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Confronting my Habitus: Facilitator Reflections in an Intergenerational Community String Ensemble

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Abstract

As founder and facilitator of the Intergenerational Community String Ensemble (ICSE), I am conscious of straddling tensions between my background, classical training, and my role as a facilitator, which may be clarified by Bourdieu's (1984, 1986, 1990) concept of habitus. If habitus is a bridge between structure and agency, explaining predispositions and tendencies towards behaviours, then social capital theory could provide an explanation for how community music practitioners support personal and community realizations and democratic learning. A dialogical view of habitus (Wright & Froelich, 2012) coupled with conscious awareness of reinscription or deterministic tendencies (Savig & Hall, 2016) could allow for the consciousness of habitus to perforate and interrupt colonizing tendencies, promoting the advancement of musical and pedagogical habitus. As a facilitator, I share the need for community and individual accomplishment within a place of hospitality, implying inherent vulnerability (Hendricks, 2018). Multiple facets as integral parts of my whole identity still vacillate between tension and harmony as I embrace a growth mindset, learning shoulder-to-shoulder within the situated practice of the ICSE.

Keywords: community music facilitation, habitus, learning, identity

An autoethnographic anecdote from my journal:

We played the entire program for the first time and although we ran overtime, I am delighted that we made it through everything. The participants demonstrated focus and engagement. They shared that although they are fond of the repertoire, however, they would not mind if we could find places to cut repeats and difficult passage work. I wonder if my programming is too ambitious or if I may be making too many musical and technical demands of some of the participants. I frequently asked questions to encourage agency and involvement, and I reminded participants about listening to the rhythmic motor for ensemble unity. One student wears a hearing aid, and we both are aware of the challenges that come with ensemble playing and hearing difficulties. Another student who primarily plays by ear sometimes loses their place in the music. Another pair of players who share a stand tend to randomly stop playing at times. Still, the participants' smiles convey a shared joy of musicking. Tonight, I praised individuals who did very well, encouraged perseverance, commended one participant for his arrangement, welcomed new and newly returning participants, and thanked all for coming. Yet, I still wonder: Who or what am I serving? The participants? Myself? The music?

This study is a natural outgrowth of my identity as one who has often straddled between mandalas of cultures and identities: musician, string player, cellist, student, performer, educator, facilitator, and varied social classes, a consumer of multiple musical tastes, and continuously evolving age and experience. My parents are from Appalachian regions, and my mother was the only one in her family to attend college. Classical music was not a part of our everyday musical consumption or culture. Just as acquiring a college education profoundly disrupted my mother's sense of self, my journey into the professional and classical music worlds has similarly impacted my family. When I became more serious about pursuing the cello, my father expressed trepidation about classical music belonging to a world and class to which we did not, primarily because one needs financial resources to acquire an instrument and lessons before having a chance to learn. Yet, I am fortunate that my parents always supported my educational pursuits. We share a love of learning, and my path into the classical music world has changed me and encouraged my family's curiosity about music. Therefore, I firmly believe that education and exposure can alter and transpose predispositions to other areas of life, affecting possible outcomes and capacity to change. As the facilitator and founder of an intergenerational community string ensemble (ICSE), I am conscious of straddling tensions between my family background, classical training, and my desire as a community music facilitator to foster personal development, social betterment, inclusivity, participation, democracy, and broader community music goals from the literature. Sometimes these lenses of identity overlap, sometimes they support other identities, and sometimes they create dissonances. Just like conflict can be a healthy part of democracy, it can be beneficial to consciously embrace dissonances of positionalities or identities within ourselves to foster self-acceptance, ultimately enabling more inclusive, democratic, and accessible learning spaces. Bourdieu's (1984, 1986, 1990) concept of habitus provides a lens that helps me make sense of my own dissonances and work with these conflicts to reframe how I can work through varied and shifting positionalities. Although education and social learning are potential disrupters of habitus, I hope to better understand and increase awareness of how my sometimes-dissonant identities as a musician, educator, and scholar might inform my practice.

Bourdieu and Social Capital Theory

Social capital is significant because it symbolizes the constructive benefits of sociability or the outcomes of relationships. Bourdieu (1986) suggested that acquiring and spending social capital is dependent upon being a member of and participant in a collective or group that operates within a field, a social space where agents share similar interests and seek and possibly compete for similar capital or power. Each agent or participant occupies a social position within the field, and participants' actions are governed by field rules (doxa) as they compete for the same credential. Bourdieu (1984, 1986) recognized the potential for individuals to amass and convert social capital to another form of capital that may be more highly valued as individuals shift positions or new participants come and go, thus changing the field. Individual networks of habitual capital can vary based on social relationships beyond family or exclusive contexts, leading toward potential positive community engagement, possibly including lifespan musicking.

Habitus

Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1984, 1986, 1990) encompasses the dispositions acquired unconsciously based on internalizing perceived norms. Habitus negotiates between social relations and actions but can change depending upon interactions between agents. Predispositions still leave room for human agency; therefore, it is not necessarily deterministic. However, it may facilitate calculation (unconscious or conscious), perceptions, and expectations which could result in reproductive behaviours that reinscribe power in those with various kinds of capital (Bourdieu, 1984). If habitus is a bridge between structure and agency, illuminating predispositions and tendencies towards behaviours, then social capital theory could explain how community music practices support personal and community realizations and democratic learning. A dialogical view of habitus (Wright & Froelich, 2012) coupled with conscious awareness of reinscription or deterministic tendencies (Savig & Hall, 2016) could allow the consciousness of habitus to disrupt colonizing tendencies, promoting the advancement of musical and pedagogical habitus (Wright, 2012).Bourdieu's (1984, 1986, 1990) concept of habitus can function as a lens that gives me a framework to help me understand and navigate the dissonances in my own predispositions and tendencies within myself.

ICSE context and background

I founded the ICSE to provide group chamber music participation for students who otherwise did not have access to chamber music collaborations and as a support for school-age students who wanted to expand their ensemble experience. The ICSE welcomes musicians of all performance levels who wish to develop individual and ensemble playing skills through various musical styles. Since its inception in 2016, membership has tripled, with participants' ages ranging from eight to 75. Under the umbrella of a private midwestern university's community arts academy, this program welcomed others who shared similar interests.

Role Ambiguity: Teacher, Facilitator, or Peer?

As a CM facilitator, defining my role and responsibility can be ambiguous. Some scholars are adamant to use the term facilitator (Higgins, 2012; Mullen, 2002), whereas Koopman (2007) argued for the CM teacher as a coach that operates beyond the terms of instructor or facilitator. Similarly, Allsup (2003) contended that the CM facilitator may transgress the traditional authority of the teacher by adopting the roles of coach, friend, and peer in learning by embodying fluid roles of observer, participant, leader, and creator. Again, I question: What is my role in the ICSE? My inner dialogue, captured through journaling, focused on performance readiness, and questioning whether my actions adequately served the participants. I wonder how to serve the participants effectively. Mullen (2002) would say that my purpose is to convene the ICSE, and to clarify the process through inquiry, echo, and affirmation. Koopman (2007) would argue that initiating and guiding the CM process is a form of musical thinking and acting, teaching and learning.

Scholars have cited social betterment as a primary goal of CM, including serving underrepresented communities (Cohen & Silverman, 2013), fostering social awareness through identity advocacy (Avery, Hays, & Bell, 2013), making politically and socially just spaces (Woodward & Pestano, 2013), and fostering lifespan learning (Myers, Bowles, & Dabback, 2013). Some community music facilitators implement flexible structures of practice (Yerichuk & Krar, 2019) to foster accessibility and inclusivity. If community music facilitators are to fulfil these ideals of personal development, societal betterment, inclusivity, participation, and democracy in their practices, facilitators should consciously assess their methods to see if those aims are met. Dividing between these goals may seem arbitrary, and there are natural overlaps between the personal and societal and between participation, inclusivity, and democracy. Dividing between conflicting components of self-identity might be similarly arbitrary. One might discover that these layers of self can enhance practices despite their apparent dissonances.

Higgins' (2014) concept of hospitality in community music, along with research conducted by Hallam et al. (2016) on the role of the CM facilitator, underscore the fundamental role that a welcoming environment and relationships play in fostering openness and a willingness to learn. Individual identity is valued and validated as a worthy contributor to the process of making music, creating a bridge to well-being. The 21st-century CM facilitator must possess characteristics beyond musicianship and expertise including having social and emotional intelligence, being verbally articulate, remaining positive, and possessing a charismatic personality while critically reflecting both during and after facilitation to pursue active, inclusive musical participation, ensuring that all voices are heard (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018). For participatory CM facilitators, this requires them to put relationships and well-being of all in the group at the fore (Higgins, 2008).

Ideally, I hope to weave goals of personal development, societal betterment, participation, inclusivity, and democracy with goals of musical and performance achievement in my practice. However, I recognize that participatory culture may validate only some ways of musicking, perpetuating exclusion (Small, 1996; Wright, 2018). I wonder: Do the participant experiences in ICSE reflect those ideals as they interact with each other and with me? How do participants perceive that the choir contributes to their musical and social goals? How does my leadership facilitate such growth? I believe there can be overlaps between these goals which foster joy in musicking through participation, inclusion, and democracy.

Performance and Participation

My roles encompass both facilitation and a participation in the ICSE. As a classical musician, I often think of performance as an assessment of proficiency or competency, including musicianship, technique, collaboration, stage presence, and more. As a community music facilitator, I tend to prioritise participation and attitude. Although there are times when my inner dialogue argues a false dichotomy between these elements, I believe that participation enhances performance goals, and reciprocally, performance goals enhance the participatory experience. Most participants of the ICSE are aware when a rehearsed musical passage is not well-played, creating a sense of imbalance. Therefore, my role is both structural as an expected leader and instigator of much of the ICSE actions, and relational, as a trusted peer and colleague who shares in the common goal of musicking within the ICSE. Small (1999) defined musicking as a ritual

through which participants learn about and experience relationships with others and their world. Collaboration and realisation of shared goals through creativity and problem-solving are some of the beneficial outcomes of mutual developing social capital within the ICSE. I am fortunate to share space with my fellow musicians in ICSE, learning from their knowledge and experience, sharing my knowledge and experience, and learning how to communicate more effectively, verbally, gesturally, and musically.

Community music has a call, welcome, decision, and responsibility (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018) that cycles reciprocally between members through mutual understanding, acceptance, and honesty. The community music workshop (Higgins, 2007) is a process that grounds a conditional environment with unconditional hospitality and an indeterminate experience that might exemplify democratic practice when the ownership of the work is distributed among all participants and when the facilitator provides a context for discovery (Allsup, 2003). Practicing community music with such a reciprocal mindset could foster dialogue, trust, and acceptance. However, the facilitator must be aware of their ethical and critical choices affecting the musical and social processes of structures and access that inherently encourage some learners and participants to feel a sense of belonging while creating the opposite reaction in others (Yerichuk & Krar, 2019).

Considering my own practice, I aim to be aware of potential tendencies in how I facilitate, motivating my continued growth and development through self-reflection and experimentation. Uneven participant experience is a challenge in the ICSE, something far less prevalent in the professional ensembles of which I am a member. Having good intentions is not enough. When I see the participants of ICSE as chamber music mates, what crystalizes is that ICSE is like any other chamber music experience. It is crucial to have mutual respect, be active listeners, and be flexible and adaptive to have a chance at success. Allsup (2003) named qualities of care, respect, and discovery as ways to negotiate these disparities in experience and foster a context for learning. When I think of how to include and support individual participants, I have learned to slow down and project my verbal instructions, ensure eye contact, and be more physically demonstrative. I also recognize that each participant brings a great deal of social and cultural capital to the ensemble from their previous professional experiences that reciprocally increase my capital. Varied participant-musicians have been featured in performances as leaders, performing as a duet before the entire ensemble joins them. I learn from them, and by listening to what they share, recognizing their strengths, and including them as shared leaders, the entire ICSE benefits. Higgins (2012, p. 4) beautifully expressed this notion of the facilitator momentarily displacing their ego to allow the "outside to impact the inside" as a part of the community musicking welcome. All musicians, regardless of context can share in the common ground of discovery and growth. Despite occasional conflicts between participatory insider and formally trained outsider statuses in my inner dialogues, I am grateful to grow with the ICSE in humility and care. It is *our*ICSE, not mine.

Inner dissonances

Coming from a classical music tradition rich in heritage, structural hierarchy, and boundaries, I am curious about how I fulfill the ideals of community music and the conventions and traditions of classical music performance. I often wonder about my own place as a facilitator within the field of community music and

think it is important to consider how I negotiate between ideals and realities of practice.I am deeply indebted to my public-school orchestra teacher and my parents for enabling me to experience private Suzuki lessons, group classes, and chamber music. However, these Suzuki classes required financial means for participation, a key social stratification. I am fully aware that the classical world often imposes rankings for admission and financial requisites for participation. Access to resources such as lessons or exposure to exemplary musicians and performers can enable the development of goalposts and ideals of competency. How does one define competency on an instrument? How and why do the measurements differ for professionals from amateurs? And how does that measurement define what is sufficient, necessary, or valuable?

Perhaps I aim to provide an experience through ICSE that promotes lifelong musical participation as a right for all, regardless of age or current musical experience. As a classically trained cellist who regularly performs professionally and teaches at the college level, I am often abiding by traditional rules and cultural approaches, embodied and embedded technical ability, and a sense of hierarchy within the artistic ensemble (Sagiv & Hall, 2015). Rigorous and repetitive training is one of the ways the body achieves mastery over the instrument. Unsurprisingly, much of the classical musician's habitus is reproductive, even when teachers help students find their own voices. In fact, repetition and regular review to upgrade previous skills is one of the tenants of the Suzuki method. How do such notions of reproduction of culture, hierarchies, and tradition marry with the themes and expectations of personal development, societal betterment, participation, inclusivity, and democracy within a community music ensemble? I always demonstrate in rehearsals, my attempt to show rather than say. I almost always perform from score with the ensemble, reinforcing voices that may need more support. I wonder if participants perceive this as helpful bolstering or imposing on the creativity of the group. In the ICSE, I often find that multiple positionalities inform mixed goals: the aim to create an accessible and welcoming place for musicking, the care to share knowledge that I consider valuable about performing in an ensemble, and the desire for the ensemble to "sound good" and to improve.

Community Music Legitimized

Community music is often considered an extension of institutionalised music education, gaining legitimization and credibility as an educational resource. Koopman (2007) argued for the legitimacy of community music as an educational practice, incorporating both authentic and situated learning. Community music participants can learn socially and systematically, participating in planning and performing, and evaluation, utilizing prior knowledge and building musical and organizational competencies. In the United States, the National Association for Music Education's website shares this idea of reciprocity between community music and formal music education in their position statement. This supports the notion that community music groups can legitimately benefit individual students.

Kertz-Welzel (2016) advocated for a closer relationship between community music and formal or academic music education. "The primary rival to musical amateurism is the stigma against it as a valid and valuable musical praxis, a stigma that denies its legitimacy as a central curricular goal for music education" (Regelski, 2007, p. 39). Kertz-Welzel (2016) supported Koopman's (2007) notion that community music practitioners should embrace critical reflection to realize the potential of situated and authentic community music

education. Ben (2016) contended that the transformative power of music is the foundation of community music, allowing for dialogical rather than binary dualisms between formal and informal music education structures. Ideally, community music can bridge gaps or boundary walk (Higgins, 2012) between formal and informal learning contexts through a collaborative crossover between professional and amateur musicians. If community music ensembles can support institutionalized education by expanding access to lifespan participants, then community musickers might be validated by creating alliances where theories and practices can be communally shared (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018; Deane, 2013; Elliott, 2009; Higgins, 2012; Veblen, 2007). Perhaps community music groups like the ICSE can be legitimate and valued partners in music education practices as a vernacular form of musicking.

As a classically trained facilitator with aims to promote the positive benefits of community musicking, I hope to embody boundary walking and bridging between educational structures, roles, and relationships. Boundary walking allows me to nurture identities in both the formal and informal educative worlds and assume different roles as needed. My structural and relational roles within the ICSE vary, shifting shared responsibilities with my colleagues in the ICSE. Recognizing that my role depends on ICSE participants' perceptions leaves room for interaction, dialogue, and multiple exchanges. For instance, individual personalities, family, and educational backgrounds mix with the school, community, and ICSE. These intermingle on a broader scale with social structure, culture, and history to interact with networks within the ICSE.

Perhaps by employing the more participatory and social, actively open listening aims of community music, facilitators can bridge between the false dichotomy of classical and community music worlds. This could lead participants, including me, to approach learning with a curiosity of what is possible, acknowledging the opportunity to learn and grow from the process. For example, the ICSE has made multiple virtual recordings during the pandemic, thanks to the recording expertise of one of our members. The members requested that my recordings be used as examples for the rest of the group. In most cases, it was possible to compile our recordings into a finished product. However, one piece proved too challenging rhythmically to compile into a finished recording. We collectively decided to revisit that piece when we might more organically feel the pulse together in person.

Negotiated Programming

Through shared ownership and responsibility in the ICSE, topics of repertoire, knowledge construction (co-composed are group arrangements of pieces), and potential spaces for performance are communally negotiated. Community music facilitators should create flexible structures that foster participation, recognize musical taste, and collaboration to foster access, inclusivity, and agency. I wonder if this should also translate to music educators in orchestral environments. However, Higgins (2012) noted that the relationship between the facilitator and participant cannot be fully equal since the facilitator instigates the action, therefore holding some hierarchical power. Yet, participants and facilitators often regard each other with mutual respect, shared responsibility, and trust, enabling a sense of equality and hospitality (Higgins, 2012).

Facilitators might accept the tensions between democratic practices and leadership roles by employing conscious teaching strategies while recognizing others' prior knowledge, expertise, ideas, and preferences, creating a negotiated curriculum (Higgins & Willingham, 2017). My ongoing inner dialogue as facilitator and participant include some of the preceding themes. Practicing with care demands that I welcome and meet each participant where they are. Responsibility demands that I share expertise and provide scaffolding for improvement, even providing suggested repertoire. Flexibility means allowing time for discussion and discovery. A sense of discovery allows me as both a facilitator and as a participant to anticipate and embrace my sometimes-conflicting dialogues and positionalities and experience these dissonances as welcome and expected parts of what makes me whole. Like learning music, discovery, thankfully, is not finite.

Higgins (2007, 2008, 2009, 2012) wrote of the liberating potential for community music to provide access, safety without safety, and opportunity for all, by welcoming participants, responsibly facilitating to create open possibilities to explore the unexpected. The safety without safety requires all participants to embrace risk-taking through playfulness, positivity, and flexibility while assuming responsibility and care for each other. Through the unconditional welcome, facilitators must be flexible about sharing responsibility and use adaptive methods to suit the participants, emphasizing the process over outcome. Similarly, my process of negotiating positionalities and discovering new ways to interact, relate and share with others is ongoing.

Access and Belonging

Literature suggests that inclusion through collaboration promotes a sense of belonging to a community within relationships developed in musical settings (Bailey & Davidson, 2002; Belgrave & Keown, 2018). Feeling valued by others also creates a sense of belonging and can foster reciprocal appreciation between groups in cross-age collaborative learning (Belgrave, 2011; Madsen, 2011; Varvarigou et al., 2011). Interpersonal attachments through social musical exploration and shared relationships should be considered integral parts of democratic community musicking, and I argue that could similarly transfer to classical music making.

Ideally, my practice can allow for exploration of musical learning and experimentation, creating opportunities for individuals and groups to explore music, self, and community in various spaces and contexts. Transformation, or changing lives and practices beyond the ordinary (Higgins, 2021; Jorgensen, 2003), requires both collective and individual action, experience and reflection, and dialogue between active participants seeking possibilities by encompassing gendered and worldviews with tradition and mindset, critically analysing power structures, pedagogy, and content. Facilitation continues to transform and influence who and how I am.

Practices and Structures

Thinking of educationalstructuresas promoting autonomy and independence can be helpful. Structures can be defined by the amount of information about expectations, clarity and quality of directions, and ways to

achieve outcomes. Community music's flexible structures might enhance participation, unlike many classical ensemble prerequisites. Students must be aware of the autonomous support structures to yield motivational results (Nuñez & León, 2015); therefore, facilitators play a critical role in cultivating an environment promoting enjoyment, satisfaction, and interest in learning. Humour plays a significant role in our community ensemble. In a recent rehearsal, after offering a choice of which piece to next rehearse, no one spoke. Then, a member suggested that we perform Simon and Garfunkel's "Sound of Silence." Promoting a positive learning environment corresponds with Higgins' (2007, p. 89) notion of safety withoutsafety by encouraging facilitators to be aware of their "human responsibilities as music educators, the precariousness of the creative process, and the extent to which our identities are involved." I hope to embody the curiosity, compassion, and connection that help to diffuse tensions when expectations of learning goals differ, impacting the physical and emotional field of practice. I recognize that learning goals and communication styles vary within the ICSE. Fortunately, language is not the only route to cognition.

My inner dialogue of what to prioritise in facilitation leads to more questions than answers. How does my classical rigor meld with determining which values to prioritise? How do our collective repertoire choices and performance goals match the wide variety of participants' ages, abilities, cultural/social/economic statuses, and political or religious beliefs?

What if I choose to deconstruct my shifting positions and my inner and outer dialogues in facilitation? Perhaps those dialogues between different facets of identity can lead to new discoveries of how to practice, permitting "other" knowledge to be valued and promoted as mirrors for all students. Being aware of my own predispositions and tendencies towards specific types of culture can help me to see the political underpinnings in policy and musical curriculum documents while considering which values are accepted or rejected (Wright & Froelich, 2012). Such conscious thought allows me to keep varied positionalities and weave together new ways of thinking and operating.

Participants accruing social development, impacting society

During the pandemic shutdown, the ICSE moved online for continued meetings and planning online recordings.I learned during ICSE's virtual pandemic collaborations that I facilitate for myself as much as for the ICSE. I needed interactions, connections, and purpose with this group at least as much as they needed this experience. Also, I learned about recording protocols from participants with technical expertise that I do not possess. Other participants suggested repertoire for us to perform, and I learned how to arrangeand distribute electronic arrangements for the ICSE. Several members have also created arrangements specifically for our group. Musical tastes within the ICSE are widely varied. Hence, I started a google "repertoire wish list" to which everyone has access. This document has proven very useful for mutual planning and programming.

CM facilitators can share in personal growth and community development by recognizing other participants' expertise and experience, actively participating in social interaction, and learning and creating together with participants. Learningis a social and dynamic process that draws from previous experiences (Vygotskiĭ, 1986), and cooperative learning is an effective vehicle for knowledge construction. However, experience

begets responsibility (Allsup, 2003). Perhaps part of my responsibility is dialoguing with the facets of my identity to find ways to listen and share effectively.

A dialogical concept of habitus (Akrivou & Di San Giorgio, 2014) allows habitus to be both formative and transformative. Habitus might indicate biases, but it does not prophesy choices, thus allowing for intentional, conscious actions to override unconscious action (Mills, 2008). Dissonant aspects of identity might be negotiated and even embraced using habitus as a lens. Recognizing how habitus impacts learning may impel CM facilitators to reflect more deeply on their own dissonances in who they are and impel them to challenge assumptions of identity. Tendencies towards narrow labelling might shade CM practices and illustrate the need for conscious actions and reflections to guide practices. Understanding what tools can help CM facilitators negotiate between these dissonances could also counsel facilitators to embrace and welcome their multiple and shifting positionalities to understand how overlaps and conflicts of identity might foster more effective practices.

It is not surprising that our inner and outer dialogues may continue to raise more questions considering challenges to assumptions, tensions from dissonances in identities, and finding our shifting places within the field. Using Bourdieu's (1990) self-socioanalysis permits both narrative and investigation, "not as an "authentic" voice of an "insider" but rather as a translator of my personal position within larger societies and my vacillation between insider/outsider statuses in…" (Kruse, 2014, p. 61) a community music setting as I examine my role as participant-facilitator. Therefore, I will embrace this dialogue and consider the impossible future as I aim to be effective for all participants. Love of music and partnership in music making can be an overarching goal leading towards fearlessness, generosity, and specificity, regardless of genre or context. In turn, this can produce attitudes of caring and sharing, openness, and vulnerability which could increase mutual respect and reciprocally enhance love of music and enhance social partnerships.

From my journal:

It's a new season for ISCE. I am delighted to see so many former participants and several new faces. We began with introductory ice breakers and then read some new arrangements of familiar tunes. I feel some pride about how well the ensemble sounds upon first reading, and we are ready to share the joys and find ways to continue making music together. I wonder what next week will hold.

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