MAGAZINE

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An inspiring young pianist

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"I try to make every concert experience the most meaningful one."

Milana Gontsova
The youngest award winning Opera singer

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One of the most promising young pianists in the international online competition scene

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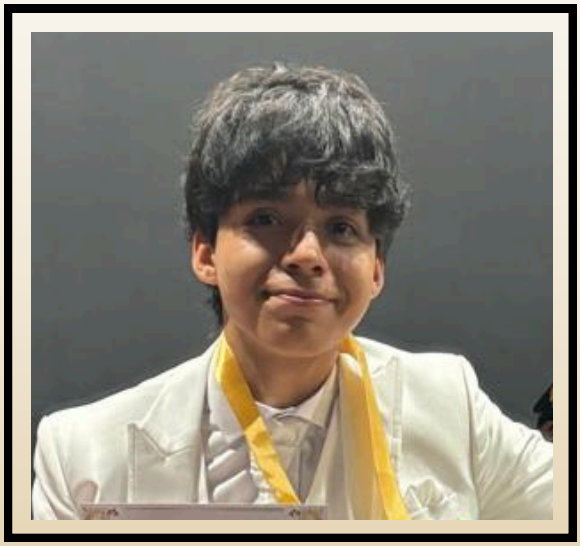

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Alberto Cartuccia Cingolani

Alberto Cartuccia Cingolani (born 2017 in Macerata, Italy) is one of the most remarkable young pianists of his generation. Having first approached the piano during the 2020 lockdown, he quickly revealed exceptional musical instincts and absolute pitch. Guided by his mother, he has already won over 90 first prizes — many of them absolute — in national and international competitions, both online and live.



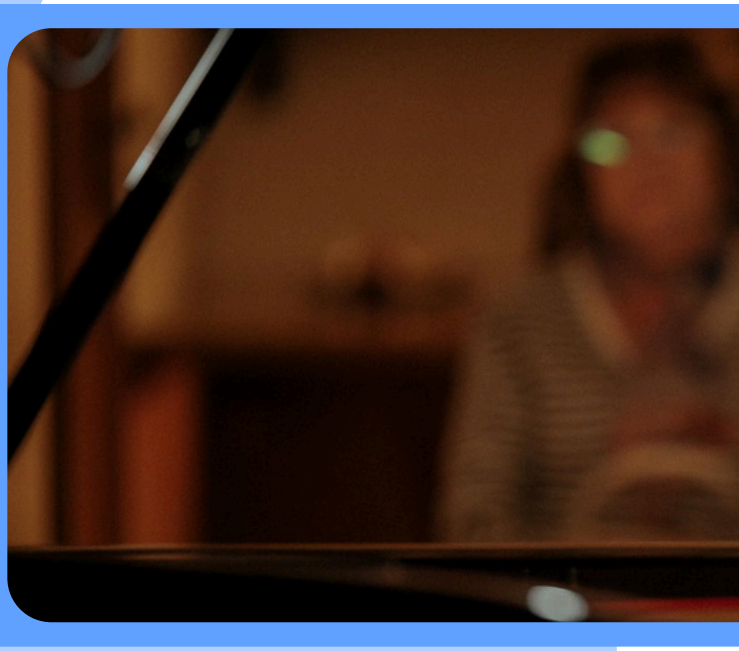
You are very busy with school, practice, competitions, concerts... What does a normal day look like for you? How do you balance everything?

In the morning I go to school, then in the afternoon, after relaxing for a while, I start practising the piano for about two hours. Then I do my homework, which isn't much as I'm in primary school, and often play with some friends who live nearby. Right after dinner, I practise for another half hour or so and then go to bed!



Your musical journey began at home, learning and playing together with your mother. What do you enjoy most about studying the piano with her, and how does this shared work shape your progress?

My mother has a diploma in singing, so when I play, she always tends to sing along and tell me to "breathe"... perhaps this is helping me to progress.



You started winning competitions at a very young age. What do these competitions mean to you — are they motivation, fun, a challenge, or something else?

I have taken part in lots of competitions, both in person and online. For now, they are all opportunities for fun and travel...
I don't feel any tension or worry...
just a little bit just before I perform.

Many young pianists look up to you because of your extraordinary talent and achievements. What helps you stay focused and calm when you perform on stage or in front of a camera?

I don't know exactly, I play without thinking too much about it and try to give it my all.



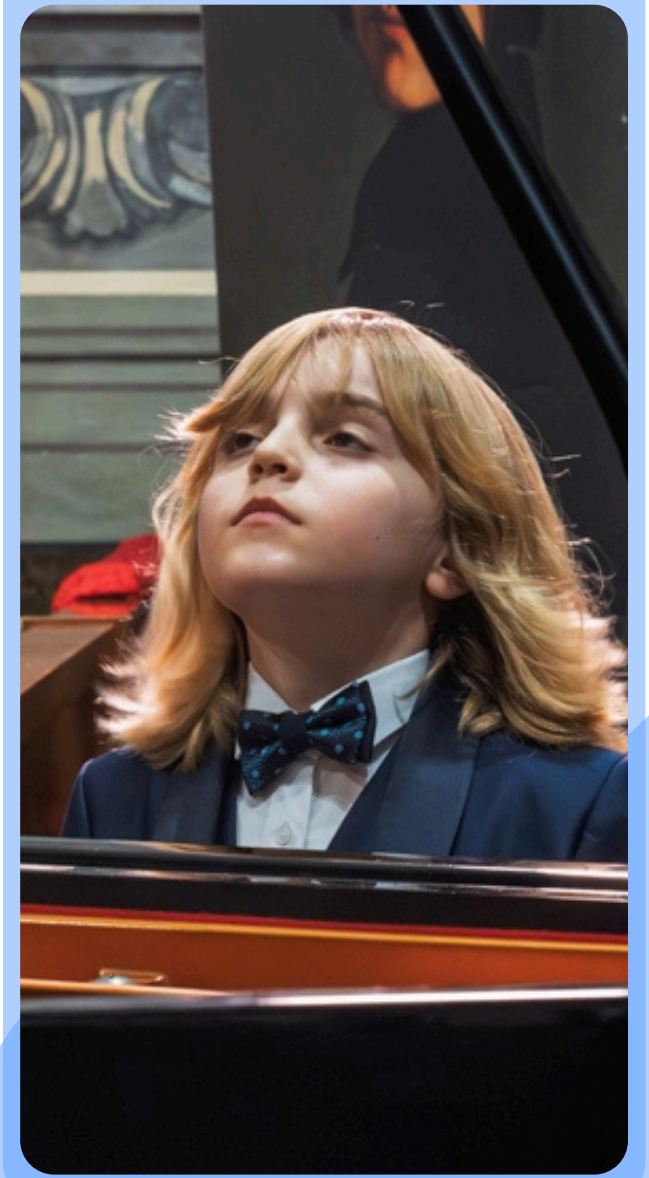
You have already played in beautiful halls, festivals, and even on television. Is there a moment or performance that you will never forget?

I have fond memories of my two performances at the Mozarthaus in Vienna, a magical place for me. But I also like to remember all the times I played with an orchestra: lots of young people and adults around me smiling at me, the conductors giving me advice and the applause from the audience.

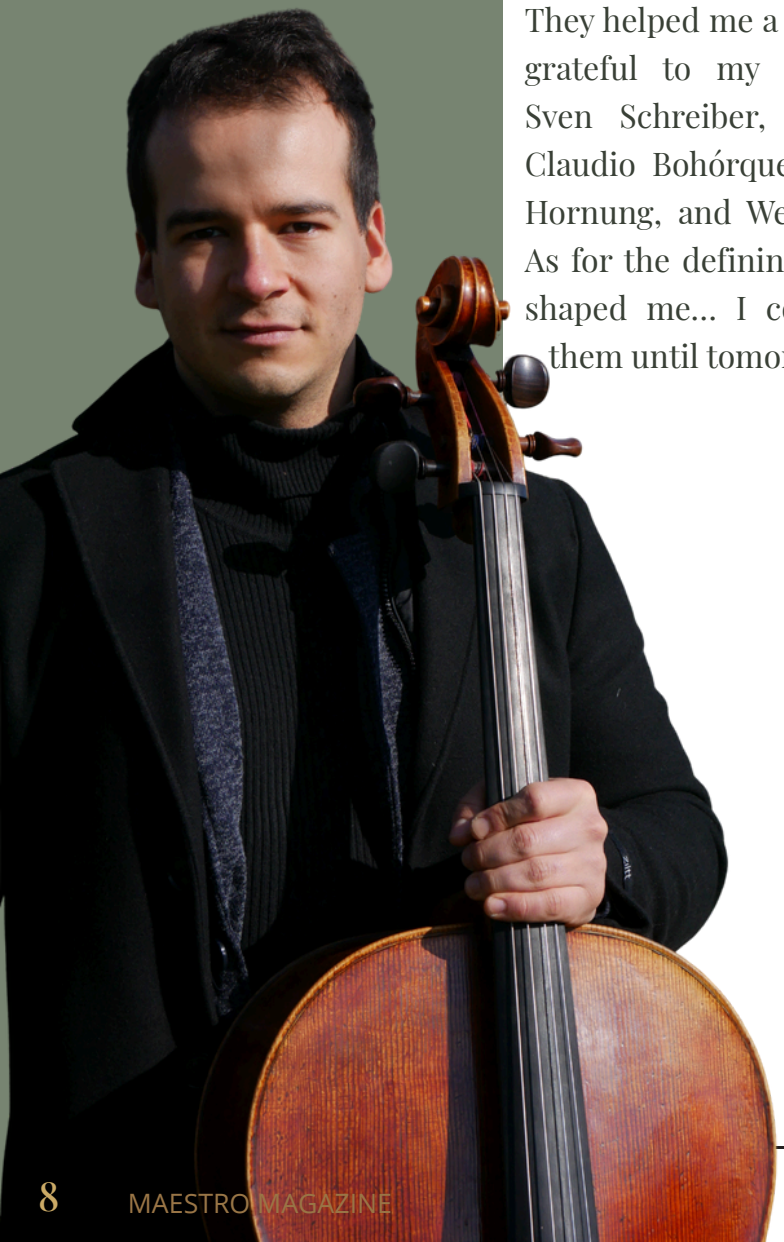
Looking ahead, what would you like to learn or experience next in your musical journey? Do you have any dreams for the future?

I would like to be a musician, but there are also other jobs I like and other passions I cultivate: geography and history... So... who knows?

I PLAY WITHOUT THINKING TOO MUCH ABOUT IT AND TRY TO GIVE IT MY ALL.



BOBBY KOSTADINOV



You began playing the cello at seven and have since won over 40 competitions worldwide. Looking back, which moments or mentors shaped your artistic identity the most?

First and foremost, I owe a great deal to my principal professor, Peter Bruns, who truly believed in me. Also my Friends, and Family. They helped me a lot. I am equally grateful to my other mentors: Sven Schreiber, Anna Niebuhr, Claudio Bohórquez, Maximilian Hornung, and Wen-Sinn Yang.
As for the defining moments that shaped me... I could talk about them until tomorrow.

You perform as a soloist, chamber and orchestra musician. What do you enjoy most about each of these roles?

As a soloist, I enjoy being in the spotlight and feeling the full attention of the audience. As a chamber musician, I love the team spirit and the close connection within the group. And with the orchestra, it's the sheer power of the sound — and also that strong sense of unity — that I find truly inspiring.

Many jurors praise not only your technique but the emotional depth of your interpretations. How do you approach developing your sound and musical voice?

I first try to form a clear picture of the style and the composer. As I continue working, I follow my personal intuition regarding the sound, the phrasing, and the message of the piece. I always aim for a wide range of expression and am not afraid to explore the extremes of dynamics.

What has been your most meaningful concert experience so far, and why?

That's difficult to answer, because I try to make every concert experience the most meaningful one.

What are your hopes and goals for the next years of your musical journey?

I'm very excited about the coming years — my recent prize-winner concerts in New York, Vienna, and Paris have opened up wonderful new contacts. Next year, I will also be working as principal cellist in a film orchestra in Germany, contributing to the production of films, video games, recordings, and television projects. In addition, I am developing my own solo recital project. So this year has really been the starting point for a very exciting journey ahead.

Alongside your artistic career, you've participated in many social projects. How have these experiences influenced you as a musician and person?

These social projects have had a profound impact on me and showed me that music and culture matter far beyond the stage. They make you humble and grateful to be able to fulfill such an important task — bringing joy back into other people's lives.

> "AND WITH THE ORCHESTRA, IT'S THE SHEER POWER OF THE SOUND — AND ALSO THAT STRONG SENSE OF UNITY — THAT I FIND TRULY INSPIRING."



Carla

At just 11 years old, Romanian-born pianist Carla Morosanu has already distinguished herself as one of the most promising young musicians in the international online competition scene. A multiple laureate across several platforms affiliated with the Universal Maestro Society, Carla has been awarded some of the highest distinctions, including Absolute Winner of the 7th Classical Music Stars Competition and the 4th Fenix Award IMC, as well as Platinum and Gold Awards in the Global Young Musicians Competition, Mozart International Music Competition, and Beethoven International Music Competition.



Do you have a favourite piece or composer right now? What do you enjoy most about their music?

One of my favourite composers is Beethoven because his music transmits pure emotion. Despite being deaf, he continued to compose. For me, he is an example of perseverance and inner strength. I like romantic composers as well, they are close to my soul and help me to express myself, to exteriorize.

Your performances are full of expression and confidence. When you practice, what helps you feel the music and make it come alive — do you imagine stories, pictures, moods, or something else?

I naturally feel the music, but my piano teacher Cristina Maria Ralea tells me about the work and composer and helps me understand the story behind the music. For me the expression comes from the way I feel and live music.

When did your journey with the piano begin, and what made you fall in love with the instrument?

My journey in the piano world started when I first touched its Keys at the age of 5. Then, gradually I fell in love with this instrument due to the way it lets me express myself, transmit what I am.

Morosanu



Many young pianists look up to musicians they admire. Do you have a favorite pianist or musical inspiration? What do you admire most about them?

Yes, I have a pianist I admire - Martha Argerich is the one who inspires me. I admire her technique, her music and the depth of interpretation the most.

Outside of competitions and practice, what brings you joy? Do you have hobbies or interests that help you relax or inspire your music?

My hobby is listening to as many concerts as possible because it relaxes, inspires and helps me live the artist's strong experiences and emotions.

Looking ahead, what are your dreams as a pianist? Is there a piece you would love to perform, a stage you hope to play on, or a goal you wish to reach?

My objective is to become a very good pianist, to play on famous stages with great orchestras and conductors. I would like to play concert no 2 by Rachmaninov and by means of my interpretation to inspire and offer joy to the audience.

For me the expression comes from the way I feel...

Winning top prizes like the Absolute Winner Title (in Fenix Award IMC, CMS Competition and Mozart International Music Competition) and Platinum Award (in Global Young Musicians Competition) is a huge achievement. How do these successes motivate or inspire you for the future?

All these results have an important impact on my development. Every prize is a confirmation of my work and passion and motivates me to go on, to overstep my bounds.

Fidel R. Castro

Maestro Fidel, you are the founder of the IBP School of Music, today one of the most recognized institutions in Peru. How was this school born? What motivation led you to start this project?

The school was born in the simplest way possible: with one classroom, a five-octave Casio keyboard, and a space my father lent me. I truly started from scratch. In the beginning, there was no major plan or the intention of building a renowned institution; I simply wanted to offer a music-workshop for the students of the Blaise Pascal Institute, my father's institution with 34 years of history.

The IBP School of Music started as an extracurricular workshop, without the intention of becoming what it is today. But something was clear: Peru has very few institutions that teach music with true seriousness. That lack of quality options was one of the motivations that pushed me to strengthen and professionalize the project. Over time, that small workshop grew into a school with a clear purpose and a level of rigor that set us apart.



IBP began in Tarapoto, a small city of 180,000 inhabitants in the Peruvian Amazon. That's where everything started. In 2022, we opened our second location in Jesús María, Lima. In 2023, we opened in Miraflores, and in 2024 in San Miguel. Now, in 2025, we are working on a fifth . location, which will be announced very soon.

You have also developed your own teaching method. Could you tell us how that idea emerged and what makes it unique within piano training?

The IBP Method was born out of a real need within my school. During the first years, we worked with scattered materials: reading in one place, technique in another, random repertoire, exercises from different authors. Besides being impractical, that didn't reflect the seriousness or the standard I wanted for an institution that was already growing.

As a teacher and as an entrepreneur, I understood that the school needed its own material—coherent, modern, and high-quality. That's how Piano I and Piano II were created, the basic modules of the IBP Method. The idea was to integrate all initial training into a single system: technique, rhythmic and spoken reading, music theory, and repertoire. Everything presented in original, well-designed, updated books — not photocopies or old materials that no longer motivate students.

One of the central pillars of the IBP Method is that it is

based on objectives, not calendars. Here, students advance when they are truly ready, not because the month or semester has ended. At IBP, students are evaluated only when they master the content. Another key principle is that the method starts easy and becomes difficult later. I am against overwhelming students from the first class with perfect posture, sound, and technique. That pressure creates stress. Scientific and detailed pianistic technique is introduced only from Module 3 onward, when students already have a solid foundation and greater maturity.

Piano I and Piano II are formally registered as intellectual material and are exclusively for our students. The books include original pieces, Amazonian music—something rarely explored in piano repertoire—four-hand works, QR codes, Spotify and YouTube playlists, quotes from renowned composers, musical tips, success stories of IBP students, and a compilation of the school's awards and benefits.

The goal of the IBP Method is clear: to train pianists with serious technical foundations, constant motivation, and real progress that respects each student's pace.

Looking toward the future, what are your dreams or projects for IBP in the coming years? Are there new initiatives or collaborations you would like to develop?

Academically, our greatest dream is to train the best generation of pianists in Peru. We work very hard toward that. The community grows every year; more and more students want to pursue music professionally, and that confirms we are on the right path.

Institutionally, our project is clear: growth and expansion. Today, we have four locations —three in Lima and one in Tarapoto. In a few weeks, we will open our fifth location, the fourth in Lima. But this is only the beginning.

We want to open more locations in Lima and in other cities around the country. Why? Because Peru lacks musicians and serious music schools. Talent exists—I've seen it while giving workshops around the country. There is plenty of talent, but few real opportunities, few structured training plans, and few long-term pathways for students seeking a musical future.

IBP's expansion responds to that need: bringing opportunities where there are none, so that a child or young person with talent can access top-level training and a concrete path for development.

And we're not stopping at the national level. We are also working toward international expansion. We want IBP not



only to be the most awarded school in Peru, but also an institution with presence beyond the country. These are our projects: raising the pianistic level of Peru and expanding IBP's reach so that more talent can access a real path of growth.

Over time, IBP has gained great prestige both in Peru and abroad. To what do you attribute that recognition? Is there something in the school's philosophy or approach that you consider key to that success?

A decisive factor in gaining prestige and recognition was competitions. Everything began in 2017, when the IBP School of Music had been operating for three years. That year, we were invited to a national competition we didn't even know existed. We participated with two students... and won two first prizes. That was a turning point. It forced me to reflect: What did we do well? What worked? What allowed this to happen? The following year, we decided to replicate the experience, but this time with more students — first two, then four — and each year the group grew. This is how the IBP Champions Club was born, the product of observing and what doesn't: technique, iterpretation, sound, expressiveness, phrasing, attitude, discipline, consistency, practice methodology, repertoire. We analyzed everything and perfected everything.

In 2020, we competed in the first international Latin American virtual competition and also won first place. Since 2017, we have competed every single year without exception. Competitions became a constant engine. But something must be clear: for us, a competition is not the goal—it is a means. A competition motivates students to study, improve, work hard, and practice for hours. The final objective is to train the best pianist possible. The results speak for themselves: today we have students with full scholarships in the United States — covering food, housing, and studies — and others studying music at the higher-education level in Spain, Brazil, and Russia. We also have former students in the best universities in Peru. All of them went through competitions, and through that process they raised their level.



At IBP, we always teach that winning or losing doesn't change what comes

> "THE POINT IS NOT JUST IDENTIFYING WHAT YOU DID WRONG...



You are not only an educator, but also a pianist, composer, and entrepreneur. How do you balance these roles, and what motivates you to continue creating each day?

For me, these roles do not compete with each other —they complement each other. At IBP, I am directly in charge of the Champions Club and lead the academic work of the entire school. We currently have 15 piano instructors, all of whom were my students, and that is part of IBP's identity: we do not hire teachers through public calls or advertisements; we train them. This allows us to share the same technical, methodological, and ethical language. Teaching at IBP requires strong values, discipline, and coherence — and that is only achieved by training our own team. As a composer, I have written works for piano and orchestra, as well as pieces for the Piano I and Piano II books. Several of my compositions have been performed by my students with symphony orchestras, and others are part of the school's official material.

I would like more time to compose, because I have many ideas I have not yet fully developed. I know that at some point I will have to devote more space to that creative side.

How do I balance everything? By working intensely and with clear priorities. I teach many hours a day but also find time to direct the institution. At IBP, we work with a flat organizational structure, which gives us speed, efficiency, and immediate decision-making. It's a light structure, but highly effective. What motivates me is the constant desire to improve. When we invite guest teachers to give masterclasses at IBP, I am the first to take notes and the one who writes the most. I always find something I need to improve. That daily search for growth keeps me innovating, teaching, and pushing my school and students to go further.

afterward: if you win, you practice the next day; if you lose, you also practice. What matters is what you do in the long term.

And something else: a central part of IBP's success is the seriousness with which we approach music. A few days ago—on Musician's Day—we posted: "Congratulations to all who take music seriously." That is our identity. Parents notice it, students feel it, and the community values it.

> ...BUT WHAT YOU DO AFTERWARD: TAKING ACTION.



How would you describe daily life inside the school? What environment exists between teachers and students, and what do you believe enables IBP's young pianists to achieve such remarkable results?

Life at IBP is intense. Very intense. And it is sustained by an uncommon level of commitment.

A central component of that environment is the IBP Champions Club, our high-performance group made up of students with the strongest attitude and aptitude. Out of more than 800 active students across our four locations, only 15 belong to this club. Their dynamic inspires the entire school.

One of the most defining characteristics of our culture is that students do not practice at home — they practice at IBP. Even those who have a piano at home come to study here.

Why?

– Motivating environment:

Hearing other pianists play better pushes you. It's like a gym: you see progress around you, and you aim for it.

– No distractions: At home there are pets, siblings, TVs, and video games. At IBP, classrooms are designed for absolute focus.

– Quality instruments: All branches have grand pianos, two concert pianos, multiple uprights, and digital pianos.

Practicing on good instruments accelerates musical and technical development.

The environment is competitive, but in a healthy way. You can feel discipline, rigor, and a constant desire to improve.

This intensity isn't limited to the Champions Club — it permeates the entire school.

Our students take part in:

- Weekly recitals
- Internal competitions
- Music festivals every two months
- Masterclasses
- Reading, recital, and orientation workshops
- National and international competitions
- Festivals inside and outside the country

A recent example: this month, from November 13 to 18, the Club won seven awards in Colombia, including three first prizes, at the XII Pianissimo Festival, which brought together 794 pianists from 12 countries, as part of the Club's official calendar.

We also promote a strong sense of cooperation. Those who know more help those who know less. Students don't only learn from teachers—they teach each other, share knowledge, correct one another, and motivate one another. This group dynamic creates an environment where everyone grows faster and with greater confidence.

And finally, the role of the instructors is essential. They are the ones who push students beyond what they believe possible, caring for

technique, discipline, and attitude.

This entire ecosystem — intensity, structure, guided practice, cooperation, quality instruments, and constant activities — is what has allowed IBP pianists to achieve consistently high results.



Finally, what message would you like to leave for young musicians and teachers who admire or follow your work?

To young musicians—and to teachers as well—I always say that growth must be based on constant self-criticism. Not destructive self-criticism, but the kind that forces you to improve. The point is not just identifying what you did wrong, but what you do afterward: taking action. For me, writing everything I need to improve and working on it immediately has been essential.

Music is a lifelong learning process; you never stop learning. That's why it is a mistake to wait for the "perfect moment" to play a piece, enter a competition, or audition. That moment does not exist. What exists are dates: you register, you commit and you work until that day. Whether you win or not is simply the result of the process, but you will have given everything.

Giving everything is key. There will always be someone better — that's reality. But what truly matters is what you do with your time, your discipline, your consistency month after month, year after year. When something doesn't go well, you don't quit: you reflect, correct, and continue.

And to Peruvian musicians in particular, I always say the same thing: Peru needs more musicians. There is talent—I've seen it across the country—but there is a need for more professionals, more opportunities, more serious projects. If someone decides to study music, I encourage them, because opportunities exist and will continue to grow. That is the only way to build a generation capable of elevating the cultural development of our country.

> "MUSIC IS A LIFELONG LEARNING PROCESS; YOU NEVER STOP LEARNING.

Gualter Silva

When you compose, which comes first — the idea (concept), the emotion, or the architecture of the piece?

When I compose, I may begin in two ways: either from an idea (a concept) or from an emotion. The idea may come from a story that inspires me to set it to music. An emotion, a feeling, may arise from an imagined melody, or even from a sentiment that moves me — for example, my love for my homeland often inspires me to create and compose. Its traditional melodies inspire me to recreate them. Its nature inspires me; as a creator, the sound in which I was raised has surrounded me, and from it I became a composer.



Your winning piece, No Ventre da Mátria, has a powerful and evocative title. What was the original image, story, or feeling that sparked this composition?

No Ventre da Mátria has a title that is entirely suggestive of the piece's performance. No Ventre means "inside", almost like the belly of a pregnant woman. Mátria is a term coined by Natália Correia, a major feminist activist from the Azores, referring to Mother Earth — the land where we were born and where we are shaped.

The piece was performed in the crater of an active volcano on Terceira Island, with some moments even played inside the volcano itself, which makes this work truly a music from the womb of the mátria.

Anyone who stops to listen to the natural sounds of the Azores can recognise the authentic sonorities I try to convey in the piece. The entire work seeks out the sounds of nature, whether inanimate or animal, and I believe this connection was achieved successfully.

One juror described No Ventre da Mátria as "a complex philosophy, but the music speaks for itself." Do you see your work as carrying a philosophical message, or do you prefer to let sound communicate without explanation?

I feel that my music may convey a philosophical message — the truth of sound.

Is every sound music? For me, yes, when the intention is for that sound to become an artistic object. It also has a purpose of preservation: to show the audience that nature and its sounds must be protected and maintained, so that they are never altered. We may explore, but never damage.
But in terms of artistic material, I believe it is extremely direct — in the sense that it makes one think, yet it is very clear that I am working with the sounds of soundscapes.

Much of your catalogue is written for wind band and wind ensemble — a tradition deeply linked to Portuguese community culture. What draws you to this medium, and what possibilities do you find in it that other ensembles don't offer?

What draws me to the wind ensemble has to do with my foundational training. I am a musician who comes from the wind band tradition, which means I know this family of instruments very well and have always been used to composing for them. They are the instruments I know best, and for that reason I write for them more regularly.
It's not that other instruments have nothing to offer — they certainly do — but I simply feel much more at ease with winds, as my entire career as an instrumentalist has been centred around that instrumentation.

What do you hope listeners feel when they hear your music for the first time?

What I hope people feel is that I always try to transport them into a natural world. Almost as if they could take a journey to a volcano, or even to a forest, without needing to see it. Something else I like to convey in my works is a certain calm. A calm that is part of the very essence of my people.

I love my land and my people deeply, and with all the good they give me, I try to turn it into art — something more considered and more refined.

You've spoken publicly about the cultural and social importance of Azorean philharmonic bands. In your view, what is the role of tradition in contemporary composition? Can the two coexist without compromise?

Philharmonic bands in the Azores, as in Portugal in general, are the main centres for training musicians. Without these bands, less than half of the music made in Portugal would exist.
Their role in contemporary music lies mostly in the way we write for them: bands made up largely of amateur musicians...



...impose certain limitations on composers, who must adapt their writing accordingly. But this is always an interesting challenge — how to convey a message or an idea without being able to use every technique available to the composer.

Tradition is also extremely important in contemporary composition; there is no future without a past. The past exists to be remembered and kept alive in our memory; the future is there to be explored and innovated. And I believe that with this mindset, tradition and contemporaneity can indeed coexist.

Looking ahead, what artistic paths are you most excited to explore — new ensembles, new styles, collaborations, or perhaps a larger project that you hope to bring to life?

My future lies in consolidating the language I have been exploring — that of the soundscape. I also want to explore this language within new ensembles. I am always looking for collaborations for joint projects. And my main goal is to establish this language and to make my land — and inevitably my art, as they are inseparable — known throughout Europe.

> "I feel that my music may convey a philosophical message.



Hiram Reategui



You have won an extraordinary number of international awards at such a young age. What motivates you most when preparing for competitions around the world?

Each competition challenges me to improve my sound, control, and concentration. I also learn a lot by listening to other top-level pianists. I am proud to represent my country in international competitions, and it fills me with satisfaction to see our flag present on these stages, as well as to perform and promote the Peruvian classical music of our renowned masters. Furthermore, I don't just go to win competitions: each competition gives me the opportunity to raise my level and measure myself against outstanding pianists from other countries. I hope that, in the not-too-distant future, I can achieve international recognition, and that goal drives me to prepare myself with greater dedication each day.

You began studying piano at age 8 and quickly developed remarkable musical abilities, including perfect pitch. How do you feel this talent shapes the way you learn and interpret music?

Having perfect pitch has allowed me to learn and understand harmony quickly and accurately, using it as my primary tool to achieve the sound I want to create and the way I want to express music. Likewise, having started my training at a young age has allowed me to build a musical career based on effort, discipline, and dedication, always supported by my parents' unwavering support at every stage of my artistic journey.

> "I hope that, in the not-too-distant future, I can achieve international recognition.





You have been particularly successful in UMS competitions such as Colors of Chopin, Beethoven Award, World Best Musician Competition and Piano Competition Online. Which of these competitions or prizes has meant the most to you — and why?

Yes, indeed, proper preparation and high performance pay off. I achieved my first notable success at the age of eight, and to date, I have done very well in all the competitions I have entered, accumulating six national and sixty international prizes. Each competition offers a different experience, but Colors of Chopin was special, as it demands a different kind of sensitivity. This competition made me reflect more deeply on my sound and on what I want to express through music. I feel that I took a great leap forward there, and I am very happy to have been selected as Chopinist of the Year 2024.

With so many competitions, festivals, and performances, how do you balance your musical life with school, sports, and everyday life?

I manage it with discipline and order. Music is my priority, but I know I must organize my time well to maintain good performance. When I practice, I focus entirely on the practice; when I study, I dedicate myself completely to studying. In addition, on weekends I play soccer with my friends, trying to stay consistent and take care of my body. Furthermore, as a member of the Champions Club at my Music School, IBP, I stay very active: not only do I direct the school's weekly spoken, melodic, and rhythmic solfège tournament, but I also have the opportunity to constantly practice sight-reading and singing. Interacting with the other club members fills my time and enriches my training.



When you learn a new piece, what is your artistic process? Do you focus first on technique, on expression, or on understanding the story behind the music?

First, I try to understand what the piece wants to express: its style, its character, and its history. Then I work on the necessary technique to be able to interpret it without obstacles. For me, technique and musicality go hand in hand, and I strive for each piece to have its own unique voice. Once I finish reading the



...piece, I refine every detail until I reach a competitive level, always with the unconditional support of my teacher, Fidel Rodolfo Castro Montalván, who is also the Director of the IBP School of Music, to which I belong.

You are only 15, yet you already have a truly international musical career. What dreams or goals are guiding your next steps as a young pianist?

My goals are clear: I want to continue growing internationally and prepare to audition for conservatories and music institutes of the highest academic standing around the world, thus continuing my musical studies professionally. I am drawn to the challenge of becoming one of the world's best concert pianists; therefore, I wish to train with the best possible teachers and learn from their techniques and experience. I aspire to build a solid and authentic career: not just to compete, but to reach a level where my performance truly connects with the audience.

“I aspire to build a solid and authentic career: not just to compete, but to reach a level where my performance truly connects with the audience.



José Andrés Álvarez

You began as a classical pianist, winning over 20 international competitions. What drew you from performance into composition, and how did that transition change your artistic perspective?

I have always had a fascination with creation. Since a very young age, I had always loved thinking about how a movie was made, how a painting was done, how a building was designed. Classical music performance was definitely a medium for me to mature both as a musician and as an individual, but this was something that still didn't feel like enough for me. I started composing classical music, slowly noticing that there were other styles of music that would make me feel a different type of way, and so I started to expand my compositional repertoire. This transition, I think, has made me a more complete human being. Understanding different kinds of music, historical explanations to different cultural expressions and sounds, has made me feel both an incredible personal and spiritual growth I never thought possible.

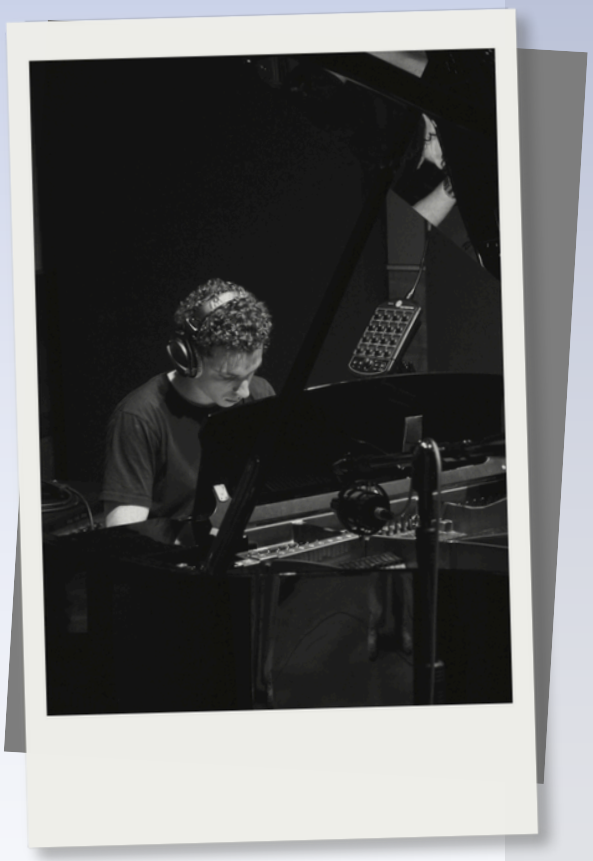
Your music blends classical, jazz, Spanish folklore, and electronic/ambient elements. How do these different influences come together in your creative process?



These are all different styles of music I have been exposed to when growing up. Classical music was the first genre I became familiar with, followed by Spanish music, then jazz and electronic music during college. I think they are all intertwined in a way, even though they sound so different to each other. The reason I compose in these different styles is because they all bring out different emotions out of me. Classical music will never express the freedom that jazz does, and neither of these will ever express the same passion Flamenco does, etc. Music is universal, and so I am trying to be too.

How did experimenting with synthesizers and software shape the composer you are today?

A musician needs to adapt to its times. Synthesizers offer a composer to basically sculpt sound from its rawest form. You can take the purest frequencies and mold them into the sounds that you are looking for, it's like the ultimate sketchbook of sound for a modern composer. Experimenting with these has opened a wide range of sonic opportunities for myself and has definitely made me understand signal flow and



...the way sound works in much more depth the way sound works in much more depth.

Winning the Absolute Winner title at the Fenix Award and the Platinum Prize in the Beethoven Award marks a very successful period for you as a composer. What do these recognitions mean at this stage of your journey?

I am incredibly honored to have received these awards, and incredibly grateful to the Universal Maestro Society for this honor. These recognitions mean nothing more than a platform to share my music with more people which, at the end of the day, is the whole purpose of being a composer. I have noticed there's been people that either participate or just follow these competitions that have texted me sharing their opinions about my music, and there is nothing more fulfilling for me than to have the opportunity to receive this attention to my art. This is truly an opportunity that I have really enjoyed having.

You are now studying Film and Media Scoring. How has writing for visual media influenced the way you think about storytelling, structure, and emotion in your concert works?

This is a great question, actually. The thing is that I have never really thought of film music and concert music as separate things. When film began, they had classical composers work on the scores as they didn't know what else to do. The cinematic composition style has evolved and there is now a sort of industry standard for most music, same thing happened with Broadway music. However, I don't want to fall into an industry standard sound, as that (to me) seems like a soul-less way to work. I try to be as real with myself as possible when composing for both scenarios, asking myself if what I am doing is what really resonates with myself and with my artistry or not. I believe that is the core of a composition with intention.



Luise Bold



Luise Bold (12) is an exceptionally gifted young pianist whose artistry has already been recognized across Europe and beyond. Winner of numerous national and international competitions, she is admired for her sensitivity, technical polish, and remarkable musical imagination for someone her age.

You started playing piano very early and now study with Prof. Sontraud Speidel at the Karlsruhe University of Music. How did everything begin for you, and what do you enjoy most about learning with your professor?

I started playing piano when I was 3 years old, inspired by my elder brother. He played piano beautifully, and I wanted to follow in his footsteps so I could create wonderful music, too. When I was 5, my teacher at the time told my mother that she should find a new teacher for me to help develop my skills further. My mother asked around, and someone recommended "Ms. Sontraud Speidel," who they said was the best teacher of the Bests. At that time, my mother didn't even know she was a professor! When she contacted her, Professor Speidel kindly offered to teach me via Zoom lessons because of Covid. Everything happened very quickly, and honestly, I just thought, "Oh, I have a new teacher who really loves piano!" To be honest, I only fully realized Professor Speidel is a real professor when I was accepted as a pre-college student at Karlsruhe University of Music. Lessons with Professor Speidel are amazing. Her explanations and advice are always very clear and precise. Sometimes my weaknesses simply vanish as soon as I follow her guidance. It's truly incredible!

You have performed Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and contemporary music. Which musical era feels closest to your heart right now – and why?

I don't have one strong favorite, but I usually fall in love with whatever era or composer I'm currently studying. Right now, it's the Romantic era, especially Franz Liszt. In autumn 2024, some

students from Professor Speidel's class and I were invited by Steingraeber-Haus in Bayreuth to hold a concert. There was a piano that actually belonged to Liszt (Liszt-Flügel 1873 im Rokokosaal), and we were allowed to touch it and play a phrase! I played a little bit of "Waldesrauschen." It was a wonderful experience. The next day, I visited Franz Liszt's grave in Bayreuth, and I promised him that I would become a good Liszt player. Before that, my favorite was Baroque, Johann Sebastian Bach, especially after I visited Köthen. I also love contemporary music because I can often meet the composers who are still alive. This is great because I can ask them why they composed certain pieces or how to approach specific sounds and techniques.

You're also a visual artist. Do painting and music influence each other? Do you sometimes "see" colors or images when you play?

Wow, I hadn't thought of myself as a visual artist before! That's a new perspective on me. Let me think... I don't see colors while I play, but the way I construct paintings and piano pieces is quite similar. When I want to draw a painting or play a certain piece of music, there's always a big universe in my brain at first. I let my thoughts fly freely in this universe, and then, when I feel the time is right, I start concentrating on the output. That's when I get a clear imagination of what I want to create.

> "I want to play piano, and I want to play better.





How do you balance school, practice, competitions, and your other hobbies without feeling overwhelmed?

I don't find it too difficult to balance practicing with other activities. Going to school is a duty for most kids, and like many others, I have extra classes after school, such as music or sports. Sometimes I have rehearsals on weekends and can't meet friends, but I think that's okay. I want to play piano, and I want to play better. This is more important to me than other things, so it doesn't feel like a burden.

You've performed in many competitions and concerts. Is there one performance that was especially meaningful or memorable for you?

I've been fortunate to play in many special places. I performed at St. Agnes Church in Köthen, where Johann Sebastian Bach and his family attended every Sunday and "Alten Ratssaal" with Musicologist Dr. Joachim Draheim for his projects. I've played Clara Schumann's music for the great-great-grandchildren of Clara Schumann and for the family of German composer Xavier Scharwenka. I even played Haydn's Piano Sonata Hob. XVI/49, III Movement (Tempo di Menuetti) at Joseph Haydn's birthplace in Vienna! I also performed on the TV show called "The Piano," which was a very interesting experience. All of these performances are very impressive to me, but personally, I love performing most for our supporters–

Piano Podium Karlsruhe e.V. and Musikforum Hohenwettersbach e.V., which are organized by Professor Speidel and others. They show me how much they enjoy my performances and encourage me to take the next steps forward.

What dream would make you especially excited about the future – a place you'd love to perform, a piece you can't wait to learn, or a goal you hope to reach?

Currently, I'm mainly focusing on small steps to move forward. My goal is to keep practicing piano and let people enjoy my music from sounds–even if they close their eyes. My dream pieces are the Transcendental Etudes by Franz Liszt and The Firebird by Igor Stravinsky.

> "Music can make me and others happy. When music is there, all the bad things are blown away."







MILANA GONTSOVA

An extraordinary young talent whose voice has captivated audiences worldwide. Singing since early childhood and already the recipient of numerous international prizes, she stands out as the youngest award winner performing classical vocal repertoire in an opera style. A remarkable new voice on the rise.

You have already performed very big and difficult pieces like Bohemian Rhapsody and music from The Phantom of the Opera. What made you want to sing these songs?

To tell the truth, previously I was singing just popular music for kids, but parents noticed that my voice range is more than enough for usual pre-school songs.

Most evident way to rise on next level was to use some well known song with lyrics re-make for 6-year singer. At first we tried to learn Rapsody with a story about how excited it is to get on the stage with all of that lights and loud music. That's was hard to learn all of that words and don't mix parts, so it take more than 2 moths to put puzzles on it's place. At first I was performed in popular vocal approach, and time to time I've tried to modify voice just for kidding. My daddy noticed my singing was not that bad and offered to try singing in classic vocal style - like in opera. And Rapsody was opened for me from new side.

When I heard “Phantom of the Opera” by Andrew Lloyd Webber, in April 2025 it was a kind of magic – nobody believes that it is possible to sing at the age of six and half years with voice range up to 3 octaves. But first attempts show that I'm not so bad at taking the first steps.

We started to learn lyrics and in the 2nd month my vocal teacher started to improve my skills. The harder part was to get clear transitions back from higher octave. Sometimes I lose hope to finish this project, but my parents believe in better results and support me in hard moments. We changed the learning approach from usual full time lessons 2-3 times per week to everyday practice up to 20 minutes to use more effective time. We focused on getting results before 7th birthday till November 2025 and made more than a hundred repetitions to get voice and performance style closer to desired level. We're trying to participate in competitions in August and then September 2025. That moment was hard for me as my age was just 6 years and 290 days, when at the age of 7 kids just started to study in music schools. But finally I'm happy to get it so highly appreciated by the international musical community.

You started singing when you were only two years old. What do you enjoy the most about singing?

I loved that my mood improved and I enjoyed the melody I was singing. Actually I don't understand how that happens, when I catch myself singing – just don't know what time it started.

Many people say you have a very special and expressive voice. How do you feel when you are on stage? Are you excited, nervous, or happy?

I really love being on stage and feeling all of those emotions at the same time! I'm at my place and enjoy it a lot! But when bright lights leave me alone on the stage and I don't see who can support me in those moments, at first I feel too excited and forget what I need to do... actually that's what the lyrics are about in my version of Rapsody.

You practice a lot for your performances. What is your favourite part of learning a new song?

I love my singing teacher a lot and enjoy choosing a new song together. While doing that, we create my new look and some parts of performance and our vision of a song. It's so exciting when something from my dreams comes true!

Is there a song or style you dream of singing one day?

For now daddy is discussing a nomination of a record as youngest award winner in opera according to results of 20 different events. I don't know if that is possible, but hope to know good news soon. I'm still searching for my own style and maybe next compositions will be something like "I will always love you" by Whitney Houston or “Hurt” by Christina Aguillera. Anyway, I dream of singing many other well-known songs.

Which of your performances made you the happiest, and why?

Actually every song brings something special and every composition opened for me from a different point of view. “Spirit of the Opera” also raised my vocal abilities over my head, as at first we didn't believe we could even finish it with any result. Another song I'm having a feeling of pleasure is called "I' d better sing and dance". I love it because it's about a girl who prefers singing and dancing instead of studying at school.

What would you like people to feel when they listen to your singing?

Joy, delight, happiness, calmness - that kind of emotions, that's what the music made for. And of course make steps to your dream, and one day you will understand that you can touch it.

“...every song brings something special...



Zeynep Temel

When did you first feel that singing was more than a childhood passion—that it could become the path of your life?

For me, there was no single "first moment" and no clear beginning. Music had always been inside me.



Adding color to emotions with my voice and sharing them with others captivated me deeply. That childlike passion and enthusiasm still live within me, and I believe I can only continue this journey with them. Every moment I felt on stage, "This is my place" — the excitement before stepping into the light, feeling the atmosphere with my entire being before beginning the first note, focusing fully on the emotion of the piece, and of course, my unstoppable heartbeat — these were the most beautiful parts. Experiencing that childhood passion afresh each time and knowing that this journey is truly my life's path is a magnificent feeling.

What inspired you to choose Elvira's aria from I Puritani, and how do you approach a role so full of emotion and bel canto style?

This special role was introduced to me by my esteemed teacher, Professor Tülay Uyar Hatip, who holds great meaning for me. I have learned endlessly from her and continue to do so. When I first listened to the aria, I was deeply moved by the connected, soulful, flowing quality of Bellini's music—how seamlessly it merges with the spirit of the story.

I became curious about Elvira's world, her past and her inner landscape. Elvira, once a joyful bride, descends into delusion and withdraws from reality after the heartbreak of Arturo's sudden disappearance on their wedding day. When I sing the Cabaletta, like Elvira, I enter that dream.

> KNOWING THAT THIS JOURNEY IS TRULY MY LIFE'S PATH IS A MAGNIFICENT FEELING.

Yet while expressing her bright, exaggerated joy, I always remember the profound sorrow hidden beneath, carried through both the music and the narrative. My aim is to reflect Elvira's desperate attempt to veil her painful truth beneath this false happiness. I envision her with this intention and try to build a deep emotional bond with the audience so they too can feel the pain beneath the surface.

You've studied with many important teachers. What has each stage of your vocal training taught you?

I was fortunate to work with highly valued and experienced teachers, each of whom gave me priceless insight. Early on, I learned that I must believe both in my work and in myself. I learned to use my voice correctly, to discover its natural timbre and to allow the story and the music to become one through my interpretation.

I learned to be strong, courageous, and humble; to let my voice be heard by anyone without distinction; and to become an artist open to criticism and deeply motivated in my craft. I discovered how essential it is to sing on the breath for my voice to develop healthily. I came to understand that technique and stage presence grow from the love, energy and quiet joy that live within me.



You earned Platinum at the Mozart Competition and later became the Absolute Winner of the Fenix Award. What changed or grew within you between these two performances?

The Mozart Competition was the first competition I had ever entered —and my first international one as well.



Representing my country filled both me and my loved ones with pride. It was also a beginning that renewed my confidence and courage. By the time I reached the Fenix Award, however, I felt a significant personal transformation. I had internalized the story of the aria much more deeply; I felt I interpreted the character with greater nuance as well as emotional depth.

I strongly believe that every competition contributes to my artistic growth, allowing me to observe myself more clearly and better understand where I am developing and where I must continue to grow.

What excites you most about studying opera at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University?

Since my middle school years, I had dreamed of studying at such a distinguished institution. The education I received at Aydın Doğan Fine Arts High School played an enormous role in helping this dream come true.

Mimar Sinan University is one of the most prestigious state conservatories. What excites me most is the school's vision: to offer young talents international opportunities by involving them in significant artistic projects. As a concrete example of this, I had the chance to attend a masterclass at our university led by the esteemed maestro Richard Hetherington, who had previously worked with my teacher, Professor Tülay Uyar Hatip. These international experiences, combined

with the inspiring atmosphere of the school, help keep my excitement and motivation alive. The dream of leaving a meaningful legacy at my university and taking part in unforgettable projects is a powerful force in my journey.

What are your biggest dreams for the future—roles, stages, or artistic goals you hope to reach?

I don't believe in setting limits on dreams. My greatest dream is to perform on major stages around the world and eventually establish an international academy where I can share my stage experience and artistic discipline with future generations. As for roles, I trust that the largest roles will come with time—through the growth of my voice and my artistic maturity. I ground my dreams in the roles I am working on now. I want to live and feel each role's excitement and sorrow fully. Beyond all of these ambitions, I believe true success does not lie solely in great achievement, but in possessing a soul that understands humanity—a soul that remains sincere and childlike in its wonder. What sustains me on this path is the unending excitement music gives me in every moment.

> "I BELIEVE TRUE SUCCESS DOES NOT LIE SOLELY IN GREAT ACHIEVEMENT, BUT IN POSSESSING A SOUL THAT UNDERSTANDS HUMANITY



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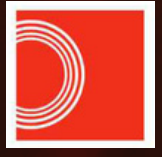

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