

ESCAPED ALONE

by **Caryl Churchill**
directed by **Daniel Wain**

**THU 2 SEP –
MON 6 SEP 2021**

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This amateur production of “*Escaped Alone*” is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd. www.concordtheatricals.co.uk and streamed online via ShowShare

A Welcome from our

Artistic Director - Lottie Walker



2020 was the year that never happened for theatre, but it did bring us opportunities to bring live theatre into our living rooms and to experiment with new ways of performing. TTC is first and foremost a club and it was important to us to keep our members as engaged and involved as they wanted to be throughout that missing year. Our actors kept busy with zoom play readings, podcasts, etc. but we wanted to involve more of our technical people too, so the decision was made to set them a challenge as soon as it was practicable (and legal) to do so. And what a challenge it was! We decided to make a movie. The theatre being dark was a gift. The rules around social distancing and maintaining the 'rule of six' whilst filming were a challenge. A big challenge. But our intrepid team not only managed to work under such conditions but to produce a marvellous piece of work to a really high standard within a very tight timeline.

We are so fortunate to have such brilliant people within the TTC family. The stuff that was going on with cameras, boom mics and various other equipment all seemed like a dark art to me; I am so impressed with the enthusiasm and effort demonstrated by everyone involved and so grateful that we have been able to push the artistic boundaries. There was a genuine buzz about the set during filming. Everyone realised how special this venture was going to be.

The choice of the play, too was important. The Observer's review of the original production of *Escaped Alone* said the play is "fantasy intricately wired into current day politics". For us it was a reflection of the solitary state we all found ourselves in and the great unknown of what the 'new normal' would be. And to be able to cast a whole play with that greatly under-represented group of 'ladies of a certain age' was a joy. And what a joy all those ladies are in the piece, too.

To list my genuinely grateful thanks here to everyone who deserves them would take a very long time and as they are all on the end credits of the film and elsewhere in this programme would also be superfluous. But I do want to mention specifically Daniel Wain and Douglas Schatz, who suggested the play and were so great at driving through the artistic side of the piece, and Steve Wayman, the production manager who co-ordinated people, kept a record of camera takes and stopped the builders making a noise during filming! As for those technicians – please find their names, find out who they are if you don't know them already, and thank them for bringing their incredible expertise to this exciting new venture.

Director's Notes—Daniel Wain



Working on *Escaped Alone* has been one of the most fulfilling and enjoyable experiences of my life, and not just my theatrical one. It's also been pretty scary in places, thinking of all the things that could go seriously wrong. I cannot emphasise how nervous I felt, in advance, about the whole project and particularly the week-long shoot itself. The fact that it was such a painless, indeed joyful, event is miraculous. This particular miracle is easily explained, however: it is entirely due to my marvellous cast and crew. Rehearsing, filming and editing *Escaped Alone* has truly been a team endeavour. Every one of our merry company played a vital role, and played it to perfection. I thank them all, from the bottom of my heart, for their inspiring combination of professionalism, dedication, talent, expertise, stamina and patience.

As for Caryl Churchill's play, I find it an endlessly fascinating piece. Running at little more than an hour, it's ideal material for a short film, and packs an amazing amount into its modest frame. It's incredibly poignant, savagely funny and eerily prescient. In particular, Mrs Jarrett's monologues (in which, like a modern-day Cassandra, she details the horrors that mankind has brought upon itself) probably seemed a lot blacker and weirder when it premiered at the Royal Court five years ago. Today, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, Mrs J's language and imagery resonates strongly and feels ominously close to our new reality.

It's the juxtaposition between the seemingly humdrum and the horrific that lies, I believe, at the heart of the play's power. As I've been marketing it to anyone who'll listen: it's about 'death, destruction and digestives'. *Escaped Alone* can probably be best summed up by Harold Pinter's remark that "life is beautiful but the world is hell", which again must echo with many after their experiences of the past year. And how can you not love a play in which, for the sheer mischievous pleasure of it, the entire cast launch into a spontaneous song a cappella?

It's also an inherently filmic work: a self-contained chamber piece. Indeed, during rehearsals, I often felt like the conductor of a wonderfully vibrant and varied string quartet. One of the reasons I was attracted to *Escaped Alone* is that it provides four fabulous roles for older women: a much-overlooked demographic, sadly, in both theatre and life. Douglas (my redoubtable assistant director) and I were so fortunate to be gifted the talents of Jane, Jenny, Michelle and Sally, plus the invaluable support of Liz (our prompt and understudy). I have rarely had so much fun in a rehearsal room, as we got to grips with the multi-layered dialogue and characters, their hinterlands and the interplay between them. I hope that we have done Lena, Sally, Vi, Mrs J and indeed Caryl proud. My cast and crew have certainly made me very proud.

Although *Escaped Alone* is obviously a first for TTC, and indeed for most of us, I feel sure that it won't be our last foray into the film business. I, for one, am raring to move on to our next movie! For now though, I hope that you enjoy this one...



How you can view TTC's production of *Escaped Alone*

This event will be streamed over five nights between 2nd-6th September 2021 (inclusive) at 7:30pm. Tickets cost £5 per viewing from a single device, and can be purchased from 30th July onwards by going to:

<https://www.stream.theatre/season/163>

After purchase you will receive a password to access the stream.

About the Author



Caryl Churchill is one of the most admired playwrights in modern drama, renowned for a body of work that is intellectually challenging and relentlessly innovative. While she has explored many different dramatic forms and techniques, she has focussed on several common themes including the abuse of power, the iniquities of extreme capitalism, and most consistently the politics of gender in a largely patriarchal world. Her plays dramatize the social and personal anxieties that dominate our contemporary world.

Churchill was born in 1938 in London, although she spent some of her childhood in Montreal, Canada, before returning to do an English Literature degree at Oxford. She began writing radio plays during the 1960s, a form she could maintain at the same time as she raised a young family. She served as a resident dramatist at the Royal Court theatre from 1974-75, beginning what would become an important life-long relationship with the theatre. The theatre's commitment to new writing that challenges the status quo made it the perfect home for Churchill's radical concerns and creativity.

It also enabled her to work with theatre companies such as the Joint Stock Theatre Company and Monstrous Regiment, a feminist theatre collective. In so doing she became more collaborative in her approach, working with actors to research the background to her subjects and developing the plays through improvisation. The results were her plays *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976), *Cloud Nine* (1979) and *Fen* (1983).

Through the 1970s and 80s her work reflected the growing feminism that was finding voice at the time, in landmark plays such as *Cloud Nine*, *Fen* and *Top Girls* (1982). These have since become staples in theatrical programming and educational curriculums. During the 1980s she was also interested in targeting the excesses of capitalism that were on overt display, as she does in *Top Girls* and *Serious Money* (1987).

She has stated however that she has been disappointed by the general lack of progress toward social egalitarianism, and her disillusionment perhaps led her drama towards even more radical technical forms in the 1990s and 2000s. In plays such as *The Skriker* (1994), *Blue Heart* (1997), *Far Away* (2000) and *Love and Information* (2012) Churchill's language and dramatic structure become increasingly fragmented, even surreal.

Throughout her career one of the most distinctive features of Churchill's work has been her inventive use of language. She has been credited with developing the textual convention of overlapping dialogue to reflect the dissonance between characters and in her vision. The surreal device of replacing words with 'blue' or 'kettle' in *Blue Heart*, for example, challenges us to find other ways to comprehend meaning and emotion. Although Churchill's language can be elliptical and challenging, her ear for the natural poetry of everyday speech is incomparable. The precision of her language is the source of powerful social satire, as well often of much humour. It is one of the consistent joys of her work.

James Macdonald, who has directed many of Churchill's plays, has said that "she is always ahead of the game". This has been true in her innovation in dramatic form, in her being one of the very few prominent female playwrights of her time and in championing women in her work, but also in her prophetic choice of subject in her plays.

We selected *Escaped Alone* to produce at this time for a number of reasons: it offered four wonderful roles for older women, a fact that is probably unique on the professional stage; it displays all of the challenging power as well as the humour characteristic of Churchill's language; it could be practically staged maintaining social distancing; and finally, because of the extraordinary prescience of its vision of a world overcome by collective disaster. The play speaks to our fears about the future of the planet, as well as our personal anxieties, while offering some salvation in the strength of our community, as friends, neighbours or open-minded theatre goers.

Douglas Schatz

The Cast



Vi
Jane Marcus



Mrs Jarrett
Sally Halsey



Lena
Jenny Hobson



Sally
Michelle Hood

Cast Biogs

Michelle Hood - Michelle trained at the Guilford School of Drama and worked as a professional actress for many years. She recently retired from a 30 year career running her own stage school in Surrey and is still involved with teaching drama and singing privately for LAMDA examinations. Michelle is still active in various local drama groups and at TTC has directed many plays and musicals (including *Wizard of Oz*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *The Winter's Tale*) and played many different acting roles, most recently in *Marvin's Room*. She was also TTC's Artistic Director for a number of years, and has also directed for the Barnes Community Players (*Oh, What a Lovely War*) and for RSS (*Larkin with Women*, *Kindertransport*) where she is currently directing their upcoming production of *The Children*.

Sally Halsey - Sally joined TTC in 1993 to take a walk-on part in Eric Yardley's production of *A View From the Bridge*. Numerous and varied TTC productions followed with particular favourites being *Antigone*, *A Slice of Saturday Night*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *Kindertransport* and *The Madness of Esme and Shaz*. After a long break from acting to focus on directing, Sally returned to the stage in 2020 with *Sex Cells*, an OHADs production performed in the studio at HHT. Sally has greatly enjoyed working with the cast and crew of *Escaped Alone* – a totally new experience that she would certainly like to repeat!

Jane Marcus - Jane was last seen on our stage as Forewoman of the Jury, Edith Davenport, in Rattigan's *Cause Célèbre*, and before that she played Margaret Thatcher ("T") in Moira Buffini's *Handbagged*. Other roles include Elinor Glyn in *The Cat's Meow*, Sara Turing in *Breaking the Code* and as Stevie in Hugh Whitmore's eponymous play, for which she won the Swan Best Actress award. Other recent roles include Gertrude in *Hamlet*, Bette Davis in *Bette and Joan*, and Hester in Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea* (all RSS). And let's not forget playing a reindeer in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*!

Jenny Hobson – Jenny has many interests in life, but theatre tops her list. From winning a poetry reading prize at the tender age of five, there was a natural progression to drama school, then radio work and teaching. Since those heady days, Jenny has been part of several excellent non-professional companies playing roles such as the eponymous Electra to the flamboyant Madam Arcati in *Blithe Spirit*. Since joining TTC in 2014 she has performed in *Equus* and *Under Milk Wood*. The TTC production of *Stevie* which she directed won a Swan award and a nomination. She also directed Alan Bennett's two one act plays *A Visit from Miss Prothero* and *An Englishman Abroad* in 2019. Jenny says that at her advanced age, a debut filming role was too good an opportunity to miss, delighting in the role of the agoraphobic Lena. Jenny feels very privileged to have been involved in TTC's first venture into streamed theatre.

Creatives and Crew

Director Daniel Wain
Assistant Director..... Douglas Schatz
Production Manager & Stage Manager..... Steve Wayman
Set Design & Construction..... Patrick Troughton
Director of Photography and Editor..... Marc Pearce
Director of Movie Trailer..... Matt Nicholas
Teaser Featurette..... Pete Messum
Lead Sound Engineer..... Harry Jacobs
Sound Boom Operator..... Charles Halford
Lighting Engineer..... Mike Elgey
Wardrobe..... Mags Wrightson
BAT Link..... Dave Rumens
Show Photographers..... Sarah Carter & Matt Nicholas
Prompt/Understudy..... Liz Salaman
Sales & Marketing..... Fiona Auty
Publicity..... Christine Wayman
Garden Floral Arrangements..... Jacqui Grebot & Vicky Horder
Opening title song and vocal coaching..... Helen Geldert
Trailer Voice-Over..... Mia Skytte Jensen
Special thanks: Wesley Henderson Roe (set construction)
..... Zoe Harvey-Lee & Gerry Williamson (set deconstruction)
..... Ellie Halsey & Rachel Nicholas (stage management assistance)



Daniel & Douglas run lines with the four actors



Harry & Charles building up muscles operating the sound booms



Vi & Sally (foreground) bicker while Lena & Mrs J look on wistfully



Matt shoots the Trailer, Charles & Daniel supervise



Testing our social distancing zones

Crew Biogs

Daniel Wain – *Escaped Alone* marks Daniel's film directing debut. However, his previous theatrical experience includes acting, producing and writing, as well as directing. His favourite acting roles include Iago, Captain Hook, Uncle Vanya, King Charles III, Philip Larkin (*Larkin with Women*), Robert (*Boeing Boeing*), Eddie Carbone (*A View from the Bridge*), Douglas (*Man of the Moment*), Ford (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), Pato (*The Beauty Queen of Leenane*), Ricky Roma (*Glengarry Glen Ross*), Johnston (*This Story of Yours*), Judge Brack (*Hedda Gabler*), George (*Once in a Lifetime*), Lambert Le Roux (*Pravda*), Rochester (*The Libertine*) and dame in panto. His last stage appearances were as O'Connor in *Cause Célèbre* just pre-lockdown and Henry Windscape in *Quartermaine's Terms*, for RSS in July 2021. As producer, he ran Strut & Fret for several years in the 1990s and has recently resuscitated the company for *Maybe It's Because* at the 2021 Camden Fringe. His favourite plays as director include *The Happiest Days of Your Life* and *Ring Round the Moon*. As writer they include *Dick Whittington*, *The Marriage of Figaro* (with Marc Brenner), *Burying Caesar* and *Look Behind You* (published by Josef Weinberger).

Douglas Schatz - Douglas Schatz was born and educated in Toronto, Canada. Inspired partly by his interest in theatre, he moved to London in 1982 to immerse himself in its culture. He spent most of his professional career in bookselling and publishing, before these interests coincided in his managing Samuel French play publishers and theatrical licensing agent for six years until 2019. More recently he joined the TTC Play Selection Committee, and he has completed courses in directing and playwriting at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. He is the founder and host of The Play Podcast, in which he invites expert guests to explore a chosen play in depth. Episode 30 recorded in July this year is all about *Escaped Alone*!

Steve Wayman – Steve is a self-confessed theatre addict, who joined TTC in 2018 and has since thrown himself into a variety of activities including box office and fundraising, as well as involvement in productions of various shapes and sizes. He was Deputy PM on *Handbagged*, PM on *Cause Célèbre* both on HHT's main stage, then during lockdown he was PM/Co-Host for both of our marathon online digital events *Wilde Weekend* and *What's Love Got To Do With It?* These forays into the online theatrical world made him an obvious choice to pilot the production side of TTC's first ever streamed video drama.

Patrick Troughton – Patrick has spent many years in the world of music and theatre but is now a regular at TTC, with recent shows including set design for *Cause Célèbre*, a Swan Award nomination for Best Stage Presentation for his production design of *Handbagged*, lighting of *Amadeus* and *Daisy Pulls It Off*, and cast in *King Arthur In Space*.

Harry Jacobs – Harry's TTC theatre credits for sound are too numerous to list here, but some recent examples include *Amadeus*, *Zoo*, *Wolf Hall* and *Bring up the Bodies*. Having migrated from TV/film to theatre sound, Harry's 23rd production at HHT has now taken him full circle. Filming *Escaped Alone* as both boom operator and sound post production mixer has brought him right back to his career roots.

Marc Pearce - Marc is an award winning director and writer. Since holding his first VHS camera at the age of 10, he has been obsessed with the idea of entertainment. He has acted in, directed, designed and produced dozens of productions, from plays to musicals. He has honed his skills and craft from every angle that he possibly could, including professional photography, but Marc has consistently felt the pull of film. His debut drama feature project achieved a significant level of recognition with leading industry professionals. His stylistic qualities can be felt in all of his productions. For Marc, everything you see is vital; and without knowing, it's the things you don't, that make it the complete experience. Marc seeks to create visually stunning pieces with heart. He has an innate instinct for knowing exactly what to show the viewer, and how to translate to screen.

Mags Wrightson – Mags has worked with the TTC wardrobe since 2008, starting with two studio productions *Snoopy the Musical* and in complete contrast Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. She has been involved in all styles of production: small cast drama – *The Collector*, *Lilies on the Land*, *Blackbird*; large cast drama - *A View from the Bridge*, *Amadeus*, *Pravda*; shows with music - *The Wind in the Willows*, *Rent* and many of the recent pantomimes. *Escaped Alone* has been her first venture into film and a great opportunity to learn more about what the camera likes or doesn't like.

Mike Elgey - Mike's great depth of experience as a Lighting Designer for TTC goes back more than four decades, with most recent Lighting credits including *Pink Mist*, *A View from the Bridge*, *Under Milk Wood*, *Jerusalem*, *A Streetcar named Desire*, *Pornography*, *Handbagged* and *Cause Célèbre*.

Elisabeth Salaman – Liz first appeared at TTC as Lion Aunt in the 2016 studio production of *Stevie*, for which she received a Swan nomination. She followed this in 2018 with roles in *Echoes of the War*, two short plays by J.M. Barrie. Her first appearance on our main stage was in the 2020 production of *Cause Célèbre*, playing both Clerk of the Court (in the Old Bailey no less!) and the Coroner. Liz has also worked at RSS, appearing in *Collaborators*, *Tom and Viv*, *The Railway Children* and, again an auntie, in *Hedda Gabler*.

Filming Week— The technical set up

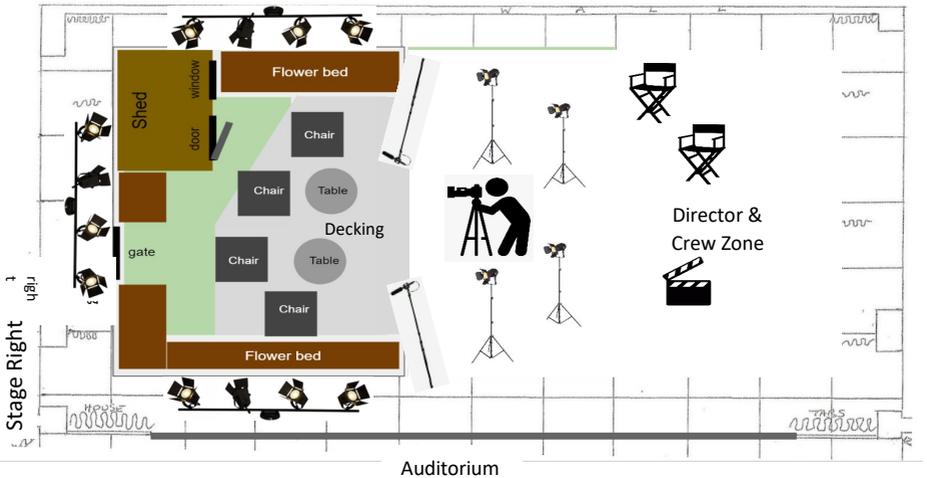


Designing the Garden and arranging the stage as a Film Set

Three months to plan, a day to construct, two hours to dismantle! My primary goal was to avoid it looking like a show garden where everything is perfect. It's easy to make something look faultless when creating it from scratch. It's important in a realistic theatre set to spend some time making it look messy, damaged or worn. The opposite of real life where the effort is usually in making something look better and cleaner. Some of that was already taken care of in that the decking, shed and fencing were all quite old, weathered and worn, which was essential to get the right aesthetic.

The garden was constructed from approximately half artificial greenery and half live. I sourced decking from a Facebook Marketplace advert. It was free but needed to be taken up from the garden. I didn't know how many screws there were in decking boards! I'd estimate 300 screws, each with layers of varnish in the screw head that needed removing first. While kneeling for the third hour in someone's garden, hammering varnish out of a screw head, only to be faced with yet another hairy spider crawling from the gap next to my hand, I temporarily regretted taking on the project. But in the end, it all proved incredibly worthwhile.

Patrick Troughton



Sound Recording and the Filming Process

Whilst the film is advertised as a non-professional piece, all the pre-production, shoot days and post-production followed professional filming standards and practices. A technical test day a few weeks before the actual shoot proved invaluable for sound, camera and lighting to address any potential issues.

Unlike many filmed stage productions the philosophy was that the film would use the HHT stage as a conventional film set, rather than a stage performance being filmed. The film is set in a suburban back garden so having a relatively dead (non reverberant) acoustic was essential to maintain this illusion. This was achieved with the help of all the hanging drapes, especially the front stage curtains. We were stringently following covid safe filming practice so not only did we keep the theatre aircon running throughout the shoot day, but we left the large scenery dock door shutter raised to allow a constant flow of fresh air. Very few takes were interrupted by external noise, and aircon noise was minimal and could easily be filtered out in post-production without affecting the quality of the actor's voices.

Having sorted our acoustic environment the next task was actually hearing the actors in terms of matching their vocal pickup to the picture seen by the viewer. We had four ladies sat in a near semi-circle sometimes separated by a small table. I decided at an early stage we would not be using radio mics as covid restrictions would make their concealed placement (avoiding clothing rustle) more difficult and time consuming, especially due to multiple costume changes. The only other option was to use two microphone booms, given the spacing between the actors.



Simplistically, a microphone boom is essentially a long pole with a microphone mounted on the end of it, but the microphone has to be mounted in such a way that mechanical movement of the the pole doesn't get transferred into acoustic noise picked up by the microphone. The pole needs to be adjustable in length, and combine rigidity with minimal weight to help the boom operator. A boom operator is perhaps one of the most unsung heroes of film and tv drama production. It takes a lot of skill to ensure that the microphone is kept 'out of shot' and its shadow from either natural or artificial lighting doesn't fall onto the actors or anywhere in the viewed picture area. It can also be very tiring over even short periods, holding and moving the boom in the correct position to meet these demands. I operated one boom and I was very lucky to have Charles Halford operating the other boom. Whilst Charles is a very experienced sound operator this was his first foray into boom operating.

As most production sound mixers will tell you, their sound output is only as good as the the input from the boom operator. The output of the two boom microphones were then independently fed to the video camera where they were recorded with the camera pictures. As a backup the microphones were also recorded onto a digital sound recorder.



The play was split into separate recording scenes. Following most drama shoot practice each scene was first recorded in a wide shot, showing all the characters including the major area of the set. The actors then repeated the scene several times with the camera filming various combinations of one, two, or sometimes three actors, to enable the final video edit to be compiled for the best production values. This process can be particularly testing for non-film/tv actors, but also very demanding for both props and continuity as they need to ensure that physical items and the actors positions/clothing are as near as possible to where they were in the initial wideshot. If they aren't, an edit between the wideshot and later shots can be very noticeable.

Once the video is edited to the director's satisfaction, the final task comes back to the sound department. The sound pickup will be balanced between the two microphone booms to match any variations in levels caused by the editing together of various different takes, and any sound FX and music will be added.

Working in the digital domain now simplifies many of the film making processes, with the potential for high quality video and audio on their completion. However at the end of the day the final film, even with all the computerised post-production refinements, still requires the initial on set video and sound to have been sourced technically and artistically correctly.

Harry Jacobs

Musical Credits

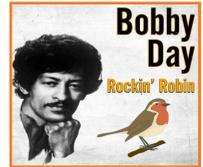
Opening titles – *I Don't Want to Play in your Yard* written in 1894 by Henry W. Petrie and Philip Wingate, famously released by Peggy Lee in 1958.

Performed for us by Helen Geldert



Scene 6 - *Rockin' Robin* written by Leon René under the pseudonym Jimmie Thomas and recorded by Bobby Day in 1958.

Sung for us by the four ladies of the cast



Closing credits - *Buona Sera* written by Carl Sigman and Peter de Rose.

Performed for us, by the kind agreement of Ray Gelato



Sat 25 Sept—Sun 26 Sept
The Recruiting Officer
TTC's play in a week

Wed 27 Oct— Sun 31 Oct
Cinderella meets the Monsters

Wed 17 Nov—Sat 20 Nov
But Yesterday

Tue 7 Dec— Sat 11 Dec
Loot

Tue 25 Jan— Sat 29 Jan
Teachers

What's on

Book at: www.thelittleboxoffice.com/teddingtontheatreclub/

A photograph of a tea set on a table. In the foreground, a white teapot and a cup and saucer are on a tray. In the background, a white teapot is on a stand. The scene is set outdoors at night with flowers and a wooden chair.

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