

A BLACK SWAN COLLABORATION WITH WA YOUTH THEATRE COMPANY

MEDEA

by Kate Mulvany and
Anne-Louise Sarks

ORIGINAL CONCEPT
BY ANNE-LOUISE SARKS
AFTER EURIPIDES

AT STATE
THEATRE
CENTRE

08 → 25
AUG AUG



BLACK SWAN
STATE THEATRE
COMPANY



'19

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FEATURING

CAST INCLUDES

Jalen Hewitt	JASPER
Lachlan Ives	JASPER
Jack Molloy	LEON
Alexandria Steffensen	MEDEA
Jesse Vakatini	LEON

CREATIVES

Sally Richardson	DIRECTOR
Bryan Woltjen	SET & COSTUME DESIGN CONCEPT
Tyler Hill	SET & COSTUME DESIGN REALISATION
Lucy Birkinshaw	LIGHTING DESIGNER
Melanie Robinson	SOUND DESIGNER & VOCAL COACH
Laura Boynes	MOVEMENT DIRECTOR
Lawrence Hassell	FIGHT DIRECTOR
Erin Coubrough	STAGE MANAGER
Anastasia Julien-Martial	ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
Nelma Welsh	CHAPERONE
Kara Rosseau	DESIGN SECONDMENT
Amelia Burke	DIRECTION OBSERVER

Black Swan State Theatre Company acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar nations who are the traditional owners and custodians of Country on which the State Theatre Centre of WA stands.

We pay our respects to all First Peoples, to their ancestors and Elders. It is a privilege to be together on Nyoongar Country.

DURATION:

70mins



Contains adult themes, coarse language, sexual and drug references, strong flashes, loud music. Further content warnings can be found on our website.

A note from the CO-WRITER

It's always terrifying to be asked to 'adapt'. What, after all, does that really mean? How tight or loose are the boundaries? How much of ourselves are we allowed, as creators, to infiltrate the text? How do we take a classic – with all its potency, its history, its collective memory – and make it our own whilst keeping the purity of the original?

These are the questions I had to ask myself when I was approached to adapt *Medea* with Anne-Louise Sarks. Two women retelling the story of the most infamous mother in history. Or rather, in our case, telling the story of Medea's children – so absent in other retellings, and yet the two souls on which the story hinges.

And this was the key to exploding our adaptive boundaries. Those forgotten children. Those two little boys in the midst of a marital maelstrom.

This subverted version of *Medea* was written after an intensive two-week workshop with two boys – Joe Kelly and Rory Potter – aged 12 and 11. I am indebted to them. Many of the moments in this play came about through their own invention, such as particular songs, lines and even their names. ('Leon' means 'brave warrior' and 'Jasper' means 'precious stone'.)

Part of the joy of bringing this text to life was that freedom of choice from the boys – a freedom that made my initial concerns about

adapting a classic null and void. They took the story and made it their own anyway. They had no notion of 'textual purity'. They just wanted to tell their story. And Anne-Louise and I followed their belligerent path happily! Since that first production, this reworking of *Medea* has travelled the world – from Sydney to Auckland to London to Warsaw to Basel... and now it is here, in my beloved home state. Throughout all of these productions, the cast and creatives have brought their own selves to the process. What you are seeing tonight is an ongoing conversation about what it is to be a child, what it means to be an adult, and how the two can often flip.

The play you are about to see is still *Medea* at heart, but for the first time ever we get to hear the children speak. We get to see them play. We get to see them laugh and tease and cry and examine their own existence. More importantly, we get to spend their last hour on earth with them when no-one else in history has. We become the community they needed...

Huge thanks to the wonderful Sally Richardson, the beautiful cast and creative team, all at Black Swan, and our West Australian audiences for supporting new Australian work.

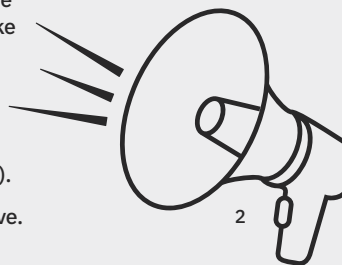
Kate Mulvany
CO-WRITER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Black Swan would like to thank Brian Heller and the Arts Angels, Cathy Penglis and our Black Swan Ambassadors. Special thanks to Katie Moore and Yvan Karlsson for their support during rehearsals. We would also like to thank the team at the State Theatre Centre of Western Australia for their support and assistance.

A big thanks to WA Youth Theatre Co for their collaboration on this project, especially James Berlyn (Executive Producer), Mollie Hewitt (General Manager) and Hayden Mumby (Arts Management Secondment).

Thanks to photographer Philip Gostelow and videographer Bevin Creative.





Kate Mulvany CO-WRITER

Kate Mulvany is an award-winning playwright and screenwriter.

Kate has had two new plays premiere in 2019, her adaptation of Friedrich Schiller's *Mary Stuart* (STC) and her original work *The Mares* (Tasmanian Theatre Company). In 2018 Kate's adaptation of Ruth Park's *The Harp in the South* (STC) premiered to much acclaim. The play was recently nominated for a Helpmann award for Best New Australian Work and won the Sydney Theatre Award for the same category. In 2017 Kate's play *The Rasputin Affair* (Ensemble Theatre) was nominated for an AWGIE award. Her adaptation of Craig Silvey's *Jasper*

Jones premiered at Barking Gecko followed by productions at Belvoir Street, MTC, QT and STCSA.

Her autobiographical play *The Seed* (Belvoir St Theatre) won the Sydney Theatre Award for Best Independent Production. With Kate performing in the play, it received great critical success, toured nationally and is being developed into a feature film. Co-written by Kate and Anne-Louise Sarks *Medea* (Belvoir St Theatre) was produced in 2012. The play won several awards including an AWGIE and five Sydney Theatre Awards and has been produced in Poland, Auckland, London and Basel. Other works include; *Masquerade* (based on the book by Kit Williams), *The Danger Age*, *Blood and Bone*, *The Web*, *Somewhere* (co-written with Tim Minchin for the Joan Sutherland PAC) and *Storytime*, which won Kate the 2004 Philip Parsons Award.

Kate is also an award-winning stage and screen actor with credits with many of the major Sydney theatre companies and in many television dramas and films. She was recently awarded Best Female Actor for *Every Brilliant Thing* at the Helpmann Awards.



Anne-Louise Sarks CO-WRITER

Anne-Louise works professionally as a director, writer and dramaturg. She is currently Artistic Director of the Lyric Ensemble at the Lyric Hammersmith and has most recently directed a new production of her acclaimed *Medea* for Theater Basel, Switzerland.

In 2017 Anne-Louise directed *Seventeen* for The Lyric Hammersmith, *Minnie & Liraz* for Melbourne Theatre Company, *Merchant of Venice* for Bell Shakespeare and *Testament of Mary* for Malthouse Theatre.

Recently for Belvoir Street Theatre Anne-Louise directed *Jasper Jones*, *Seventeen* and *Stories I Want To Tell You In Person*; she directed and co-wrote *Elektra/Orestes*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Nora* and *Medea*. Anne-Louise was also assistant director on *The Wild Duck* and dramaturg on *Thyestes*. In 2015 Anne-Louise directed a new production of *Medea* at The Gate Theatre in London to critical acclaim.

Anne-Louise's other theatre credits include *The Fiery Maze* (Malthouse Theatre Company and Sydney Festival); *The Seed* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *The Nest*, *Yuri Wells* and *By Their Own Hand* (The Hayloft Project). She has also worked as dramaturg for post presents post: Zoë Coombs Marr, Mish Grigor and Natalie Rose on *Oedipus Schmoedipus* (Belvoir and Melbourne Arts House) and *Ich Nibber Dibber* (Sydney Festival).

Anne-Louise was Resident Director at Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney from 2013-2015. In 2011, Anne-Louise held the positions of Associate Artist for Belvoir, Director in Residence at the Malthouse Theatre Company in Melbourne and from 2010-2013 Anne-Louise was Artistic Director of The Hayloft Project.

A note from the DIRECTOR

"Through history the play has remained a cultural sounding board for saying the unsayable and doing the unthinkable: it has been used to test our deepest preconceptions of gender, our profound acceptance of compromise, our fear of truth; and it has been used, of course, as a voyeuristic spectacle, a window into that resilient taboo, maternal ambivalence..."

RACHEL CUSK, UK AUTHOR

Medea is not an easy play. It deals with issues societies would prefer did not occur (and are unwilling to face or deal with). It deals with a woman who does in the final instance kill her own children – something we never truly understand or forgive. In this carefully observed and nuanced modern adaptation by Kate Mulvany and Anne-Louise Sarks, we are very close to home. The setting is Jason and Medea's sons' bedroom, a space that physically reinforces the intimacy and personal nature of this story. We are voyeurs, for we can only watch and bear witness, as we follow the trajectory of Jasper and Leon's final hour. We identify with them, as we are powerless to change their fates.

Medea is about a betrayal, the end of a marriage, and the subsequent breakdown of a family unit. It invites us to consider powerful resonating issues that exist in our society; parenthood, domestic violence, the experience of trauma, the effects of isolation, loneliness, betrayal and despair, and leads us to ask how could such a terrible thing happen, and who are the victims?

This work is also a fresh and dynamic adaptation (After Euripides' play which was first produced in 431BC). If recognition and remembrance of the myth/story of *Medea* are part of the pleasure (and risk), so too is the invitation to consider change. Adaptations are never merely simple reproductions of the original, because the very process of adapting is and must be its own transformative thing.

Kate and Anne-Louise's adaptation, set in a contemporary household, is a world that is so 'achingly familiar', it pricks at our consciousness, our intellect and our compassion as we attempt to decipher the motivations that could push a woman and mother to betray and destroy everything she loves. Was it to hurt another? Is it indicative of inherent weaknesses and

hubris? Is *Medea* the archetype of a woman who disdains the feminine, the archetype of our collective fears?

What I see and experience is a human being suffering and I can find motivation for her actions even as they repel me. For *Medea* has great integrity; she must be true to her heart. This is a heroic stance. In response to his betrayal she deals Jason the most painful blow possible by killing his future. He will have nothing at the play's end. Past, present and future are all completely destroyed. *Medea* is also suffering because she is oppressed. Choices are being made for her. She is trapped and has nowhere to go. *Medea* wants Jason. If she can't have his love she will kill his life.

From Kate Mulvany: *We need to sit with her in the horror of it all, because we have been part of it. From the moment the audience enters the boys' room, they are part of the act. And as a society, we all play a part in these deeds.*

I want to thank Kate and Anne-Louise for allowing me the privilege of directing their magical script and tracking with us alongside the work as we have developed it in the rehearsal room. I want to thank the four wonderful young men who are making their professional stage debut and doing it so beautifully. Heartfelt thanks to Alexandria who has brought wit, compassion, intelligence, and so much more, to her devastating portrayal of *Medea*, and to James and Mollie at WAYTCO, Clare Watson and Black Swan for their encouragement and support of me personally. Finally, a big thank you to our creative and production team who have reminded me just how brilliant a collective of artists working in collaboration can be.

Sally Richardson
DIRECTOR

CAST



Jalen Hewitt JASPER

Jalen Hewitt was born in Perth but spent a large part of his childhood in Brisbane and Melbourne, before returning to Perth in 2016. On his first day of Year 7 drama, Jalen decided that he wanted to be an actor. He has since participated in YOHfest and completed Screen Squad at WAAPA summer school. He is also hoping to attend WAAPA after he finishes school.

A pop culture fanatic, Jalen is inspired by many of his favourite Australian actors including Hugh Jackman, Chris Hemsworth and the late Heath Ledger. He hopes to one day follow in their footsteps, with his ultimate goal to be cast as a character in a zombie apocalypse movie.

When not pursuing dreams of the undead, Jalen enjoys hanging out with friends and family, playing Mario Kart™, taking part in Park Run, and walking his family's new puppy, Jasper (named in honour of his first theatre part).



Lachlan Ives JASPER

Lachlan is an aspiring actor and current Year 9 student at Mazenod College. This is his debut with Black Swan. He has always had a love of acting and performing but is fairly new to the show business scene. 2019 marks his overall theatre debut – singing and dancing across the stage as Charley Bates in Mazenod College's production of *Oliver! The Musical*.

Lachlan is an avid musician, playing piano, guitar, clarinet and saxophone, as well as being a keen sportsman. He has represented the Perth Cricket Club at Districts level, is a member of two Mazenod College bands, and also enjoys hockey, football and tennis. He won the Barry Moss Citizenship Award for Drama at his primary school and is looking forward to future partnerships with Black Swan and WAYTCO.



Jack Molloy LEON

Jack is a Year Nine student studying under the Special Visual and Performing Arts (SVAPA) program at Mount Lawley Senior High School. After responding to an open call out, Jack was selected to join a group of twenty young actors for a series of WA Youth Theatre Company (WAYTCO) and Black Swan casting workshops, facilitated by director Sally Richardson and under the guidance of WAYTCO Executive Producer James Berlyn. This is his first professional role.

Jack is an avid climber, both indoors and in any tree that will hold him. He loves to read and has been a fan of Greek mythology since he can remember. He also loves photography, you'll often find him taking photos from the top of some tree somewhere.



Alexandria Steffensen MEDEA

Alexandria is an Acting graduate from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts where she was the recipient of the Leslie Anderson Award for Acting Excellence. Some of her theatre credits include *Good People* (Red Stich), *She's a Little Finch* (MKA), *Camarilla* and *Valley Song* which included a regional tour (Merrigong Theatre Company), *A View of Concrete* (Belvoir), *Crave* (Acquiesce Speck Productions), *Jet of Blood* (Ignite Productions), *The Crucible*,

X-Stacy and *Live Acts on Stage* (Black Swan) which was part of the 2004 Perth International Arts Festival. In 2008, Alexandria travelled to Los Angeles and studied with many leading industry professionals. Her film and TV credits have included *Happy Feet*, *Neighbours*, *FB Holden* (short), *CNNNN* and *Life Support*. Alexandria also has a Bachelor of Arts in English majoring in Theatre and Film and Television from Curtin University and created, acted and directed many theatre productions and devised shows.



Jesse Vakatinini LEON

Jesse has trained with NIDA and The Celebrity Experience and is a member of the Matrics Management agency. He received a scholarship to attend the Specialist Contemporary Drama program at Belmont City College in 2016 and has since received the 2017 Arts Performance Award and the 2018 Top Student Award for Specialist Contemporary Drama.

Jesse is aiming to be accepted into WAAPA after the completion of high school.

Jesse also enjoys distance running, rugby, dance and plays drums/percussion.

CREATIVES



Sally Richardson DIRECTOR

Sally is one of WA's most experienced and respected independent theatre artists. A director, writer, dramaturg, producer and advocate she is passionately committed to the creation of new Australian work and developing collaborations with other artists in this region, championing the voice, artistry and presence of women in the performing arts.

Sally has been commissioned/worked for companies including: Sydney Theatre Company, Perth Theatre Company, Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre, Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Deckchair Theatre, The Flying Fruitfly Circus, The National Institute of Circus Arts, PICA, WAAPA, Performing Lines and her work has featured at Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Beijing and Shanghai Festivals amongst others. Productions have been a winner/finalist for Helpmann Awards, Green Room and Blue Room Awards, Ausdance Awards amongst others. She is a former director of Playworks Australia and Stages WA.

For Black Swan (Steamworks company partner 2002-05) *MEDEA 05*, *The Other Woman*, *Savage Grace* and multi award winning *The Drover's Wives*.

She has developed, produced and toured over 30 original works through her company Steamworks Arts and is Artistic Director of MAXIMA Circus.

Up and coming productions include world premieres *CATCH!* (AWESOME Festival) and Aust/Taiwan dance/theatre/film collaboration *GUI SHU (Belong)* PICA/PLWA. In 2019 she is part of Australia Council's Arts Leaders program and a Playwriting Australia DUOLOGUES recipient with Artistic Director Clare Watson. She is a PHD creative research fellow at ECU WAAPA.



Bryan Woltjen SET & COSTUME DESIGN CONCEPT

A graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Bryan has designed for a diverse range of theatre makers across Australia, India and the UK. In 2008 he undertook a series of residencies across India researching traditional puppetry and devising new works. He is the recipient of two WA Equity Guild Awards for Best Set Design. He has been partially based in the UK for the last decade.

His previous work with Black Swan includes *X-Stacy*, *Striptease*, *Mountain Language*, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, *The Lady Aoi*, *The Messiah*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *Far Away*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Web*, *Ninety*, *When the Rain Stops Falling*, *The Motherfucker with the Hat*, *Blithe Spirit*, and *Extinction*.



Tyler Hill SET & COSTUME DESIGN REALISATION

Tyler is a graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (BA Performing Arts, Set & Costume Design) and alumni of the Black Swan Resident Artist Program. After winning the David Hough Award for Outstanding Achievement in Design (WAAPA, 2016), he was seconded to Sydney Theatre Company's *The Hanging* and then engaged as Design Assistant for the Perth Festival 2017 Opening Ceremony *Boorna Waanginy: The Trees*

Speak. His design credits include *Our Town*, *Hir*, *The Eisteddfod*, *Endgame* (Black Swan), *You Know We Belong Together* (Black Swan, Perth Festival and DADAA), *Actéon*, *Trouble in Tahiti* (Lost & Found Opera) *Tom Vickers and the Extraordinary Adventure of his Missing Sock* (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and WA Museum). Tyler's film credits include *Dirt Music* and *Otherlife*. Connect on web www.tyler-hill.com



Lucy Birkinshaw LIGHTING DESIGNER

Lucy Birkinshaw is a lighting designer and artist, a co-founder of Filament Design Group whose design work spans theatre, music theatre, concert lighting, opera, dance, film and television. She graduated from the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts with an Advanced Diploma of Lighting Design for Production and Performance and Curtin University with a Bachelor of Art, Fine Arts.

Lucy has designed lighting for Black Swan State Theatre Company, Perth Theatre Company, Malthouse, Griffin Theatre, Barking Gecko, The Aphids, Melbourne Opera, Lyric Opera Melbourne, Performance 4a, WAYTCO, My Darling Patricia, OpticNerve, Side Pony Productions, Hayloft Project, School With No Walls, Magnormos, Red Ryder, Perth International Arts Festival, Opera in the Park, Australian Opera Studio and many others.

She has collaborated with a diverse range of directors, choreographers and composers. Lucy's distinctive approach to depth, contrast and beauty within her designs make her an identifiable theatre artist.



Melanie Robinson SOUND DESIGNER & VOCAL COACH

Award-winning musician Melanie Robinson is a cellist, singer, composer and arranger. A graduate of the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (Bachelor of Music), Melanie has just returned to Western Australia after 12 years based in Melbourne, from where she toured, co-wrote and collaborated with some of Australia's finest performers. These include: Tim Rogers, You Am I, Megan Washington, William Barton, The Black Arm Band,

Jimmy Barnes, Tilman Robinson and Xani Kolac. Instrumental credits include: ArtsWA Young Artists Creative Fellowship, two-time WAMI Best Female Instrumentalist. Theatre scores include: *Ghost Child* (Steamworks 2012), *Cinderella Dressed In Yella*, *Colourwheel* and *RabbiT* (Buzz Dance Theatre). Melanie is also known for her solo performances and has released two albums of her own music: *After The Storm* and *Empty Places*.

"A heart-stopper" (Sydney Morning Herald) with "a voice that will make your black heart beat again" (Adelaide Now).



Laura Boynes MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

Laura is a graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (BA Honours Dance). Her theatre credits include: *You Know We Belong Together* (Black Swan, world premiere and encore season), *Actéon* (Lost and Found Opera), *Trigger Warning* (Sally Richardson).

As a dancer Laura has performed nationally and internationally in contemporary dance, theatre, experimental music, site-specific and opera works. 2009-2013 performer for Buzz Dance Theatre. As choreographer, she has independently created multiple short and full-length works and co-directed large commissions for dance companies such as LINK Dance Company, Buzz Dance Theatre, CO:3 Youth Ensemble, and the WA Academy of Performing Arts. She has been awarded 2014 Winner Australian Dance Award for Outstanding Achievement in Youth and Community Dance. Look the Other Way – Buzz Dance Theatre – in collaboration with Cadi McCarthy 2016 – Most Outstanding Dancer (Dance Australia Critics Choice) for *SousVide* presented at the Adelaide Fringe Festival.



Lawrence Hassell FIGHT DIRECTOR

Lawrence has trained in stage combat since 2014 at the *Western Regionals Stage Combat Workshop* run by Andy Fraser and in Canada with various other specialists in this field. In 2017 he became part of Stage Combat Perth and entered an apprenticeship with Andy Fraser, under his guidance Lawrence has worked on various shows such as; Black Swan's *Switzerland* and *Let The Right One In*, WAAPA's *Heathers* and *Crucible*, Yirra Yaakin's *King Hit*, Barking

Gecko's *A Ghost In My Suitcase*, *Mimma: A Musical of War and Friendship*, The Graduate Dramatic Society's *Macbeth*.



Erin Coubrough STAGE MANAGER

Erin graduated from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2011 with an AD in Stage Management, and since then, has worked with Black Swan on a number of productions including *The White Divers of Broome*, *Arcadia* and *Signs of Life* (2012), *The Importance of Being Earnest* in (2013) and *The Eisteddfod* and *Switzerland* in (2017). Other career highlights include *Wicked the Musical* Australasia Tour (2013 – 2015), *McQueen the Play* on

London's West End (2015) and *The Wizard of Oz the Musical* – Australian Tour (2018). Erin is currently the Production Stage Manager at The West Australian Ballet and loves stage managing back home, here in Perth.



Anastasia Julien-Martial ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Anastasia graduated last year from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (AD Live Production). They have worked with the company on the world premiere of *Xenides*, *Our Town*, *You Know We Belong Together* (2019) and *The Torrents*. Festival and events credits include: Fringe World Festival 2018 *House of Joys*, *You're Welcome*, *Miss Westralia*. Fringe World Festival

2019 *Endless Answers: Limbs*, Kickstart Festival 2019: *Festival Day Music Stage*. Anastasia identifies as non-binary and prefers they/them pronouns.

KEY PROGRAM AREAS

Fronted by the leadership of our Artistic Director, Clare Watson, we are creating a strong brand of theatre that portrays a uniquely Western Australian voice. One that reaches out and speaks to who we are and who we want to be.

In a place as vast as WA, we have the entirety of our State's story to tell, and we know the absolute importance of sharing it with both our own community and the world.

Our ambition is for Black Swan to match the beauty and boldness of the State that we call home. We will continue to be audacious, ambitious and authentic. We will explore our city and our State to find new ways to inspire audiences and help shape the broader narrative of what it means to be Western Australian.

REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

From our home in the State Theatre Centre, we reach far and wide. From regional cities to small towns and remote areas, we aim to anchor theatre, and its ability to bring people together, in the lives of communities large and small. Whether it's supporting regional areas through touring, community engagement, live broadcasts or ambassadorships – these are all vital ways of connecting with the heart of these communities.

EDUCATION

Enabling students to experience theatre has been pivotal in the flourishing of our local arts scene. More importantly, it's where our youth build their confidence, their voice and continue to develop who they are. Through workshops, productions and mentorships in schools, at both a metropolitan and regional level, and of course their attendance at our shows, we are creating a stronger connection with culture and identity.

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

As these generations develop, giving emerging artists the means to explore and experiment is critical to establishing careers. Whether it's through our Emerging Writers Program or partnerships with WAAPA, we're committed to immersing these talents in our productions, to help them shine under the spotlight. Our Resident Artists work closely with the Artistic Director in collaboratively curating the season. They are emerging and established Western Australian artists who work on productions in their area of expertise and contribute to activation activities throughout the year.

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In recognition of donations received between July 2018 and 2019.

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Thank you!

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