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Volume 40. Number 4

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Classical Ballet
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"The Greatest Single Industry"

Crex: Created Out of Nothing

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This 1901 American Grass Twine publicity photo shows a room furnished and decorated almost entirely with wire grass products. The company processed all of the raw material and manufactured the floor coverings in St. Paul. It made the wicker items in New York. The wall matting and picture frames were probably made specially for this photograph. American Grass Twine later became Crex Carpet Company. Photo from Creating New Industries in the Minnesota Historical Society collections.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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H1Story

Volume 40, Number 4

Winter 2006

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN JULY 2003:

The Ramsey County Historical Society shall discover, collect, preserve and interpret the history of the county for the general public, recreate the historical context in which we live and work, and make available the historical resources of the county. The Society's major responsibility is its stewardship over this history.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

In this era when we seek to use natural products in new ways, we will enjoy reading Paul Nelson's lead article depicting a once-flourishing Ramsey County industry that manufactured twine, furniture, and carpet from a forgotten resource: wire grass! A modern-day visit to Crex Meadows in Wisconsin will evoke memories of workers harvesting this dense material, which was twisted and bent into wicker furniture that once graced the porches of St. Paul neighborhoods. A detailed portrait of the founders of the Andahazy dance studio, an account of an early rabies outbreak, and two book reviews round out this diverse issue.

We welcome as our new editor John Lindley, who takes the position following his tenure as editorial board chair. John brings to his new job years of professional publishing experience and a practiced, conscientious approach to the complex task of producing this magazine on a quarterly basis. Under his committed leadership we will maintain the high standards of content and production that have garnered *Ramsey County History* two national awards. As we greet John, we dearly miss our founding editor, Virginia Brainard Kunz, whom we profile in this issue. Her keen intelligence, lively curiosity, and abiding compassion have long guided our interest in local history, and she will always live on in our hearts.

Anne Cowie, Chair, Editorial Board

Virginia Brainard Kunz 1921-2006

A Remembrance

Virginia Brainard Kunz, editor of Ramsey County History for more than forty years, died on January 7, 2006, in Minneapolis. Members and supporters of the Ramsey County Historical Society will miss Virginia's deft editorial hand, her nearly encyclopedic knowledge of St. Paul history, and her talent as a writer.



Born in 1921 in St. Cloud, Minnesota, Virginia graduated from Iowa State University in 1943 with a degree in journalism. Shortly thereafter the Minneapolis Tribune hired Virginia. Her work with the newspaper involved cropping and sizing photos for news stories, writing short articles, and crafting headlines. These skills would serve her well when in 1962 she became the Ramsey County Historical Society's executive secretary. Two years later, Virginia founded Ramsey County History. At the time the Society's magazine came out twice a year. It expanded to quarterly publication in 1989. In 1973 the Society made Virginia its executive director, a position she held until her retirement sixteen years later.

During her tenure as executive director, Virginia oversaw the Society's move from offices at the Gibbs Farm Museum (now the Gibbs Museum of Pioneer and Dakotah Life) in Falcon Heights to larger quarters in the Landmark Center in downtown St. Paul. In the 1970s she was one of a number of civic-minded leaders who were involved in persuading St. Paul and Ramsey County officials to restore the old Federal Courts Building and convert it to the Landmark Center. A skilled manager, Virginia also oversaw the growth of the Society from operating two afternoons a week on an annual budget of \$10,000 to more than 1,200 members and a budget that exceeded \$500,000 at the time of her retirement.

In addition to all the responsibilities she had as executive director of the Society, Virginia found time (continued on the reverse)

Growing Up in St. Paul

My Years at the Andahazy School of Classical Ballet

Sandra Snell Weinberg

It was fifty-five years ago when, at age eleven, I walked up the long flight of wooden stairs that led to the ballet studio and dressing rooms of the Andahazy School of Classical Ballet. The studio, which had been established by Lorand (Lorant) and Anna Andahazy, was on the second floor of the Martens Herman Grocer on 1680 Grand Avenue.

It was Saturday morning and I was greeted by the smell of resin. A class was in session with Mathilda Becker at the piano; her rhythmic playing synchronized with the commands of the teacher. (She would give years of faithful service to the Andahazys.) The waiting room walls were covered with beautiful black and white photographs of Anna and Lorant (Lorand) and of other dancers of the Col. W. de Basil Ballet Russe, during their careers with that company.

I took piano lessons for about a year, but sitting still was not for me, and so I told my mother I wanted to take dance lessons. I enrolled at a dance school housed in the basement level of the old Hamline Hotel that was located on the corner of 545 North Snelling and Charles Avenues. I was taught beginning tap and a sort of acrobatic dance (which was not to my liking). I was not athletic, and standing at the bar arching my back and trying to touch the tip of my toe to the back of my head was not the idea I had in mind as "dance." The teacher scolded me in front of the class for not practicing the tap steps at home (we were on vacation as I remember). So, I left along with my shiny new tap shoes.

Thanks to the mother of one of my friends, I learned about the Andahazys and their school. Three of my school friends and I decided to begin classes there. Even before class began, I knew this was something quite different and of a much higher caliber than what I had ex-

perienced before. The pure classical line was substituted for the awkward affectation of poses and movements I had seen at the other school. I soon learned that we were not to practice at home in order to avoid developing bad habits or causing physical harm. Also, much to my relief, there were no recitals!

My education developed gradually. The historic content of the art of ballet came directly from my teachers as I learned of such great choreographers as Marius Petipa, Michel Fokine, Leonide Massine and George Balanchine.

I spent many a Saturday afternoon at the Hill Library in downtown St. Paul searching for every book I could find on ballet. I read about, and looked at photographs of the famous dancers and choreographers I was learning about in class. I exhausted the selection of ballet books at the Hamline Branch Library on Minnehaha Avenue. I remember one Saturday morning before class when I excitedly announced to Mrs. Andahazy that I had seen her picture in the Borzoi Book of Ballet. At home I talked about the studio and the Andahazys constantly. My father would later tell Mrs. Andahazy, "Sandra eats, drinks, and sleeps ballet."

We were encouraged to visit museums to look at the paintings and sculpture. Mrs. Andahazy's favorite sculptor was Rodin. The artist Douglas Volk, who was with the National Arts Institute in New York, was her grandfather. His painting, "After the Wedding," is in the permanent collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. I remember seeing it for the first time and recognizing the quiet repose of the bride as similar to the grace of Mrs. Andahazy's technique. I learned also that the sculptor, Leonard Volk, was her greatgrandfather. He created the sculptures of the life mask and hands of Lincoln which

are on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

* * *

The Andahazys' teachings were rooted in the traditions of the Russian Imperial Ballet. Out of this rich heritage emerged the methods of the Italian teacher. Enrico Cecchetti, which formed the core of the curriculum at the school while I was there. Every class had a format of basic exercises at the barre to strengthen and tone the body in preparation for the rigors of classical dance. Each class began with barre work and the plié, with accompanying arm positions. We would then move to the Cecchetti port de bras (arm movements), which were the basis of classical ballet upper-body and arm positions. After being shown a routine, we divided into groups for center work (au mileiu) that consisted of combinations of steps and movements using the work that had been done at the barre. These differed in complexity and difficulty as dancers moved from beginning, through intermediate, and on to advanced level classes. Full-length mirrors gave dancers the opportunity to observe their movements and study their positions during the center work. We were taught that the basis of classical ballet training is to keep the upper body quiet while working the legs and feet in a "turned-out" position. This allows the body to "glide" from side to side, forward, and back without having to rotate the body accordingly. The end result of this struggle to get the body to do things which do not come naturally, is that even the most technical of excercises must appear effortless.

When I first came to class I was illequipped with terrible feet and few of the attributes of a fine dancer's body. The hard work required to overcome these physical handicaps left me feeling sick and I would



"Gypsy Dances" from Slavonic Scenes. Sandra Snell (Weinberg) is on the left in this photograph from the Andahazy Ballet Borealis Company's 1956 program. The other dancers are, second from left, Adele Warhol, Margaret Kaehler, Delores Eisenstadt, and Lila Nett.

have to rest when I got home. In spite of this, I loved my teachers and I loved being at the studio. I appreciated good music and yearned to express feeling through dance and the interpretation of the music. This would become more natural as I gained in technique. I remember clearly Mrs. Andahazys words, "Familiarity does not breed contempt, it breeds facility."

In 1952, friends took me to my first performance of the Andahazy Ballet Borealis at Northrop Auditorium. Among the ballets presented that evening was "Slavonic Scenes" with Mrs. Andahazy dancing the lead role in the "Levantine (Serenade)" portion. Slavonic folk dance movements were transposed into the classical ballet idiom, as the dancers were symbolic of wheat growing in the fields. The music was haunting and the depth of feeling displayed by Mrs. Andahazy's work was an image I have never forgotten. She utilized the entire stage in her choreography and her arm movements were most memorable.

As the months and years passed, I took two and three classes a week, and gained in stamina and strength. My muscles began to change, and I developed more of a dancer's

"line": a sort of unbroken flow of the arms and legs in the various positions.

Quiet words of encouragement and the necessary corrections were given to us on an individual basis. Some students came to the school with special physical problems as a result of prior training and were given attention to correct those problems. Mrs. Andahazy also told us about the importance of proper nutrition and rest. She said that rest was needed to re-build cells and guard against possible injury. When I returned to study in the early 1970s, Mrs. Andahazy told me after class one evening that when she saw me for the first time she thought I would last about a week! That "week" turned into years when I finally left in 1960 to return to school out of town, marry and raise a family.

Mrs. Andahazy did not take her art lightly. She was a strict disciplinarian and I wanted to work hard to please her. She demanded, and respected, hard work from all of us. One day after barre exercises she approached me, put her hands around my waist, looked at me and said, "See what you can do?" I was unaware of what I had done that was different, but it gave me hope!

Her demonstrations were a delight to watch. The most mundane exercises held a lyricism that was inspirational. Mr. Andahazy had a more relaxed nature, while still holding high but realistic expectations. As a result of his athletic background and training he had tremendous strength and elevation. It was exciting to watch him leap and turn in the air.

We received lessons in life which came from the Andahazys' own experiences dancing in the Ballet Russe and traveling the world. We were told about fellow dancers they had worked with, and their individual artistic qualities. We learned as Ballet Borealis Company members that petty jealousies and competition among us would not be tolerated.

Lorant (Lorand) had seen a performance of the ballet "Choreartium" with the de Basil Ballet Russe when the company toured Ohio. He fell in love, not only with the beauty and the splendor of ballet, but with a young dancer whose stage name was Anna Adrianova. He began studying ballet in Cleveland under Serge Nadejdin and three years later joined the de Basil Company.

Mrs. Andahazy was the first American girl to be accepted into the Ballet Russe. She successfully auditioned for Leonide Massine and Sol Hurok in New York City when the de Basil Company was on tour. She danced lead roles in the company repertoire, and was chosen by Michel Fokine to dance in his ballet "Les Sylphides." For months she was groomed and coached for the lead role by Fokine. She took a leave of absence from the company to study in Paris with Mathilde Kschessinska, a former prima ballerina assoluta of the Imperial Russian Ballet in St. Petersburg.

Anna's and Lorant's careers with the ballet were interrupted when World War II swept across Europe and the ballet company was disbanded. In 1941 they were married in the "Little Church Around the Corner" in New York City, and one month later Lorant was drafted into the United States Army. While serving his four years, he sustained injuries that earned him the Purple Heart and the Silver and Bronze Stars. In the meantime, Anna toured Europe with the USO (the "Foxhole Ballet") and gave birth to their first son in Lorant's absence. In 1945, the couple was re-united

by Lorant's army chaplain, the late Reverend John Buchanan. As a former pastor of Holy Childhood Catholic Church in St. Paul, Father Buchanan encouraged the Andahazys to come to St. Paul and here they opened their first ballet school. Lorant Andahazy had seen the horrors of war, and many times told us about the suffering of civilians caught in the devastation. His message was that music and the arts play important roles in feeding the souls of suffering people.

* * *

On Saturday, August 17, 1955, my fellow ballet students and I boarded the Northern Pacific Railroad at the Great Northern Railway Station in Minneapolis on our way to Camp Ballet Borealis, established by the Andahazys on Star Lake, near Dent, Minnesota. We arrived in Perham and were transferred to a bus which took us to Dent. I sat with Mrs. Andahazy and we talked about the beauty of the landscape and the woods. She had grown up in New York State and she reminisced about the Adirondack mountains. As we watched the beautiful hills with their bundles of wheat against a blue sky, she told me she dreamed of scenery for the ballet "Slavonic Scenes" that would be just like that view.

We entered camp and found our assigned cabins. I shared a mine with Adele Warhol, Kay Wilson, and Melanie Holmes. After getting settled we all went for a swim, then on to dinner served in the large main building which doubled as a ballet studio.

All the fun of camp life was ours—swimming, archery, and horseback riding, with qualified instructors to insure our safety. Having been a champion equestrian, Mr. Andahazy was riding instructor. Most important me were the daily ballet classes. Every morning, the Andahazys inspected our cabins making sure beds were made properly. They felt a great deal of responsibility for our well-being.

After almost three years of study, I had developed enough strength to begin *pointe* work. *Pointe* shoes (or toe shoes) have a hard, block-like toe. With wear, the toes become softer. The *pointe* work was done toward the end of class after preliminary work in soft ballet shoes.

In 1953, during the beginning of my



Anna and Lorand Andahazy in "Danses Slavs Tzigani." 1954. Photo collection of Marius J. Andahazy.

intermediate level, I was given the role of a worm (one of the "Forces of Decay" in the ballet "The Cargo of Lost Souls"). It was based on Dante's Inferno, choreographed by the Andahazys to contemporary music, and had a narration from the text of the Inferno. Black lights and luminous costumes gave the ballet a demonic quality. Just before the curtain went up, a booming voice came on saying, "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." My first performance in this ballet was presented at the Mayo Civic Auditorium in Rochester, Minnesota. The dressing rooms were tiny and stuffy, and we barely had enough room to move. The stage was small, dirty, and in poor condition. As a "worm," my work was mainly on the stage floor, and I received slivers through my black tights, but the slivers were forgotten when two young girls from the audience asked me and Lila Nett for our autographs.

My entrance into the Corps de Ballet began with "Cargo," and awhile later I got a part in Gypsy Dances in the ballet "Slavonic Scenes." I received a letter from Mrs. Andahazy congratulating me that said, "Everything comes to him who waits," and that I must "wait with patience working all the while until the body is as strong as the soul's desire." I kept that letter, and others I received from her, in a large scrapbook of newspaper clippings, programs, and photos.

I was given a role as a Corps member in the ballets "Les Sylphides" and "Aurora's Wedding." On Mr. Andahazy's advice I wrote down the steps and format of "Les Sylphides" using stick-figure drawings of the positions, entrances, and exits of the soloists. I also diagramed the Farandole (opening) of the ballet "Aurora's Wedding" performed by the entire ensemble. This was encouraged so that we would remember the ballets in their original form. Along with Tschaikovsky's dramatic music to "Aurora's Wedding," I will never forget the thrilling fanfare written by Stravinsky heralding the Farandole.

The ballet company was booked for a



Lorand Andahazy teaching pointe class in St. Paul studio. Joseph Mason photograph, 1956. The author is the fifth dancer from the right. Photo personal collection of the author.



Anna Andahazy in a spontaneous pose at Ballet Camp. 1955. Photo personal collection of the author.

summer session performance at Northrop Auditorium in Minneapolis, accompanied by music from members of the then Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. Rehearsals began months in advance. Cold winter nights were spent at the studio where windows were covered with thick frost. I remember early one evening when the butcher from the shop below the studio appeared at the studio doorway in his bloody apron to complain to Mr. Andahazy about the noise. What struck me at the time was the juxtaposition of the bloody apron in the refined atmosphere of the ballet studio. These rehearsals would take place after a full ballet class, and often lasted until after midnight. I wouldn't get home until oneo'clock in the morning. Some students who lived in Minneapolis or St. Louis Park had to take as many as three buses to get home. At that hour several of my friends and I were lucky to have one of our parents at the studio waiting to take us home. My father, Alonzo Snell; Ralph Nett; Blanche Garland, and her sister, Ruth Commodore, were in the waiting room throughout those long, late evenings. Their wit produced gales of laughter prompting Mr. Andahazy to tell them to quiet down!

I had to get up early to walk to school the next day, but it never entered my mind to stay home because I was tired or sore.

My feet usually were bandaged to cover blisters and my high school locker was full of shoes for assorted foot problems. Going up and down stairs to classes was agony.

In the summer the studio was hot. The long windows on the second floor where our classes were held were opened wide. We could see people across the street below looking up to watch us at the barre. I remember one Saturday in the summer when we all were soaking wet with sweat. Mr. Andahazy lectured us on how lucky we were to be working hard to create beauty. The breezes were cooler on our skin, and he said it was much healthier than lying in the sun on a beach, drinking cokes.

To prepare for the stage, one of the advanced company members gave us lessons in applying our make-up. It had to look like a painting; well-blended and professional. My ballet friends and I would go to Giesens at 8 East 6th Street, Room 207, of the old Midland Building in downtown St. Paul. Giesens had everything for the stage, and we would buy our Max Factor stage make-up and false eyelashes there. The make-up, rouges, etc., came in little silver-colored metal tins. At least one Sunday afternoon was spent at the Minneapolis home of our costumer, Helen Beaverson, for fittings. Years later,

Helen still referred to us as, "my girls." Helen lived well into her nineties.

Dress rehearsals at the theater lasted all day. I liked to watch Mr. Andahazy talk with the stagehands and work with the set designers backstage. During a rehearsal the music would suddenly stop and the musicians would put their instruments down. They were union members and it was time for their break. We were not union so we had to keep going! Our performance at Northrop was to a capacity crowd, and it was for me both exciting and terrifying. Strict orders went out that head pieces must be absolutely secure and not a hair pin was to drop on the stage. We learned the philosophy of both Lorant and Anna that performances were not for selfglorification. Before our entrance onto the stage, they would join with us in a circle and, holding hands, lead us with a prayer that our work would bring beauty to the audience. These performance nights went much too fast, and I wanted to keep dancing. I wanted to do it all over again as it seemed like a "warm-up."

The morning after a performance, my friends and I would call one another on the phone and read the newspaper reviews. At that time, John H. Harvey wrote for the St. Paul papers. Sometimes we would gather at one of our homes to



The cast of "Aurora's Wedding" taking its final bow. The tableau was the original design for the W. de Basil Ballet Russe and executed by Victor Hubal.

re-live everything and dream of the next performance. I couldn't wait for the next ballet class when I would see everyone again and the Andahazys would talk to us about our work. I remember Mrs. Andahazy telling us that we had performed "flawlessly." Deep down, I did not think that I had.

On several occasions, the Company was invited to dance at the Festival of Nations in St. Paul. I danced in the ballet "Szuret" which was inspired by the Hungarian Grape Festival. I wore my own red leather character shoes with our beautiful white dresses, vests and head-pieces decorated with red and green ribbons, the colors of the Hungarian flag.

In the 1920s Lorant Andahazy came to America from Hungary with members of his family. During the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, he was chairman of the Hungarian Relief Campaign in St. Paul. Our studio became a gathering place for Hungarian refugees who had fled their country and found assistance, thanks to the efforts of the Andahazys. Some of them took classes with us, danced in the Company, and a few even married members of the Company.

Many of the friendships I formed at the studio have been life-long. Among them, Lila Nett who went to France to become co-director of a modern dance company in Lyon. After nearly forty years, she is still dancing, teaching and creating new work. She has said that her strong foundation in classical ballet during her years with the Andahazys has served her well.

Anna and Lorant are the two strongest personalities who marked my life. I think of them, with love, often as they are very much alive in my thinking. They never indulged in egocentrism, as the "essential" dance was never abandoned. They both believed profoundly in the sacred nature of dance and Anna especially, projected this spiritual quality like no other I have seen since. Their ideals are summed up in the quote from Plato which was written above the studio mirrors.

"The dance is of all the arts the one that most influences the soul. Dancing is divine and is the gift of God."

Ms. Weinberg has a degree in Art Education and has taught in schools in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Clark Co., Nevada. She also worked in education at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Minnesota Museum of American Art in St. Paul. This year, she and her uncle will begin a fourth volume of family history and geneology. She is employed at Marshall Field's and lives in Hastings, Minn.

I Remember 'Andy' Andahazy— Dancer, Athlete, Officer, Teacher

Del Carter

I was privileged to be a junior counselor under Lorand Andahazy in 1946-47 when he was senior counselor and taught horseback riding at Camp Mohetomi, at Steamboat Springs. To me he was "Andy" during camp and "Sir" or "Captain Andahazy" during school at Breck School and he was director of Military Training there.

Andy rode horseback in the famous Black Shirt Horse Troupe in Chicago, Illinois. He was an expert at trick riding, dressage, and hunter class or horse jumping. He could raise himself to a handstand on the saddle while the horse was running in a circle. He would stand on one arm, then the other.

I would see him walk up to a fence, reach out to the crossbar about chest high and raise himself up to a handstand using almost nothing but his wrist. He had incredible strength, complemented with great poise and grace.

He would tell me about his experiences in World War II. He talked about liberating the concentration camp at Nordhausen and the sights there of man's inhumanity to man. (Go into the Internet, type Lorand Andahazy, then click on the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. There are five videos of Andy talking about his wartime experiences.)

He told me that his athletic and ballet training saved his life on many occasions. For example, he was leading some men down a narrow road that had tall hedgerows on each side. The Germans opened up with heavy machine gun fire and it was Andy's ability to leap over the hedgerows that saved his life.

Not many of the other men survived. He was among the first troops to cross the Elbe River and shake hands with the Russians. (He did not like the Russians and told me he thought it was a huge mistake to let them go into Berlin first. History has proven him right.)

He told me that when he first saw Anna dance, he knew that she was the girl he wanted to marry, and that's why he took up ballet. I once saw a newspaper article that said that he was the greatest ballet dancer since Nijinsky. Another article described a leap he made from the top of some stairs spinning all the way down and landing in a perfect ballet pose. Few other ballet dancers have been able to perform that feat before or since.

He was the most remarkable person I ever met. He could do almost anything he set his mind to.

Del Carter is a graduate of Breck School and a retired businessman who lives in Spring Park, Minnesota.

Stanley Hubbard Remembers

Stanley S. Hubbard

Stanley S. Hubbard also remembered "Andy" Andahazy as an athlete, a war hero, an artist, and teacher, as well as his romance with Anna, his wife

As an athlete he could have gone to the Olympics and competed in gymnastics, track and field (he ran a good second against Jesse Owens in high school), low and high diving, horse jumping and dressage.

As a war hero Andy went into the army as a private, came out as a highly decorated captain, leading one of the tanks into Germany. "I took the first German town away from Hitler," he said.

As an artist, had he not been wounded as a soldier he might have become the greatest ballet dancer of all times. While dancing for the Ballet Russe, he was often denied top billing because he was Hungarian and the Russians did not want a Hungarian overshadowing their Russian dancers. The same was true for his wife, Anna, because she was an American. (Anna was compared to the great Anna Pavlova.)

As teachers, Andy and Anna were always quick to teach and were recognized with many awards for their contributions to ballet. Their Andahazy Ballet Borealis Company was the largest classical ballet school in America. Many students from Breck School benefited from their teaching.

How many people do we know who would, as a young person, see someone dance and say that's the person I want to marry then change their whole life around to become a dancer in order to meet the one they love? Andy's and Anna's story could be made into a great movie. Anna died in 1983 and Andy died a short time later [1986]. They said he died of a broken heart.

Stanley S. Hubbard has had a long career in radio and television broadcasting in the Twin Cities.



Anna and Lorand Andahazy as Zobeide and the Golden Slave in Scheherazade. Miss Dee Studio photo, 1964, courtesy of Marius Andahazy.

R.C.H.S.

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