



Enabling disabled people to develop their creativity and unlock their talents through the use of innovative technologies

DECIBELS INTERIM REPORT TO THE NATIONAL LOTTERY AWARDS FOR ALL

“LISTEN TO ME “& “ARE YOU LISTENING” PROJECT

1. INTRODUCTION

As Decibels believes in a world where all people should have opportunities to develop their creativity and discover their talents, we wanted this challenging project to enable participants, especially those with deafness and other related disabilities, to develop their creativity and unlock their abilities. We decided to work with Audiovisability, an organisation lead by Deaf Creatives, as we wanted to create a flagship project that brings the Deaf community and hearing world together, creating better opportunities for children, young people and emerging professionals in the creative industries. For many years now, we have been aware that the Deaf community are often isolated by their access needs and the mainstream world is often not equipped with the knowledge, skills or confidence to work with the Deaf Community. This project fostered better relationships with organisations and professionals within the creative industries to help better understanding, created opportunities and brought together deaf and hearing & people for meaningful dialogue, creativity and celebrating especially after the pandemic.

2. ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENTS DESPITE THE PANDEMIC

Decibels, supported by Audiovisability, is delighted to report that most of the creative workshops are being delivered by specialist Deaf professionals so that deaf children do not miss out on learning valuable skills. Where possible, we paired emerging deaf creative professionals with more experienced hearing professionals using our established networks in the Deaf Community and delivering music-based workshops in London, Berkshire, Somerset & Devon. We have established good practice and given young deaf people role models, inspired them to engage with activities and develop creative skills they usually do not have access to in the wider community.

The project is building on to the Cedars Hall, Wells Cathedral School event. We have definitely created a network of emerging creative Deaf professionals and have started to influence policy makers and industry leaders. Bringing people together in a fully accessible forum has helped to reduce isolation and build stronger communities. The event facilitated dialogues between young people, emerging deaf professionals and hearing professionals. This has allowed us to push for more mainstream inclusion of Deaf young people and emerging professionals in society, as well as pushing for higher standards of creative work from the grass roots up, promoting more integration within society as well as encouraging dialogue to establish best practice on a national level. We are already creating a strategy which will publicise our outreach work to ensure good attendance at workshops & other events, raising awareness and maximizing impact through contacting the wider community.

3. INTRODUCING THE CEDARS HALL, WELLS CATHEDRAL SCHOOL EVENT



Saturday 4th September 2021
11.30 noon - 5.45 pm, Cedars Hall, Wells

Are You Listening?

This conference will showcase some of the UK's top deaf musicians. For the first time, we will bring them together with leading music organisations for dialogue. Together we can shape policy and discuss practical ways of making music accessible.

*How can we make music more inclusive and keep standards high?
How can professional deaf musicians help shape the future of music?
How can we create better musical opportunities for deaf children and emerging deaf musicians?*

A BSL interpreted event in partnership with Wells Cathedral School



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Welcome by - Eloise Garland & Lucy Dunkerley – Project Co-ordinators

“We are delighted you have joined us today for the ‘Are You Listening’ conference. This is the first of its kind and has brought deaf and hearing practitioners and key organisations from the music and education world together. There are around 50,000 deaf children in the UK, with levels ranging from mild to profound. It is therefore perhaps surprising that there are very few deaf musicians currently practising. Furthermore, there are limited musical opportunities for deaf young people, and standards of inclusive music provision vary widely across the UK. We feel it is time to bring people together to discuss honestly how we can address some of these issues. We want to create a space to share best practice and ideas, as well as creating more opportunities and raising expectations for young deaf musicians. We hope to establish a network where we can support each other and help organisations to make their musical activities more accessible through training, representation, and development of national policy. We do not have all the answers but hope this conference will help us start this journey together and push for real change. The conference is featuring keynote speeches by accomplished Deaf musicians. Between them, they have a wide range of personal and professional experiences, spanning several decades, showing real insight into the world of music and deafness. Speakers include Ruth Montgomery, Flautist and Artistic Director of Audiovisability; Paul Whittaker, Organist and pianist and founder of Music and the Deaf, and Liz Varlow, sub principal viola at the London Symphony Orchestra. There are also be two breakout sessions giving an opportunity to discuss key issues in smaller groups including policy

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making & best practice. Our lunchtime concert will give the opportunity to hear some emerging young deaf musicians in the country perform. We hope this conference will be the first of many. We look forward to meeting you so we can all work together to shape the future. We would also like to thank Decibels for their ongoing support of this project, and the National Lottery Community Fund for their sponsorship.”

Welcome by Mark Stringer - Member of the Senior Executive Team Director of Music and Managing Director, Cedars Hall, Wells Cathedral School

“It gives me great pleasure to welcome all delegates and our guest speakers to what, I am sure, will be a stimulating, informative and enjoyable conference here in Wells. We are honoured to host it. Whether you are here physically - as a member of the immediate School community - or are joining us via a live-stream broadcast, you are warmly welcomed to our state-of-the-art Eavis Auditorium at Cedars Hall, Wells Cathedral School. Music underpins the life of our School community and we offer all our students a rich engagement and experience with it whether they are Choristers, Specialists or non-specialist musicians. To be able to gain first-hand knowledge of innovative ways of working with children and young people across challenging specialist music settings is a cause close to my heart and that of my colleagues here. The work of Decibels and Audiovisability in raising deaf awareness training will be of great benefit to all those working in the professional and educational sectors and will make a positive impact in understanding more about the experience of deaf students in orchestras, ensembles and private lessons as well as informing how best to support them. I applaud the organisers for devising this ground-breaking conference and for inviting some of the UK's top deaf musicians and leading music organisations to engage in dialogue. Let us hope that this will lead to further initiatives and a basis through which we can all strive to improve the opportunities for deaf children and emerging deaf musicians. Along with my colleagues, I look forward to learning from you through the sharing of experience and expertise.



Organisations Involved



Wells Cathedral School

Music has been the heart of our community since the School was founded in 909 and the choristers of Wells Cathedral play a central part in our School to this day. Here at Wells we believe that everyone can engage with, and appreciate, music and that it enriches our lives. Our pupils sing,



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perform, develop their rhythmic skills, compose and access music through technology. We explore the interface between music and other disciplines and embrace music of all styles and periods – from Gregorian chant through to contemporary repertoire and genres. We encourage young people to push musical boundaries through innovation and creativity and to communicate through engaging with their audiences. Wells boasts a Cathedral Choir School and a specialist music school set within a wider educational context so that non-specialist and specialist musicians can benefit from a comprehensive range of academic subjects and co-curricular activities, world-class instrumental teachers and visiting artists and access to amazing facilities...and all of this in the most beautiful, stimulating, supportive, and safe environment in which you can progress your talents and be what you are.

Decibels

Decibels believes in a world where all people have opportunities to develop their creativity and discover their talents. Our work enables people, especially those with disabilities, to develop their creativity and unlock their abilities. Decibels' charitable activities include delivering inclusive and accessible technology-based arts projects; supporting the development and enhancement of technology; and disseminating information relating to the research and development of innovative technologies. Since its establishment in 2005, Decibels has enjoyed a number of successful projects. Projects have included 'Makey Makey – Creating Music Through Technology' for deaf children in the UK; 'The Year of Sound' 2016-17 which was launched at the House of Lords by Honorary President Lord Michael Berkeley of Knighton, CBE, and supporting the 'Tuned to Each Other' project for World Music Day in Budapest, Hungary.

Audiovisability

We are a charity bringing the highest quality of Classical and World music to deaf people. Founded in 2016, Audiovisability is passionate in its belief that deaf people can, and do, engage with and make music. Our projects focus on making audio visible, showcasing the talents and tenacity of the lived experiences of deaf people. Through our work, we are already showing that deaf people are quite able to realise their music potential on an equal footing with hearing people when given the right opportunities and resources. Working with deaf children, deaf artists and deaf communities locally and globally, Audiovisability designs and delivers collaborative creative professional interventions and inclusive learning environments that are wholly original in their shape and form.

National Lottery Community Fund - Awards for ALL

This project is kindly sponsored by the National Lottery Community Fund

Accessibility

This conference was British Sign Language interpreted. There was also Speech to Text Relay (STTR) available. The Streamtext link for the day is:
<https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=festival-040921>. All buildings used for the conference were step-free access.

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Biographies



Ruth Montgomery



Through her work as a professional musician, Ruth proves that music is not just auditory in nature. Born profoundly deaf into a musical family and having studied at the Royal Welsh College of Music for her B. Mus honours degree in music and flute performance. She is a flautist, music teacher and workshop practitioner. For 20 years, Ruth has established a successful teaching practice from early years to working with young musicians at advanced levels. As a visionary artist and Clore Leadership fellow, she has also developed professional relationships with arts,

music and media organisations locally, nationally and worldwide. At Audiovisability where is Ruth is a founder and Artistic Director, her vision is of a more cohesive society, which recognises the innate talent of deaf musicians and visual artists through the forging of partnerships and innovative thinking. www.ruthmontgomery.co.uk

Liz Varlow



Liz Varlow grew up in Birmingham in a musical family. When she was 16 years old she started experiencing hearing problems and over the next 3 years became profoundly deaf. She won a scholarship to study viola at the Royal College of Music where she received numerous prizes, including the prestigious Tagore Gold Medal. Following her studies, Liz got a job in the BBC Philharmonic. She will always be grateful to the Principal there for giving her a chance. Deaf viola players do not look so good on paper! She then became Associate Principal viola with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra before moving back to London to join the London Symphony Orchestra. For the last 18 years, she has been Sub Principal viola in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Liz has always combined her orchestral career with solo and chamber music performances, education

work and coaching, not to mention combining her busy career with family life bringing up two children. Liz lipreads but has tried to improve her BSL through lockdown as masks are so difficult for deaf people!

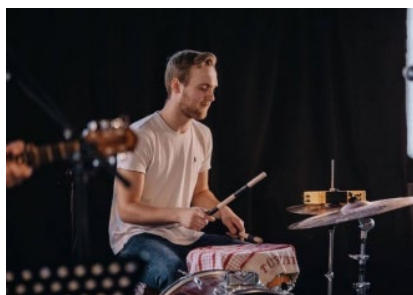
Paul Whittaker



Paul Whittaker was born Deaf in 1964 yet has pursued a music career despite this. After gaining a music degree from Wadham College, Oxford, and a Post-graduate diploma from the RNCM he founded a charity “Music and the Deaf” which he ran for 27 years. Since 2015, he has worked freelance, continuing to promote music and deafness and encouraging access and inclusion for D/deaf people. Paul has also worked as a theatre, opera and concert interpreter, working on shows such as Les Miserables, West Side Story, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat and many others; at the BBC Proms,

Edinburgh Festival, Aldeburgh Festival; with The Sixteen, Halle Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Britten Sinfonia and Opera North. During lockdown he has created many BSL resources for choirs, music services and hubs, and worked with the Stay at Home Choir, Oxford Bach Soloists, NYCGB Alumni and NYCOS

Adam Butler



Adam Butler is an 18 year old drummer based in Halifax, Yorkshire and has wealth of experience in all things drum related. Inspired by his local church band, he first started playing when he was 5 years old. Adam has played with many bands covering a variety of genres including, funk, rock, RnB, and metal, although his favourite genre is groove. Throughout his childhood and teenage years, Adam has been involved in a number of projects combining music and deafness, including projects by Music and the Deaf and the National Deaf Children’s Society where he was a young ambassador. Adam

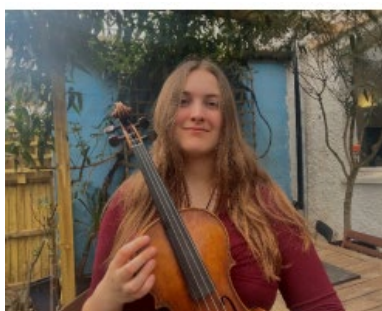
is currently studying BA Hons in Popular Music at Leeds Conservatoire. He has also recently started his own teaching practice, both online and in person, and has a busy schedule recording tracks for artists locally and across the UK. Adam’s top level pro gear is thanks to sponsorship from: Mapex Drums, Vic Firth Sticks, Code Drum heads.

Daniel Regan



Daniel is a 14 years old trombonist from North West England. In year 5, his class had a brass lesson in which he was handed the trombone and it has not left his hands since! He recently passed his grade 6 trombone with distinction. He won Ramsbottom music festival as a soloist in 2020 and has been invite to be part of NYO inspire which provides orchestral opportunities to musicians who are underrepresented in the sector. Daniel plays many prestigious youth bands such as; Kearsley youth brass band, Lancashire youth brass band, Honk improvisation group and Freckelton youth brass band. The British trombone society rewarded him with a £250 bursary and lessons to help with his music education. He has also made a blog for the charity ‘Music and the Deaf’ to raise awareness around hearing loss and his love for music.

Sophie Wiseman



Sophie fell in love with the violin at an early age after hearing her grandmother play. She began lessons at 4 years old and has consequently played for 13 years. She was a member of the National Children’s Orchestra, the youngest member of ever Stoneleigh Youth Orchestra and now is part of the National Schools Symphony

Orchestra. At 10 years old, Sophie gained a music specialist place at Wells Cathedral School where she studies under Simon Smith. It was at 11 years old, after winning the National Deaf Children's Society's 'Raising the Bar' music competition, that Sophie first became aware of the lack of opportunities for deaf musicians. Since then she has; volunteered at Frank Barnes - a school for the deaf, returned to Raising the Bar as a mentor and worked with Audiovisibility on many projects aiming to bridge the gap between the hearing and deaf worlds through music. She has also taken a proactive role throughout the Covid-19 lockdowns by organising and running an online concert for Help Musicians UK which raised just under £2,000. Also recognising that lockdown had an effect on mental health, she brought together 55 musicians of over 25 nationalities in a virtual video performance of 'The Prayer,' which was featured on a well-known Indian news channel. As part of the Wired4Music team, she and 4 other young people also organised the online Allegro Music Festival show casing up and coming artists of many different non-classical genres. Sophie will be applying to a music conservatoire this year.

INSET Training 4.15 – 5.45 p.m.

INSET 1: Making Music Accessible in the Classroom Led by Eloise Garland

For: Music teachers in schools and music hubs.



This session covered a variety of practical skills, techniques, and resources to make music more accessible in the classroom environment. Very few deaf children have no useful hearing. Most deaf children can hear some sounds at certain frequencies and loudness, and with the use of hearing aids or implants they are often able to hear more sounds. We shared tried and tested methodology to help tailor lessons for individual needs, whether teaching music to an individual deaf child in mainstream setting or to whole class in specialist school.

Contents include:

- The benefits of music for deaf children and young people
- Music in the classroom– barriers to learning and how to make music lessons fully accessible.
- Visual communication • Resources to use in the classroom/when planning music lessons
- Opportunity to discuss case studies

Eloise Garland is a professional musician, teacher, producer, and Deaf awareness campaigner based in London, UK. She works alongside a number of charities, organisations, and companies to promote full inclusion and access to music for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. In 2017, Eloise presented the radio documentary *Listening Without Ears*, which was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 as part of the station's *The Art of Living* series. The documentary explored ways in which people with hearing loss engage with music and sound and challenged listeners to consider music appreciation from another perspective. Eloise has worked with Audiovisibility since 2016 to further visual music education and has played a role in all of Audiovisibility's projects to date.

INSET 2: Supporting Deaf Students in Orchestras, Ensembles, and Private Lessons.

Led by Ruth Montgomery; For: Ensemble leaders and teachers in specialist music/private settings.



A session designed to give awareness into the challenges and barriers deaf musicians face when learning an instrument and playing with others. Ruth shared her personal experience including the trials and tribulations of a deaf professional musician and teacher, as well as offering practical solutions and insight in how to nurture and support young deaf musicians across a variety of settings.

Contents include:

- Best practice for inclusive ensemble leadership
- Support for deaf students in orchestras and ensembles
- Raising expectations in specialist education
- Music examinations: access and adaptations

Through her work as a professional musician, Ruth proves that music is not just auditory in nature. Coming from a musical family and having studied at the Royal Welsh College of Music for her B.Mus honours degree in music and flute performance, she is a flautist, music teacher and workshop practitioner. For 20 years, Ruth has established a successful teaching practice from early years to working with young musicians at advanced levels. As a visionary artist and Clore Leadership fellow, she has also developed professional relationships with arts, music and media organisations locally, nationally and worldwide. As a performer, she was given the opportunity to perform with some of the world's best orchestras as a soloist - playing the Danzi Concerto with the Royal Philharmonic in London at Cadogan Hall and the Russian National Orchestra in Moscow and St Petersburg with the Music of Life Foundation. She has performed as both a soloist and as a member of an ensemble.

Since 2005, Ruth has worked with hearing students as a music practitioner for Essex Music Services, as a flute teacher, Woodwind lead, and teaching music theory. She has entered over 200 students for their ABRSM examination and has a pass rate of 100 percent. Many of them have taken up orchestral, music college and university positions. She has delivered music workshops for deaf children for many organisations such as NDCS, MatD, RAD, and Essex Funding. She leads the 'Music of Life' Deaf teacher training programme – a pioneering programme to expand the number of music teachers qualified to teach deaf students. Ruth's vision is of a more cohesive society, which recognises the innate talent of deaf musicians and visual artists through the forging of partnerships and innovative thinking. She has devoted her career to revolutionising the teaching of music to deaf students by adopting a visual style and continues to push for changes in current educational methods.



A Deaf awareness session to support confidence and understanding when working with deaf people. The session explored communication on a meaningful level and supported those attending to consider the impact of being a Deaf person in today's society. We looked at technology, levels of deafness and communication methods and how you can internalise behaviours to always be inclusive.

Contents include:

- **Deafness:** looking at the different levels and what this means
- **Technology:** understanding what is available, what it does and when to use it
- **Communication:** exploring communication methods, strategies for effective communication and supporting reflections on your approach (note that although if time allows, we may cover some BSL terminology, this is not a session to learn BSL skills)
- **Impact:** considering what it means to be Deaf in today's society, what is deaf culture and what you can do to support those you work with.

Bryony Parkes is profoundly deaf, proud BSL user with a strong Deaf identity. Growing up in a hearing family, with a hearing husband and children, Bryony has always been driven to support the hearing population in embracing what Deaf people bring to the table in a different light. For most of her professional life, she has worked for leading Deaf charities, with a passion for ensuring Deaf Young People reach their full potential. She is particularly vocal about good communication, rights to access and intersectionality.

DECIBELS REFLECTIONS REPORT – Are you Listening ('Listen to Me') Conference at Wells Cathedral School

On Wednesday, 5th September 2021, Decibels, in partnership with Wells Cathedral School and Audiovisability, held a pioneering conference at Cedar's Hall, Wells, called 'Are you listening'. The conference was held to bring together deaf and hearing practitioners and key organisations from the music and education world to create a space to share best practice and ideas, as well as creating more opportunities and raising expectations for young deaf musicians. It was also an opportunity to establish a network of support and to help organisations to make their musical activities more accessible through training, representation, and development of national policy.

The conference attracted a wide range of people from across the music industries, including established deaf musicians, deaf and hearing teachers, teachers of the deaf, and representatives of organisations including Dorset Music Services, Centre for young Musicians in Taunton (a division



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of Guildhall), and Wells Cathedral school. The whole event was fully accessible with a comprehensive team of 6 British Sign Language Interpreters, speech-to-text-relay, and a hearing loop system available on request. The day began with a short concert and words by three young, emerging deaf musicians – Adam Butler (drums), Daniel Regan (trombone), and Sophie Wiseman (violin). We then moved onto the keynote speeches by Ruth Montgomery, Liz Varlow, and Paul Whittaker, which were both eye opening and inspiring, covering topics from misconceptions, accessibility, and teaching successes. Following the keynote speeches and Q&A session, the conference attendees were split into three breakout groups over two sessions, focusing on the following questions:

Breakout session 1- Education

1. What are the challenges for deaf children and young people in music?
2. Do you have any examples of best practice or notable experiences to share with the group?
3. How can we make music more accessible for young deaf people?

Breakout session 2 - Strategy and Policy

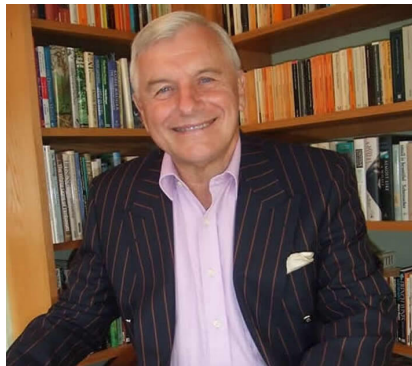
1. What can we change in order for more deaf people to be able to access music?
2. How can music organisations (schools, orchestras, etc) attract more deaf students?
3. How can they support them?
4. How can partnerships help?

The sessions generated a great amount of important discussion, bringing together perspectives and experiences from a wide range of backgrounds. We have gathered notes from these sessions, including people's individual experiences, examples of best practice, and past and present logistical challenges relating to policy-making. It was also clear during the plenary that there were some recurring themes between the breakout groups. The day ended with optional INSET training available to three groups of people: music teachers in schools and music hubs, ensemble leaders and teachers in specialist settings and/or private 1-1 teaching, and for all other staff including classroom teachers, admin staff, and CEOs. The 'Are You Listening?' conference was the first of its kind, creating a platform and space in which to discuss the issues relating to music and deafness, gain a clearer picture of the opportunities, projects, and inconsistencies across the UK, and to begin recommending sustainable short and long-term changes. Looking ahead, the notes from the conference will be collated and, alongside any findings from the remainder of the project, our recommendations for organisations and individuals in music education will be presented as part of a final toolkit.

"We have never seen our son as confident as he was on the conference. To be honest it was the best conference we have ever attended, full of positivity, inspiration, hope and kindness." - Inna Rega

DECIBELS ORGANISERS WITH CONTACT DETAILS

KEN CARTER



Ken is the Founder and Executive Director of Decibels and is also the Director of the Deafax Research and Development Unit which is based at the Institute of Education, University of Reading. He has studied at Loughborough, Surrey and London Universities. He has been challenged by a variety of roles... as a top class sportsman, Royal Marine Commando, parent of a deaf daughter, teacher of English, History and PE, teacher-lecturer in deaf education, advisory lecturer in special needs and as a charitable entrepreneur. He has been responsible for helping to set up-the Breakthrough (Deaf/Hearing) Integration Trust (now named DeafPlus), Deafax, AACT for Children Ability2Access, GOALS4LIFE, EASiTEC, Specialkidz International, DSFF and Deaf Aspirations. For his contribution to preventative medicine and healthcare, he was recently elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine. Also, he has just been awarded an Honorary B.Sc. Degree from Loughborough University as part of their Centenary Celebrations.

DEBBIE FLORY



Debbie joined Decibels in October 2014 and spends her time helping out with the day-to-day administration of the office as well as assisting with researching and sending out funding applications and co-ordinating the current projects. Prior to this, Debbie worked for many years in the Financial Services Sector starting as a member of the New Business Team and ending her career as Executive Assistant to the CEO & Sales Director. She was then approached by an ex-work colleague who was volunteering at Deafax, a charity for the deaf, to see if she would be interested in supporting them on their “admin side of things” – Debbie is still there 11 years later! Hobbies include travelling, cooking, reading and spending time with family and friends.



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DECIBELS

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Acting Company Secretary/Treasurer: Ken Carter

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Rosie Axon

William Ogden

Projects Co-ordinator & Administrator: Debbie Flory

Hon. President: Lord Michael Berkeley of Knighton, CBE

Hon. Vice Presidents: Professor Adam Ockelford

Caroline Parker, MBE

Sannah Gulamani

Advisers: Dr Nicholas Bannan (International Music Education)

Helen Lansdown (Chief Executive of Deafax)

Riccardo Mancuso (Business & Strategy Planning)

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