

SHAW

GUILD



**CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
OF VOLUNTEERING**

PREPARED BY JAMES CLEMENS, MICKI CLEMENS AND MARY MIZEN
WITH INPUT AND ASSISTANCE FROM THE 2022 SHAW GUILD
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

AUGUST 2022

INTRODUCTION

Volunteers have been an integral part of the Shaw Festival from the very beginning. Originally called the *Women's Committee* (despite the fact that many men also volunteered their time), the volunteer organization was renamed the *Shaw Guild* in 1974. This group still embodies and exemplifies VOLUNTEERING!

In their 2012 history, *Fifty Years of Shaw Festival Volunteers*, past Guild President Faye Goodwin and Shaw Festival librarian Nancy Butler, described the roles played by volunteers between 1962 and 2011. Early volunteers helped to produce the initial plays in the Court House, hunting for props and sourcing costumes, in addition to many other tasks. As the Shaw Festival grew professionally, the roles of Guild volunteers also changed.

This year, 2022, marks the Diamond Jubilee of the Shaw Festival. While Goodwin and Butler recorded the history of volunteer assistance to the Shaw over the first fifty years, this record continues the story of the many achievements and successes of Guild volunteers over the past ten years, 2012-2022. ***And what a cause for celebration it is!***



Photo: Shaw Festival hosts reception for Guild Volunteers in the Green Room to celebrate National Volunteer Week 2019.

In 2012, Jackie Maxwell was in her 10th season as Artistic Director at the Shaw Festival. During her tenure, Jackie worked to include contemporary plays, as well as plays by women playwrights, both past and present.

The Shaw Guild's 300+ volunteers continued to support the Shaw in many ways; Hosting and scanning tickets, conducting backstage tours, and maintaining the gardens behind the Festival Theatre. Over the past ten years, the Guild has taken on additional roles including Greeting patrons, and initiating projects within the Niagara-on-the-Lake community. We have expanded the scope of volunteer roles that have been in place for years. In addition, Guild volunteers organize and host annual fundraising events, and donate the proceeds back to the Shaw Festival.

GUILD HOSTS

Guild volunteers have been hosting at the Shaw in one way or another for 60 years. Those first seasons at the Shaw Festival included volunteers selling tickets to plays. Today over 200 Guild volunteers sign up for shifts to host at the Festival and Royal George theatres, scanning tickets as patrons arrive and answering any questions they may have. The technology has changed over the years – instead of ripping tickets, Hosts now scan ticket barcodes with an electronic scanner. Guild volunteer Diane Walker remembers hosting at one evening performance:

“The electronic scanners we used to scan tickets were not working and Hosts had to revert back to the old method of ripping tickets. A group of returning patrons insisted we imitate the sound of the scanner as we ripped their tickets. We agreed, and a lot of fun was had during that shift!”

GUILD DOCENTS and CHANGES TO BACKSTAGE TOURS

Backstage tours at the Shaw Festival Theatre were piloted by the Shaw Guild in 2004, and jointly coordinated by volunteers Suzanne Hebert and Margaret Shiels. Tours became part of the regular program the next year in 2005. These tours help to enhance a patron's theatre experience and increase their knowledge of the history of the Shaw Festival.

Over time, different tours were added to the tour roster. They were designed for specific groups of patrons, and tours became more interactive. In 2010 a tour was created specifically for groups of students with a question-and-answer format, and in 2012 another tour was added for families. This family-friendly tour allowed young theatre-goers to create their own scenes, work with props and other hands-on activities. In 2017, the Shaw season included the play, *Dracula*, and the Shaw Education staff scripted a special Ghost tour for patrons. Reduced-step tours and tours for patrons in wheelchairs were added to the roster of backstage tours to accommodate Shaw patrons with special needs.

New Docents on the team are told that they need to be flexible as often the tour will change, based on what's happening at the theatre that day. Guild volunteer Jane Hanna tells one of her favourite stories from when she was a Docent:

"My favourite memory is from doing the Public tours with (Guild volunteer) Len Kooperman. He was great to work with and told wonderful stories about Shaw and his contemporaries. One tour we did (unknown to us) was for a group of Japanese tourists. They did not speak English, nor did we speak Japanese! Jeff Bingley of the Festival change-over crew saved our tour by demonstrating how the sets moved around the stage and how they went together. The tourists oohed and awed and left with smiles on their faces."

Backstage Tours continue to be a popular activity for patrons who want to learn more about what happens "behind the stage" at the theatre. Today we have 31 Guild Docents conducting tours.

GUILD GARDENERS AT THE THEATRE

Guild volunteers began maintaining the gardens behind the Festival Theatre in 1997. Each week a group of 12-15 volunteers meet with gardening gloves and tools in hand to help weed, mulch and dig. Guild volunteer Peggy Bell has been a member of this team from its inception and today she acts as team lead, directing the team to jobs that need to be completed. In the beginning, the Gardeners only weeded and maintained the existing gardens. But over time, they have added new gardens and updated designs, including the Secret Garden, Woodland Meadow Garden and the Lost Keys Garden.



Photo: Guild Gardening Team 2019

In 2019, Artistic Director Tim Carroll asked the Guild Gardeners to work with Festival staff to create a patron experience: *Poems in the Trees*. Company members were invited to submit their favourite short poem about nature. Twenty-five poems were selected from over 100 submissions and were posted on plaques throughout the gardens. Visitors to the gardens were asked to find all 25 poems, and send an email to the Guild with the title of their favourite poem and the name of the company member who submitted it. A winning name was drawn and the winner received 5 pairs of tickets to the Director/Designer presentation for *Holiday Inn*.

At the Royal George Theatre on Queen St. there was no outside space for patrons to gather at intermission, other than the front sidewalk or alleyway beside the theatre. In 2016, Guild President Arlene Carson, worked with Robin Ridesic, (a member of the Shaw Board), and arranged for a design to be created to transform the alley into a welcoming and attractive space for patrons to enjoy during intermission. The design was immediately given the “green light” by new CEO Tim Jennings and the space was ready for the spring opening. Later, Tim Jennings arranged for the Shaw to purchase the Angie Strauss property directly behind the Royal George and Guild Gardeners took over maintenance of that garden. It was

one of three gardens featured in the 2021 Sip, Savour & Stroll event hosted by the Shaw Guild. The little house on the property (originally an art gallery) is now used by Shaw company members for education activities.

In 2016 the Shaw Guild Theatre Gardeners were recognized by the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake as “*Volunteers of the Year*”.

INTRODUCTION OF THE GUILD GREETER PROGRAM

In 2014, Guild President Peter Gill was approached by Shaw management to discuss a new program to greet patrons when they arrived for a play. Vice-President Arlene Carson set up a pilot program for Guild volunteers to meet buses of patrons arriving at the Shaw Festival Theatre for a performance. She organized training for volunteers, and scheduled shifts for volunteers to meet and greet patrons appropriately. The pilot program was an immediate success, and was quickly expanded to include volunteers greeting all patrons arriving at the Festival Theatre. Greeters welcomed arrivals, ensured patrons were at the correct theatre, directed them to where they could pick up tickets, and answered questions.

Greeting became a formal program in 2015, and has expanded further to include greeting at the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre and the Royal George Theatre. A Greeting Chair position was created on the Shaw Guild Executive for the 2017 season and Marg Mather (with help from her husband John!) filled this role.

Greeters have had many interesting conversations with patrons - often involving the name of the play! In 2018 when *Grand Hotel* was performed at the Festival, Greeters were often asked “*Is my room ready?*” or “*Do you have room service?*”. In 2019, with the production of *Sex in the Studio Theatre* and *Brigadoon* at the Festival Theatre, the Greeters knew that they would hear some interesting comments. On a day when both plays *Brigadoon* and *Sex* were *on-stage*, a Greeter said:

“Welcome to the Shaw. Are you here for Brigadoon or Sex?” The elderly gentleman looked at his wife and said, “Sex? You didn’t tell me about Sex!” His wife just grinned, and he said, “I guess we are going to Brigadoon!”

Greeters also have the opportunity to meet interesting people. When patrons were arriving for a performance of *Damn Yankees* in 2022, Greeter Jane Hanna started a conversation with an American patron.

“She told me that her nephew had been in Damn Yankees 30 years ago, off-Broadway. I asked her what part he played. She didn’t remember; but she said I could ask him, as he drove her to the theatre and was parking the car. Her nephew arrived. I asked him what part he played and he replied, “young Joe”. Without missing a beat, he burst into song “Goodbye Old Girl”. The patrons around us stopped and listened as he has a beautiful voice. He got a round of applause and they then went into the theatre. It made my day and made me appreciate the unique experiences we have as Greeters.”

After some research, it was discovered that the nephew was Jarrod Emick, who won the 1994 Tony award for Best Actor in a Musical: *Damn Yankees!*



Photo: Guild Greeters in action!

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR VOLUNTEERING

By 2016, change was in the air at the Shaw. That year marked the final season for Jackie Maxwell as Artistic Director and the arrival of a new Executive Director, Tim Jennings. In 2017, Tim Carroll completed his first season as Artistic Director and we witnessed the start of a transition with the introduction of new strategies and initiatives. As Peter Jewett, Chair of the Shaw Board of Directors, commented in the 2017 Annual Report:

“TC (Tim Carroll) took risks, challenged assumptions and tested ideas. He engaged us in a dialogue about theatre and what it is that makes it work, and not work, for us”.

Just as the Shaw was looking at its strategic direction, the Guild Executive Committee decided the time was right for the Shaw Guild to do the same. That process began in November 2017. Volunteers were asked for their comments in a brief Member Survey, and over 200 people responded. Input was also gathered

The image shows the cover of a document titled "Our STRATEGIC PLAN 2018 – 2022" for the SHAW GUILD. The cover features the Shaw Guild logo in red and white at the top left. Below the title, there are four main sections, each with a colored header bar and a list of bullet points:

- Our VISION – Who we are**
 - A vibrant community of volunteers who create value for The Shaw Festival
- Our VALUES – What we believe**
 - Respect, inclusion, engagement and excellence
- Our MISSION – What we do**
 - Engage volunteers
 - Enrich the volunteer experience
 - Enhance the patron experience
 - Extend our reach in the community
- Our PRIORITIES**
 - Members & leaders understand roles & expectations
 - Communications align with strategic priorities
 - Support volunteer development & increase capacity
 - Introduce a more effective process for volunteer scheduling
 - Maintain & enhance relationship with The Shaw
 - Promote spirit of outreach and inclusion
 - Ensure continued financial sustainability

from Shaw Management, and followed by a planning workshop in January 2018. Aided by an outside consultant, a 5-year Guild Strategic Plan was developed. It revisited the Guild’s Vision (our long-term goal), Values (what we believe) and Mission (why we exist) and set 7 Strategic Priorities to support how we deliver value to the Shaw. The Strategic Plan has served as an effective roadmap to 2022. Over the five-year period, the Guild has successfully addressed key priorities including introducing a new software tool, My Volunteer Page (MVP) to better manage volunteer resources,

deepening the Guild's relationship with the Shaw, making significant improvements in communications and creating more opportunities for volunteer engagement. Even through the pandemic years, it kept our focus on finding ways to support the Shaw Festival and our community.

MY VOLUNTEER PAGE (MVP)

In 2017, the Guild Executive recognized that a new approach to managing volunteer shift assignments was needed. Our previous process of using spreadsheets and phoning volunteers to fill shifts was cumbersome and time-intensive.

An on-line database tool called "My Volunteer Page" (MVP), provided an easy method of setting up volunteer shifts and allowing volunteers to choose shifts that best suited their own schedule. Cheryl Morris – MVP Convenor that year – initiated a pilot with a small group of volunteers who used MVP and determined the best way this tool could schedule shifts for Guild activities.

In 2019, MVP was rolled out to all volunteers. Cheryl and Guild President Laurie Harley organized small groups of volunteers for training. Each volunteer set up their own profile, indicating how they would like to volunteer, and added their personal skills and experience that they could contribute to the Guild.

Each month, the Chairs for Greeters, Hosts and Docents notify volunteers about upcoming shifts. Volunteers then choose the shifts they wish to fill, and are scheduled for that activity. In 2022, shifts for Guild Gardeners were also added to MVP. The MVP tool tracks the number of shifts and volunteer hours, and ensures an equitable sharing of volunteer tasks. Volunteer skills and experience is referenced regularly when the Executive Committee is looking for candidates for open positions on teams or committees. MVP is also updated with mandatory certifications each volunteer is required to complete before they can sign-up for a shift. These include AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act), and COVID-19 vaccine certifications.

INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY IN ACTION

In the June 2020 Guild newsletter, President Laurie Harley wrote:

“Emotions went into a deeper dive when we witnessed the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the aftermath of events that forced us to confront the injustice and inequities in our own society. How do we make sure that the Guild is part of the solution? There are no easy answers. But to start, we can commit to listen more closely, to engage in conversations even when they are uncomfortable, and to change course whenever we see ways to improve.”

That same year, the Guild launched the IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity in Action) team. IDEA is a forum for Guild volunteers to explore, share and learn, so they can have safe and respectful conversations that foster equity and inclusion. The team is dedicated to listening and learning from the experience of people who belong to marginalized communities in the Guild, the Shaw, and the community. At the same time, the Shaw company and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake created similar committees to undertake the exploration of these concepts and to establish policies and strategies in these areas.

A survey on discrimination was sent to all Guild volunteers in February 2021, and feedback from this tool was used in four ZOOM conversations with interested Guild volunteers in April. The participants reported they found the survey results were eye-opening, and in particular, they read and learned about microaggressions, what they are and how they exist at the Shaw. They discovered Indigenous, Black, and other employees and artists of colour had been on the receiving end of unacceptable racial comments and behaviours, whether conveyed consciously or not. The Guild is committed and honoured to play a role in making the Shaw and the Town welcoming, safe, respectful places that protect and promote diversity. The [Shaw Guild website](#) contains resources that can help increase individual knowledge about discrimination and identify issues in the community.

FUNDRAISING

In addition to the thousands of hours Guild volunteers donate to the Shaw Festival each season, they also fundraise and host events in order to make financial donations each year.

Shaw Guild Garden Tour

The annual Shaw Guild Garden Tour is the longest running fundraising event sponsored by the Shaw Guild. Launched in 2005, the Tour celebrated its sixteenth anniversary in June of 2022. (The event planned for 2020, was cancelled because of the pandemic.)



Photo: Co-convenor Patricia Scrivener and Garden Tour Convenor Jane Catcher, 2022 Garden Tour

Planning for the tour begins the previous year. A Planning Committee meets regularly leading up to tour day, securing gardens for the event, planning marketing and promotion of the tour, ticket sales, day-of logistics, distribution of brochures and organizing volunteers to work on the day. The Garden Tour held June 11, 2022 was a success with a record number of patrons buying tickets on tour

day. Eight gardens were enjoyed and Garden Tour Convenor M Jane Catcher commented:

“I am very proud of my TEAM ... and it was a picture-perfect day!”

The Garden Tour is enjoyed by patrons year after year. As past committee chair Franca Moss remembered:

“I still recall the buzz of energy and sense of enjoyment felt by the visitors we saw strolling through each tour.”

Sip, Savour & Stroll

In 2019, Sip, Savour & Stroll was added as a second annual fundraising event. Guests at this elegant evening garden party began their evening in the Festival Theatre garden, where they sipped glasses of wine before strolling to two private gardens nearby in Niagara-on-the-Lake. There, they enjoyed the beauty of the gardens, and wine and refreshments.



Photo: Sip, Savour & Stroll 2021 Volunteers

The event was cancelled in 2020 because of the emergence of COVID. However, in 2021, tickets to the event sold out within days. Feedback from guests at the event was extremely positive and included comments such as:

“Outstanding! This would be on my list of favourite events!”, “A really fun evening.”, “Congratulations to all the hostesses and organizers!”.

The 2022 Sip, Savour & Stroll event was held on August 13th. Two private gardens situated on the Niagara River were included, and the evening was a magical and enjoyable event.

Proceeds from these events and other fundraising activities are donated to the Shaw Festival. In the past 10 years, the Guild has helped to support several funds set up to support the company, including New Play Development, the Shaw Endowment Fund, Student Workshops, Shaw Gardens Fund and the Shaw Resiliency Fund. Guild donations have also supported production of *A Christmas Carol* for several years.

These financial donations are in addition to the thousands of volunteer hours donated to the Shaw each year. The Guild is recognized by the Shaw Festival as one of their *Theatre, Production and Program Sponsors* (minimum annual donation of \$750,000) as a result of our cumulative donation of money and volunteer hours during the year.

PANDEMIC YEARS – LEARNING HOW TO PIVOT

With the onset of COVID-19 and government restrictions in place, the Shaw Festival was significantly impacted. In 2020 and most of 2021, large gatherings and performances indoors could not take place and everyone was required to wear a mask to help prevent spread of the virus.

When CEO Tim Jennings joined the Shaw in 2015, he had the foresight to conduct an insurance review and he decided to purchase pandemic interruption insurance. This action meant that when the pandemic spread, the Shaw Festival was protected somewhat from the damage caused by loss of performances. The insurance coverage and government assistance programs gave the Shaw the ability to keep its 550 employees employed throughout the pandemic.

Guild volunteers were also affected. Volunteers were not allowed in the theatre, and all in-person volunteer shifts were cancelled. It was important for the Guild Executive Committee to keep volunteers engaged and active as much as possible, and so a number of events and activities were provided online. Activities Chair Brenda Weafer helped to organize events, including *What's the buzz?* and *Cheers for Volunteers*. These events were held online and helped volunteers stay in touch

with happenings at the Shaw, and to celebrate those volunteers who contribute time and enthusiasm to the Guild and the Shaw. A series of 5 interviews with Shaw staff were videoed and included *Fancy Pants*, featuring Jason Bendig, Head of Wardrobe, and *A Day in the Life*, which showcased Jenny L. Wright from the Shaw ensemble. Guild newsletters were published biweekly, with news from the Shaw and interesting articles for volunteers to enjoy.

The time away from the theatre also offered the Guild Executive Committee an opportunity to look at different ways of communicating, educating and supporting volunteers. A Guild organizational review took place and selected volunteers offered input on what was working and what needed to change. Internal Executive Committee processes were reviewed, documented and updated. Feedback and recommendations from the organizational review will also be used as input to the Shaw Guild Strategic Plan which will be refreshed in 2023.

Community Events

During these pandemic years the Guild was asked to lead and take on additional roles within the Niagara-on-the-Lake community.

The Ambassador Project

In the summer of 2020, the Shaw Guild was asked by Lord Mayor (and Guild volunteer) Betty Disero, to pilot an Ambassador program, designed to welcome visitors to town, and to provide information on COVID protocols. Shaw Guild volunteers walked the downtown streets of Old Town during the summer and early fall, greeting and directing visitors, reminding them of COVID protocols, and answering their questions.

In 2022, the pilot project became a core program under the umbrella of Tourism, Niagara-on-the-Lake, with the Shaw Guild as a partner in the program. The Ambassador program has become a community-based program, focused on enhancing visitors' experience in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Volunteers from outside the Guild have become Ambassadors, and feedback from visitors shows the program is a tremendous success.

A Lot O'NOTL

Local merchants in Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake needed some support as they emerged from pandemic restrictions, with reduced traffic in stores. Shaw Ensemble

member Emily Lukasik conceived an idea to create boxes for purchase that would include quality items representing the merchandise available locally.



Photo: A Lot 'O NOTL "elves" and finished box

Emily asked the Guild for help with sourcing items, packing, selling and delivery of the Lot O' NOTL boxes. Volunteers filled fifty boxes with items and products sourced from local merchants and sold the boxes for \$50 each with all the proceeds returned to the merchants. Repeating the program that Christmas, volunteers filled one hundred boxes and sold these for \$100 each. Again, these proceeds were handed over to the merchants. Both the first and second Lot O'NOTL boxes sold out in days.

Shaw Guild Volunteers Produce Videos for the Town!

Lord Mayor Betty Disero, approached the Guild to ask if volunteers would be interested in producing short videos that provided residents with information on Stage 2 of COVID Guidelines. A small team was assembled to produce the first one, [Dining Out in Niagara-on-the-Lake in Stage 2](#). The Old Winery Restaurant in town agreed to provide the location. The second video was entitled [Guidelines on Entertaining at Home in NOTL Under the New Provincial Guidelines](#). Both videos can be viewed on YouTube.

ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS

Each season Guild volunteers participate in events and gatherings to help them learn more about the Shaw Festival, and to celebrate their contributions to the theatre.

- Annual visits to the Scene shop
- Bi-annual visits to the Prop Shop and Costume Warehouse
- Spring Preview & Luncheon (formerly President's Luncheon)
- Director / Designer Chats
- Dress Rehearsal for a play each season
- Monthly Coffee Connections
- Volunteer Recognition Day (formerly Members' Day)
- Summer Celebration
- Shaw / Stratford Annual Cricket Match
- The Art of Ideas 2022
- Recognition event for Garden Tour and Sip, Savour & Stroll volunteers
- 2022 Leadership Forum
- Guild newsletters
- Shaw Guild website
- Annual General Meeting



Left: Felicitas Mandeville
and Laurie Harley,
Members' Day 2018



Right: Tim Jennings
and Alan Walker,
Members' Day 2021

Walking the Boards

In 2018, the invitation came for several Guild volunteers to experience their stage debut. Diana Donnelly, directing Caryl Churchill's play, *Far Away*, as part of her assignment with the Director's Project, asked for a number of Guild volunteers to take on the roles of anonymous townspeople in a post-apocalyptic setting. Thirty Guild volunteers were recruited and lived the life of actors as they paraded across the stage in a pivotal scene in the production, wearing exotic hats and with their mouths covered with scarves and masks. The volunteers also had the opportunity to observe a *Far Away* rehearsal, and to see first-hand the work of a director, stage manager, designer, and actors as they prepared for a production.



Photo: Guild Volunteers waiting for their cue for Far Away

60 YEARS OF VOLUNTEERING

In the fall of 2021, patrons were once again allowed inside the theatre for performances after being restricted from large gatherings inside due to the pandemic. Some restrictions were still in place, but holiday plays: *A Christmas Carol* and *Holiday Inn* were booked. Guild Greeters and Hosts were asked to come back to the theatres and fill volunteer shifts, and the teams worked quickly to set up shifts and assign volunteers. These volunteers not only fulfilled their usual tasks of greeting patrons and scanning tickets; they also reminded patrons to follow COVID protocols, and checked vaccine certifications before they entered the theatre.

In 2022 the Shaw Festival opened its longest season in celebration of its 60th anniversary, beginning in March with performances of *This is How We Got Here* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Almost 800 performances are scheduled for the 2022 regular season, including 11 plays, outdoor concerts and performances, and 2 plays during the holiday season: *A Christmas Carol* and *White Christmas*. Guild volunteers are also back, maintaining the theatre gardens, conducting backstage tours, facilitating after-show chats, scanning tickets, greeting patrons, and more.

There have been a few set-backs along the way due to positive COVID tests within the company. A few performances have been cancelled. Some showings of *Damn Yankees* have changed to a concert format. We adapt and follow pandemic protocols closely. Despite these challenges, Guild volunteers continue to support the Shaw Festival with enthusiasm, professionalism and pride, as we have for the past 60 years. As Tim Carroll reflects on our anniversary at the Shaw Festival:

“... so we are here, at sixty, looking back over an incredibly rich and varied past and looking forward to what the next chapter might bring.”

Shaw Guild Presidents

Peter Barwell	2011-2012
Peter Gill	2013-2014
Arlene Carson	2015-2016
Julian Rance	2017-2018
Laurie Harley	2019-2020
Alan Walker	2021-2022

2022 Shaw Guild Executive Committee

President, Alan Walker	Past President, Laurie Harley
Vice-President, Mary Mizen	Treasurer, Joe Allevato
Secretary, Deborah Williams	Membership Chair, Susan MacDonald
Hosting Chair, Greg Fedoryn	Greeting Chair, Marg Mather
Activities Chair, Brenda Weafer	Docent Chair, Arlene Carson
Communications Chair, Cheryl Morris	Shaw Gardens Chair, M Jane Catcher
MVP Chair, Margot Devlin	Garden Tour Convenor, M Jane Catcher
Marketing Convenor, Jo Ann Ely	

Thank you to the Shaw Guild Executive Committee, Past Presidents and all the Shaw Guild Volunteers who contributed their stories to this document!

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