



The NHSDA Newsletter for Middle and High School Students
Holiday Issue 2015



Photo of dancer Rachel Spitzmiller by Brooke Schneider.

The Holidays bring many celebrations,
with acts of kindness and generous giving.

Here, we learn how to build our own
campaigns to support quality dance
programs and our NHSDA chapters.
Award-winning students share their
experiences in choreography, creative
writing, health, and artwork,

all remembering that dance is more than
a sport ~ it is an important part of
integrative learning and, above all, an
unforgettable bond!

~Dance Arts Now! Editorial Staff

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NEWS

Building Your Own "Thank A Dance Teacher" Campaign

Are you ready to learn how to develop your NHSDA chapter's "Thank A Dance Teacher" fundraising campaign for charitable giving and activism? Here's how...

Step One: Choose a campaign date and establish strategies for a monetary goal.

Step Two: Contact NDEO Special Project Coordinator, Lori Provost at lprovost@ndeo.org. She will send you a link to your chapter's special NDEO giving page.

Step Three: On your campaign website, list clear instructions, including that all participants should post videos and "unselfies" thanking their dance teachers and donate \$10 for each dance teacher they thank. Donations go directly to NDEO to help support dance education projects that benefit students.

Step Four: In January, NDEO will tally all donations made through your chapter's donation page. Schools that meet and supersede pledges will receive complimentary NDEO services and benefits (TBA). Donations may go towards NHSDA points.

You are now ready to fundraise in support of quality dance education and your future!



Photos courtesy of NDEO.

News (cont.)



NHSDA Award Winner Announced

Rachel Spitzmiller, Fine Arts Center Dancer, earned the 2015 NDEO Artistic Merit, Leadership, and Academic Achievement Award based in part on her essays and choreographic accomplishments. A video of her performing her original choreography was also reviewed.

Junior and senior high school NHSDA

members are eligible for this award, one of the highest dance honors programs in the nation. The NHSDA adjudication committee makes the final decision.

Now follow two of Rachel's essays that demonstrate a fine maturity and understanding of dance as an art form. The first explores the importance of the creative process on her life and the second, the analysis of her award-winning dance.

How Choreography

Impacts My Life

By: Rachel Spitzmiller

Fine Arts Center

Advisor/Sponsor: Jan Woodward

While academic classes teach such topics as reading comprehension and calculating equations, dance classes explore some of the most valuable skills, including problem solving and higher order thinking, which directly correlate to real world situations.

This year specifically, I was granted challenging opportunities to choreograph. My responsibility as the choreographer was to learn how to solve each problem creatively while remembering the necessity and ability of the dancers. When an original idea becomes impossible, the choreographer must decide how to alter it, while still fitting within the narrow guidelines.

Often our curriculum involves viewing distinguished dance pieces and examining why we find certain aspects to be effective or ineffective. In our discussions, we avoid saying "I do/do not like," to fully delve into the depths of our mind to scoop out our opinions and reasoning behind them. This concept goes beyond what is commonly taught in schools. Students are often encouraged to find out "What is the Answer" when we should discover ~ ***"Why is the Answer."***

For more information on NHSDA awards,
http://www.ndeo.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=893257&module_id=53722
http://www.ndeo.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=893257&module_id=182478

Special Note: Photos of Rachel by Lucy Ranson, a fellow NHSDA member.

*Student Artistic Merit, Leadership &
Academic Achievement Award
The Choreographic Process ~
Struggle to Triumph
By: Rachel Spitzmiller*

*It is presumed
that the first piece of music was written
circa 1500 BC in*

*Mesopotamia. . . Now leap forward
over thousands of years to the
beginnings of musical compositions by
American women in the early 20th
century ~ women such as Vivian
Fine, the composer of "The Dance of
Triumph: The Rescue of Alcestis."*

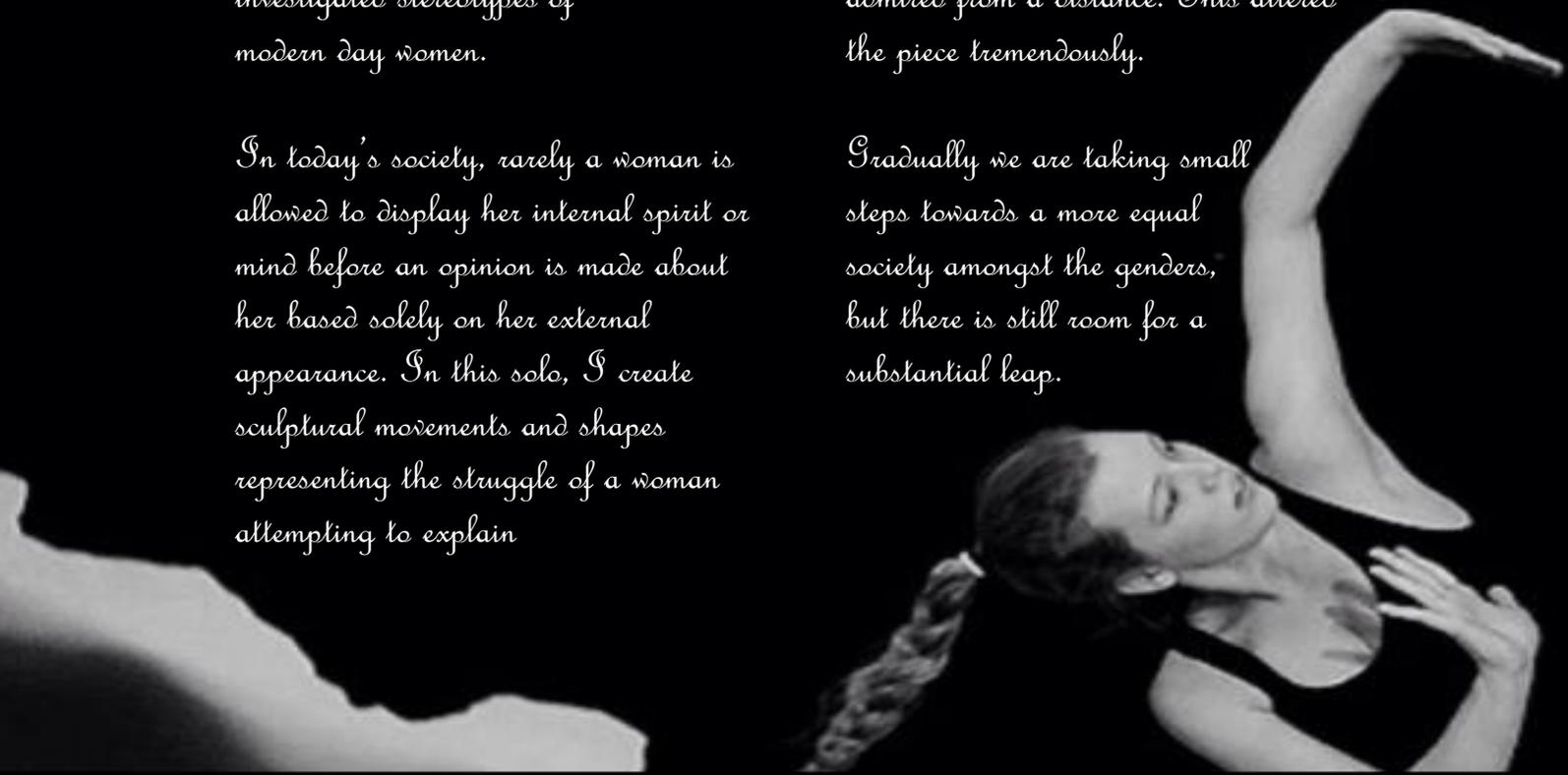
*Through my solo exploration of
movement, entitled "Femme du
Monde," with inspiration from
Vivian Fine's musical composition, I
investigated stereotypes of
modern day women.*

*In today's society, rarely a woman is
allowed to display her internal spirit or
mind before an opinion is made about
her based solely on her external
appearance. In this solo, I create
sculptural movements and shapes
representing the struggle of a woman
attempting to explain*

*her mind to a society that does not
listen but only looks.*

*Initially during the choreographic
process, I set a large amount of
movement upstage. During an
informal performance for college
representatives, Dr. Gretchen
McLaine (Department Chair of
Dance of the College of Charleston)
suggested that I rearrange my
spacing and pathways more downstage,
to emphasize the idea that a woman
has more substance and should not be
admired from a distance. This altered
the piece tremendously.*

*Gradually we are taking small
steps towards a more equal
society amongst the genders,
but there is still room for a
substantial leap.*



Impressions of the Precious Spine
By: Ellie Madwed
Advisor/Sponsor: Mary Pisegna Gorder
All That Dance

Ellie, a senior at University Prep, studies modern, ballet, jazz and lyrical. She is a member of All That Dance's performing company, and serves as her NHSDA chapter's Vice President. Her artistic interpretation of a dancer's foot appeared in the 2015 Back-to-School issue.

***Once you accept the power of spine...
you will become much more efficient
in your creativity. ~ Twyla Tharp***

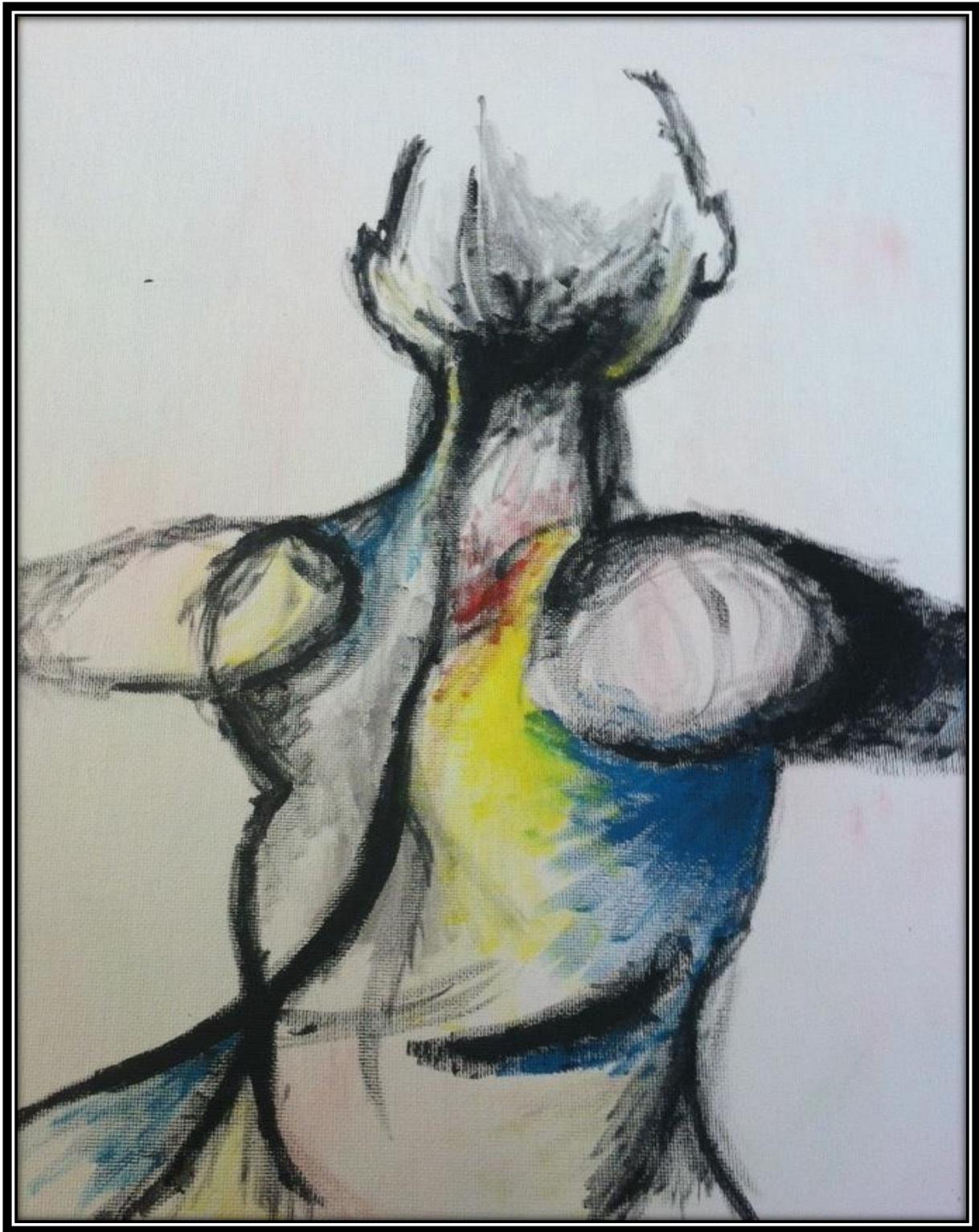
When I chose the subjects for this painting series, I considered the parts of the skeleton that dance heavily focuses on. The torso and spine in particular hold a large amount of strength and expression unlike most.

I begin all of my art projects with a specific idea in mind such as colors or a feeling I want the work to evoke. This project was challenging because I found it was surprisingly difficult to express one art form (dance) in another (visual art).

The medium: acrylic on canvas.



"Spine Study" by Ellie Madwed



"A Dancer's Torso" by Ellie Madwed.

The Gift of Dance

"How dance helps us with other academic subjects"

By: NHSDA Middle & High School Students

Kemps Landing/Old Donation School (ODS)

Advisor/Sponsor: Mary Ann Laverty

These commentaries offer an insightful student view of how the gift of dance smoothly flows into the Core Curriculum and so enriches our lives.

"Dance helps me look at new perspectives of different situations. It makes me creative and innovative in ways to express my thoughts through movement, and with its music my brain strengthens...My understanding of life has skyrocketed!" ~ Sumi

"Dance helps me in Social Studies because we learn about many histories and of people from long ago and today." ~ Brae

"In geometry we must use a focused, logical thought process ~ and so, slow down. When examining a math problem, I tap my foot so that my brain 'dances' around in my head, and through these movements, my thought process is easier; I can think better/more clearly." ~ Ryn

"Dance helps me improve in art class ... I imagine dance shapes to be placed into my sketches and ultimately into my paintings. Also, I think of C.A.S.T. (curved, angular, straight, twisted)...that flow into straight lines or twisted swirlies"~ Abbey

"Memorizing dance movements, while quickly discovering rhythms, helps me comprehend geometry patterns or to remember my Latin vocabulary. This process makes these classes easier...I can understand my work by means of a pattern." ~Bella

"Do you know that dancing helps me when I am in math class at school? ...My friends, my teacher, and I all like to come up with rhymes and dance moves to remember problems. We also like to create hand or body movements to remember polygons and geometry shapes. Also, when I am reading, I picture a dance for the story." ~ Madi



Structure and Form ~ an Architectural Study. Photo courtesy of KL/ODS.

***Dance is More than a Sport –
It is an Unforgettable Bond***

**By: Sophia DeMarchi
Ridge High School
Advisor/Sponsor: Rachel Miranda**



Sophia has been dancing since age four; she participates in the Ridge Dance Collective, her dance studio's ballet company, and has performed in many productions, including Swan Lake and Giselle. She serves as Co-Vice President of her NHSDA Chapter.

Dance is energizing. Dance is tiring. Dance is showing motivation. Dance is showing dedication. Dance is beautiful. But most of all, *Dance is family!*

Through fourteen years of classes, recitals, dress rehearsals and costumes changes I have come to love this sport more and more. Joy is getting ready for Monday class, and nothing completes my week more rejuvenating than a Friday night stretch class. It is a combination of little moments and memories that make it so magical.

This passion I had as a toddler has moved my whole life, and it will continue into the future. My heart has many loves, and certainly dance holds the largest spot, that continually grows.

But dance is more than weekly classes and barre followed by routines in the center; more than pirouettes followed by double attitude turns. It is an unforgettable bond formed with my fellow dancers.

Being part of a dance company has positively changed my life. When I say, "Every Saturday for eight hours I have company rehearsal," people stare and think I'm crazy. They are baffled that my teachers are willing to instruct a group of over twenty teenage girls, but once they step into my studio, they understand what I feel.

Saturday, beginning at nine a.m., my life enriches. Normally teenagers would dread that morning wake-up call, and I would too if not going to dance. We all appear bright and early with messy buns in our hair and sweatshirts over our ballet pink tights and black leotards. As the sun rises, our warm-ups come off and we turn into a unit...Spitting out combinations left and right, exploring new skills - even falling flat on our faces. But we still laugh it out! Company rehearsal is a no judge zone. We tease each other and tell inside jokes that collectively we all laugh at.

My dance teachers are like my aunts and uncles. They know if we have a rough day so they will just go out to Starbucks and come back with twenty Venti Caramel Frappuccinos, with extra whipped cream, of course. They call out "point your feet" or "More extension", only to help us and it works. The strength I build in just two weeks is incredible. I feel more fit, flexible and talented all from their constructive criticism.

Within a few months we have fully completed six numbers, dealt with three heartbreaks, faced one death and made one thousand memories. Our moves are seamless.

Moving effortlessly through *grand jetés*, *ballonnés* and *sissonnes* feel like a flowing river, moving back and forth with such power and vigor. When one girl is lost, or confused about a step, we then run over to help her. We advise on routines, suggest alternatives for difficult movements. We are like each other's cheerleaders, the confidence boosters. Rehearsal might also become a best friend-maker. Yes, we have separate lives outside of our studio, but it somehow connects us, leading to a wonderful union of technique and fun.

We are each other's best friends, advice givers and sisters. Through thick and thin, the sensitive times and laughable moments we share together. This sets dance apart from other sports. We are friends for life. Teammates face rivalries with only the common goal of winning a game. But as ballerinas we share the passion of dance, the

trust in each other, which create an everlasting strength that pulls us together.

Dance is the only place where we can really say we work hard and play hard. It is a community, a collective group of friendly faces that are warm and welcoming. So for me it is much more than the shows and bouquets at the end of a big performance. It is about the connections I make, the friends I have discovered, and the people I know I can always count on. Dance has changed my life in so many ways, and I have yet to find one person that can disagree with its magic.



Photo of friend Daniele Campbell and Sophia DeMarchi at Ridge High School's Spring Dance Showcase 2015.
Photo courtesy of RHS



Photo of Amanda and dance partner taken at Bak MSOA.

Feature Story

The Adagio Class

By: Amanda Ramirez

Bak Middle School of the Arts

American Heritage Boca/Delray campus

Advisors/Sponsors: Martha Satinoff and Hollond Schiller

Amanda's writings have been published in several journals, including Young Writers of America and Cannon Solutions America: Future Authors Project. 'The Adagio Class,' published here, received the Silver Key Award at the Scholastic Art and Writing Competition. She continues dancing and is attending American Heritage Academy as a Full Merit Scholar.

Nervously, I cowered in the corner of the stretching room as all of the dancers chattered away. Legs were stretched practically taking every square inch of the room; topping this off, obese dance bags littered the floor and lunch boxes filled the gaps. The room was small, and I felt even smaller. Bubbles of laughter filled the air. Day end! Day end! I screamed in my head. Expectantly peering at the clock, I let out a groan. The hour hand read three o'clock, not three thirty. I had been in this studio since seven this morning.

"I'll survive one more class," I told myself, "two... maybe not." The previous classes were ballet and folk dancing, which were filled with complexity beyond my skill level. The result: numerous corrections mostly in vibrating shouts. This studio, located behind several back roads and abandoned buildings, was a

mystery; the class schedule was never revealed.

The door flew open, the ballet mistress waltzed in. Her fiery red hair was pulled into a low ponytail. (Great!) The reason for my relief was that the higher her hair was pinned up, the stricter she was in class. "Ladies! Put on your pointe shoes and hurry. In five minutes you will take an adagio class in studio B." She left as quickly as she came in. There was a distinct Cuban accent embedded in her voice.

All of the girls scrambled over to their bags and squealed with excitement. They whipped out their pointe shoes from their bags and tied them with grace and rapidity. My clumsy fingers moved not so quickly.

All around, the talk of the adagio class swarmed my ears. Timidly, I whispered to the girl beside me, "What is an adagio class?" Her brown eyes bulged out of her sockets. "You don't know what an adagio class *is*?" "No," repeated my voice, softer than before. "We get to partner with boys!" she exclaimed with delight. "What?!" I gasped. My stomach took a churning sensation. "I know, isn't that great!" "Yes." I said with a forced semblance of a smile.

Her "motor mouth" began describing in great detail what was to occur in partnering. She seemed oblivious to the fact that I was ignoring her and that I was nervous.

Five minutes wasn't a long time. I found myself entering a purple room, which reeked of feet. To my right were the music controls. In front of me, ironically, the door to leave the studio. (Did I have time to escape?) A few men and teenage boys were already there, stretching and warming up, more girls filed in. The girl, Melissa, was still chattering away. Finally, a tall man with black hair and almond eyes entered.

Silence swept the air as Salvador, our instructor, walked in. He spoke with a mixture of Cuban and British accents. (Curiously, yet what *wasn't* curious about this studio). We began by breaking up into groups according to height for partnering. I was assigned to the group with Julio. I must say he was handsome. He was tall, around six feet, with olive skin. His face appeared chiseled out, with raven black hair, large brown eyes. Salvador explained what was going to happen. We began with turns. The four girls in front of me went too quickly. Blood pounded in my ears, each pound said, "Doom, Doom."

I stepped into preparatory fourth position. An explosion of music came on. I felt Julio's large hands on my tiny waist. The sickening sensation left my chest, replaced with a joyous feeling to dance. My energy leaped towards the sweet melodious music, out from within me. Colors swirled the room as his hands spun me faster and faster. My head whipped around



Photo of Amanda and dance partner taken at Saladino's School of Dance

until the only spot visible was the reflection of my eyes. I could feel the air whipping my face as my heart beat, synchronized with Beethoven's piano accompaniment. I was flying as I turned.

Yet that was the beginning. His hands abruptly stopped my body, which skidded to a halt. I could have sworn sparks flew off my waist. That didn't matter. Colors still lingered in the air, the room no longer smelled of feet but of sweet lavender. Jumps were executed in an explosion of fireworks. I was embraced in a coat of pink, greens, and magentas.

Suddenly... it was all over. My legs were walking out of the space, while my head turned to look back at the studio. "So" asked Melissa "What did'ya think?" "It was amazing." I said in a far off voice.

Dance Arts Now!

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Photo courtesy of All That Dance.

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