# Cut the Sky Marrugeku

Arts House



Wed 6 – Sun 10 July 2016, 75 mins, no interval Post-show Q&A: Thu 7 July

## Artistic Director's Notes

Cut the Sky is collaboratively created by: Concept: Dalisa Pigram & Rachael Swain Poems: Edwin Lee Mulligan

Director:

Rachael Swain Choreographers: Dalisa Pigram & Serge Aimé Coulibaly Dramaturg: Hildegard de Vuyst Musical Director: Matthew Fargher Media Designers & Visual Concept: Sonal Jain & Mriganka Madhukaillya (Desire Machine Collective) Set & Costume Designer: Stephen Curtis Lighting Designer: Damien Cooper Cultural Adviser: Patrick Dodson

Cast/Co-creators:

Miranda Wheen, Ngaire Pigram, Eric Avery, Josh Mu, Dalisa Pigram & Edwin Lee Mulligan

#### Production

Production Manager & Lighting Operator: Mike Smith Sound & Video Production & Operation: Ella Wufong Tour Manager: Tarvne Laffar Cinematographer & Video Production: Sam James Editors: Greg Ferris & Sam James Rain Effect Designer: Joey Ruigrok Van Der Werven

Marrugeku Staff Theater ImPfalzbau Artistic Co-Directors: Ludwigshafen Dalisa Pigram & (Germany) Carriageworks Rachael Swain General Manager: (Australia) Bruce Gorring Koninkliike Vlaamse Schouwburg - KVS Creative Producer: (Belgium) Rachael Swain Booking Manager: Justin Macdonnell Weeping Song & Red

Songs

Seeds

Right Hand

the Future

Ngaiire

ganganv

languages)

Rain Song

Ngiyampaa

Nick Cave and the Bad

Rain Song & Dreaming

Eric Avery (sung in

For What it's Worth

**Buffalo Springfield** 

Wadampa lu Ring-ganga

Edwin Lee Mulligan (sung

in Nyikina and Walmajarri

Musicians & Vocals

Lorrae Coffin, Konrad

Park, Kelly Ottaway,

Andry Sculthorpe,

Michael Fortescue &

Voice of Bill Grayden:

Engineer & Production:

in Recordings:

Ruth Langford

Backing Vocals: Kartanya Maynard

Peter Docker

Don Bate

Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg (Luxembourg) Centre Culturel Tiibaou Nouméa (New Caledonia)

Cut the Sky-Five Songs for the Future

Act one - Disaster Act two-Deeply Cut Wounds Wangaaypuwan language) Act three – The Sun Act four - History Repeats Act five - Dreaming the Future In creating Cut the Sky we wanted to open ways of thinking to allow Indigenous knowledge systems and approaches to 'caring for country' that exist in Aboriginal culture to come forward. We want to offer our audiences the chance to consider climate change through another lens, exemplified in the poetry of Edwin Lee Mulligan, the songs written specially for the production by Ngaiire and the choreography of our wonderful cast. Situations are becoming more complex by the day in the North West of Australia where cultural relationships and responsibilities are being challenged in multiple ways. Fulfilling our responsibility to keep the balance is delicate, but from an Aboriginal perspective there are people in our culture who still hold the knowledge and power to 'sing the rain' or 'cut the sky'.

In a key moment in Cut the Sky Edwin tells the dreaming story for the gas, buried deep in his spirit country. In his fourth poem - Dungkabah, or Poison Woman, he explains for the audience her presence. She exists at the same time as mineral, as a dangerous and lusty woman who can cause death and yet who cares for her country. She is also a physical site near Noonkanbah and Edwin's spirit country. Edwin's poem and the characters in *Cut the Sky*; Indigenous and non-Indigenous mining workers, a geologist, a sex worker, a displaced traditional owner and a protester give form to our ideas as they have played out across time in the Kimberley.

Our early reference points have included the film Werner Herzog made with Wandjuk Marika - Where the Green Ants Dream (1984), based partly on the Milirrbum v Nabalco Pty Ltd case; the documentary On Sacred Ground (1980), based on the landmark protests of the Noonkanbah people against the American company Amex: as well as the Brecht/Weill Opera The Rise and

Fall of the City of Mahagonny (1930). You will see references to each of these in our production. As we have created Cut the Sky we have both inverted the concepts (from listening to not listening) and also totally reversed the order of the scenes. The cyclone doesn't loom and pass as in Mahagonny, but we begin in its midst, sometime in the near future, contemplating the increase in extreme weather events around the world.

This shifting of time and of cause and effect has been in part our attempt to come to grips with the sprawling nature of climate change- and with who or what is in control. There is a sense that the cyclone has been circling us as we work. That it, in turn, has been listening to us, causing us to dance at the edge of the apocalypse.

We wish to thank our extraordinary team who have committed themselves to our ambitious project. Creating intercultural and interdisciplinary performance is not for the feint hearted! Our collaborations have included artists from the Kimberley, Sydney, Hobart, Ouagadougou, Brussels and Guwhati in Assam. The perspectives drawn from specific pressure points around the world have all contributed distinct points of view to an issue we face together as a planet: how we value that which is above and below the earths crust.

As we look back across time to the voices that spoke up along the way we ask: have the questions changed or are they still the same? Cut the Sky is a meditation on these issues in five acts.

Rachael Swain & Dalisa Pigram

Image: Jon Green



Cut the Sky is a combined artistic response from the creative team and cast to global issues of climate change while giving respect and acknowledgment to Aboriginal perspectives. The production was inspired by their research and experiences about the issues raised in trying to find balance when it comes to caring for country in a time of global environmental change. It was also informed by current and past situations and events in the Kimberley region. Marrugeku respects the views of all Traditional Owners and the decisions they make with regard to their Country and the activities that occur on it and do not attempt to speak for any specific communities.

#### Image: Heidrun Lohr



## **Biographies** (Creative)

#### Rachael Swain Concept & Director

Rachael Swain is a director of multi-media dance theatre, a creative producer and researcher. She is a founding member and co-artistic director of Marrugeku, together with Dalisa Pigram, (1994 till present). She has directed and co-written Marrugeku's productions Mimi, Crying Baby, Burning Daylight, and co-directed Buru (with Pigram). She was dramaturg and creative producer of Pigram's solo Gudirr Gudirr. Her dance, circus and multimedia productions for both Marrugeku and Stalker Theatre have toured extensively nationally and internationally. Rachael curates and facilitates practice led research laboratories exploring new cultural pathways in the creation of contemporary intercultural performance. She studied at the European Dance Development Centre in Arnhem, the Netherlands and The Amsterdam School for Advanced Theatre and Dance Research (DAS ARTS). She has a PhD from Melbourne University. She currently holds an early career research fellowship at Melbourne University.

#### Dalisa Pigram Concept, Co-Devising Performer & Co-Choreographer

Dalisa is a Yawuru/Bardi woman born and raised in Broome. After completing an Advanced Certificate in Aboriginal Musical Theatre (1993) Dalisa performed in Jimmy Chi's Corrugation Road and Bran Nue Dae (Cabaret). Dalisa is a founding member of Marrugeku (1994) and Co-Artistic Director since 2009. She has been a co-devising performer on all company productions, touring extensively overseas and throughout Australia with Mimi (1996), Crving Baby (2001), Burning Davlight (2006) (assistant choreographer/cultural liaison) and Buru (2010), which she also conceived, choreographed and co-directed. Dalisa's first solo work Gudirr Gudirr premiered in 2013 and has since played across Australia, Europe and at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in Nouméa. Gudirr Gudirr has earned Dalisa and Marrugeku collectively an Australian Dance Award (Outstanding Achievement in Independent Dance 2014), a Green Room Award (Best Female Performer 2014) and was nominated for a 2014 Helpmann Award.

#### Serge Aimé Coulibaly Co-Choreographer

Serge Aimé Coulibaly is a dancer and choreographer born in Burkina Faso, and now living Belgium. He was an actor, musician, and dancer of the famous company Feeren from Burkina Faso (the first professional theatre company in West Africa), directed by Amadou Bourou and toured widely in Africa and Europe. In 2002 he joined the famous Belgium company, Les Ballet C de la Band performed in *Wolf, C(h)oeurs* by Alain Platel and *Tempus Fugit* by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui.

In 2002 Serge Aimé founded his own company Faso Danse Théâtre in Burkina Faso and in France. 'Every artistic act is a political act' says Coulibaly and hence his work always talks about socio-political issues. He created a number of works with his company. The work *Kohkuma 7° south* is all about possibilities of an African Renaissance. What if the painful histories of the continent can lead to a change in which people start creating their own destiny and are no longer prisoner of their past? Coulibaly's latest work, *Nuit Blanche a Ougagadougou* created ripples: the piece predicted the downfall of the president.

All his works have toured extensively throughout Africa and Europe and he has developed an original contemporary language, which is rich and powerful, anchored in African Culture.

#### Hildegard de Vuyst Dramaturg

In 1994 Hildegard started working as a dramaturge for Het muziek Lod and in 1995 with Les Ballets C de la B for *La Tristeza Complice*. She has worked in collaboration with director Alain Platel which would lead to *lets op Bach, Wolf, vsprs and pitié!* She has also worked with Koen Augustijnen (*To Crush Time*) and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui (*Rien de rien*) and taught workshops (dance dramaturgy) in Amsterdam, Lublin and Aarhus.

In 2001 she started working at the Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg (KVS) as a dramaturge and part of the artistic team. Her far-reaching commitment to the KVS as an institution and to Platel as a choreographer came together in April 2006 in *Uit de bol*, and in her work as dramaturge on the recent coproduction of *pitiél*. Hildegard worked in Palestine in 2004 leading a workshop with Platel. Where she founded PASS (Performing Arts Summer School), a collaboration between KVS, Les Ballets C de la B and the A.M, and Qattan Foundation in Ramallah, consisting of a longterm workshop trajectory with young Palestinian performers in Palestine and in Belgium.

## **Biographies** (Creative)

#### Patrick Dodson Cultural Advisor

Patrick Dodson is a Yawuru man from Broome in Western Australia. He has dedicated his life work to being an advocate for constructive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples based on mutual respect, understanding and dialogue. He is a recipient of the Sydney International Peace prize.

Patrick has extensive experience in Aboriginal Affairs, previously as Director of the Central and Kimberley Land Councils and as a Commissioner in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. He also served as inaugural Chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and as Co-Chair of the Expert Panel for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians.

Prior to his endorsement as a Senator for Western Australian on 2 May 2016, Patrick was a member of the ANU Council, Adjunct Professor at the University of Notre Dame Australia (Broome) and Co-Chair of the National Referendum Council.

Patrick lives in Broome with his family, where he is involved in a range of social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability activities and advocacy roles. He has worked as a cultural adviser to Marrugeku on the productions *Burning Daylight* and *Buru* and co-conceived *Gudirr Gudirr* with Dalisa Pigram.

## **Desire Machine Collective** Media Designers & Visual Concept

Collaborating since 2004 as Desire Machine Collective, Sonal Jain and Mriganka Madhukaillya employ film, video, photography, and multimedia installation in their works.

Sonal is a fine arts graduate from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Vadodara, Gujarat, India. Mriganka received a degree in physics from Fergusson College in Pune, India, and completed his postgraduate work in film and video at the National Institute of Design. As Desire Machine Collective, they initiated Periferry (2007–), an alternative artist-led space and residency programs situated on the M. V. Chandardinga, a ferry docked on the Brahmaputra River in Guwahati. Periferry serves as a laboratory in flux for generating innovative practices in contemporary film and video. The space and its activities also provide a connective platform for dialogue across artistic, scientific, technological, and ecological modes of production and knowledge. In addition to their tireless activities forging artistic networks and spaces, Desire Machine Collective have presented their work in a number of group exhibitions including, at the 54th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, India Pavilion, Venice (2011), Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo, Rome (2011) and Deutsche Guggenheim Museum, Berlin (2010).

Their recent exhibitions are *Being Singular Plural*, at the Solomon Guggenheim Museum New York (2012), *Intense Proximity*, the 3rd edition of the La Triennale at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, (2012) and Experimenta India: London Indian Film Festival at the Tate Modern London (2012). *Walking Drifting Dragging*, New Museum, (2013), *[UN]NATURAL LIMITS* at the Austrian Cultural Forum New York (2013).

## Stephen Curtis Set & Costume Designer

Stephen has worked extensively as both a costume and set designer for drama, film, opera and dance.

Major credits include Black Diggers, QTC/Sydney Festival 2013; IAm Eora Sydney Festival 2012; La *Boheme* for West Australian Opera/Opera Oueensland/ Opera Australia; Lulu, The Cunning Little Vixen. Turn of the Screw for Opera Australia/Houston Grand Opera: Der Ring Des Nibelungen (The Ring Cycle) for State Opera of South Australia: The Secret River. A Man With Five Children, The Government Inspector, Heartbreak House for Sydney Theatre Company; Rupert, All About My Mother, Life x 3, Tribes and The Blue Room for Melbourne Theatre Company; The Vertical Hour, Doubt and Two Brothers for the Melbourne Theatre Company/Sydney Theatre Company; The Winter's Tale, Henry IV, The Government Inspector and The Servant of Two Masters for Bell Shakespeare Company; Gwen in Purgatory, Small Poppies, The Popular Mechanicals and Signal Driver for Company B Belvoir; Pvgmalion, The Venetian Twins and Corporate Vibes for Oueensland Theatre Company.

As a production designer Stephen's film credits include Looking for Alibrandi, Twelfth Night, Breathing Underwater; Bedevil and Night Cries. Stephen has recently published Staging Ideas: set and costume design for theatre as a guide to the design process for young theatre-makers and theatre-lovers.

#### Damien Cooper Lighting Designer

Damien Cooper lights theatre, dance and opera. His career highlights include *Exit The King* on Broadway, starring Geoffrey Rush and Susan Sarandon; The Australian Ballet's *Swan Lake* which has been presented in London, Paris and Tokyo and *Keating! The Musical*, Australia's most successful subsidised theatre show ever.

Damien's theatre highlights include Glass Menagerie, Summer of The Seventeenth Doll, Gethsemane, Stuff Happens and Tov Symphony at Belvoir: Cyrano de Bergerac, The Lost Echo, The Women of Troy, Tot Mom and Riflemind at STC and Peter Pan at New Victory Theatre season in New York. His Opera credits include Der Ring Des Nibelungen (The Ring Cycle) for Opera Australia, A Midsummer Nights Dream at Houston Grand Opera, Canadian Opera Company and The Lyric Opera of Chicago; Chorus! at Houston Grand Opera; and Cosi Fan Tutte and Peter Grimes at Opera Australia and co-produced and presented at Houston Grand Opera. Damien loves lighting dance and designed Chunky Move's Mortal Engine, Bangarra's Of Earth and Sky, Australian Dance Theatre's Be Yourself, Australian Dance Theatre's extensively-toured Birdbrain, The Australian Ballet's Silver Rose and Romeo and Juliet. Damien has won three Sydney Theatre Awards for Best Lighting Design, an APDG award for Best Lighting and a Green Room Award for Best Body of Work in 2007.

## Matthew Fargher Musical Director

Matthew has produced, composed and directed music across many genres with a remarkable array of collaborators since the early 1980s.

As Marrugeku's Musical Director he has worked since 1995 with remote and urban Indigenous musicians and dancers for *Mimi, Crying Baby, Burning Daylight, Buru* and *Cut the Sky*, through national and international tours. He has composed or musical directed for Terrapin Puppet Theatre, Circus Oz, Belvoir Street Theatre, and Kickstart Arts. He devised "Origins" with Tasmanian and Broome Musicians, and has devised music for largescale outdoor events and festivals.

His studio work includes film and animation scores and production for Hip Hop, Blues, Metal, Folk, and Roots musicians. In the last 2 years has mixed, mastered and produced 9 different albums. He runs a community access recording studio for Youth Health South in Glenorchy, Tasmania now entering its eleventh year of operation.

#### Ngaiire Songwriter

Sydney future soul galacticon Ngaiire (pron Ny-Ree) had a killer of a year in 2014, having cemented her place as one of Australia's most dynamic vocalists and unique performers. Her Australian Music Prize nominated, debut LP *Lamentations* (2013), showcases stunning vocals over a refined mix of down-tempo electronic glitch, soulful grooves and elegant piano work. Written between her Sydney home and a tiny Japanese watering hole called Bar Noah on the outskirts of Tokyo, the album featured single *Dirty Hercules* with Grammy nominated 'Nai Palm of Melbourne band Hiatus Kaiyote drawing the attention of some big fans. She toured with Alicia Keys & John Legend, played acclaimed Australian festivals such as Sydney's VIVID 2014 and David Walsh's MOFO in Tasmania.

Having erected a flag in Australian soil with *Lamentations*, Ngaiire spread her love for the dark beauty of the melancholic further afield in with breakout performances at Glastonbury 2014 & a string of UK club shows. With album #2 currently in the works expect to see & hear a whole lot more from Ngaiire as we head into 2015.

## Cast & Co-Creators

## Miranda Wheen

Miranda is an independent dancer based in Sydney. A highly versatile performer, she has collaborated with a number of companies and choreographers throughout Australia and internationally, including: Shaun Parker and Company, Mirramu Dance Company, Restless Dance Theatre, Martin Del Amo, Marrugeku, Stalker Theatre and the Tsai Jui-Yueh Dance Foundation in Taiwan, among others. Miranda has studied in Senegal, West Africa, with choreographer Germaine Acogny at L'Ecole des Sables, the International School for Contemporary and Traditional African Dance, and for three years was a participant in the International Indigenous Choreographic Laboratories held in Sydney, Broome and Auckland. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Dance from the University of Western Sydney, where she was awarded the Dean's Medal, and a First Class Honours from Macquarie University.

## Ngaire Pigram

Ngaire is a writer, director and performing artist. A Yawuru/Yamatji woman from Broome, WA she has been performing most of her life. Ngaire has played the lead role in several short films including Bec Cole's Plains Empty, which was selected for the 2005 Sundance Film Festival. She was nominated for a Best Performance award at the 2013 WASA's for her role in Dot West's short comedy, In the Air. She also played in the 2011 theatre production of The Sapphires - directed by Neil Armfield, which showed at The Barbican Theatre in London. After acting in the 2011 Sundance Film Festival selection feature film Mad Bastards - Ngaire moved into writing and directing with her short drama. Dark Whispers, a Screenwest initiative and Spearpoint Production exploring a woman's struggle with her tragic reality. Cut the Sky is Ngaire's first time working with Marrugeku.

## Eric Avery

Eric is an Indigenous Australian dance artist and musician working independently and based in Sydney. He belongs to the Yuin, Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan and Gumbangirri tribes of NSW and is a custodian of Ngiyampaa Wangaypuwaan traditional songs and dances from his father's line. As a child, Eric learned Indigenous dance before going on to study at NAISDA. Since graduating, he has worked with a range of choreographers including Francis Rings, Narelle Benjamin, Soo Yuen, Jasmine Gulash, Tammi Gissel and has also danced at Graeme Murphy's direction in Turandot.

In 2012, with the guidance of mentor Helen Cameron, Eric completed a 6-month mentorship program with the Australian Ballet. Choreographically, Eric has been developing a solo exploring Ngiyampaa language patterns and is developing a method to teach the Ngiyampaa Wangaypuwaan language through dance. In 2013, Eric was a dancer in Vicki Van Hout's new work and was the violinist/composer for *Black Cockatoo*, performed and choreographed by Tammi Gissel of the Canberra Dance Theatre. Eric is playing violin with the Black Arm Band and in a variety of venues, and is composing for *Magnificus Magnificus*, a joint project between Liz Lea of Canberra Dance Theatre and Tammi Gissel.

#### Josh Mu

Josh Mu is a Sydney-based contemporary dance practitioner who has worked with a wide variety of choreographers and directors performing both nationally and internationally.

A Darwin born WAAPA graduate, Mu has a strong passion for all things movement based. His career has led him to perform and collaborate alongside many independent dance projects and major contemporary dance and theatre companies throughout Australia.

Such choreographers/companies include: STEPS, Perth Theatre Company, Aimee Smith, Buzz Dance Theatre Company, Tracks Dance Theatre Company, Katrina Lazaroff, Sue Peacock, Chrissie Parrott, Alice Lee Holland, Tim Darbyshire, Gavin Webber, Sydney Theatre Company, Antony Hamilton Projects, Jo Lloyd, Shaun Parker & Company, Garry Stewart, Kate Champion (Force Majeure), Gideon Orbarzanek, Stephanie Lake, Anouk van Dijk (Chunky Move) and Meryl Tankard.

Mu has been an ArtsNT scholarship recipient and an AusdanceWA award winner for 'Outstanding Performance'.

#### Edwin Lee Mulligan

Born in Derby in 1980, Edwin is also known by his traditional name Warrda Lumbadij Bundajarrdi. Edwin grew up in Yakanarra and now resides in Nookanbah in the central Kimberley

His Grandfather Jimmy Pike is a well-known Walmajarri artist and is the reason Edwin has started his career in the arts. He has won several art awards.

Exhibitions include *Nomad Two Worlds* New York Exhibition O9. *Nomad Two Worlds* Exhibition at the NGV in Melbourne, sharing his stories with Sir Richard Branson, Hugh Jackman, Donna Karan and Black Eyed Peas. In 2011 he exhibited in Berlin and Rotterdam Perth CHOGM *Portrait of Diversity*.

Edwin appeared in the 2008 documentary *The Reincarnation of William Buckley* (ABC), shot in Melbourne, Victoria.

In 2014-15 Edwin was Artist-in-residence at Broometime Gallery where he exhibited solo and in partnership with long time collaborator Paul Boon. Edwin joined Marrugeku in 2014, writing poems for and performing in *Cut the Sky* which premiered in Perth International Arts Festival in 2015.

## **Biographies (Production)**

## Mike Smith

Production & Lighting Operator

Since graduating with a degree in Arts Production, Mike has worked as a Production Manager and Lighting Designer for theatre, events, music and film. As a Production Manager, Mike has toured theatre productions and new developments across Australia, Europe, Mexico and Asia, and has been part of the planning and design for several major Arts Festivals. He was head production manager for the Sydney Writer Festival for five years. In lighting, Mike has designed for theatre developments and corporate events, and has worked on a range of productions, including Billy Elliot (Sydney), Pixel Mountain (Korea, Mexico), and the feature film X-men Origins: Wolverine. In 2014, Mike received a grant from Australia Council for the Arts to undergo professional development in Cambridge, UK as an Arts Producer.

#### Ella Wufong Sound & Video Production

Since 2006, Ella has worked on numerous tours as a sound engineer and sound/video operator with Marrugeku, including *Burning Daylight* in Broome and Zurich and *Buru* in the US and Canada. He did audio and video post-production work on *Gudirr Gudirr* and subsequently toured with the show around Australia, as well as Nouméa and three European tours. Before joining Marrugeku, Ella worked in music production as a recording and live sound engineer. When not working in theatre production, Ella is an experimental psychologist who likes wearing hats.

## Arts House

Marrugeku would like to thank the following:

Paul Bell for Drone Footage, Geoff Mackley for Fukushima, Aceh and Thailand disaster footage. Nimia for Mining footage, ABC for Noonkanbah 1980 footage, Bill Grayden AM for permission to use his speech to the people of Nookanbah in 1980

## Families of all cast, crew and creative team:

Nyamba Buru Yawuru, Jane Cunningham, June Oscar Rosie Mulligan, Caroline Mulligan, Gie Baguet and all at Frans Brood Productions & Ben Ross

## With thanks to the Marrugeku Board:

Debra Pigram (Chair), Lorrae Coffin, Matthew Fargher, Michelle Broun, Patricia Ignacio, Nancia Guivarra, Rachael Swain & Dalisa Pigram

## marrugeku.com.au

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## **Commissioning Partners:** Theater Im Pfalzbau, Ludwigshafen (Germany) Carriageworks (Australia)

Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg - KVS (Belgium) Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg (Luxembourg) Centre Culturel Tjibaou Nouméa (New Caledonia)

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For more information, please contact us on the details below.

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