



WISHES AND CANDLES
AMERICAN CHRISTMAS MUSIC

THE EBOR SINGERS
PAUL GAMESON

Wishes and Candles

American Christmas Music

The Ebor Singers

Rachel Dent *harp*

Jane Wright *oboe*

Paul Gameson *conductor*

About The Ebor Singers:

'The programme was brilliantly executed and beautifully sung'
The Sunday Times

'Fine singing and playing'
The Times

Trad. arr. Susan LaBarr (b. 1981)	Abbie Betinis (b. 1980)	
1. The Angel Gabriel	[3:28]	13. Carol of the Stranger [2:43]
Melissa Dunphy (b. 1980)		Timothy C. Takach (b. 1978)
2. O Oriens	[4:47]	14. Joseph [4:47]
Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)		Jake Runestad (b. 1981)
3. O magnum mysterium	[6:34]	15. Sleep little baby [5:39]
Gerald Custer (b. 1953)		Trad. arr. Matthew Culloton (b.1976)
4. Balulalow	[2:35]	16. Tomorrow shall be my dancing day [2:25]
Dan Forrest (b. 1978)		Michael Praetorius (1571–1621)
5. The Work of Christmas	[3:49]	arr. Matthew Culloton
Melody: 'Christmas' arr. Dan Forrest		17. In dulci Jubilo [3:12]
6. While shepherds watched their flocks	[4:36]	Matthew Culloton
Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)		18. Balulalow [2:33]
7. Lux aurumque	[3:10]	Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)
Franz Gruber (1787–1863)		arr. Matthew Culloton
arr. Stephen Paulus (1949–2014)		19. Hark! The herald angels sing [3:16]
8. Silent Night	[3:59]	Stephen Paulus
Stephen Paulus		20. Wishes and Candles [2:51]
9. In the moon of wintertime	[4:07]	
10. The Holly and the Ivy	[4:18]	Total playing time [74:27]
René Clausen (b. 1953)		
11. O magnum mysterium	[3:21]	
Alfred Burt (1920–54)		
12. The Star Carol	[2:06]	



Photo © Euphy, Guy Tudor

Wishes and Candles: American Christmas Music

The contemporary American Christmas choral tradition is a wonderful confluence of stylistic confluences, sacred and secular, which reflect the country's cultural vibrancy more so than other times of year. While it might be possible to define the most recognizable American 'sound' as resonant chordal writing (Lauridsen, Whitacre), equally prevalent is the influence of twentieth-century English composers, and jazz. Christmas music is also influenced by English carols, whether it be familiar melodies or texts, or more generally an Anglican style. Much of this repertoire is not necessarily written for church services; the intended performers are often college or professional choirs singing in concert halls, a tradition which can be traced back to the establishment of Scandinavian-American Lutheran Colleges – notably in Minnesota, where there is also a concentration of concert choirs, amateur and professional. The American Christmas season is also framed by secular traditions – the Lincoln Center Christmas Tree lights switch-on, baseball, film and music – and different religious ones – Hannukah.

If any piece can be said to represent the

beginning of a whole generation of composers, or a whole style of composition, then Morten Lauridsen's **O magnum mysterium** can lay claim to the role of shaping the American sound of modern American choral music. First performed by the Los Angeles Master Chorale in 1994, where he was composer-in-residence, the work – a setting of the Matins Responsoy on Christmas Day – quickly became a popular feature of carol services and concerts in the USA and UK. Lauridsen spoke of his vision to create a 'transforming spiritual experience within what I call "a quiet song of profound inner joy." I wanted this piece to resonate immediately and deeply into the core of the listener, to illumine through sound'.

Susan LaBarr is a Missouri-based composer. Her through-composed setting of the Basque melody associated with **The Angel Gabriel** (familiar to English audiences in Edgar Pettman's arrangement) adds a freshness to the carol, particularly exploring 'Gloria' to good effect.

Melissa Dunphy is an Australian-American composer, now settled in Philadelphia, who defines herself as a composer of 'political and vocal art'. Her setting of the Advent Antiphon **O Oriens** uses the traditional plainsong as a backbone, expanding into

diatonic clusters and triads. It was commissioned by the Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia in 2015. Dunphy chose the text for its universality – ‘a plaintive call for light in the form of love, knowledge, and peace both in the world and within each of us personally, particularly for those of us who have suffered from depression or grief.’

Gerald Custer studied at Westminster Chapel College (Rider University) although he had composition lessons with Malcolm Williamson, Master of the Queen’s Music. **Balulalow**, a simple homophonic setting, was written in 2007 for the new Director of Choral Studies, Joe Miller, and the college’s very Anglican carol service.

Dan Forrest was born studied at the University of Kansas, and credits Alice Parker as a foremost influence. **The Work of Christmas** is a poem by civil-rights leader Howard Thurman, a text which offers the challenge to live out the Christmas story in very practical ways. For his setting of **While shepherds watched their flocks by night**, Forrest uses the *Christmas* melody by Handel, and this version is more commonly used in the United States. Forrest says his setting reflects ‘the dignity and beauty of the English cathedral style’, and this is evident in the diatonic choral writing and

emphasis on strong melodic voice-leading.

The Master Chorale of Tampa Bay premiered Eric Whitacre’s **Lux aurumque** in 2000. Whitacre asked his long-term collaborator poet Charles Anthony Silvestri to translate a poem by Edward Esch into Latin, who attempted to render ‘the original poem into Latin as singably and as sonically beautifully as I could’. The composer suggests in the score that ‘if the tight harmonies are carefully tuned and balanced they will shimmer and glow’. Rather like Lauridsen’s *O Magnum mysterium*, this work helped establish Whitacre’s reputation abroad. By 2022, there had been 6.7 million YouTube views of a virtual performance of *Lux aurumque* organised by the composer.

Clausen, Betinis, Takach, Runestad, Culloton, Runetsad and Paulus are just a few of the composers who have emerged from the rich choral tradition of Minnesota. Stephen Paulus had an important role in the early establishment of the area’s cultural scene and status. He attended the Macalester College, St Paul, singing under Dale Warland, and later the University of Minnesota, and he co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum (now the American Composers Forum) in 1973. The texture of his choral music is largely homophonic, with

surprising harmonic shifts in response to the text. Much of his work was born from a fruitful relationship with regional choirs such as the Dale Warland Singers, including *The Holy and the Ivy* (1998, from *Three Nativity Carols*), and *The Singers, Minnesota Choral Artists* (*Silent Night*, 2009). **The Holy and the Ivy** (1978) is scored for the striking combination of choir, harp and oboe. **In the Moon of Wintertime** (1990) is a setting of a translation of the seventeenth century Canadian Huron Carol. **Wishes and Candles** (1998), for choir and harp, was written for Judith Clurman and *The Lincoln Center Tree Lighting*, 1998, with lyrics by the American song-writing duo Alan and Marilyn Bergman.

René Clausen’s **O magnum mysterium** was written in 2010. In his performance notes Clausen acknowledges the settings by Victoria and Lauridsen, and briefly uses the opening motif of Victoria; he uses a distinct harmonic vocabulary, with blurred tonal clusters, initially peeling off from a unison C. The piece was written for *The Concordia Singers*, one of the ensembles at Concordia College, Minnesota, founded in 1891 by Norwegian settlers, where Clausen is Professor of Music.

Abbie Betinis was educated at another Norwegian-founded music school in

Minnesota, St Olaf’s College, later becoming Professor of Composition at Concordia College. Her compositional style is unique yet accessible, often using extended vocal techniques. Abbie is the grand-niece of Alfred Burt: Alfred was an American jazz musician who is best known for composing the music for fifteen Christmas carols between 1942 and 1954, that appeared on family Christmas cards. **The Star Carol** was one of these, completed just days before his early death at the age of thirty-three. Abbie re-established this family tradition in 2001, and **Carol of the Stranger** was her 2013 offering. The lyrics are by the poet Michael Dennis Browne, professor emeritus at the University of Minnesota. The melody is written in a folk-like shaker style, initially heard over simple harmonic drones before more of the texture is expanded rhythmically and melodically.

Timothy Takach is also a music alumnus of St Olaf’s College. When commissioned by Una Vocis Choral Ensemble in Mason City, Iowa to compose a piece for Christmas 2016, he was determined to add a fresh approach to the Nativity story, and so chose the unusual perspective of **Joseph** with a new text by Michael Dennis Browne. Takach uses a unifying chordal passage between sections, with the overall tonality of the piece progressing from minor to major as

the poem explores Joseph's fears, then hope and confidence for the future.

Jake Runestad studied at Winona State University, Minnesota, where his teacher was Libby Larsen. There's a hint of Lauridsen's style in the sonorities of his **Sleep little baby, sleep**, composed in 2012 for the group Seraphic Fire, although there is much rhythmic and melodic variety.

Matthew Culloton studied at Concordia College, and later the University of Minnesota. As the founding Musical Director of The Singers, Matthew Culloton has commissioned many new works, and been commissioned by them – including **Tomorrow shall be my dancing day, Hark! The herald angels sing** and **In dulci jubilo**. While these – and especially *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day* – are close in spirit to arrangements of English composers such as Willcocks and Rutter, Culloton introduces jazzy syncopation and harmonies to *In dulci jubilo* and expands *Hark! The herald* into double-choir (*ripieno* and chorus). Culloton describes **Balulalow** as a 'manger carol', which, with the soprano solo (Mary) supported by the choir gently humming, recalls the setting of Peter Warlock.

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Texts and Translations

Trad. arr. Susan LaBarr (b. 1981)

1. The Angel Gabriel

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
'All hail,' said he to meek and lowly Mary,
'most highly favored maiden.' Gloria!
'I come from heav'n to tell the Lord's decree:
a blessed virgin mother you shall be.
Your Son shall be Immanuel, by seers foretold,
most highly favored maiden.' Gloria!
Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head;
'To me be as it pleases God,' she said.
'My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name.'
Most highly favored maiden, Gloria!
Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
'Most highly favored maiden.' Gloria!

Basque Trad., translated S. Baring-Gould

Melissa Dunphy (b. 1980)

2. O Oriens

O Oriens, splendor lucis aeternae, et sol iustitiae: veni,
et illumina sedentes in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

*O Morning Star, splendour of light eternal and sun of
righteousness: Come and enlighten those who dwell in
darkness and the shadow of death.*

Advent Antiphon, 21 December

Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)

3. O magnum mysterium

O magnum mysterium, et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,
iacentem in praesepio: Beata Virgo, cujus viscera
meruerunt portare Dominum Christum. Alleluia!

O great mystery and wonderful sacrament, that animals

*should see the new-born Lord lying in a manger!
O blessed is the Virgin, whose womb was worthy
to bear Christ the Lord.*

Responsory, Matins, Christmas Day

Gerald Custer (b. 1953)

4. Balulalow

O my dear hart, yung Jesu sweet,
Prepair thy credil in my spreit,
And I sall rock thee in my hart,
And nevermore fra thee depart.

Bot I sall praise thee evermoir,
With sangis sweet unto thy gloir;
The kneis of my hart sall I bow,
And sing that rycht Balulalow.

*O my dear heart, young Jesu sweet,
Prepare thy cradle in my spreit,
And I shall rock thee in my heart,
And nevermore from thee depart.*

*But I sall praise thee evermore.
With sweet songs unto thy gloir;
The knees of my heart shall I bow,
And sing that rich Balulalow.*

*James, John & Robert Wedderburn (16th century),
after Luther*

Dan Forrest (b. 1978)

5. The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
When the Kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost, to heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To re-build the nations;

To bring peace among brothers,
To make music from the heart.

*Text used by permission of Friends United Press:
Thurman, Howard, 'The Work of Christmas'. From
A Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations.
Friends United Press (fum.org/shop), 1985*

Melody: 'Christmas' arr. Dan Forrest

6. While shepherds watched their flocks By Night

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
an angel of the Lord came down,
and glory shone around.
'Fear not,' said he (for mighty dread
had seized their troubled mind)
'glad tidings of great joy I bring
to you and all mankind.

'To you, in David's town, this day
is born of David's line
a Savior, who is Christ the Lord;
and this shall be the sign:
'The heavenly babe you there shall find
to human view displayed,
all simply wrapped in swaddling clothes
and in a manger laid.'
'All glory be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
to those on whom his favor rests
goodwill shall never cease.'

Nahum Tate (1652–1715)

Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)

7. Lux aurumque

Lux,
Calida gravisque pura velut aurum
Et canunt angeli molliter
modo natum.

*Light,
warm and heavy as pure gold*

*and angels sing softly
to the new-born babe.*

*Edward Esch, b.1970
(Translated to Latin by Charles Anthony Silvestri)
Text used with permission*

Franz Gruber, arr. Stephen Paulus (1949–2014)

8. Silent Night

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.
Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing, Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

*Joseph Mohr (1792–1848),
tr. John Freeman Young (1820–85)*

Stephen Paulus

9. In the moon of wintertime

'Twas in the moon of wintertime
When all the birds had fled,
That God the Lord of all the earth
Sent angel choirs instead,
Before their light the stars grew dim
And wond'ring hunters heard the hymn:
Jesus, your King, is born;
Jesus is born!
Glory be to God on high!



Photography: Martin Sheppard

The earliest moon of wintertime
Is not so round and fair
As was the ring of glory
Around the infant there,
And when the shepherds then drew near,
The angel voices rang out clear:
Jesus, your King, is born;
Jesus is born!
Glory be to God on high!

O children of the forest free,
The angels' song is true.
The Holy Child of earth and heav'n
Is born today for you.
Come kneel before the radiant Boy
Who brings you beauty, peace and joy:
Jesus, your King, is born;
Jesus is born!
In excelsis gloria!

*Jean de Brebeuf (1593–1649),
tr. Jesse Edgar Middleton (1872–1960)*

10. The Holly and the Ivy
The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown.

*The rising of the sun
And the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.*

The holly bears a blossom,
As white as the lily flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To be our sweet Saviour.
The rising of the sun etc

The holly bears a berry,
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to do us sinners good.
The rising of the sun etc

The holly bears a prickle,
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas Day in the morn.
The rising of the sun etc

The holly bears a bark,
As bitter as any gall,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all.
The rising of the sun etc

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown.
The rising of the sun etc

Traditional English

René Clausen (b. 1953)
11. O magnum mysterium
[See Track 3]

Alfred Burt (1920–54)
12. The Star Carol
Text by Wihla Hutson (1901–2002)

Abbie Betinis (b. 1980)
13. Carol of the Stranger
Peace and grace be to this house
Where all are welcomed in;
Receive the guest, receive this heart:
Tell the Stranger, tell.

*Tell the Stranger what you cannot tell
Those who love you and desire your joy:
Tell.*

Make tall your walls, make long these beams,
Who once believed alone;
Make wide the circle, feed the fire:
Tell the Silence, tell.

*Tell the Silence what you cannot tell
Those who love you and desire your joy.
Tell.*

Blessings be upon this place,
Let every wound be healed,
Let every secret, every dream:
Tell the Angel, tell.

*Tell the Angel what you cannot tell
Those who love you and desire your joy.
Tell.*

Peace and grace be to this house,
All will be returned;
Let every soul be called your own,
Tell the Mystery, tell.

*Tell the Mystery what you long to tell
Those who love you and desire your joy.
Tell.*

Michael Dennis Browne (b. 1940)
Text used with permission

Timothy C. Takach (b. 1978)
14. **Joseph**
a starry sky is in my arms

I hear my breathing – now not only mine
each dawn is different now that you are here

sometimes I stare at you, sometimes I tremble
I stand above you, my head a moon
and you down there on the sweet straw

each dawn is different now that you are here
I hear my breathing, now not only mine
all my dreams for you, wondering
who you might be, how far you may have come
to be with us

each dawn is different now that you are here

sometimes I feel among waves too steep,
my boat too small
for these wide hands to have made

when I've been working, when the sun is low,
I sink into the stream and lie there, pale as stone
and still this burning that I feel
so deep inside me

how are you mine, child?
how are you ever mine?

I am like a father
I am like a father

so let the old Joseph die, the new be born
hold high this lantern for the world to see –
this child, this light, this saving one

a starry sky within my arms (O heart)
each dawn is different now that you are here

Michael Dennis Browne

Jake Runestad (b. 1981)
15. **Sleep little baby**
Sleep, little baby, sleep;
The holy Angels love thee,
And guard thy bed, and keep
A blessed watch above thee.
No spirit can come near
Nor evil beast to harm thee:
Sleep, Sweet, devoid of fear
Where nothing need alarm thee.

The Love which doth not sleep,
The eternal Arms surround thee:
The Shepherd of the sheep
In perfect love hath found thee.
Sleep through the holy night,
[...] kept from snare and sorrow,
Until thou wake to light
And love and warmth to-morrow.

From Holy Innocents by Christiana Rosetti (1830–94)

Trad. arr. Matthew Culloton (b.1976)
16. **Tomorrow shall be my dancing day**
Tomorrow shall be my dancing day;
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to the dance;

*Sing, oh! my love, oh! my love, my love, my love,
This have I done for my true love.*

Then was I born of a virgin pure,
Of her I took fleshly substance
Thus was I knit to man's nature
To call my true love to the dance.

Sing, oh! my love, oh! etc

In a manger laid, and wrapped I was
So very poor, this was my chance
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass
To call my true love to the dance.

Sing, oh! my love, oh! etc

Then afterwards baptized I was;
The Holy Ghost on me did glance,
My Father's voice heard I from above,
To call my true love to the dance.

Sing, oh! my love, oh! etc

William Sandys, Christmas Carols,
Ancient and Modern, 1833

Praetorius, arr. Culloton
17. **In dulci Jubilo**
In dulci jubilo
Let us our homage shew:
Our heart's joy reclineth
In praesepio;
And like a bright star shineth
Matris in gremio,
Alpha es et O!

O Jesu parvule,
I yearn for thee alway!
Hear me, I beseech Thee,
O puer optime;
My prayer let it reach Thee,
O princeps gloriae.
Trahe me post te.

O patris caritas!
O Nati lenitas!
Deeply were we stained.
Per nostra crimina:
But Thou hast for us hast gained
Coelorum gaudia,
Qualis gloria!

Ubi sunt gaudia,
Where, if they be not there?
There are Angels singing
Nova cantica;
And there the bells are ringing
In Regis curia.
O that we were there!

Heinrich Seuse (1295–1366),
tr. Robert Pearsall (1795–1856)

Matthew Culloton
18. **Balulalow**
[See Track 4]

Mendelssohn, arr. Culloton
19. **Hark! The herald angels sing**
Hark! The herald-angels sing
'Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled';
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies,
With the angelic host proclaim
'Christ is born in Bethlehem',
Hark! The herald-angels sing
'Glory to the new-born king'.

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel,
Hark! The herald-angels sing
'Glory to the newborn King'.

Hail the Heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings;
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth,
Hark! The herald angels sing
'Glory to the new-born king'.

Charles Wesley (1707–88),
adapted by George Whitefield (1714–70)

Stephen Paulus
20. **Wishes and Candles**
We have a wish for each candle we light
Making the holidays shiny and bright,
A wish for the children, the young and the old,
To never go hungry, to never be cold.
Wishes and candles and love and laughter,
Mem'ries we'll treasure forever after.
Families are gathered with presents to share.
The best gift of all is that everyone's there.

A wish for the people who walk all alone,
A roof overhead and a bed of their own.
A candle for those in the need of a friend,
A hand and a smile by the holiday's end.
Wishes and candles they warm the season,
Hope for a world filled with peace and reason.
Think of the love that is waiting for you,
When all of our holiday wishes come true.

Marilyn Bergman (b.1928) and Alan Bergman (1925–2022)
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The Ebor Singers

Sopranos

Violet Beaumont
Sarah Clarke
Helena Daffern
Natalie Houlston
Moira Johnston^{11, 18}
Hattie Pecksmith
Alice Potter
Alison Russell Pawley⁸
Anna Sharmar
Clare Steele-King⁷
Amy Walker
Rachel Webber

Altos

Louisa Dobson¹³
Hugo Janacek
Adam Piplica¹⁴
Sammi Tooze
Charlotte Yandell

Tenors

Joshua Adams
Matthew Badham
Roger Boulton
Jason Darnell
Christopher Hughes⁸
Christopher O'Gorman¹⁴
Dominic Wallis
James Wells¹¹

Basses

Jack Comerford
Jonathan Holland-Avery
Samuel Hucklebridge
Patrick Osbourne
Joel Starkie
Guy Tudor
Paul Tyack
Jonty Ward
Robert Webb

Directed by Paul Gameson

The Ebor Singers

Acclaimed for performances and recordings that sparkle with fresh insight and vibrant musicality, The Ebor Singers has earned a reputation as one of the most exciting vocal ensembles in the north of England. The choir draws its members from professional and professionally-trained amateur singers in the region. The choir was founded in 1995 by their director, Dr Paul Gameson, as part of his ongoing research into French and English vocal music of the seventeenth century, and this repertoire remains a focus of the group. The choir is also committed to the promotion of new music, encouraging young composers to write for voices – notably through the NCEM Young Composers Award and their own St Cecilia Commissions – and maintaining strong links with composers, including Kerry Andrew, Kerensa Briggs and Philip Moore. As well as their concert series held in York Minster, the choir has performed in festivals in the UK and abroad, broadcast on BBC Radio, and leads education and composition workshops, including the NCEM Young Composers Award. They are also an associate choir at York Minster, and regularly sing services there.

Paul Gameson (conductor)

Dr Paul Gameson is an Associate Lecturer at the University of York, where he completed his PhD on sacred music in seventeenth-century France. His editions have been published by York Early Music Press and have been used by groups including the Gabrieli Consort and Corona Coloniensis. Paul founded The Ebor Singers initially to develop his own research in to English and French seventeenth-century repertoire, but he has always enjoyed the rich variety to be found in choral music, and has led collaborative projects with contemporary composers including Errolyn Wallen, Christopher Fox, David Lancaster and Ambrose Field. As a choral director he has given choral workshops in the UK and abroad. He is also a Vicar Choral at York Minster, and a singing teacher of the choristers there.

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