

# THE ISONZO, THE RIVER THAT UNITES

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and with maestro **Manuel Figelj** on the accordion  
and **Olga Sosič** on flute

## MUSIC 1

BRUNO - What we want to present to you is a memory of some authors who have felt the soul of the territories and peoples near the Isonzo.

MARILISA - The Isonzo ( Soča ) is our shared river, whose meandering and beautiful banks overlook the sea, home to diverse communities: Slovenian, Italian, Friulian, Bisiaca , and Grado, each with their own languages. We also like to call what were once considered "dialects" languages, because the peoples who are able to express and share thoughts and feelings with their own "dialects" belong to a true language.

BRUNO - We like to emphasize how the language of a people, even if not as large as the Slovenian one, was first shaped, preserved, and expressed by two great poets, Prešeren and then Gregorčič . And the same thing happened with the Italian language, which was founded about seven centuries ago by our Tuscan writers and poets (Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio): in both cases, it was not armies and wars that imposed a language on the people, but culture that bestowed it!

BRUNO - **Simon Gregorčič** (1844-1906)

In Italian, "Isonzo" is masculine, while in Slovenian "Soča" is feminine. Simon Gregorčič therefore addresses the river as if it were his beloved.

## ALL'ISONZO

Sei bella delle alture o linda figlia,<sup>(1)</sup> / graziosa  
tra gli incanti del creato, / se il ciel, pei nubi irato,  
non s'acciglia / sulle onde tue trasparenti e fonde. /  
Sei bella delle alture o linda figlia, / Leggero è il  
tuo fluire e saltellante, / simile al passo delle mon-  
tanine; / sei pura come l'aria di alte cime, / sonora  
come il canto vigoroso / di gioventù che qui tra i  
monti vive: / sei bella o figlia dei pianori alpini. /  
Rapir mi sento al rimirar quest'onde, / dall'acque  
or verdi ed ora celestine, / in cui degli alti pascoli si  
fonde / il verde col zaffir del firmamento. / Tu la  
bellezza attingi alla rugiada / dei tersi cieli imma-  
colati e insieme / ai rugiadosi fior della montagna,  
/ - o bella figlia dei pianori eccelsi. / Per me tu sei  
l'amica cara! E quando / dei cheti monti giungi al  
pian rombando; / di casa mia sei la messaggera / e  
di saluti cari sei foriera. / Con te il Signor, tra le tue  
aree alture! / Come sonora e gaia tu risuoni, /  
come agile rimbaldi mentre incedi / dei monti tra  
le gorre, anfratti e salti. / Quando placata giungi al  
piano, / perché al borioso tuo fluir rinunci? / Perché  
ti espandi e ti fai lenta, / e la tua voce si fa triste e  
spenta? / Così penoso ti è, sì ti contrista / l'addio ai  
monti, di tue linfe culla? / Presenti di fluir presso le  
tombe / che tombe di slovena stirpe sono? / E l'uno  
e l'altro duolo il cuor ti fende. / In questo tuo dolore,  
triste e lenta, / come una lacrima ti vedo immensa: /  
ma anche così, qual lacrima, ancor bella. / Sei bella  
delle alture o linda figlia / graziosa tra gli incanti del  
creato, / se non si acciglia il ciel, pei nubi irato,  
/ sulle tue onde trasparenti e fonde. / O misera! Su  
te di già s'addensa / un uragano orrendo. Dal rovente  
/ meridione verrà, con rio furore: / e infurierà per la  
ferace piana, / che le tue linfe rendono fiorente. / E  
quell'orrendo di non è lontano! / Sarà l'arco del ciel  
su te sereno: / sulle tue sponde grandine di piombo, /  
pioggia di sangue e lacrime a torrenti. / Si brandiranno  
qui spietate spade / e l'acque tue andranno rosse al  
mare. / E te disseterà dei figli il sangue, / e t'intor-

biderà sangue straniero. / Limpido Isonzo: allora  
tu rammenta / del mio cuore un desiderio ardente:  
/ quant'acque allor riposte troverai / su, in alto,  
nelle nubi del tuo cielo, / e quante unir potrai su  
pei pianori, / e le riserve dei fioriti prati: / tutte rac-  
cogli e tutte giù trascina / e, di esse gonfia, scendi  
al pian ruggendo. / E non ristare più tra anguste  
sponde; / dagli argini tuoi balza con furore, / e lo  
stranier, del nostro suol bramoso, / nei tumultuanti  
gorghi annega.

## MARILISA - Carlo Michelstaedter (1887 - 1910)

### ALL'ISONZO

Dalle nevole gole, dai torbidi  
monti lontani con lena rabida,  
con aspro sibilo soffia la raffica,  
rompe la densa greve nebbia,  
stringe le basse grigie nubi  
e le respinge in onde gravide.

Passa radendo sui pioppi tremoli  
- sul nero piano incombe il peso  
della ciclopica lotta dell'etere.  
Ma a lei più forte risponde l'impeto  
selvaggio e giovine del fiume rapido  
cui le corrose ripe trattengono:  
il suo possente muggito al sibilo

della procolla commesce e il vivido  
chiaror del lontano sereno  
riflette livido, nell'onda torbida.

E al mar l'annuncio porta della lotta  
che nebbia e vento nel ciel combattono,  
al mar l'annuncio porta del tumulto  
che in cor m'infuria quando la nausea,  
quando il torpore, il dubbio, l'abbandono  
per la tua vista, Argia, più fervido  
l'ardir combatte e sogna il mare libero.

## MUSIC 2

### BRUNO - Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888 - 1970)

#### THE RIVERS

BRUNO - I hold on to this mutilated tree  
Abandoned in this sinkhole Which has the languor Of a circus Before  
or after the show And I watch  
The quiet passage  
Of the clouds on the moon  
This morning I lay down  
In an urn of water And like a relic I rested

The Isonzo flowing  
smoothed me like one of its stones

MARILISA - I picked up  
my four bones And I left Like an acrobat On the water  
I snuggled up  
next to my clothes  
Dirty from war  
And like a Bedouin I bent down to receive The sun  
This is the Isonzo  
And here I recognized myself better A docile fiber Of the universe  
My torment  
is when I don't believe myself In harmony

BRUNO - But those hidden  
Hands That soak me Give me The rare Happiness  
I reviewed  
the eras of my life  
These are  
my rivers

MARILISA - This is the Serchio  
From which  
two thousand years of my country people have drawn water, perhaps,  
And my father and my mother.

BRUNO - This is the Nile  
That saw me Born and grow And burn with unawareness In the vast  
plains

MARILISA - This is the Seine  
And in its turbidity  
I got mixed up  
and got to know myself  
These are my rivers  
Counted in the Isonzo

BRUNO - This is my nostalgia  
That shines through in everyone Now that it's night That my life  
seems to me A corolla Of darkness

MARILISA - **Celso Macor** (1925 – 1998)

### **Flôr di ciamp**

BRUNO - This chimp of uàrdin jo nassi ogni àn ,  
ziri 'l zîl who gave me the color,  
but s' ciafojât between spics and papavars  
my siari and walls  
prin di vê leave you saw me lusôr ,  
no one can tell you me , there peraulis ch'a vevi di dî .  
Cressût fin insomp dal pussibil ,  
prin that zòncin me ,  
tal madûr from sflamiadis of ' zuin  
pa ' fresis that I go to the vint  
I ciali and cianti i mei roncs kujéz  
tun concert of uzzéi  
devant from muraja from the venciars from Judri .

Discolz tai agars da blava che nàs  
to pompâ verdigris such row from the blaufrenghis ,  
travanât of vert , of sweat , of pantan ,  
the muse of Fossai neris ,  
like me.

Even, even, they are zinczent ains ch'a tu pais chel afit ,  
zinczent ains al to nòn on the books, every San Martin.  
Nonu , nonu , contadin , marengon e muini e ustîr ,  
nassut austriac but of no duc ' ;  
germania of soldâz a côi  
and pîs tal cul ,  
slindra in Galicia, imbrenada you divided  
from the emperor , as the ciaval tal comat ;  
race that stumbles upon cun caretis e bûs  
and children and straz , ta criura ,  
cul front ch'al ven indemnifying ;  
a race of sacodada from every side there that goes and dies ,  
race that has ciata tornant simpri gnos parons ;

beaten breed , a breed that will live forever  
 there' feridis dai pampui pass the tampiesta ;  
 race that calls to the zîl , cun dut church  
 and par chist .  
 Tanti' ueris par nuja , nonu ,  
 and so on voja , tu, di vivi in pâs ;  
 ago strissulis until the hour from stelis for a sc'calin in plui ,  
 par un blec di mûr ,  
 for a tiara bar,  
 a vacia of meti dongia ta stable .  
 The gnos parons , and ultins ,  
 you are fat spy, no one knows about ze :  
 you you savevis of galeta and morars ,  
 of splanis and cuetis and piviai :  
 you are partât via sburit  
 Jessi 's fault mills ,  
 see the claf from the sacristy and from ciampanis ,  
 Sburtat par distant streets , cudumât  
 pai you peciâz ,  
 peciâz : so many flowers and so many fans, quatri mistîrs ,  
 and my polez simpri pal plevan .  
 Vecio barba me, comunist di rabia par duc ' i secui  
 of a Friul ass ciapiel in man, gobo of inchns  
 and of resignation ,  
 reed you ju for Italy: par vê name quemandât part .  
 No you as fat che s' ciampâ , like a jeur , gnot after gnot ;  
 Once upon a time it was like a simpri ,  
 ta pâs da Franza libara .  
 ' Navora a long life so long , beard me,  
 beard me Austrian and Furlan ,  
 that you are muart Jean  
 Up there, far away ,  
 to sarês in tanc 'from me sanc tal zimiteri of Sannois .  
  
 Nanny, peasant nanny , marengon , ustir ,  
 restât sul morar dal mê sun a fâ fuea  
 in ' zornadis senza fin:  
 I called you , it's the day of the galeta .  
 He returned to Sant'Antoni di Miggea , nôâltris two ,

every day from to sant , without knocking ,  
happy ju pa's'calis da mont ,  
the colàz tôr dal cuel ' na man ta tô , par no sbrissà  
and in ta what a drag on the mudon cake  
which was worth a cias'ciel .

Galeta , forment and wine, seas,  
three zornadis al an cul ciâf alt in butega  
to stricâ a pair of pages from the eternal books from the debiz .  
Tata mê , muart zovin e vivût massa:  
you no as corût daûr discolz fin ué  
Polsa cumò che sin granc ' .  
And you, people from Friul : cista no jè dome  
the story mê .

MARILISA - On this journey along the Isonzo, we want to remember Celso Macor with one of his most beautiful poetic moments, which we will read to you in three different languages: Italian, Slovenian, and finally Friulian.

### MARILISA - DO YOU KNOW MY COUNTRY?

My country,  
every house a stable, and fields and fields and acacia groves for the  
good scent of summer. And everything is filled with shadows that  
come from the time of dreams. My country is a dream. It is born, light  
and song, when darkness falls.

### **MANUEL** - POZNAŠ MOJO VAS?

Moja vas ,  
vsaka hiša en hlev ,  
in njive in njive  
in gozdiči akaciji  
za prijetno vonjav poletja .  
In vse je polno senc ,  
ki prihajajo iz house sanj .  
Moja vas je sanja .  
Rhodes if, luč in pesem ,  
Ko pade tema.

## **BRUNO - SATU 'L ME PAÏS?**

In my country  
every house has a stall  
and ciamps and ciamps  
and boschetis of agazza  
pal nasabon dal instat .  
El dut 'l è fodrat di olmis  
ch' a vègnin dal timp dai suns .  
Al me païs 'l is a sun .  
Al nas , lusôr and ciant ,  
when it is dark .

## **MUSIC 3**

MARILISA - A river is born from a mother source, up there, and flows agile, young and therefore often impetuous... then it curves and follows the rocks, the valleys and the fields, until it widens, sometimes more slowly, towards its destination: the mysterious and great father, that is, the sea, which human folly is making sick.

BRUNO - Our peoples have lived alongside the Isonzo for centuries, with their history and customs. Both peoples suffered greatly through the tragic events of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from Nazism (including Catholics and Jews for Slovenians) to the difficult days of Tito's Yugoslav occupation. These sorrows made relations very distrustful, difficult, and even hostile for years. Then, slowly and with mutual wisdom, everything resolved itself into a new brotherhood.

MARILISA - In 1991, the newly formed Slovenian nation regained its dignity and identity, and its entry into Europe helped to establish it as part of a shared destiny. Of course, today's Europe is perhaps far less perfect than originally imagined, but for decades it has nevertheless remained a guarantor of a peace and general well-being that were almost unthinkable at the time.

BRUNO - So today, when Nova Gorica and Gorizia are celebrating a European Capital of Culture together, we should ask ourselves why they were given this opportunity. The two sister cities, with different

ages, today are the symbol of a renewed brotherhood, of a peace rediscovered without militaries and powers, only with a slow mutual recognition of identities and rights to exist. This is the true Europe.

## **MUSIC 4**

MARILISA - This event aims to let us hear the voices of these precious lands of ours... of a border that previously did not exist, at least during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then appeared during Nazi-Fascism and in the post-war period, but in recent decades with the new Europe it has disappeared, by the will of its citizens.

BRUNO - Our territories, through immense hardship and pain in the past, have today slowly become masters of peace, sharing, and civility... We would now like to read a short piece translated into Italian by a Slovenian poet and journalist.

MARILISA - **Jurij Paljk**

MARILISA - I was born a Yugoslavian citizen, I became a Slovenian citizen 10 years ago, I wanted my children, who are Italian citizens, to also have Slovenian citizenship. What a story, folks! Four generations, four different states, the same centuries-old house in Zablje : the same one, the same languages, the same rich culture, the same spirit of Aquileia, the same broad Gorizia spirit! What a story, folks! Our common history. And how could I hate anyone if in my own home I've never heard a word against anyone of a nationality other than my own? But how could I hate anyone if an uncle, a Dachau survivor , married an Austrian who didn't know she had Slovenian grandparents from Carinthia? I was born in Gorizia, I live as a Gorizian, I'm happy to be one. I live the free spirit of Gorizia, Goertz , Gurize , Goriza and of mother Aquileia, Oglej , Aquilee .

BRUNO - Now we continue this journey that follows the natural course of the Isonzo ( Soča ) river to the sea and the languages with which other modern and contemporary authors have chosen to express themselves in their literary works.

**MANUEL - Alojz Gradnik (1882-1967)**

## BRDA

Še naša tu glasi se govorica,  
še svojemu so rodu srca verna,  
še čitajo tu pesmi se Prešerna,  
še nada je v bolesti pomocnica.

Še so ponosna mračnoresna lica  
in še je žalost v srcu neizmerna,  
ko kraj Podgore, Pevme in kraj Mirna  
se v nočni luči zablešči Gorica.

Bo še živila nasa tu beseda?  
Bo še med brati sladkomila vez?  
Ne bo nilcoli bratu brat krvnik?

Srce vprašuje, trepeta in gleda  
na tri strani, tam že odprt je jez:  
Koprivno, Rutarji in tam Ločnik.

## BROWN

### COLLIO

Qui si parla ancora la nostra lingua, / è ancora fedele alla sua origine il cuore, / qui si leggono ancora i versi di Prešeren, / è ancora di conforto nel dolore la speranza. // Ancora è fiero il viso schivo / e ancora smisurata è nel cuore la tristezza / quando ai margini di Piedimonte, Piuma e Merna / nella luce della notte Gorizia risplende. // Per quanto ancora sarà viva, qui, la nostra lingua? / Sarà ancora dolce tra fratelli il legame? // Un fratello non sarà mai carnefice di suo fratello? // si chiede trepidante il cuore guardando / in tre direzioni, là dove già un varco si schiude: / Capriva, Ruttars e laggiù Lucinico.

## MARILISA - Lyubka Sorli (1910-1993)

### MANUEL

#### MISELMOJA

Misel moja, romarica tiha,  
med goré v domači svet potuje.

Mnogo upa, mnogo pričakuje,  
med veseljem in boleščjo niha.

Z njo na pot srca gre hrepenenje,  
do globine je od njega bolna,  
sladkih sanj iz mladih dni prepolna.  
Oh, in skoraj skoraj že jesen je ...

Misel moja vse bo preletela,  
ves planinski raj za hip objela,  
od Škrbine, Mengor pa do Krna.

Bistra Soča, v soncu nit srebrna,  
pesem bo kot nekđaj zašumela –  
v meni speči ogenj razplamtela.

**MARILISA -**

#### IL MIO PENSIERO

Il mio pensiero, muto pellegrino, / tra le montagne  
vola, verso casa. / È pieno di fiducia e di speranza, /  
oscilla tra la gioia e il dolore. // Insieme a lui, l'ane-  
lito del cuore / si mette in viaggio. L'animo si strugge  
/ nei dolci sogni dei di giovanili. / Ma già l'autunno  
incalza imminente... // Il mio pensiero volerà dovun-  
que, / abbraccerà quel paradiso alpino, / Škrbina,  
Mengore, Krn - luoghi amici. // Il filo argenteo del  
fiume Isonzo / mi canterà la sua canzone antica - /  
svegliando il fuoco che mi dorme in seno.

**BRUNO - Silvio Cumpeta (1933 – 2020)**

Troppo - lo so -  
credetti alle parole  
e poco alle cose.  
Ala vogliosa demmo  
alle parole  
perché ci portassero  
fuori di noi,  
e ci cingessero  
per fonderci  
in una sola cosa.  
Corpi amati cadono  
lontano da noi.  
A questi gelidi  
connubi di parole  
ci porta il tempo,  
che non ci volle  
stroncare all'alba, infanti  
o taciturni amanti.

## MARILISA

Il mondo scoppierà,  
Pietro, a forza  
di narrarsi - se  
ripete, demente, sazio  
la sua storia.  
Agogno cecità, mutezza,  
ma mi rinarro  
il bieco mio  
dolore infimo.  
Sai quanto ci disturbano  
i silenzi interrotti, ripresi,  
i rumori ossessivi,  
i tonfi, i tanfi ...  
Ma chi l'udirà, fratello,  
l'altissima, finale  
deflagrazione?

**BRUNO - Alberto Princis**

Non so se rispondo al che mi chiedi.  
Mi ricordo bimbo in riva all'Isonzo.  
Ascoltava i miei segreti  
toccandomi veloce  
i piccoli piedi addormentati?

Forse non è dell'amore  
esaudire i sorrisi,

non è dell'amore  
guardare negli occhi  
l'acqua corrente.

## **MUSIC 5**

**MARILISA - Francesco Tomada**

### **ITALY (IS A POMEGRANATE)**

In my life I have bought and transplanted only one tree  
a pomegranate

I chose a corner of the garden  
from where you can see the mountain ring  
from San Gabriele to Nanos  
that crest was Italy and Yugoslavia and then Slovenia  
it was a land of pain and resentment

borders should be like horizons  
when you move they move too  
if you stop they stop count  
but they always make you feel at the exact center of the world

and homeland is where  
a man plants a pomegranate tree

and can wait to eat the fruits .

**BRUNO - NO MAN'S LAND** (*no men end* )

Here  
Between the road signs “Italy” and “ Slovenia ”  
here  
on the railway embankment  
the bushes grow

they were young they were seeds  
they had the patience and the roots to  
embrace this land  
which we once called *nobody's*

it's their land now.

**BRUNO - Marilisa Trevisan**

**BORDER LINE**

MARILISA - Zità de aria  
of the wind November  
which clears up my writings  
and makes a mission of the form  
luse scarmida zughì de ciaro -scuro  
he was drinking from Umbria  
smashed to the cunfin ' where you are  
' where dreams die  
there will be the strussio  
on the ancient square zimbulo  
I bag the stones of solitude  
in the evening I slanbra descosola beliefs  
if you disvidrina references  
like white bones  
barbina was the tongue  
but to play cards gave you viz  
seneous nerves

to put a man on the shovel  
the heart inside he made a noise  
like the tone of the triàca  
today breathes name ' na unity  
ta schiribizi de nui a refoton  
' where the slate covers  
fufigna luse al ziel  
smoke from the chimneys  
ta le ruspie sere de inverno  
on grey roads  
stravirade from the shore up  
but which one hope xe  
of catharsis marvelous and filial  
ta 'sta zità de maségno distinction  
this dump of ziti

inbozade of sprèzi and vardadure

I sing to a love that is no more  
and the dare is made zornada  
pa ' na sdruma de luti  
of revocation of fià  
' na zimigada de oci suazadi  
of the smoke of a Spaniard  
and the cunfin gypsy where it distances itself  
how when we lost the dragon  
ta'l jaron de l' Isonz  
and lumps lot of earth  
hills of pain  
piera upon piera  
cret on cret  
to ranpar the Monte del cor  
today it causes despair  
but to flinch lora  
in the evening gioldàr de essarghe  
and cundurar .

BRUNO - **Ivan Crico**

## LISONZ

MARILISA - By Giaroni I 'm sending you nothing ,  
logos de lisért spying , where the codul  
if he earns balance ' nzeà de ziti. On the twentieth  
de boi se ' ndulzisse who odor fiéul  
of the pirantoni ; there in cau , smagnada  
of the ciaro , zente forest the polsa  
zidìna , without waiting . Of forgetting  
to me I record of nou al se ànema  
whose deceivers who in altitude - virtindo of joke -  
i se ' npia ta le ponte, contra al biau nét .

BRUNO - And now let's conclude these readings with two immense  
poets, both born on the sea into which the Isonzo flows, the Gulf of  
Trieste which then, like the Adriatic Sea, mixing fresh water with salt  
or brine, continues southwards until it reaches the larger, smaller and  
more tragic Mediterranean.

BRUNO - **Biagio Marin (1891-1985)**

MARILISA

La vita xe fiamma  
e duto la brusa  
el fior su la rama  
el sol che sul fior el se pusa.

Ardor e sinisa se alterna  
la fiamma la crea e la distruse,  
al dolor la vita conduse  
ma la zogia, dopo, xe eterna.

No' esiste una vita  
de là de 'sto fogo  
de là de 'sto zuogo  
de vanpe e de sènere sita.

El fogo xe grando  
el lumina i sieli sirini  
el scolda, a rimando,  
i cuori, per duti i matini.

‘Na vanpa, una sola,  
in duto ‘l creato:  
me vardo beato  
comò che la svola.

Me sè quel che me toca:  
muri, ‘ndâ via  
mentre t’ha in fior la boca,  
de bon odor ‘na scia.

I prài fiurisse de narcisi  
e l’erba s’alsa al vento  
in dolse ondesamento,  
ofrendo ai puti paradisi.

Vardo confuso  
la gran festa de magio,  
me, solo escluso:  
triste, za in viaggio.

## MUSIC 6

BRUNO - **Umberto Saba** (1883 – 1957)

### ULYSSES

In my youth, I sailed  
along the Dalmatian coast. Small islands, like waves, emerged, where a rare bird rested intent on prey, covered in seaweed, slippery, beautiful in the sun as emeralds. When the high tide and the night obliterated them, the leeward sails swerved further out to sea, to escape its threat. Today, my kingdom is that no-man's land. The harbor lights its lamps for others; my untamed spirit still pushes me out to sea, and the painful love of life.

MARILISA – To conclude this concert of poetry and music, we would like to read you a text that Alberto Princis , who curated the selection of texts, dedicated to the Isonzo and the sea.

BRUNO - **BELONGINGS, OR I WAS...**

I was the dead and the living of the Isonzo,  
blood red of wars and blond wines  
soaked and damned, with great elegance.  
I was his immense emerald  
given to the vanquished and idiots.  
I was the ardor of sumac, as a boy  
amidst the sinkholes of suspicion  
and the poisoned berries  
of the beloved and so barren or stingy Karst.  
I was the plague of the greedy winds  
in broken affections and in the lights of adventure.  
I was something and also nothing,  
scattered and silent here and there:  
I was the pale theater of opportunities  
and grim fevers, of useless innocence.  
I was also the bitter and holy voice  
of a word that cares unaware  
or the solitary caress, I was its current  
turbulent looking at me, almost  
coffee with milk for mountain rains  
oh clear and hungry for a sea that awaits me,  
that of Grado, with its angry cloud  
but good and slow: and now I am his,  
with the smiling wound and the hand that seeks it,  
naked, and without hourglass sand.  
After all, dear Isonzo, perhaps I was not always yours  
of that healthy and full, swollen love... or just  
a lanky lover passing through, like you.

I belong to you and to you anyway: and it's not late  
if the meeting of eyes and senses knocks:  
we are the mystery of our love  
reckless and carefree...  
we are the unexpected sun of a warm winter.  
But I was the sea, only sea, and I know this  
fresh and salty kissing my sunset.

**MUSIC 7 FINAL**