Erie Philharmonic Society
Sixth Season—First Orchestra Concert
November 10, 1936
8:30 P. M.

Overture to "Der Freischutz" von Weber
Beethoven

Symphony No. 5, in C minor, Op. 67
  Allegro con brio
  Andante con moto
  Allegro
  Allegro—Tempo I—Allegro—Presto

   —— Intermission ——

Polovtsian Dances from "Prince Igor" Borodin

"The Swan of Tuonela"—Legend from the Finnish Sibelius
  Folk-Saga, "Kalevala," Op. 22, No. 3

Spanish Caprice, Op. 34 Rimsky-Korsakov

NOTE—It is suggested that the listener refrain from applause after the First Movement of the Symphony—even though moved to bestow it—so that the full effect of contrast between this movement and the second may not be disturbed.

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PRESERVE THIS PROGRAM. References will be made to these notes in later programs.

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Overture to the Opera, "Der Freis¿chtz"

Carl Maria Friedrich Ernst, Freiherr (Baron) von Weber

Born at Bautzen, Oldenburg, Germany, December 18, 1786; died at London, England, June 5, 1826.

In the second decade of the nineteenth century the musical populace of Germany was divided into two camps over the question as to whether German opera, or works in the style of the Italian opera, should dominate the operatic boards in Germany. The advocates of the latter were strongly in the ascendant, largely because King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia himself prominently supported them.

The practitioners of the Italian style aimed almost entirely to please the ear with their music, to give every opportunity for "bel canto" (literally "beautiful singing") and vocal display for their own sake, regardless of the appropriateness of their music to its concurrent dramatic situation. They were concerned very little, or not at all, with any attempt to reflect in their music the scene, the action, the atmosphere, the emotional ebb and flow and interplay, and so on, as they were set forth and unfolded on the stage. The exploitation of the voice was their main preoccupation, and all expressive qualities and requirements were sacrificed thereto. The inevitable result of such a method was a cut-and-dried succession of more or less loosely strung together "pieces"—arias, recitatives, duets, quartets, choruses, etc.—often very beautiful in themselves, but producing an effect that was transient, stereotyped, and artificial, and was obviously incompatible with the Germans' love and admiration for things logical and substantial.

At this time Count Karl Friedrich Moritz Paul von Brühl, (1772-1832) was intendant-general (general manager) of the Prussian royal theatres. He was a friend of Goethe and a very important figure in the development of the drama in Germany. He recognized the theatricalizing of the operatic performances given in the theatres under his supervision, and he determined to do whatever he could to combat this trend and restore native opera to its rightful position on the German stage. He knew a young musician whose help he wanted, a man of high ideals, an abiding faith in German art, great originality, and the courage to fight for his convictions—Carl von Weber. Count von Brühl selected him for intendant of the Schauspielpalais (theater) in Berlin. Negotiations were entered into between them, when in 1817 this playhouse was destroyed by fire, and with it von Weber's chance to serve German art in that capacity.

Before long a new and finer Schauspielpalais was under way, but before its completion the King had invited Spontini, then living in Paris and at that moment the great popular opera composer, to come to Berlin as general director of all musical activities at the capital, and with virtually dictatorial powers. In 1820 Spontini arrived. This, of course, created a conflict very far more important than von Brühl, who nevertheless laboured faithfully to cooperate with the vain and temperamental Spontini. But the setting-up of a foreigner in so important a musical post—especially one from Paris, an Italian, and the arch representative of his native opera school—was deeply resented by a group of patriots who still, perhaps too vividly, recalled the sacrifices Prussia had been called upon to make in the war against Napoleon, and who had been anxiously watching for a German who would watch over their own opera the glories bestowed upon it by Handel, Gluck, Mozart, and Beethoven (with his only opera, "Fidelio"). So far such a one had not made himself known.

About this time the new Schauspielpalais was nearing completion. Count von Brühl had determined that in spite of everything it should be opened with a German work, and his choice was a new opera by his friend von Weber, which would thus have its premiere—the romantic opera "Die Jagersbraut", founded on a German folk legend. Von Weber had been occupied with its composition off and on for several years. The last part to be written, the overture, was begun February 22, 1820, and on May 15 following Weber wrote in his diary, "Overture to "Die Jagersbraut" finished, and with it the whole opera. God be praised, and to Him alone be the glory."
The theatre was not ready as soon as expected, so the opening was delayed; but in due course, on June 18, 1821, the première of von Weber's mature work, which had been so long anticipated, and which in its one-hundred-and-nineteen-thousand-word libretto (without including the dialogue) showed a title changed at von Brühl's suggestion to "Der Freischütz," and with the composer conducting, started the new theatre on the brilliant career that is now in its one-hundred-and-nineteen-year-long course. The public's enthusiasm was incredible; Overture and Folk-song were encored; fourteen out of seventeen music-pieces were stormily applauded. Everything went well for a time, but when the song "O catalogue!" was sung, a man named Weber, who was standing rather close to our copyist, Mad. Seidler and Mile. Enikof (two of the cast) with me, so I could not get hold of the others. Verres and wreaths came flying, "soli Deo Gloria." Some of those verses were repeated too, yet the man whom you called Spontini, which for some reason or other was reproached with being a bad impresario and a bad manager after the overture was so tremendous that although the composer bowed repeatedly, the audience would not allow the performance to proceed until it had been played through without intermission. The whole affair was such a stupendous success that the followers of Spontini were quite put to rout. "Der Freischütz" then and there established itself with the Berlin public.

Thus von Weber, through the success of "Der Freischütz," restored to German opera a just and full recognition of its right to be produced on German stages. But of far higher than that is the fact that the "Freischütz" has provided a field of work that Beethoven was doing in the realms of chamber music, the sonata and the symphony—that of emancipating music from the fetters of formality and convention that were choking it. Here, in the deeper, lusher, more expressive world of the "Freischütz," he was able to show the true beauty of music as he had never done before; but it was not only the form of the German opera, as he is so often called, but his new and fresh idealism became as well the point of departure for the best of German music of the last century.

DER FREISCHÜTZ is founded on the German tradition that any hunter may receive hospitality in the house of any hunter, however humble, without being fired upon, unless his honour is invaded. A hunter, Zamiel (several of the evil devils), seeing the eagles and falcons when fired from the hunter's weapon, will infallibly hit their mark regardless of the accuracy of his aim. Six of the bullets the hunter may direct as he chooses, but the seventh is directed according to his desire. The hunter must surrender his soul to Zamiel, who will claim it when the bullets are exhausted; but if the hunter bring another victim to Zamiel before that time, his own life will be extended and he will receive a fresh supply of the charmed missiles.

The Plot. Agathe, beautiful daughter of Cuno, head ranger for Prince Otto of Bogen, has just married Max, one of her father's young attendants, only to find their marriage if Max wins a coming contest of marksmanship. In the early trials Max has not done well; the peasants taunt him and he is angry and despondent. Another of the peasants has already sold himself to the Demon and his time on earth is to be up the next day—unless, of course, he produces a new victim. He suggests to Max that with the charmed bullets he yet could surely win the contest. Max refuses. Cuspar tempts him to shoot at an eagle soaring so high that it scarcely be seen, and hands Max his own gun. Max fires. The birds drop. Cuspar then tells him the gun was loaded with one of the enchanted missiles. Max sees what these would mean to him and in the contest and agrees to meet Cuspar at midnight in the Wolf's Glen, where amid scenes of the wildest horror Zamiel casts for Max his seven bullets. Next day at the contest Max has successfully fired six of them. Zamiel appears to guide Cuspar, who directs that Max bring down a white dove hovering nearby. Agathe had been warned by a hermit of grave impending disaster. As the dove raises his gun she exclamations, "Don't shoot, Max; I am the White Dove!" But too late—Max has taken his trigger, and she falls. Then it is discovered that Cuspar has also fallen, and that the hermit alone was sowno. For Zamiel, having no power over the pure maiden, directed the bullet to Caspar, whose soul he already possesses, and who, having no weapons to carry away. Max confesses what he had done and the Prince at first sentences him to death; but after the hermit's appeal Max is commuted to a term of years, in which he is to repent and prove himself worthy of his lovely bride.

The Overture begins solemnly, Adagio, 4-4 time (strings and woodwinds). Then to a weaving, tranquil accompaniment of strings the horns have a most lovely song—picturing, perhaps, the peaceful depths of the forest of a summer night. Suddenly this is interrupted by an ominous tremor of the strings, through which we hear a sinister pronouncement from the cellos—the music of the demon Zamiel. (This comes from the well-known Mosel Vivace, 2-2 time—this being taken from the scene in the Wolf's Glen.) The wolf howls and carries off the mortally wounded Caspar near the end. Now the music becomes highly agitated (strings at first, Mosel Vivace, 2-2 time)—this being taken from the scene in the Wolf's Glen. A sudden leaping down, and a clatter (strings tremolo) sings a theme associated with the wolf, a groan of the wolf, and an echo from Spontini, which for some reason or other was reproached with being a bad impresario and a bad manager after the overture was so tremendous that although the composer bowed repeatedly, the audience would not allow the performance to proceed until it had been played through without intermission. The whole affair was such a stupendous success that the followers of Spontini were quite put to rout. "Der Freischütz" then and there established itself with the Berlin public.

"Der Freischütz" means "a free shot," as applied to a missile that freely finds its mark rather than to a shooter who fires with a free aim and accidentally hits his mark.

**Symphony No. 5, in C minor, Op. 67**

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

*Born at Bonn, Germany, December 14 (7), 1770; died at Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827*

Beethoven began serious work on this symphony in 1804, but his notebooks contain sketches of its first three movements made in 1800 and 1801. In fact, there is a sketch made in 1795 of a movement in C minor that is indistinguishable from the third movement of this work. He was occupied with it in 1806, when he put the first movement to paper, and had already laid hands on it when he finished it in 1807. It was first performed at the Theatre an der Wien, Vienna, December 22, 1808, the "Pastoral" (No. 6) having its première at the same concert.

In his biography of Beethoven, Anton Schindler tells of inquiring of the composer as to the meaning of the first motive of this symphony. Beethoven expressed himself very felicitously like a vehement animation, when describing to me his idea, "It is thus that fate knocks on the door."

Schindler became a sort of secretary and general factotum to Beethoven, and lived with him for a time from 1814 on, and again toward the end of Beethoven's life. During those years his personal contact with the master was probably the most intimate of any of Beethoven's contemporaries and Beethoven went to concert with him quite frankly.

His statement about the "knock of fate" has been called into question in these latter years, when it has become fashionable to discount and disapprove so many of our beliefs and traditions about the great and near-great of former days. Not the veracity of this statement is doubted (all seem to concede that it was actually made), but the seriousness with which it was made. The principle basis of this skepticism is that Schindler, though Beethoven's devoted disciple and meticulous recorder, was also gullible, and could at times irritate Beethoven more than a little with his inquisitiveness and persistence. When vexed with him Beethoven would often give some impatient, even scornful, reply. Yet, beyond pure conjecture, no evidence has been produced that this reply was such a one. All the earlier writers who mention it accept Schindler's declaration at face value; only the later ones caviar it over. True, earlier writers were naturally influenced by Schindler's statement, for to the best of their knowledge, it is unique. Apparently it did not have much effect. Sir George Grove, Frederick J. Crowest and Ernst von Eltzerlein had been doubtful, some questioning would surely have arisen nearer Beethoven's lifetime, which would thus be preordained. Apparently it did not have much effect. It seems fair more rational and logical to assume that the remark was indeed made in all seriousness and good faith, and expressed Beethoven's own conception of the motive's meaning. There seems to be no reason why Schindler's word in this instance should not be accepted. However, as to adopting the weight of evidence for adopting it without reservation is at least equal to that opposed.

But after all, very little argument for accepting the "knock of fate" idea should be needed other than the symphony itself, for by its acceptance we are provided with
Second Movement. Andante con moto. A-flat major, 3-8 time. A set of simple variations on two similar themes, the first beginning the movement in cells and violins, the second entering in the twenty-second measure in clarinets and bassoons to sustain the development.

Third Movement. Allegro, C minor, 3-4 time. This is really the scherzo, though not so marked. Basses and cellos at once introduce its grouping, indecisive main theme, to which other strings wind and add themselves, as though trying to be helpful. In four time the woodwinds take over, one having a lyrical, melodic nature, like that of Beethoven, poetical, and like that of Mozart, as a noble, harmonic humanity; all their symphonies work being but modifications of the one central idea. It is far otherwise with the symphonies of Beethoven. Each is a small, each represents a world in itself, with an ideal center of its own. Thus... tragical conflict with fate, and eventual victory, is the theme of the fifth...

It must be remembered that Beethoven was an introvert. He was immensely absorbed in his own conflicts and struggles, his ecstasies and intumescences, and all the complexities of his own spiritual life. His objective interest in human experience was largely confined to its manifestations as they affected him. And all this was intensified by the time of composing the Fifth Symphony by the advent of that greatest affliction that had befallen him; his deafness. By 1806 it had progressed to the stage that he could not fully realize its tragic import, and this fate was hard indeed to contemplate. No man has ever lived to whom this faculty was more indispensable and who could less afford to be deprived of it. He did not submit at first without violent inward protest, but gradually he came to face the silent future with fortitude, and then with determination that he would not allow it to impair his creative achievement. He would, despite this supreme adversity, carry on to the final consummation of his labors. How obvious becomes the parallel between Beethoven's own destiny and the philosophical doctrine summed up in the C minor Symphony!

This, then, is the great plan of this symphony— the familiar, universal experience of all courageous humanity: per aspera ad astra—through darkness unto light; from the depths of despair and death to joy and the triumph of life and death; and suffering to triumph! And to the separate movements may be ascribed these aspects—

I. The struggle against opposing forces in life, against Fate in all its infinite manifestations—natural, physical, mental, spiritual.

II. Consolation and repose; refuge and comfort to be found in love and beauty; reassurance gained through reflection.

III. Doubts and forebodings. In the Trio, a rough humor, typical of Beethoven, the rude, practical joking. In the Transition to the Fourth Movement, mystic, tense uncertainty, the awakening of courage and self-confidence, and at last—

IV. Triumph, and the mastery of one’s destiny.

THE MUSIC. First Movement. Allegro con brio, C minor, 2-4 time. Although this movement adheres to sonata form, because it is almost completely dominated by the fate motive, it can best be considered as a huge development of that motive with a contrasting theme (the second subject) and one other contrasting section (the retransition).

It is opened forthwith by the "knock of fate"—that amazing, unbelievably simple motive on four tones, out of which proceeds the first subject.

Thereafter, except for very brief intervals and one fairly long passage (the retransition), dominates the whole movement, hammering away through 494 of its 626 measures. This is a formula that is constantly changing, its rhythmic energy and intensity of its are astounding. There is nothing more remarkable in all music than the sustained effort imparted to this short motive.

In the fifty-ninth measure the horns defiantly blare it out, whereupon the violins announce the contrasting second subject, soothing and tender; but even through this Fate is knocking away. It rises to quite an ecstatic climax, only to be beaten down by that fateful hammering. Development is given over wholly to the theme of fate and all its variations. The energy of the passage wherein chords alternate between strings and wind is indescribable, the strength and fortitude for a spell the contending forces must rest from sheer exhaustion. Rudey Fate interposes its demands. Then the struggle is resumed and carried on as at the beginning (Recapitulation). The long Coda begins with strings and wind instruments hurling the motive furiously back and forth.

Polovtsian Dances from the opera, "Prince Igor". Alexander Porphyryevich Borodin

"Prince Igor". Born in Leningrad (then St. Petersburg), Russia, November 12, 1854; died there February 27, 1887.

BORODIN studied to become a physician, but gave up that career because his deeply sensitive nature could not stand close and continual contact with suffering. Instead he pursued the science of chemistry, attaining therein an eminent position. Although not remembered and revered chiefly as one of Russia's great composers, music was really his avocation. By far the major portion of his time was devoted to his profession, and he jokingly referred to himself as a "sunday musician."

THE OPERA is founded on one of the oldest Russian manuscript chronicles, now accepted as an account of actual events, and probably written by a contemporary bard or monk—"The Epic of the Army of Igor". It tells of an expedition in the twelfth century of a number of Russian princes and their followers against the Polovtsi, a nomadic tribal who were invading Russia.

The suggestion of writing an opera on this ancient tale came from the eminent critic V. V. Stassov. Borodin provided his own libretto. He began work on "Prince Igor" in 1868. The time was to have been his first symphony. For sixteen years he steeped himself in the atmosphere of the chronicle and read all the old Russian epics, collected and studied Central Asiatic and Russian folk songs, delved into the history of Eastern Times, so that he hoped to help him to fully and faultlessly re-create the story. He was himself descended from an ancient Caucasian princely house, the scene of the story was his native soil. Being intensely patriotic, the conflict between Russian and Asiatic forces stirred him deeply. Add to all this a nature singularly fitted to absorb all the elements of this story and the story inherent in the tale, a genius vastly able to transmit them and aroused to a high pitch of interest by his historical researches, and the outcome was a lyrical opera of purest national home and fibre, and physically and absolutely indigenous music—miraculously vivid, barbaric and stimulating, and physically and emotionally.
These repeat, the dialog of the Boys' Dance in the violins, the chorus in its turn sings "Hail, O Khan! Hail, all hail!" The tempo changes to moderate alla breve, 2-2 time, for the Dance of Young Girls with the accompaniment, being the same theme and song as those of the original Slave Maidens' Dance (32 measures), the melody being also repeated for English horn and cellos. Next a Slow Dance of Young Girls and Rapid Dance of Little Boys and Girls' theme is in strings while the Boys' skips through the woodwinds. The Dances of the Little Boys and of the Men with their return and alternate as at first. The finale is a General Dance. Allegro con spirito, 4-4 time. At first the Savage Dance, then woodwinds, chords in the strings, to which is soon added the introductory theme. All sing—

“For the pleasure of your master, dance ye maidens, sing ye maidens! Dance ye sprightly maidens, dance now for your noble prince! Gayly dance ye now before him, lovely maidens! Sing and dance for the pleasure of your master. Hail, O Khan! All hail, O Khan!”


Jean Julius Christian Sibelius

Born at Tukasalme, Finland, December 8, 1865; now living at Järvenpää, Finland

In the summer of 1899 Sibelius was staying at Kuopio in the interior of Finland. There he met the writer J. H. Erika, who suggested that they join forces on a project to be called “Weneen luominen”, “The Building of the Boat”, in which part of the action was to take place in Tuonela, the underworld of Finnish mythology. Sibelius began the music, but finding the restraints and limitations of operatic form burdensome and difficult to deal with he gave up work on it before it was very far along.

The overture, however, had been completed; this he named “The Swan of Tuonela” and included it as the third part of a Suite of four “Legends”, Opus 22, all on subjects from the Finnish folk-epic, “Kalevala”. Nearly 15 years later he did write the other three Legends, “Lemminkainen and the Maiden”, “Lemminkainen in Tuonela”, “Lemminkainen’s Home-faring”. Only the latter and the “Swan” are published. The score in inscribed, “Tuonela, the land of death, the hell of Finnish mythology, is surrounded by a large river with black waters and a raging current, through which the Swan of Tuonela floats majestically, singing”. This picture is strikingly projected. Dreamily the Swan sings its melancholy Song (English horn); gracefully it glides along (the slow, swaying 9-4 rhythm all through melody and accompaniment) on the black waters (the darkly shifting harmonies in strings).

THE LEGENDARY BACKGROUND. Lemminkainen is one of four leading heroes of the Kalevala. He is described by W. F. Kirby in his translation of the Kalevala as a ‘tall, reckless personage, always getting into scrapes, from which he escapes either by his own skill in magic, or by his mother’s. His love for his mother is the redeeming feature in his character. One of his names is Kaukomiel, and he is, in part, the original of Longfellow’s ‘Fau-Puk-Keevis’. (And it might be added, of Tall Eulenspiegel).

The 13th and 14th Runos of the Kalevala relate how Lemminkainen sought the Maiden of Pohjoa, the Northland. He went to her mother, Pohja, to ask how he might win her, and the old woman set him three tasks to prove his worth. Two he accomplished: on snowshoes he captured the elk of Hiisi, and then brided the fire-eating steeds. The third was to shoot the swan on the river—

“I will only give my daughter, There on Tuonii’s murky river, Give the youthful bride you seek for, In the sacred river’s whirlpool, If the river swan you shoot me, Only at a single trial, Shoot the great bird on the river; Using but a single arrow.”

On reaching the river Lemminkainen was slain by the cowerd Markkashatu, old and toothless, who had long awaited him, by causing a serpent “like a reed from out the billows” to strike through his heart. His body fell into the black and forbidding stream and floated to Tuonii’s dread dwelling-place, where Tuonii’s son cut it into mealless. Lemminkainen’s mother heard of his fate, and raked the waters beneath the catacra until she had found all magic salvos she put the body together and restored life to it, and Lemminkainen returned home with her.

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THE MUSIC. Andante molto sostenuto, A minor, 9-4 time. A sombre chord swells up from the lowest depths to the highest peals of the strings, which are muted. The song of the Swan begins with short utterances (English horn) answered twice by rising phrases for a solo cello and a solo viola, like spirit wraiths floating out into the netherworld, then once by stifled cries of two horns, and undulations in the tonal current of the strings with strange, sweet harmonies, as though the river's swift, smooth flow were disturbed by some submerged rock. Bass drum twice rolls oppressively.

Now the Swan sings a long, haunting melody to string tremolos. A passing climax develops and subsides. The Swan sings again, violins pizzicati giving the impression of water dripping from the roof of some cave cut deep into the river bank. Soon ghostly, warlike calls echo about (horns), as harp, bass drum and tympano add at once a gleam of brightness and deep shadows to the scene. This dies away. Wraiths again pass by (solo cello, solo violon).

Then begins a dull, heavy-handed pounding, the blows in groups of three many times repeated (at first brasses, basses, and tympani struck together, continued by the later, cymbals) — a suggestion of Fate akin to the basic motive in the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Along with this the song is heard from all the strings in unison (except basses) as though from some hidden, spectral chorus, dying away at length to be resumed by the horn with string tremolos (on the wood of the bows) for some strings while others draw their bows. The effect of this whole passage is mystical and deeply affecting.

With a reminiscence of the opening measures this vision of a world beyond human ken fades away.

The scoring is unusual, calling for opening horn, one oboe, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trombones, harp, tympani, bass drum and muted strings which are divided into thirteen parts and some of these often double-stopped. No bright toned instruments are used, and thus the tonal hue throughout is sombre and mysterious. Singular sonorous effects are accomplished by such devices as tuning the tympani to a minor third and striking them simultaneously, a tremolo for part of the strings on the wood of the bow and the same tones doubled by the remaining strings with drawn bows, and some of the high tones of the latter harmonics.

Additional notes on Sibelius and his music will be found in the following programs:


Spanish Caprice, Op. 34
Nicholas Andejevitch Rimsky-Korsakov
Born at Tikhvin, Province of Novgorod, Russia, March 15, 1844; died at (then) St. Petersburg, June 21, 1918.

This piece the composer sketched out as a fantasy on Spanish themes for violin and orchestra. Later he decided to make it an orchestral composition, and began work on it in this form in the summer of 1886. The following November the score was submitted to Tchaikovsky, who wrote on the 11th to its composer. 'I must add that your Spanish Caprice is a colossal masterpiece of instrumentation, and you may regard yourself as the greatest master of the present day.' Quite a handsome compliment from the greatest Russian of them all.

It was first performed at a concert of the Russian Symphony Society in St. Petersburg, (now Leningrad), October 31, 1887, with the composer conducting. He writes of it in his "Chronic of My Musical Life" as follows—

"At one of the later concerts my Spanish Caprice was performed. At the first rehearsal the first section (in A major, 2-4 time) had scarcely been finished when the whole orchestra began to applaud. Similar enthusiasm followed all the other sections, and whenever the pauses permitted. I asked the orchestra for the privilege of dedicating the work to them. There was general delight at this. The Caprice went without hitch and sounded brilliant. At the concert itself it was performed with such perfection of execution and such enthusiasm as never was given to it later, even when Nikisch himself conducted it. Despite its length, the work called forth an insistent repetition. The opinion formed both by the critics and the public, that the Caprice is a magnificent piece of orchestration, is correct. The Caprice is merely a brilliant composition for the orchestra. The change of colors, the happy selection of melodic designs and figurations, exactly adapted to each kind of instrument, the brief virtuoso cadenzas for solo instruments, the rhythm of the percussion instru-