



# *Dance Arts Now!*

*The Official Junior/Secondary NHSDA Newsletter*

*2025 Back-to-School Edition*



Mike Reid



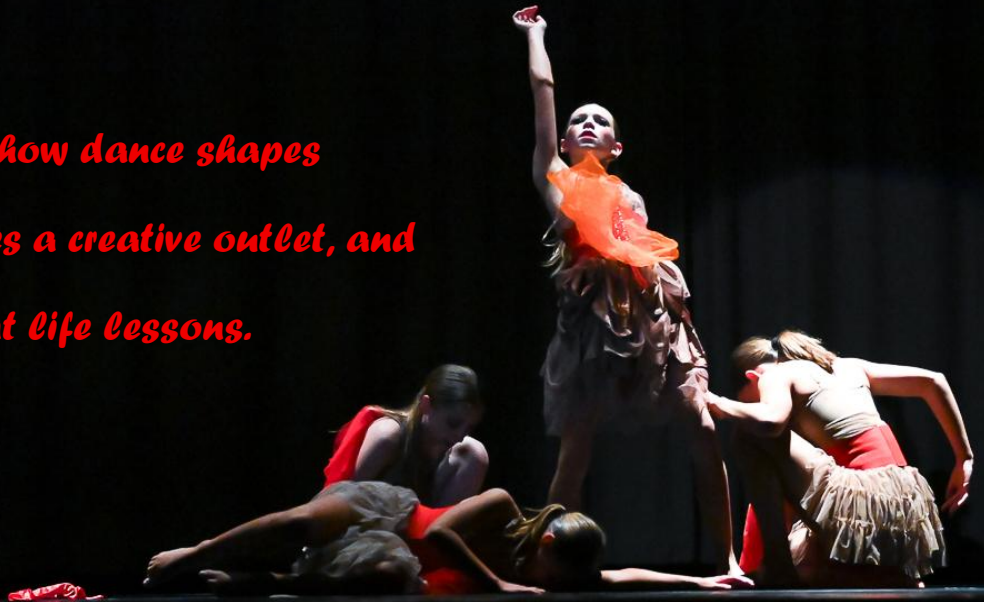
## ***Dance Arts Now!***

***The official Junior/Secondary NHSDA Newsletter***

***2025 Back-to-School Edition***

***Reach for the Sky!***

***In this issue, learn how dance shapes  
our identity, provides a creative outlet, and  
teaches us important life lessons.***



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## *Dance Story*

*Poem & Illustration By: Emma Ortiz Age*

*Sponsor/Advisor: Meghan Owens*

*Chara Christian Dance Academy*

*Ballet's grace in silent flight.*

*Contemporary's confidence, a daring sight.*

*Arms that reach, feet that soar.*

*Every movement tells much more.*

*Elegant lines, a rebel's twist.*

*Both seek freedom in the mist.*

*In each step, a story unfolds,*

*A dance of passion, fierce and bold.*





*Pictured, Bridget Pechota. All PC Idaho Fine Arts Academy*

## *Ode to Pointe Shoes*

*By: Bridget Pechota*

*Sponsor/Advisor Mrs. Swenson*

*Idaho Fine Arts Academy*

*Like a square peg in a round hole*

*You weren't made for anyone*

*Footsteps echo*

*A big, daunting clock stares from an old, dusty wall*

*Crack, twist, bang, bright satin turns to weathered skin*

*Faults are what make them flawless*

*Cold and shiny slips, red drop falls*

*Remaining inconspicuous, a scratch on the wall*

*Until it's divulged  
All this work, and its life has just begun  
Pink fabric hugs  
Bones crumble and break  
Yet the heart beats faster and faster  
Numb and cold*

*A princess floating in the sky  
A slave pushed to the floor  
A fairy, a swan, a doll, a spirit  
A time machine with endless possibilities awaits in the  
room of mirrors  
By the time we are friends, you are dead*

*Pictured, Abbigail Hansen and Harrison Hoyne*





*Celebrating Young Stars*  
By: Susan McGreevy-Nichols  
NDEO Executive Director, retired

*Our honor society celebrates young stars,  
Recognizing their leadership, raising the bar.  
With artistic merit and achievements so bright,  
They secure the field's future, a dazzling light.*

*With inclusion, we celebrate every voice,  
Every dance form, pedagogy, and career choice.  
We honor each story, unique and true,  
Building a field that welcomes you.*

*Leadership thrives in the sponsor's and student's sphere,  
Directing studios and teaching classes with cheer.  
Choreographing visions, creating the art,  
Leading with purpose, they inspire from the heart.*

*In the community, we build understanding and trust,  
Respecting each other builds a foundation robust.  
Together, we thrive, the work we do, true,  
The future of dance education depends on you.*

*In the rhythm of life,  
dance education weaves its thread,  
A force that uplifts  
where creativity has led.*





PC: Ashlinn Berger

## ***Viewpoint***

***Motivate, Enlighten, Elevate***

***By: Ashlinn Berger***

***NHSDA Award, Winner***

***Sponsor/Advisor: Jennifer Verba***

***Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School***

*Through performance, choreography, and education,  
I strive to positively impact the lives of individuals and communities,  
spreading the joy and strength of dance.*

**D**ance has significantly influenced my life, both inside and outside the studio. It has shaped my identity, offered a creative outlet, and taught me essential life lessons. Within the studio, dance has provided a foundation of discipline, commitment, and resilience. The intense training and continuous drive for progress have instilled in me a solid work ethic and a sense of determination. Dance has served as a way for me to express myself, enabling me to convey feelings and narratives that I fail to articulate through words.

Beyond the studio, the impact of dance extends to my everyday life. It has provided me with confidence and a feeling of purpose. The ability to perform in front of an audience has enabled me to overcome shyness and build a strong presence. Dance has similarly nurtured a feeling of community and connection. The friendships and bonds I have developed through dance are among the most significant relationships in my life. These connections have offered encouragement, motivation, and a common enthusiasm that goes beyond the dance floor.

As I look ahead, I intend to harness the power of dance to positively affect individuals and communities. I aim to build a performance

career as a professional dancer, allowing me to keep inspiring and engaging with audiences through my art. In addition to performing, I hope to move into choreography and teaching. Through creating choreography that strongly connects with individual experiences and feelings, I plan to reach the hearts of people and inspire them to explore their own stories through movement.

In teaching, my goal is to mentor and support the upcoming generation of dancers. I want to inspire them with the same enthusiasm, commitment, and affection for dance that has influenced my path. Through fostering a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere, I hope to inspire young dancers to have faith in their abilities and potential. Additionally, I intend to utilize dance as a tool for social change and community building. Through outreach programs and workshops, I want to introduce dance to underprivileged communities and offer chances for people to feel the life-changing impact of movement.

In summary, dance has played a fundamental role in my life, impacting me on both personal and professional levels. It has shown me the importance of diligence, personal expression, and community. As I progress, I am dedicated to applying the influence of dance to motivate, enlighten, and elevate others.



*PC Saliah Hartmann*

***Viewpoint***  
***"An Invaluable Support System"***  
***By: Saliah Hartmann***  
***NHSDA Award, Honorable Mention***  
***Sponsor/Advisor: Rachel Miranda***  
***Ridge High School***

**M**y introduction to ballet was at the Los Angeles Ballet Academy when I was six years old. Each week, I attended class wearing pink ballet tights and slippers, pale green leotard, and matching scrunchie holding my hair in a slick bun. Since then, my passion for dance has only grown stronger. I have learned how to challenge myself and be confident in my abilities. Through my experiences as a choreographer, I have enhanced my creativity and problem-solving skills, allowing me to succeed in many areas of my life.

Dance has also provided me with an invaluable support system that I know I can rely on. Whether it's encouraging me before a performance or comforting me when I am down, my fellow dancers are always there. As a new member of my high school dance team, I was assigned a peer mentor who guided me in and out of the studio.

As a senior member of the team, I have been committed to ensuring that I can continue to make the dance community the welcoming home it has been for me. I wave to the new team members in the hallways, write encouraging notes before performances, and offer to assist them with challenging choreography.

Though seemingly simple acts of kindness, remember how impactful they were to me when I was on the receiving end while transitioning into high school.

As I enter college next year, I will carry forward the mentorship and community spirit I've cultivated over the past four years. I will promote positivity and inclusivity within my college dance environment, and this will be beneficial not only in dance but in any personal or professional endeavors.





## ***Viewpoint***

***By: Camila Isabel Pérez Rodríguez  
NHSDA Award, Honorable Mention  
Sponsor/Advisor: Teddy Talbot  
New World School of the Arts***

*PC Camila Isabel Pérez Rodríguez*

**A** dancer on a stage, performing for a crowd... This is what three-year-old Cami, dancing on her living room coffee table, believed she was. From that moment on, it was clear who I wanted to be. As I started ballet and realized the technical effort that it required, I recognized that with hard work and passion, I could make my dream a reality. Throughout my five years of ballet, various artistic interests arose within. So much so that I participated in a musical theater junior company for two consecutive years, while also staying consistent with my ballet training.

Although the musical theater stage fulfilled my desire to perform, I felt that something was still missing. My love for dance surpassed everything else. The ability to move every inch of my body truly allowed me to express who I am fully. This epiphany led to only one decision: to join my current dance company, Miami Dance Project. My love for dance expanded as I discovered the numerous creative possibilities I could explore. As a passionate nine-year-old, the many rehearsals and classes had only doubled as I began to homeschool solely to metamorphose into the dancer I dreamed of becoming.

My career-based mindset had begun. My middle school years consisted of a professionally structured dance schedule that built my artistry while strengthening me in the process. Eight hours a day and six days a week of technical training was, yes, demanding, but in a way, ignited a sense of freedom from within. It allowed me the hours to really understand and hone in on myself as an artist and person. Growing my artistry and encouraging others has strengthened bonds on many levels. When I was young, I remember looking up to the older dancers as role models and aspiring to be like them.

Now, the roles have reversed, and I have the privilege of being an inspiration to the younger dancers. As a senior in my studio's dance company, I realized the importance of not only striving to be an inspirational artist but also embodying qualities like kindness, equality, diligence, and humility.





PC Freepik

**Good News!**

**Be Published ~**

**Write About What You Learn!**

***Dance Arts Now!*** is the official newsletter of the  
***National Society for Dance Arts™ (NHSDA)***  
Junior and Secondary Programs.  
Our Editorial Staff invites our student members  
and their chapter sponsors to contribute  
original stories, poems, articles, chapter news,  
photos, and other creative works  
for our future editions!

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[colleendean12@gmail.com](mailto:colleendean12@gmail.com)



PC Nina Trisiripisal



**GOOD NEWS!**

**2025 NHSDA Honors Awards**

*Award Candidates must excel in three categories:*

*\*Artistic Merit \* Leadership \* Academic Achievement\**

*Well-Deserved Congratulations to All!*

*View all solos: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/11708954>*

**Winner**

*Ashlinn Berger*

*Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School*

**Finalists**

*Riley Coats Ogrenics  
Willamette Valley HS*

*Jordyn Barrett  
North Fort Myers HS*

*Eric Liang  
The Dancer's EDGE*

**Honorable Mentions**

*Gianna Di Loreto  
All That Dance*

*Sonia Ivancic  
Shishya School of  
Performing Arts*

*Miranda Aquino  
USC Hybrid HS*

*Ava Buckhalt  
Howard HS*

*Alyssa Gonzales  
San Marino  
Dance Academy*

*Katelyn Lu  
Shanghai American  
School Pudong*

*Marilyn Chen  
Princeton Day  
School Dances*

*Saliah Hartmann  
Ridge HS*

*Zoe Maxwell  
McCallum HS Fine  
Arts Academy*

*Bryce Collis  
The Archer School  
For Girls*



*PC Ashlinn*



*All PC Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School*

## ***Good News!***

### ***Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School - Dance Department***

**The Dance Department at Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School offers an immersive education in dance, balancing the importance of specialized training across multiple genres with the foundational skills, technique, and conditioning essential for success in any dance form. Our program is designed to develop versatile, well-rounded dancers equipped for both professional pursuits and continued academic arts studies.**

**The Dance Department provides a broad, integrative education, with training in Ballet, Modern, Jazz, and Tap. Specialized courses in Pointe, Partnering, Improvisation, Composition, Pedagogy, History, and Production enhance the curriculum, making sure students gain a comprehensive foundation in both technical skills and academic knowledge.**

**In addition to daily training, students participate in Lincoln Park Dance Theatre, our performance ensemble that shares the art of dance throughout the community. Whether performing at nursing homes, community parades, or representing Lincoln Park at the High School Dance Festival and other regional events, our dancers develop not only performance experience but a strong sense of civic engagement.**



Students audition and perform in a wide range of productions offered through the school and the Lincoln Park Performing Arts Center, a non-profit organization. Each year, the Center produces *The Nutcracker*, a full-length dance production, three musicals, and two plays.

Participation in these productions provides students with real-world performance experience, helping them understand the expectations and demands of the professional arts industry while preparing them for future careers on stage or behind the scenes.





***Good News!***

***NHSDA Love Your Body Week***

**November 16-22, 2025**

***A week dedicated to creating body-positive dance environments!***

***Learn more: <https://www.ndeo.org/nhsda/lybw>***





**Good News!  
Ballet Rocks with  
The Youth Council  
at BalletRox!**



*All PC BalletRox*

**BalletRox** aims to foster a community focused on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Justice, believing dance should be accessible to all.

The Youth Council provides arts administration training. Teens collaborate with the Executive Director on projects like drafting a foundation inquiry letter and a virtual trip to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. They share ideas and work with guest artists to develop their artistic voice.

Studio members collaborate with local schools, including Boston Public Schools Arts Expansion. This year, 500 children explored creative movement and learned to respect each other through teamwork.

The Corps de Ballet Young Professionals Group involves future arts ambassadors in education, transforming lives through dance. They volunteer in activities that help disadvantaged children and families.

BalletRox fosters a dance community based on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Justice, believing dance should be accessible to all. Their mission is to create an environment that celebrates everyone's perspectives and experiences among dancers, staff, and the community. Open to high school students, these programs promote positive community change.

*For me, the Youth Council is a platform where young people share their roles, priorities, and opportunities in the community. It's a place where we all contribute and make.  
BalletRox is a fantastic program to be a part of. ~ Saree*



*PC Jennifer Verba*

### **Feature**

## ***"Unmasking My True Self"***

***By: Ashlinn Berger***

***NHSDA Award, Winner***

***Sponsor/Advisor: Jennifer Verba***

***Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School***

**The** title of my solo piece is "Unmasking My True Self." The motivation for this dance stemmed from the constant struggle to fit societal standards as a performer in the arts and the stress to meet the expectations of others. In our daily lives, many of us wear metaphorical masks, concealing our authentic selves to meet the expectations established by others. This solo represents my individual journey to overcome these stereotypes and embrace my true self.

The purpose of my initial choreography was to express the emotional and psychological struggle of trying to fit into a mold established by society. Through complex movements and expressive gestures, I tried to illustrate the tension and frustration of existing behind a mask. The dance starts with limited and stiff movements, representing the limitations set by social norms. As the piece

progresses, the movements become more fluid and unrestricted, representing the journey towards self-acceptance and the shedding of the "mask."

One of the main challenges I encountered during the choreographic process was finding a balance between technical precision and expressing deep emotions. It was essential to make sure that each movement carried a significant emotional weight while maintaining the technical aspects of the dance. Additionally, translating the abstract concept of wearing a "mask" into tangible choreography required a lot of experimentation and refinement.

Overcoming these challenges allowed me to create a piece that not only showcases technical skill but also resonates deeply with the audience on an emotional level.





All PC Michael May

## *Feature*

### *"Movement"*

*By: Michael May*

*Sponsor/Advisor: Lynette Wertkwein  
Ocean Township High School*

*If life is a stage, I want to give a memorable performance for a sold-out audience.*

**G**rowing up, I always felt I had a natural ability to understand my body and myself best through movement. I quickly found my love for movement ~ playing with trains, riding skateboards, boogie boarding, flipping on my backyard trampoline, dancing in my living room ~ the list goes on and on. Reflecting on some of my favorite childhood memories, I often find that they involve being active. I believe movement best defines my passions, talents, and interests.

In my early school years, I sometimes felt that the elementary school classroom inhibited my creativity and tried to put me in a box I didn't feel fit in. I knew my job as a student was to listen to the teacher, sit still at my desk, and complete my work.

I tried my best to do those tasks, but they presented my young self with quite a challenge, given the limited time for movement and creative activities in my school day. I couldn't wait for recess, gym class, and fire drills! Luckily, my parents encouraged and supported all the sports I expressed interest in, keeping me busy outside of the school day.

My parents enrolled her at a local dance studio when she turned three. Being the supportive older brother, I attended her first

winter showcase. Luckily, the boys' hip-hop team performed at this showcase, and I had my first exposure to the place I now consider my second home.

I truly believe that dance was always something I was meant to discover. As a child, I looked up to singers and songwriters for their creative abilities, but I didn't possess those talents. Dance, however, became the space where I could excel and share my creative abilities.

Attending my sister's dance showcase turned out to be so much more than I could have ever imagined. I began taking one hip-hop class per week. It was an all-boys hip-hop class that made me feel included and really cool. This hip-hop class sparked a journey I can look back on with pride.

I started competition dance the following year as a fifth grader for hip hop, but I quickly realized I wanted to train in all dance styles in addition to hip hop, including tap, jazz, ballet, acro, and contemporary. Throughout my time as a competitive dancer with my studio, I earned numerous accomplishments and accolades at both regional and national levels. I also had the opportunity to network and bond with others in my dance family and community, which has forged relationships that will last me a lifetime.

I believe I have had a profound opportunity to influence my community through movement, especially in the narrative of male dancers, who are strong, artistic, and deserving of the same attention that athletes receive in other sports. Dancing for my high school and studio teams has provided me with an additional platform to directly influence students' perceptions of male dancers. Two other male dancers were even willing to join the team with me! We love being able to go out onto the football field at halftime to put on a memorable show for all the right reasons. There is something very special about the culture and climate at my school.

Where do I see movement in my future? I want to continue my passion, commitment, and journey in dance into my adult years. As a proud member of the Saint John's University D1 College Dance Team, I am

eager to be actively involved in collegiate school culture. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue developing my talent and love for dance at the collegiate level, building memories with the larger dance community, and inspiring young people to pursue their dreams. In addition to my collegiate dance career, I aim to leverage my strengths in the education field.

As an early childhood education major with an interest in special education, I believe my dynamic skill set would be an asset for student learning in today's classrooms. Additionally, I hope to continue coaching, mentoring, and motivating future dancers ~ and the legacy in my community will be remembered and cherished.





**Feature**

***"Moonchild"***

**By: Bryce Collis**

***NHSDA Award, Honorable Mention***

***Sponsor: Advisor: Andrea Locke***

***Archer School for Girls***

***"Moonchild"*** is a love letter from my current self to a younger version of me ~ a girl who had unlimited fun, climbed to the roofs of the jungle gyms, and let her curiosity run rampant. I often wish I could return to her headspace, free from judgment, completely limitless, and completely comfortable in myself.

In my dance, I represent this boundless exploration that I crave through specific movements. I inquisitively peek through my arms as I enter ~ lost in a strange new world. I leap in the air to convey a sense of joy and elation. I reach downstage as an invitation to my younger self to dare to make an entrance into adult life with me.

Technically, the hardest part for me was balancing during the slow turns in the piece.

However, the most challenging aspect was finding authentic emotional expression, as I had to search for a genuine identity, buried under years of trying to "fit in" and be "cool."

Thanks to a suggestion from my dance teacher and co-choreographer, Jen Hamilton, I journaled about my past and tried to match up my movements with what I found while journaling, which led to the joyful sotés at the end. My art is a portal back to the carefree "moonchild" I once was.

Creating this solo in my senior year of high school felt like drawing a full circle from past to present, connecting the matured dancer I am today back to the wild child of my youth.

*PC Bryce Collis*



*Feature*

*"Idontwannabeyouanymore"*

*By: Riley Coats Ogrenics*

*NHSDA Award, Honorable Mention*

*Sponsor/Advisor: Kristen Stoller*

*Willamette Valley High School*

**T**he main intent of my choreography, "idontwannabeyouanymore," was to create a competition piece that I was proud of. Initially, I wanted it to show my accumulated skills, including technique, musicality, and quality of movement. As time went on, I played with different songs and styles. As I rediscovered and saw others dancing to idontwannabeyouanymore,

I knew that this was the song. I picked it because of the feelings Billie Eilish presents; the deep conflict and sadness automatically connected and drew me in. Whilst choreographing, I would often get stuck, wanting to make sure the movement felt natural and performable. To overcome this block, I would start the music at the beginning and perform as if I were on stage. This often put me in a different headspace, and new movement would flow out of me. If this didn't work, I would stop choreographing and come back to it, say, the next day. This put less pressure on the task and, in the long run, positively affected the piece.

Once I finished with the choreography, I truly found myself within it. I discovered how much I was subconsciously choreographing with my heart and psyche. I easily wrote my own story that paralleled my struggles with confidence and self-hatred. Now, every time I perform it, I feel free. Being able to reflect and present my own story to an audience has been, and will continue to be, the most therapeutic to me.





All PC Nina Trisiripisal

### ***Feature***

## ***It's Never Too Late to Find Your Passion***

***By: Nina Trisiripisal***

***Sponsor/Advisor: Allison Barron***

***Windermere Preparatory School***

**When** I was little, I thought dance was just something fun I did in a pink tutu. I never imagined it would become the thing that changed my life. I didn't grow up in a competitive studio or start training at age three like many of the dancers I know. In fact, I didn't take my first real dance class until the fifth grade. Some people might say it's too late to start, but I've learned that passion doesn't come with a deadline.

Even before I officially danced, I was always moving. During little league soccer, while other kids chased the ball, I was spinning and doing cartwheels in the grass until my coaches yelled at me. On the golf course, I could never stand still. I was always twirling, wishing I could be

dancing instead. Whenever my girlfriends and I got together, we'd make up dance routines and put on shows, and so our parents had no choice but to be the *Audience!*

In fifth grade, I finally found the courage to ask my parents for dance lessons. From the moment I stepped into the studio at The Dance Collective, I felt like I belonged. I remember peeking into the room where the competitive dancers were rehearsing. They looked so strong and confident, flying across the floor like they were born to do it. I thought, "*That's what I want. I want to dance like that.*"

I knew I was starting late. Most of those dancers had years of training, and I was only beginning. But I also knew I couldn't

waste another minute. In the summer leading up to 6th grade, I begged my parents to let me audition for the competitive team. On the day of tryouts, I was terrified. My hands were shaking, and I kept thinking, *“What if I’m not good enough? What if I’m too late?”* But I made the team. That moment taught me that passion can catch up to experience when you’re willing to work for it. When we got the dance schedule, I was thrilled ~ but my parents were concerned. *“How will you ever have time to do homework?”* they asked. They were so shocked; they actually called the studio from the middle of our cruise ~ convinced there had been some kind of scheduling mix-up and that no kid could possibly dance *that* much. I was mortified but the whole experience lit a fire in me. I knew I had to prove I could handle it all. They warned me that if my grades slipped, I’d have to quit dance. I couldn’t let that happen.

So, I worked harder than ever. I studied in the car on the way to practice. I did homework in between rehearsals. I stayed up late and pushed through exhaustion. I made my mom quiz me in the car. Although I started later than most, I wasn’t going to let anything slow me down. I loved dancing too much.

The year has been both the hardest and most rewarding of my life. I’ve grown not just as a dancer, but as a teammate, a student, and a person. On top of my

studio training, the dance classes at Windermere Prep have helped me become more confident and well-rounded. Whether I’m in the school studio or on stage at competitions, I’m constantly learning and improving. I’ve learned discipline, humility, and what it means to chase something with one’s whole heart. Even with everything going on, I managed to keep up my grades and was proud to make the Headmaster’s List with straight A’s all year.

This summer, I volunteered as a dance assistant at The Dance Collective, and it made me feel proud of how far I’ve come. I may not have started early, but I started with passion. And that made all the difference. So, to anyone who thinks it’s too late to follow a dream: it’s not. If it sets your soul on fire, go for it. Because sometimes, the “late start” is really just the perfect beginning.



*Welcome Back to School!*



*PC Academy of Dance Arts*



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