Doucement -

Les Turcs -

Les Suisses -

Les Moscovites -

Les Portugais anciens -

Les Portugais modernes -

Les Boiteux (alternativement) -

Les Coureurs

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685–1750)

Brandenburg Concerto No. 4

for Violin, Two Recorders, Strings, and Basso Continuo in G Major, BWV 1049

Allegro Andante

Presto

INTERMISSION

George Frideric HANDEL (1685–1759)

Suite from Almira, HWV 1,

for Two Oboes, Strings, and Basso Continuo

Ouverture - Chaconne - Courante -Sarabanda - Bourée - Menuet -Rigaudon - Rondeau - Ritornello

Antonio VIVALDI (1678–1741)

Concerto for Two Oboes, Strings, and Basso Continuo in D minor, R. 535

Largo Allegro Largo Allegro molto

Jean-Féry REBEL (1666–1747)

Les Caractères de la Danse

for Two Oboes, Strings, and Basso Continuo

Prélude – Courante – Menuet – Bourrée – Chaconne – Sarabande – Gigue – Rigaudon – Passepied – Gavotte – Sonate – Loure –

Musette - Sonate



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♦ he 18th century was an age of great travel, which led to the discovery of other cultures. The arts have the power to illustrate the unknown, transport information, and characterize the foreign. Music, as an acoustic art form, attempts to mimic sounds and rhythms of regions far away or of its own culture, to carry them out into the world, sometimes even with passages of ironic mutations. The opening piece by Telemann is an excellent example of such imaginative travel: character sketches with rhythmically westernized evocations of culture and temperament. Handel explores the Orient, though with a European language. Vivaldi and Bach represent the opposite poles of northern and southern European perspectives, while Rebel's joyous and popular observation of various dance styles is both an original and unique composition. Rebel's suite is a dance fantasy, reflecting the French style that spread rapidly over Europe at the beginning of a new century.

—Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

Suite for Strings and Basso Continuo in B-flat Major, TWV 55:B5, *Les Nations* Georg Philipp Telemann

With the condescending pronouncement, "Since the best man could not be obtained, mediocre ones would have to be accepted," City Councilor Platz announced the appointment of Johann Sebastian Bach in 1723 as Kantor for Leipzig's churches. Platz's "best man" was Georg Philipp Telemann, then the most highly regarded composer in all Germany. Telemann's association with Leipzig went back to 1701, when he left his hometown of Magdeburg to enroll at the city's university; he was soon receiving regular commissions from the Leipzig City Council for new service music. In 1702 he became director of the local opera house, and began churning out specimens of that genre to fill his own stage. Two years later, he started a Collegium Musicum with some of his talented university friends in a local coffee house to give concerts of instrumental music and was also appointed organist and Kapellmeister of Leipzig's Neukirche. A year



later, Count Erdmann von Promnitz lured Telemann to his estate at Sorau, a hundred miles southeast of Berlin, to become his music master. In 1708 or 1709, Telemann was appointed court composer at Eisenach, Sebastian Bach's birthplace, and in 1712, he moved to the post of city music director in Frankfurt-am-Main. Nine years later, he was named director of music for Hamburg's five main churches. During his tenure, he also headed the municipal opera house and oversaw the city's flourishing concert series. He composed with staggering prolificacy for the rest of his days, being slowed only in his last years, like Bach and Handel, by problems with his eyesight. He died of (probably) pneumonia in 1767 (Mozart turned 11 that year), and was succeeded in his Hamburg post by his godson, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

Several of Telemann's vast number of instrumental suites are enlivened by extra-musical, programmatic, and other associations. Perhaps the most familiar of these pieces is the Hamburger Ebb' und Flut ("Hamburg's Ebb and Flow," commonly known as Telemann's Water Music), composed in 1723 to celebrate the centenary of the founding of the city's Admiralty. Other of his referential instrumental works include suites titled La Lyra, Sounding Geography (depicting Germans, Swedes and Danes through various national dances; the work ends with a movement called "The Old Women Bemoan the Good Old Days"), and one brazenly dubbed La Putain ("The Prostitute"), which contains scenes of "The Peasants' Church Fête," "The Witches' Dance," "The Inn of Lice," "Boss-Girl Lissabeth," and "Brother Michael's Goatee." Cervantes' Don Quixote inspired from Telemann both a vocal cantata and an instrumental suite.

Though Telemann never ventured farther from the German lands than 20 miles across the Polish border for his early position at Sorau, he was one of the most cosmopolitan composers of his day. During his training, his court, church, and opera experience, and especially his long residence in Hamburg, Germany's most important port city and a hub of international commerce, he thoroughly absorbed mu-

sical styles from across Europe, "mastering almost every musical genre and the musical styles of all the nations, with equal ease and vigor, without in the slightest confusing or compromising his own taste, which remains always beautiful, excellent, and constant," according to the prominent German-Danish composer, critic, and music theorist Johann Adolph Scheibe. Among the chief evidences of Telemann's wideranging creative scope is the Suite (Ouverture) in B-flat Major (TWV 55:B5), commonly known as Les Nations, which combines his knowledge of international musical styles with his remarkable gifts as a painter of tonal pictures. Though its date of composition is unknown, such a piece would have been useful not just for local entertainment but also as evidence of the city's cultural sophistication for visiting diplomats, business people, and other travelers.

The Suite opens with an Ouverture in the three-part French style (A-B-A: slow and noble, fast and contrapuntal, slow), though here the customary central fugue is replaced by a leaping gigue, a dance of English origin. Next comes a Menuet, originally a French court dance that became popular across Europe. "The Turks" are portrayed as rather impetuous and self-willed, while the abrupt slow-fast alternations in "The Swiss" and "The Portuguese" depict those country's older and younger generations. These two movements are separated by an evocation of the great bells integral to the life of "The Muscovites." The suite closes with two evocations of human conditions common to every land—"Les Boiteux" ("The Lame") and "Les Coureurs" ("The Runners").

Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 for Violin, Two Recorders, Strings, and Basso Continuo in G Major, BWV 1049 Johann Sebastian Bach

Brandenburg, in Bach's day, was a political and military powerhouse. It had been part of the Holy Roman Empire since the mid-12th century, and its ruler—the *Markgraf*, or Margrave—was charged with defending and extending the northern imperial border ("mark," or "marche" in Old English and Old French), in return for which he was allowed to be an

Elector of the Emperor. The house of Hohenzollern acquired the margraviate of Brandenburg in 1415, and the family embraced the Reformation a century later with such authority that they came to be regarded as the leaders of German Protestantism; Potsdam was chosen as the site of the electoral court in the 17th century. Extensive territorial acquisitions under Frederick William, the "Great Elector," before his death in 1688 allowed his son Frederick III to secure the title and the rule of Brandenburg's northern neighbor, Prussia, with its rich (and nearby) capital city of Berlin; he became King Frederick I of Prussia in 1701. Frederick, a cultured man and a generous patron, founded academies of sciences and arts in Berlin, and built the magnificent palace Charlottenburg for his wife, Sophie Charlotte. When Frederick William I succeeded his father in 1713, however, he turned the court's focus from music to militarism, and dismissed most of the excellent musicians that his father had assembled; several of them found employment at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, north of Leipzig. Frederick William did, however, allow his uncle, Christian Ludwig, younger brother of the late King Frederick and possessor of the now-lesser title of Margrave of Brandenburg, to remain at the palace and retain his own musical establishment.

Johann Sebastian Bach met Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, in 1719, during his tenure as music director at the court of Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, the young prince who had recently signed up some of the musicians fired by Frederick William I. Bach worked at Anhalt-Cöthen from 1717 to 1723, and early in 1719, he was sent by Leopold to Berlin to finalize arrangements for the purchase of a new harpsichord, a large, two-manual model made by Michael Mietke, instrument-builder to the royal court. While in Berlin, Bach played for Christian Ludwig, who was so taken with his music that he asked him to send some of his compositions for his library. Bach lost an infant son a few months later, however, and in 1720, his wife died and he rejected an offer to become organist at the Jacobkirche in Hamburg, so it was more than two years before he fulfilled Brandenburg's request. By 1721 Leopold had

become engaged to marry a woman who looked askance at his huge expenditures for musical entertainment. Bach seems to have realized that when she moved in, he would probably be moved out, so he began casting about for a more secure position. He remembered the interest the Margrave Brandenburg had shown in his music, so he picked six of the finest concertos he had written at Cöthen and sent them to Christian Ludwig in March 1721 with a flowery dedication in French-but to no avail. No job materialized at Brandenburg, and in 1723 Bach moved to Leipzig's Thomaskirche, where he remained for the rest of his life. It is possible that the Margrave never heard any of these magnificent works that immortalized his name, since records indicate that his modest Kapelle might not have been able to negotiate their difficulties and instrumental requirements. The concertos apparently lay untouched in his library until he died 13 years after Bach had presented them to him, when they were inventoried at a value of four groschen each—only a few cents. Fortunately they were preserved by the noted theorist and pedagogue Johann Philipp Kirnberger, a pupil of Bach, and came eventually into the collection of the Royal Library in Berlin. They were brought to light during the 19thcentury Bach revival, published in 1850, and have since come to be recognized as the supreme examples of Baroque instrumental music.

The Fourth *Brandenburg* Concerto features a violin and two recorders accompanied by a string orchestra and keyboard. (Two decades later Bach arranged it as a harpsichord concerto [BWV 1057] for the performances of the Collegium Musicum that he directed after settling in Leipzig.) The opening measures of the first movement present the joyous leaping motives from which the ensuing music is spun in a skillful play of textures and harmonic shadings that takes particular delight in contrasting the timbres of violin and flutes against each other and the larger ensemble.

The Andante is a dark-hued lament whose character would allow it to fit easily into Bach's most fervent church cantatas. Particularly poignant are the tiny cadenzas for the flute, as though the intense emotion of the piece called



not just for expression by the entire assembled company, but also for brief moments of individual reflection.

The festive mood of the opening movement returns in the finale, whose bounding rhythmic propulsion gives it the spirit of a great, whirling dance. Soloists and orchestra share the themes—imitating, intertwining, accompanying—like the carefully patterned steps of an elaborate court ballet. The solo trio is, however, *primus inter pares*, with the violin especially displaying a dazzling virtuosity, including a breath-taking flurry of scales and broken chords in the movement's middle section.

Suite from *Almira*, HWV 1, for Two Oboes, Strings, and Basso Continuo George Frideric Handel

When he was 17, the musically ambitious Handel entered the university in his hometown of Halle as a student of law but soon found the studies not to his liking, despite his coincidental appointment as organist at the local cathedral. Within a year, sometime during the summer of 1703, he left the university and moved to Hamburg, where his musical talents could be given freer rein. There he met Reinhard Keiser, the first great German composer for the stage and then director of the renowned Hamburg Opera, and Johann Mattheson, another gifted young musician who later became an admired critic and writer on music. With their help, Handel obtained a position as a violinist with the opera orchestra and was quickly promoted to principal keyboard player. He and Mattheson became close friends, though one incident of anger between them almost ended Handel's career prematurely. Mattheson served as composer, singer, and cembalist with the opera, and he had written a part for himself as Mark Antony in his work on the subject of Cleopatra. Since his character expired a half hour or so before the end of the opera, he liked to go down to the pit and take over from Handel at the harpsichord to finish the evening. On one occasion, Handel refused to budge, the two became incensed, and they were out in the square with swords drawn before their tempers cooled. Mattheson recalled in later years that the result

of this tantrum might have been disastrous "had not God's guidance graciously ordained that my blade, thrusting against the broad metallic button of my opponent, should be shattered." The close call brought the pair to their senses, and they made up and remained friends thereafter—peacefully.

Hamburg, a free city not subject to the whims and restraints of a court when Handel arrived in 1703, was a center of commerce and diplomacy and a crossroads of influences from across Europe, "a cultural supermarket" according to Winton Dean and John Merrill Knapp in their study of Handel's operas. A syndicate of local businessmen and music lovers had opened a purpose-built opera house there in 1678 (the Theater am Gänsemarkt, named for its proximity to the city's goose market), the first public opera house outside Italy, and Keiser, Mattheson, and others had developed a motley variety of the genre intended to appeal to a wide range of potential ticket-buyers, from groundlings to aristocracy: stories, sometimes told in a mixture of German and Italian and even Dutch, based on biblical, historical, mythological, pastoral, medieval, or farcical themes; abundant comic elements, even in tragic plots; a steady succession of short musical numbers; dance sequences; and, above all, lavish spectacle. "The [Hamburg] opera," according to the local librettist Heinrich Hinsch, "provided a pleasurable poetic experience, precisely because it titillated the senses of its audience without attempting to address their reason or understanding."

Reinhard Keiser was a director and the chief composer of the Hamburg Opera, and he infused this composite genre with a fine musicality and trenchant emotion that deeply impressed his young colleague Handel. Keiser was, however, "a man of gaiety and expense [who] involved himself in debts, which forced him to abscond to Weissenfels," reported Handel's early biographer (1760), the Rev. John Mainwaring. Handel, all of 19, was asked to write a new piece for the house in Keiser's absence. The libretto for Handel's first opera was based on one by Giulio Pancieri that Giuseppe Boniventi had set for Venice in 1691— L'Almira; the plot was ap-

parently original. The poet Friedrich Christian Feustking, a theology student who had turned up in Hamburg in 1702 after being expelled from Wittenberg University for lampooning one of his professors, adapted the Venetian libretto for Hamburg, working up a text of more than 70 musical numbers, 15 of which he retained in the original Italian. Der in Krohnen erlangte Glücks-Wechsel, oder Almira, Königin von Castilien ("The Change of Fortune Gained with a Crown, or Almira, Queen of Castile") opened at the Theater am Gänsemarkt on January 8, 1705, and was repeated some 20 times during the following seven weeks, a good run by Hamburg standards. Almira's success prompted the management to have Handel compose another opera, on the subject of Nero, but it fared poorly. By the time he left Hamburg for Italy during the summer of 1706, he had also written Der beglückte Florindo ("Happy Florinda") and Die verwandelte Daphne ("Transformed Daphne") but they were not performed until 1708; only fragments remain of them and nothing of Nero. Almira was revived in Hamburg in February 1732 (with revisions and additions by Georg Philipp Telemann, then director of music for the city's opera, churches, and concert series), performed in a greatly truncated version as part of a triple bill celebrating the bicentenary of the Hamburg Opera in 1878 (Dean and Merrill claim that Almira was the only Handel opera staged during the 19th century), and given its first modern production in Leipzig in 1985, the 200th anniversary of the composer's birth.

The plot of *Almira* is a dizzying round of jealousies, mistaken messages, and conflicting amorous intentions among its three female and four male characters that ends in a triple wedding with the couples properly sorted out under the approving gaze of the queen's aged mentor; a servant plays the comic role. In addition to the obligatory Ouverture (in the French manner, with a slow opening section in majestic dotted rhythms followed by a brisk movement), instrumental music features in each of *Almira*'s three acts as accompaniment to dances and to cover entrances, exits, and scene changes. The Chaconne and Sarabanda occur in Act I during the festivities surrounding Almira's coronation. (The essential harmonies of the Sarabanda recur in Act III, where they are fitted with a melody that Handel reworked as the magnificent aria "Piangerò la sorte mia" in his *Julius Caesar* of 1724.) The Courante, Bourée, Menuet and Rondeau are heard in the party scene that closes Act I. Act III opens with a pageant of the continents in honor of a visiting nobleman; the Rigaudon is associated with Africa. The Ritornello provides an instrumental interlude in the servant's Act II aria.

Concerto for Two Oboes, Strings, and Basso Continuo in D minor, R. 535 Antonio Vivaldi

Vivaldi obtained his first official post in September 1703 at the Pio Ospedale della Pietà, one of four institutions in Venice devoted to the care of orphaned, abandoned, and poor girls. As part of its training, the school devoted much effort to the musical education of its wards, and there was an elaborate organization of administrators, teachers, and associates who oversaw the activities of the students. Part of his duties as violin teacher required Vivaldi to compose at least two new concertos each month for the regular public concerts given by the Ospedale. The featured performers in these works were occasionally members of the faculty, but usually they were the more advanced students, and the difficulty of Vivaldi's music is ample testimony to their skill. These concerts offered some of the best music to be found in Venice, and they attracted visitors from all over Europe. One French traveler, President Charles de Brosses, described the conservatory concerts in a letter of August 1739: "The most marvelous music is that of the ospedali. There are four of them, all composed of bastard girls, or orphans, or of girls whose parents cannot afford the expense of bringing them up. They are reared at the expense of the State and trained only to excel in music. They are the only executants, and at each concert about 40 of them perform. I swear to you that there is nothing so pleasant as to see a young and pretty girl robed in white, with a garland of pomegranate flowers in her hair, conducting the orchestra and beating time with all imaginable grace and precision." These young

ladies became the object of much attention in Venice, and the most gifted among them were even the regular recipients of proposals of marriage. The beauty and charm of Vivaldi's music undoubtedly played no little part in the success of the graduates of the Ospedale.

Vivaldi wrote nearly 20 concertos for oboe, including three for two oboes, and also scored the instrument into many of his chamber works. The Double Oboe Concerto in D minor (R. 535), in the form and style of the *sonata da chiesa* ("church sonata"), opens with a somber paragraph that serves to preface a muscular Allegro alternating statements from the paired oboes and the orchestra. The oboes engage in an expressive dialogue above a steadily moving bass accompaniment in the Largo. The finale follows *ritornello* form, with elements of the opening orchestral *tutti* returning to surround the soloists' intervening episodes.

Les Caractères de la Danse for Two Oboes, Strings, and Basso Continuo Jean-Féry Rebel

Jean-Féry Rebel, a leading figure in the musical life of the French court during the glory days of Versailles, was born in 1666 into the musical family of a singer at the royal chapel. Jean-Féry proved to be a prodigy on the violin, and he amazed both Lully and King Louis XIV when he played for them when he was eight. While still a teenager, Rebel joined the orchestra of the Académie Royale de Musique, the operaproducing wing of the court's musical establishment, and he became its concertmaster by 1699. The following year he traveled with Louis XIV's grandson Philippe, Duke of Anjou, to play for his coronation as Philip V of Spain and subsequent marriage to Marie Louise of Savoy. In 1705 Rebel was appointed to the 24 Violons du Roi, Louis' household orchestra, and he later became that ensemble's principal violinist. He was named harpsichordist at the Opéra in 1713, its maître de musique in 1716, and Chamber Composer to the King (by then, the recently crowned Louis XV, great-grandson of Louis XIV) in 1718, upon the death of his brother-inlaw, Lalande. Rebel also served as needed in

the royal chapel and directed the Concerts Spirituels, Paris' most important concert series, in 1734 and 1735, after which he retired and began passing on some of his positions to his gifted son, François. Jean-Féry Rebel died in Paris in 1747.

Rebel composed a single opera (Ulysse of 1703; it failed) and just a handful of sacred pieces (now lost), so he is remembered today solely for his instrumental works: numerous solo and trio sonatas (some of the earliest composed in France) and a series of multi-movement accompaniments for dance. Les Caractères de la Danse, the second of Rebel's ballets, was composed in 1715 for the famed ballerina Françoise de Prévost (ca. 1680-1741), whose expressive and effortless performances did much to establish the craze for dramatic dance at the French court. Rebel's score comprises a continuous sequence of brief movements (its 14 sections occupy just eight minutes) based on popular dance types of the day, upon which Prévost built choreography depicting a series of lovers of both sexes at various ages. The whiplash changes of mood, tempo, and rhythm suggest both her range of dance techniques and her ability to instantly evoke expressive states. Prévost revived the piece on several occasions to satisfy audience demand, and taught it to Marie Sallé (ca.1707-1756) and Marie-Anne Cupis de Camargo (1710-1770), her two most gifted pupils. Sallé first performed Les Caractères in London in 1727 and created a sensation on a return to the city seven years later when she not only choreographed her own ballet after the legend of Pygmalion, but also discarded the era's cumbersome traditional dance costume to appear on stage in a simple, shape-hugging, "Grecian-style" muslin dress and with her hair let down. George Frideric Handel, then at the height of his career as an opera composer and impresario and always alert to commercial possibilities for his ventures, engaged her as prima hallering for his Covent Garden season of 1734 and created for her a feature solo number on the legend of Terpsichore, the ancient muse of poetry and dance.

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Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

Founded in Berlin in 1982 and recognized today as one of the world's leading chamber orchestras, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, enjoys an unprecedented history of success. The ensemble, which performs regularly in Europe's leading musical centers, has toured Asia, North America, and South America. In 2016 the orchestra toured Buenos Aires and Japan. This month, the Akademie visits North America on its fifth US tour, returning to Cal Performances, the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Kansas City Friends of Music, Carnegie Hall, the Boston Early Music Festival, and for first performances with the San Diego Early Music Society, New Orleans Friends of Music, and Mississippi Academy of Ancient Music.

Ever since the reopening of the Berlin Konzerthaus in 1984, the ensemble has enjoyed its own concert series in Germany's capital, and since 1994, it has been a regular guest at the Berlin State Opera. Starting with the 2012–13 season, the Akademie also has had its own concert series at Munich's Prinzregententheater. Each year the group gives approximately 100 concerts featuring music ranging from small chamber works to large-scale symphonic pieces, performing under the artistic leadership of its concertmasters Stephan Mai, Bernhard Forck, and Georg Kallweit.

The ensemble's close partnership with René Jacobs has produced many celebrated opera and oratorio productions. The latest interpretations of Mozart's operas *The Abduction From the Seraglio* and *The Magic Flute*, as well as J.S. Bach's *St. John Passion* and *St. Matthew Passion*, have been highly praised by critics and audiences.

The ensemble has also worked regularly with conductors such as Marcus Creed, Daniel Reuss, and Hans-Christoph Rademann. The orchestra will be led by Emmanuelle Haïm, Bernard Labadie, Paul Agnew, and Rinaldo Alessandrini in upcoming seasons.

Most notable is the group's cooperation with the RIAS Chamber Choir, whose quality is recognized by numerous award-winning recordings. The Akademie works regularly with internationally renowned soloists like Isabelle Faust, Andreas Staier, Alexander Melnikov, Anna Prohaska, Werner Güra, and Bejun Mehta. Moreover, the Akademie has extended its artistic boundaries to work with the modern dance company Sasha Waltz & Guests in innovative productions like Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and *Medea* (music by P. Dusapin).

The international success of the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin is highlighted by well over one million recordings sold to the public. Recording exclusively for Harmonia Mundi France since 1994, the ensemble has earned many international prizes, including the Grammy Award, the Diapason d'Or, the Cannes Classical Award, the Gramophone Award, the Edison Award, the German Record Critics' Award, the MIDEM Classical Award, and the Choc de l'Année. The latest additions to the orchestra's discography are CDs devoted to Handel's Water Music, Bach's St. John Passion (conducted by René Jacobs), and Mendelssohn's Elias (conducted by Hans-Christoph Rademann).

The Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin has been honored with the Telemann-Preis Magdeburg and in 2014 with the Bach Medaille Leipzig and the ECHO Klassik awards.

For more information, please visit the ensemble's website at www.akamus.de.

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