



AMERICA ISRAEL  
CULTURAL FOUNDATION

**EIGHT  
DECADES OF  
SUPPORTING  
ARTISTIC  
EXCELLENCE  
IN ISRAEL**

**2017**

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## Dear AICF Friends and Supporters,

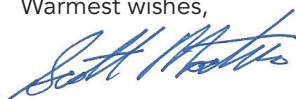
Please join me in welcoming our new Israel Executive Director, Iris Reff-Ronen, who was selected from among 300 qualified applicants to lead our Israeli operations and local fundraising efforts. Iris comes to us with over 15 years of executive experience in managing and guiding other prominent Israeli NGOs.

Together with our executive board and management, Iris will help to ensure that AICF continues to provide needed support to Israel's outstanding young artists. AICF also is pleased to announce a significant new donation. The Azrieli Foundation, together with the Canada-Israel Cultural Foundation, will provide \$1.3 million over the next three years to enable the AICF to maintain and extend its valued grant programs to top Israeli artistic talent. We could not be more appreciative of the Azrieli Foundation's and CICF's recognition of the important cultural mission served by AICF and their financial support for the arts in Israel.

As we embark on the latest chapter in our rich history, and look to find new ways to invest in the next generation of Israeli artists, AICF remains dependent on your support. As an American who has called Israel home for the last 13 years, we must remember that Israel's future depends not only on the strength of its army but also on the strength of its artistry. AICF grant recipients rank among Israel's leading ambassadors to the world, spreading a message of hope, peace and harmony. Please help us to ensure that positive message continues to echo.

On behalf of my family and AICF family, I wish you and yours a happy, healthy and prosperous 5778!

Warmest wishes,



Scott Mortman  
Amuta Chair

## Spotlight on | Or Matias



Or Matias is a composer, pianist, music director, and producer. Since graduating from Juilliard, Or has worked with The Trans-Siberian Orchestra, Ingrid Michaelson, violin virtuoso Amadeus Leopold, songstress Rachael Yamagata, and tap dancer Andrew Nemr, alongside countless others. Most recently, Or was the music director and conductor for *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* on Broadway, starring Josh Groban.

In the summer of 2015, Or played the role of Sergei Rachmaninoff in Lincoln Center's production of *Preludes*, for which he was nominated for the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor.

# Tovit Adis Semay

27, Theater - Acting, Mazkeret Batia, Current Grant Recipient



Photo credit: Or Danon

## How was your audition for AICF?

At my first audition... I had an out-of-body experience. I just had a sensation so large that I can't describe it.

## What do you like most about acting?

Theater and film are places where you can come and have your say to the world. Theater is so alive, here and now, happening before your eyes. So much magic happens there that cannot be matched elsewhere.

## What kind of characters do you like to portray the most?

I like best to portray comic characters – there's something about the timing that makes the experience more energetic and funnier, for me as well. I love to laugh. I love round characters, that I can understand from A to Z and find myself in them.

## How is the experience of studying at the Yoram Loewenstein Performing Art Studio?

I am the only student of Ethiopian descent in my class. I actually get a lot of good things from it, because in most cases I can play almost any character, and I also have the added bonus of my color, which gives another interpretation that directors can work with.

## What do you feel about the cultural life in Israel today?

I wish to see more of the joy of creativity here, more investment in culture and in all of the organizations that do such important work, which I think is underappreciated these days.

## On Broadway | *The Band's Visit*

After a mix-up at the border, an Egyptian Police Band is sent to a remote village in the middle of the Israeli desert. With no bus until morning and no hotel in sight, these unlikely travelers are taken in by the locals. Under the spell of the desert sky, their lives become intertwined in the most unexpected ways. *THE BAND'S VISIT* celebrates the deeply human ways music, longing and laughter can connect us all.

Based on the award-winning Israeli film, *THE BAND'S VISIT* is brought to Broadway by three-time Tony® nominee DAVID YAZBEK (*Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *The Full Monty*), Drama Desk nominee ITAMAR MOSES (*Nobody Loves You*, *Fortress of Solitude*) and acclaimed director DAVID CROMER (*Our Town*, *The House of Blue Leaves*); and stars Emmy® winner TONY SHALHOUB and Lucille Lortel winner KATRINA LENK.

For tickets and more information, visit [thebandsvisitmusical.com](http://thebandsvisitmusical.com).



# Dor Levi Zelicha

26, Visual Art - Sound & Video Art, Jaffa, Current Grant Recipient

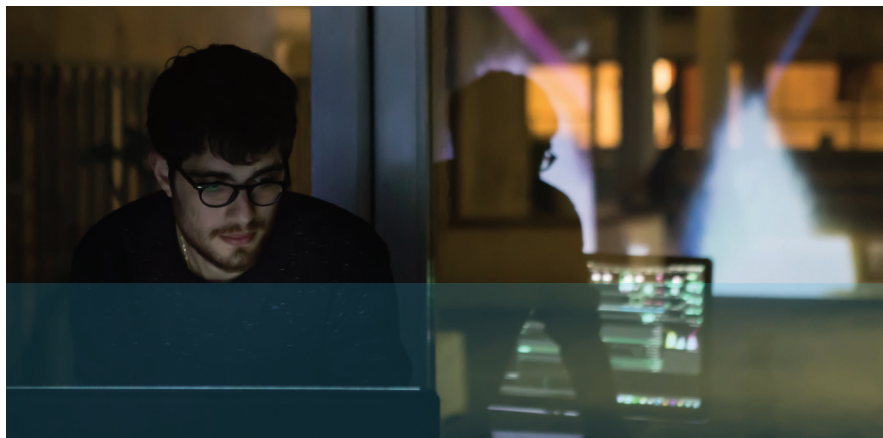


Photo credit: Hila Ido

## What inspires you in your work?

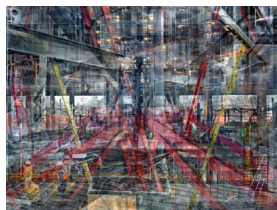
I am lucky to be able to explore my roots through my work while my grandparents' generation is still here. They visit my exhibitions and are part of them. Therefore, my dialogue with them is alive and I believe it is apparent in my art.

## What motivates you in your work?

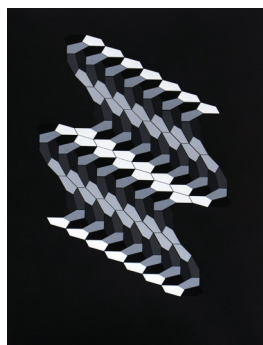
Everything I do is connected to my cultural quest and my artistic intention. I make an effort to always convey my ideas in the most distilled and pure way.

## A Closer Look | Works by AICF Alumni

These art alumni have generously offered to auction their works to benefit AICF!



**Shai Kremer:** During my career I received support three times from the AICF: the 2002 Sharett Grant, and the 2004 and 2005 Study Abroad Grants. Apart and above from the financial help of the grant, it gave me a safeguarded feeling, a sense of confirmation in the path I chose. These grants came in the early stages, when the doubt is enormous. As a foreign art student I wasn't totally convinced that my A plan would work. Luckily, I still don't have a B plan. I just keep struggling and continuing what I know to do best.



**Jan Tichy:** To become the artist and educator that I am today it took years of education from various institutions that provided me with a broad spectrum of knowledge and artistic tools. The America-Israel Cultural Foundation supported me in every step on this educational journey from my studies of photography at the Musrara School of Photography, through the advanced studies program at the Bezalel Academy of Arts, to finally have the great privilege of studying at one of top art schools in the US - The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where I currently serve as a full-time faculty. I am forever grateful to the AICF for their generosity and trust.

**Zigi Ben-Haim:** AICF was a very significant force in my professional career all throughout my four years at the Avni Institute in Tel Aviv. Isaac Stern personally presented me with a scholarship, which also led me to travel to America in 1971 at the end of my studies. I went to California, where I did my MFA at San Francisco State University. I was then invited to New York for a one-man show, and I haven't left since, making New York my home. Forty years later, I'm celebrating my sculpture installation in SoHo on Broadway. It is the first sculpture ever to receive a permit from the Department of Transportation to be installed on Broadway.

# Rill Greenfeld

## 27, Jewelry Design, Givatayim, Current Grant Recipient

AICF has broadened its support in the arts this year by extending its design grants for the first time in years to include students in industrial design, ceramic design, fashion design, gold-smithery, and accessories.

### How did you start designing jewelry, and why?

I started four years ago, at the Shenkar [College of Engineering and Design]'s Department of Jewelry Design. I always knew that I wanted to learn and work in Design. The day I understood that jewelry is the right field for me, suddenly all of the pieces fell into place. It was a combination of my great loves in one wondrous and magical field.

### When and how did you understand that you want to focus on this field?

The moment I understood that the world of jewelry design was for me took place on a long bus ride in Argentina: while I was taking in the magical landscapes, Nature in its full glory and rawness, I had a kind of vision where I was able to insert this beauty and this moment into a pair of earrings. A small, miniature world, fascinating material combinations, materials such as metals and stones that symbolize a kind of eternalness, combined with additional materials that I collected, kept or prepared. Jewelry has adorned mankind since the dawn of history, symbolizing status, history, culture. To me, jewelry is the best memento that adorns and decorates the body, and it holds within it more than the eye can see.

### How did your AICF audition go?

The audition went great, I wouldn't even call it an audition, but a fascinating conversation with interesting people, who take interest in young designers. I enjoyed exposing [my work], being exposed and sharing my plans.

### How will the grant help you?

The grant will help me purchase additional tools and instruments for the workshop I am establishing. A lot of expensive tools and equipment are needed in order to create beautiful jewelry in good smithing. This grant will help me get there.

### What does receiving an AICF grant mean to you?

Being a part of a community of designers and artists in my country is a great honor, and it's a great feeling of belonging. It is an amazing opportunity for a young creator at the beginning of their career, and a wonderful platform for development, collaborations and a place to grow and develop in. It's a very tough world outside, and being "alone" and without a supportive framework is very not simple. For me this

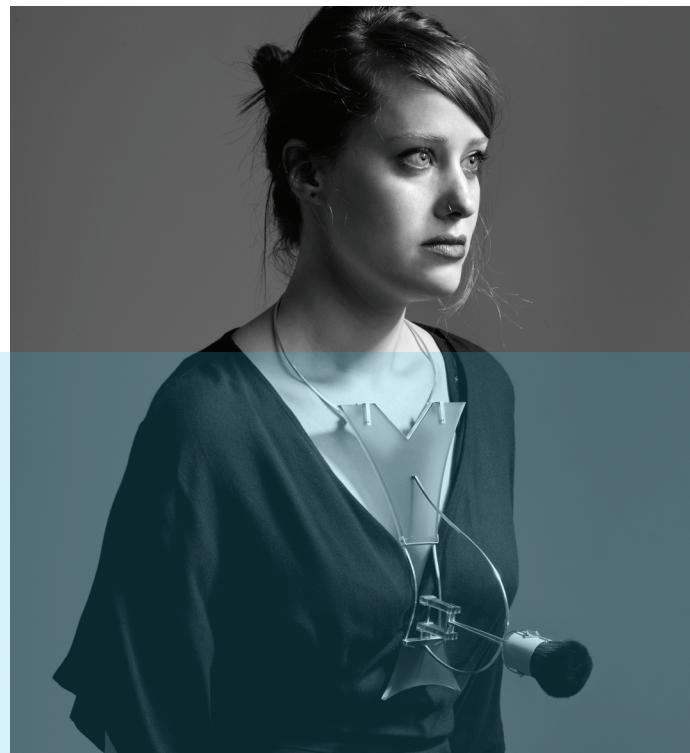


Photo credit: Daniel Sheriff

is an opportunity to feel part of something bigger, and hence to think and create on a larger scale.

### Why do you think it is important to nurture and to work with art in Israel specifically and in the world at large?

Life isn't plain and simple for anyone. Art and design are a way to make the world more beautiful, pleasant and aesthetic – to me, it is the light at the end of the tunnel. Thanks to art and truthful design, the world will seem more illuminated and pleasant for all.

Creation and art can serve to connect people, and to extract from them sides that are not usually exposed. Art and design are languages that don't require words, [and yet] are clearer and more communicative than any other thing. They whet the imagination, satisfy aesthetic and intellectual needs, and to some degree, make us forget troubles and evils. Art and working with art creates a more pleasant environment and atmosphere. Without nurturing and working in art, the whole world would be a rough place, boring and hopeless.

Two current grant recipients share the title role in *Billy Elliot the Musical*

## Arnon Herring

13, Dance, Ramat Gan

### What draws you to dance?

Either you're crazy about it or you're not. If you don't love it a billion percent, then you don't have that drive to push yourself. I like it a lot because of the hard work that it requires, and knowing that you're going to do the same for your entire life, with the purpose of getting to the stage - the place you crave the most.

### How is the experience of performing one show for such a long stretch of time?

Performing on stage is a great privilege. Not every kid my age gets to perform so much on stage and love it. The more experienced you are, the more relaxed you get.

In a way, even if you don't have this support, a real dancer who has the passion to dance, no matter what happens around them, will do it anyway. But when you have this kind of support, it's an amazing help.



Photo credit: Yossi Zwecker, *Billy Elliot the Musical*, Cinema Stage Productions

## Shon Granot Zilberstein

15, Dance, Hod Hasharon

### How do you feel when you're on stage, performing in front of a live audience?

The most fun on stage is the applause. The audience isn't required to do it, and isn't required to say they enjoyed themselves, but when they applaud and show enthusiasm during the performance, it adds motivation and also adds to the drive to continue and be good at it.

### How was your audition for AICF?

Usually auditions are very stressful and tense, and you're under pressure the whole time. But the judges from AICF were very relaxed and pleasant to all of us, and made sure to calm us down the entire time, and it helped us get through this audition in one piece.

### How was the experience of preparing for the role of Billy Elliot and sharing the role with Arnon Herring?

The entire beginning, the entire training, all the rehearsals where you study the text, singing, acting, everything - we did that together. Anyone will tell you that if they watched both me and Arnon, it's an entirely different show, because each of us is Billy, but each of us is a different Billy.



# Yanir Eldorot

## 13, Classical Music - Violin, Givatayim, Current Grant Recipient

Featured performer at AICF's 2017 Celebration of the Arts of Israel

### How and when did you start playing the violin?

I started playing when I was eight years old at school, as part of a program with the city conservatory. After going through a test, it was suggested that I play the violin. We were playing in groups of six students at school, and I fell in love with the instrument. I loved the tone, the repertoire, and in general, even though they were school classes, they were special and different than other classes, and I waited eagerly for them.

### When and how did you understand that you want to seriously invest in playing?

At the end of the first year, I felt connected to the music and a desire to perform in front of an audience. And so I found myself investing in practice and taking private lessons, and the violin became the central thing in my life.

### Are there any artists in your family?

My grandfather used to play the violin and I'm very sorry I never got to hear him play. He passed away before I was born.

### Do you remember your first concert? What was that experience like?

My first performance was at the Givatayim Conservatory, about six months after I started private studies. I performed the Rieding Violin Concerto. I felt a sensation that I had not known before that moment - it was sublime and full of excitement. I felt at that moment that this is what I want to do my entire life - perform in front of an audience, see the audience that is listening and experience the applause at the end. It's a feeling that is hard to describe in words and one that I look forward to with every performance.

### Where are you studying now?

My violin teachers are Prof. Irina Etigon. I am also studying composition, theory, conducting and piano with the international composer and conductor Benjamin Yusupov, who recently was awarded the Acum Lifetime Achievement Award in composition. In addition, I take part in the Young Philharmonic program and the David Goldman Program for Outstanding Young Musicians at the Jerusalem Music Center. Finally, I've been a composer member of Acum since 2017.

### How long a day do you practice?

5-6 hours a day and up to 8 hours before performances. But even when I'm not playing, my thoughts revolve around music and the material I need to practice.



### Who inspires you, especially in the violin field in Israel?

Itzhak Perlman, to whom I listen and whose playing I admire. For me, he is an Israeli icon. This year, I got to participate in the Perlman Program for musicians in Israel.

### When you think of the future, what do you think you'd want to do and achieve? Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

For me every day is a new signifier for what the future holds. I want to play, study new pieces, perform as a soloist and with chamber ensembles. I still don't have a good sense of what a year holds, or 10 years, but I have no doubt that my ambition is to be playing my entire life, perform all over the world and attract more people to the music I perform.

### How did you hear about AICF and why did you audition?

AICF is known as an indispensable part of the development of all students of classical music, and it was a given that I'd audition and be a part of this important framework that holds so much tradition and so many generations of musicians.

### Which other prizes have you won?

Excellence scholarship at the Tel-Aviv Conservatory  
First place in the Golden Key competition  
First place in the Muse competition  
First place in the string instrument category at a competition held at the Raanana Conservatory  
Givatayim Mayor's Award for my violin and piano piece, "Hope"  
And I completed the 8th grade with honors.

# Nahar Eliaz

## 11, Classical Music - Cello, Savyon, Current Grant Recipient

### When and why did you start playing music?

I started playing the cello a little before turning 5. My mom had always dreamt of playing the instrument, and she fulfilled that dream as an adult, while working. I was born into a reality in which my mom plays cello. I saw it, heard it, and asked to learn it too, because I fell in love with an instrument that you can physically embrace and that has such a human-like tone.

### When was your first performance in front of an audience?

About three months after I'd started playing. My teacher had me join a concert given by her conservatory students. I was very nervous before going on stage, but once I was up there, I was no longer afraid. Everything faded away, I concentrated on my playing, and relished both the performance and my playing.

### Who are you studying with now?

For the past six months I've been studying with Prof. Hillel Zori. We usually hold lessons at the Music Academy in Tel-Aviv. I've played recitals and different concerts, and the more work there is, the more hours I have to put in. I usually play about three hours a day, and more as needed during busy periods. Last July, I traveled for a month-long summer course in Boston, and, because of the intense activity at the course, I found myself playing six hours a day and more. It's very important for me to feel satisfied with the results of my practice.

### What kind of music do you enjoy listening to?

Ever since I can remember myself I've felt connected to classical music from all periods. When I'm on the road, I like to relax with "The Voice of Music," Israeli radio's classical music station, and I go to a wide variety of concerts all over Israel. Ever since I was little, I'd lay in bed and listen to cello repertoire, thinking that one day soon, I'll be able to play these pieces.

### Are there musicians who inspire you?

My inspiration for the cello, from the very beginning, was Jacqueline du Pré. I like watching her joie de vivre when she plays. Her life and playing are with me every day.

### How did you hear about AICF's auditions?

I heard about AICF through family members that have received grants years ago, through friends of older musicians and through my teacher. The Foundation is well-known and highly esteemed among all musicians and all my friends. I, like everyone else, waited to reach the minimum age to



Photo credit: Morningside Music Bridge

audition and be eligible for grants, and I finally reached it this year.

### What does a grant from AICF mean for you?

A grant from AICF for me is a professional accolade more so than financial assistance. In Israel, when a musician receives an AICF grant, they add that accomplishment to their resume. In addition, the study of musical performance and all that surrounds it demands major financial expenses, and I appreciate knowing that my family can be more comfortable financially and allow me all I need to progress in my playing.



# Nadav Ovadia

23, Classical Music - Percussion, Current Grant Recipient

## How was the experience of auditioning for AICF?

I enjoy myself every time I play, even during auditions. I've been auditioning for AICF's grants for the past eight years. I remember my first audition, how excited and nervous I was, even shaking at the end of it. Today I'm much more comfortable, and I feel that I can express myself freely during the audition, which helps me enjoy it.

## How has AICF's support helped you in your career?

AICF has a central role in my personal musical development as well as in the advancement of the percussion field in Israel as a whole. I could talk about the technical aspects, and about the grant, but the most important thing is the audition itself. The auditions are like a ladder; every two years there is a new step to climb, and I make a great effort to climb it successfully. These steps in the ladder advance my technique - they are stepping stones in my development as a musician and as a percussionist.

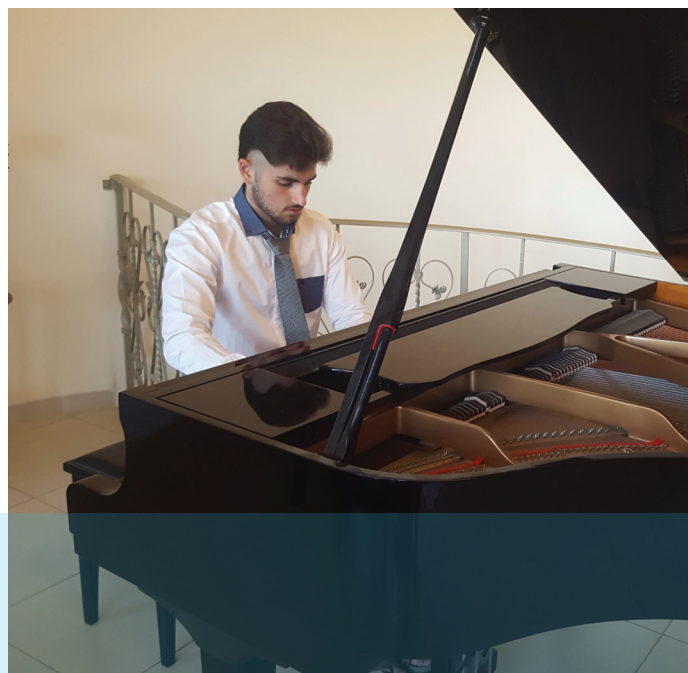


Photo credit: Tormod Kjensjord

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# David Saruchanov

15, Classical Music - Piano, Safed (Tz'fat), Current Grant Recipient



## How did receiving AICF's support affect your work?

When I got my first AICF grant, I realized that music is what I want to focus on professionally. Toward the end of last year, I was able to start studying in Tel Aviv (thanks to AICF's support), and as a result, I am even more convinced that this is what I want to do.

And money aside - the confirmation that I am worth it is truly helpful; it made me more hopeful and confident.

## How are you using the grant?

The grant I received covers a significant part of the tuition my parents pay for my music studies. Since I now travel back and forth from Safed to Tel Aviv, transportation is expensive, so this support is really important.

# The Aviv Competitions

Recognizing Classical artists ready to take the world stage

Piano   Strings   Brass   Woodwinds  
Composing   Conducting   Voice

The **AVIV Competitions** is a flagship program of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. The **AVIV Prize** is one of the most prestigious prizes an artist in Israel can receive. It opens doors to important performance opportunities in Israel and internationally, and strongly impacts their future success as professional artists.

The panel of judges for the **AVIV Competitions** is comprised of some of the most talented and respected professional musicians and music educators in Israel and the world.

The early stages of the AVIV Competitions are co-sponsored by the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, the Music Department of the Culture Administration of the Ministry of Culture and Sport and the Jerusalem Music Centre. The AVIV Competitions, held at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, are free and open to the public.

Israel's next superstars come from among AICF's upper echelon of grantees, soon to be recognized by leading orchestras around the world.

[Visit our website for information on upcoming competitions.](#)

In December 2017 and January 2018, 45 candidates will compete in Cello, Brass, Piano and Voice. The winners will perform in concert together on January 10.



Photo credit: Ilan Spira





Since its establishment  
in 1939,

**18,000**

Israeli artists have benefited  
from AICF's financial support,  
which totals over

**\$160 million**

dollars in grants and  
scholarships.



**400**  
grants are  
awarded to  
outstanding  
Israeli artists  
each year

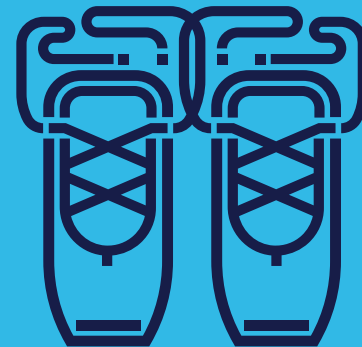
Nearly all the musicians in the  
Israeli Philharmonic who were born  
and raised in Israel were  
AICF grant recipients.



Approximately

**85%**

of the faculty at the Buchmann-  
Mehta School of Music at  
Tel-Aviv University were AICF  
grant recipients



More than

**60%**

of the dancers at the Batsheva  
Dance Company were AICF  
grant recipients.

A Celebration of the Arts of Israel  
Sunday, November 19, 2017  
New York City

**78 YEARS OF IMPACT**

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please visit [www.aicf.org/donate](http://www.aicf.org/donate)

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