

I dance at illinois



pivot

ISSUE 38 • 2024





On-stage rehearsal with the cast of Martha Graham's *Steps in the Street* with guest artist Elizabeth Auclair (rehearsal director, regisseur)

Moving Forward, Looking Back

By Sara Hook, Head

Excitement is always in the air around Dance at Illinois. I am writing this statement on the day before we open our doors to the first ever Midwest Umfundalai Intensive for professional dancers, led by the venerable Dr. C. Kemal Nance. In the same week, Dance at Illinois will be having a fundraising event in our new Storefront Studio, and before June ends, we welcome high school students for a fun-filled, pre-college dance intensive experience. We never slow down!

As I reflect on this past year, I am struck by all the connectivity that we foster. Of course we teach how to connect to our bodies, how body parts connect and coordinate, and how our emotional, spiritual, and intellectual selves are connected to embodiment. We also connect movement to context (personal, political, cultural); we connect with alumni and guest artists across multiple aesthetic traditions; and we connect to our campus and our beloved Champaign-Urbana community.

I feel fortunate to have “landed” here. This fall will be the start of my 25th year and my third year as head. During all that time, change has been constant. I am proud that this department has always stepped forward to help define new traditions and new visions of excellence. This couldn't



Tessa Olson (BFA '25) pictured second from right in Martha Graham's *Steps in the Street*

have happened without the foundations formed by brave leaders like Margaret Erlanger, Jan Stockman Simonds, Oliver Kostock, Patricia Knowles, Rebecca Nettle-Fiol (BFA '75), and Jan Erkert. These educators could not have led those progressive changes without the visionary hardworking faculty, past and present, who unabashedly instigate new ways of seeing, thinking, being, and making. They inspire our students (and in turn are inspired BY our students) daily. It's all a web of connection.

We are also connected to the wider field of dance and to dance in academia in particular. Dance in higher education is always under threat in some ways. We are

constantly proving our worth, our rigor, and our impact. Now is a particularly troubling time as many programs face reductions, upheaval, and even cancellation. We extend our support to all those affected by these daunting turns of events and by many other forms of destabilization occurring in our world today.

I'm grateful to be here, for all the amazing faculty, staff, and students, for the parents and guardians who support those students, for the culture of respect that we enjoy, and for our legacy. Connecting to each other and to all our *Pivot* readers is key to helping us stay ambitious, keep dancing, keep asking hard questions, and dance like we matter—because we do.

TRANSFORMATIONS

By Tessa Olson (BFA '25)

Martha Graham's *Steps in the Street* transformed me as a dancer and a human. Eight weeks deeply studying Graham was really healing. I enjoyed looking at Graham technique as a tool, rather than an absolute. I didn't have to become a Graham dancer or change myself to do this work. With the new block schedule, Dance at Illinois believes that every dance technique deserves energy and respect. All techniques are interrelated. Instead of feeling the weight of perfectionism and expectations, I used the experience to enhance the dancer I already am. I discovered many new ways to move and activated muscles previously not felt. The rigorous work and discipline made me happier, and I rediscovered that committing fully yields great results. This process has directly demonstrated that *you get out what you put in*, and I'm so grateful for the reminder.

DAI attends CADD

By Alexandra Barbier

The 6th biannual Collegium for African Diaspora Dance (CADD) convened at Duke University in February 2024 with the theme “Body Geographies | Mapping Freedoms.” Scholars, artists, students, and dance enthusiasts from around the world gathered to consider how place, location, and geography matter in Black dance practices. Serendipitously, the piece that I created for the 2023 October Dance concert, *yESteRDaZe**, addressed

this theme. With the help of my cast (Khiari Everett, Erin Fabian, Lily Freebery, Damiyah Williams), I converted the piece into an audience-interactive, lecture-demonstration.

Our presentation was well received by an energetic and congratulatory audience, but this was only one aspect of a successful, stimulating weekend. We also received advice from dance

legends like Diane McIntyre, Charmaine Warren, Sherone Price, and Halifu Osumare through intimate conversations and keynote lectures; took workshops that explored South African house dance, the Black dance lineage in the Rockettes precision technique, and the ties between the Black church and Hip Hop culture, to name a few; and watched performances that left our eyes teary and mouths agape in excitement.

Assistant Professor Alexandra Barbier, Damiyah Williams (BFA '25), Khiari Everett (BFA '25), and Erin Fabian (BFA '25) in Barbier's *yESteRDaZe**



Avi Pellegrinetti (BFA '26) in Professor Cynthia Oliver's *Summon. Sow. Reap.*

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

By Betsy Brandt (MFA '12)

Congrats to Avi Pellegrinetti, DAI sophomore (rising junior) for receiving an **Outstanding Presentation** award at the recent Undergraduate Research Symposium! Avi presented “Love and Mania: An Arc Between Deaths,” a deeply researched investigation into the dialectical dynamics of Doris Humphrey’s technique and its potential as an analytical framework for diverse contemporary dance practices. Teaching Associate Professor Betsy Brandt mentored the project, which Avi began exploring in their Context course in fall 2023. Avi was the only FAA student to receive this award from almost 100 presentations and performances at the symposium!



Anna Lillig (BFA '25) and Sophie Philbrick (Dance Minor) in Brooklyn Lutz's (BFA '25) *Pyramids*

THE UNDERGRADUATE DANCE MINOR EXPERIENCE

By Betsy Brandt (MFA '12)

Fall 2023 marked the official launch of our new undergraduate Dance Minor. Two years later, we have almost 30 minors (with more added all the time)! Designed to expand and enrich the department’s impact on non-major populations, the minor has been enthusiastically embraced by students from across the university. The program is designed with flexibility in mind, empowering students to craft a customized curriculum that supports their interests and complements their other studies. Minors take a variety of courses including dance technique, choreography, history, kinesiology, performance, and production. With majors ranging from Creative Writing to Lyric Theatre to Mathematics, our dance minors each contribute something unique to our vibrant Dance at Illinois ecosystem!



Natalia Espinel (Graduate Minor)

GRADUATE MINOR IN DANCE

By Natalia Espinel

I am a Colombian artist and educator pursuing a PhD in Art Education with a graduate minor in Dance. The Dance minor supports my research and my work as a performance artist and represents a community that resonates with my deepest creative inquiries and desires. This year, I will have the honor of presenting my work at the 15th Havana Biennial of Contemporary Art in Cuba, one of the most important biennials in Latin America and the world. The work I will present at the biennial is part of my preliminary exams and dissertation at UIUC, under the guidance of Dr. Jorge Lucero, professor of Art Education, and Roxane D’Orléans Juste (MFA '21), associate professor of Dance. The graduate minor in Dance has helped guide me through my interdisciplinary research in the arts, including collaborative work in public spaces, education, performance, forms of relationality, and experimentation.



DANC 350: Teaching Dance class members leading Leal Elementary School students through creative movement

DANCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

By Sarah Rose Vickerman (BFA '25)

This semester, members of the course DANC 350: Teaching Dance had the incredible opportunity to teach at University High School and Leal Elementary School. Collaboratively, the class worked together to execute various aspects of the lesson plan. At University High School, we engaged with students of diverse dance backgrounds, fostering connections, offering encouragement, and emphasizing the expressive nature of dance. Meanwhile, at Leal Elementary, where dance is already integrated into the curriculum, we introduced new skills and concepts. Both experiences enabled us to conceptualize what we were learning in class in practical settings. Utilizing our knowledge in real-life scenarios was invaluable. The students at both schools were eager to explore new avenues, and we thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the students and being able to dance with them!



NEW

Storefront Studio

By Anna Sapozhnikov (BFA '98, MFA '02)

Welcome to our new Storefront Studio located at 700 South Gregory Street in Urbana. This studio will serve multiple purposes: additional classroom space for DAI's curricular classes, extracurricular space for Registered Student Organizations (RSOs), and finally, rehearsal and study space for our MFA students, replacing the Graduate Dance Center. The Storefront Studio brings DAI great visibility as it is located near popular businesses and only one block away from Krannert Center and the Nevada Dance Studios. Dance donors, alumni, and friends celebrated the soft opening of the studio on June 6, 2024, complete with a wonderful performance by the Umfundalai Summer Dance Intensive participants, under the direction of Associate Professor Kemal Nance and guests Monique Walker and Joseph Bryant. Come by and take a peek!

Members of the Umfundalai Summer Dance Intensive performing at the new Storefront Studio soft opening event in June



ILDEO CONFERENCE

By Betty Allen

This past March, Dance at Illinois had the honor of hosting the Illinois Dance Education Organization (ILDEO) Conference. We were pleased to welcome dance educators from all corners of the state to engage in professional development, collaborative learning, and artistic expression. The conference featured a diverse range of dance sessions catering to various age groups and topics,



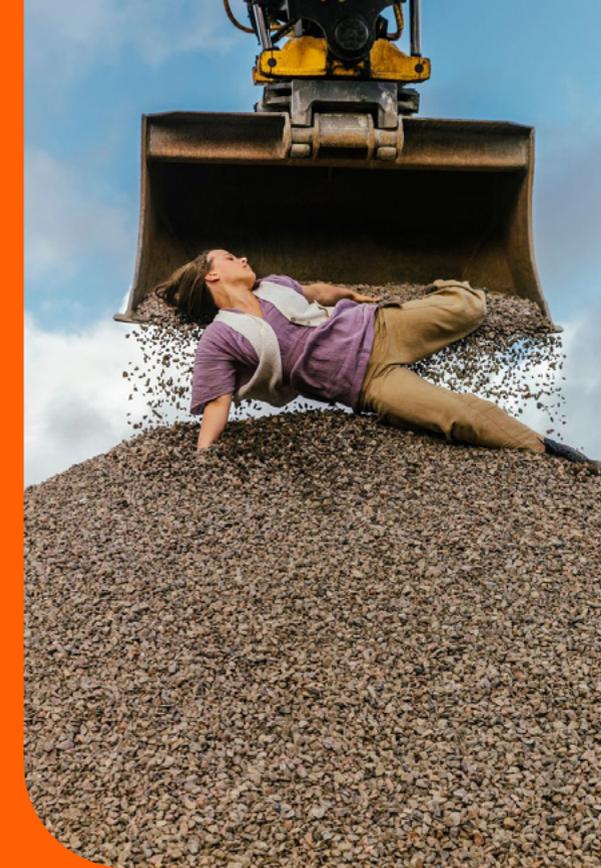
offering attendees the opportunity to participate in practical workshops, creative exploration, and reflective discussions on innovative pedagogical approaches. Participants left the conference equipped with fresh insights and practical strategies to enrich their practice in the field of dance. Our state-of-the-art facilities provided an optimal environment for the conference, which drew approximately 30 attendees over the course of two days, and included presentations by Dance faculty Elliot Reza Emadian (MFA '20), Betsy Brandt (MFA '12), and Becky Netti-Fiol (BFA '75).

Flatlands Short Film winner *excavation* by Ella Posti

FLATLANDS

By Laura Chiamonte (MFA '09)

The Flatlands Dance Film Festival celebrated its 10th anniversary this past season and presented two remarkable films in August. *Broken Memory*, directed by Tomoko Mikanagi, featured a powerful performance by Miki Orihara, a George A. Miller Visiting Artist in the Department of Dance. The festival also showcased *Moving Together*, directed by Maggie M. Bailey, which explored the collaboration between dancers and musicians. The film competition portion of the festival was a true celebration of global dance film talent, featuring a variety of films from around the world. Our esteemed adjudicators Jennifer



Allen, Irene Hsiao, and Omri Drumlevich had the challenging task of selecting the finalists and the festival winner, *excavation*, directed, choreographed, and performed by Ella Posti. The festival has another exciting season planned—keep your calendars open for September 5! The festival opens the Dance at Illinois production season with the feature-length documentary *Bad Like Brooklyn Dancehall*.

transitions



Elliot Reza Emadian (MFA '20) served as our Office Administrator, Assistant Media Coordinator, and Lecturer from 2022–2024. They will be heading to the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY, as a new Assistant Professor in Dance.



Jacob Henss (MFA '22) served as our Space Coordinator from 2019–2024 and will be headed to Illinois State University as a full-time Visiting Lecturer during the 24–25 school year.



Kevin Hamilton served as Dean of the College of Fine and Applied Arts from 2018–2024. He now assumes a campuswide leadership role as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation—Humanities, Arts, and Related Fields.



Assistant Teaching Professor **Rachel Rizzuto** (MFA '21) welcomed a new addition to the family, **Lucille Demarest Yoerges**, on February 24, 2024.



Cast of Landon Allender's (BFA '24) *An Endless Thread*

In Memory

BERNT LEWY

By Sara Hook

Bernt Lewy was the extraordinary man behind the extraordinary woman, his wife Jan Erkert, who led this department from 2006–2022. Bernt was a champion of Dance at Illinois, an enthusiastic (sometimes wittily critical) audience member who donated his goodwill with alacrity and generosity. A tall, handsome old-world gentleman, Bernt insisted on affectionate greetings and reminded us to smile. Bernt knew real challenges in his life having escaped the Nazis in Berlin as a child and losing his first wife to cancer. I think that was why he became an example of positivity and humor and of seizing all that life had to offer. He was an amazing designer of houses and furniture, works of art that are full of his practical no-nonsense sensibility but also his whimsy and lush imagination. I recall that Bernt always loved the gutsiest dancers, the ones who never held back, who took chances, and who were above all, passionate. I hope he is watching us from somewhere and gloating a bit. After all, he was the one who encouraged Jan to become our department head, who helped her keep a good work-life balance, who opened his home to countless faculty, students, guests, donors, and other friends of Dance at Illinois. Bernt is part of our history and legacy and every daring, new, progressive move we make. We miss him and honor him.



dance at illinois

Gabriel Bruno Eng Gonzalez (MFA '25) in
Adanya Glimore's (MFA '24) *so! what now?*



Banafsheh Amiri (MFA '25) in her solo
Shout the Call (Faryad) with Bahram Khani



Cheyenne Smith (BFA '27) in Joe Bowie's (MFA '24) *Shake! Spill! Kiki!*

Awards

Dance Partner Undergraduate Project Awards

(est. 2010) Targeted for summer study by undergraduates.

Landon Allender (BFA '24)
Brooklyn Lutz (BFA '25)
Claire Rineberg (BFA '25)
Jeremiah Jordan (BFA '27)

Mary Elizabeth Hamstrom Award

Awarded to a graduate student for summer study.

Anna Peretz Rogovoy (MFA '24)

Patricia Knowles Graduate Travel Award

Designated for an outstanding MFA candidate in the Department of Dance to be used for travel and study that deepens their artistic life.

Sojung Lim (MFA '24)

Courtney B. Kellogg Memorial Scholarship

(est. 2015) For an outstanding undergraduate dance student. Established in memory of Courtney B. Kellogg Wojcik (BFA '00).

Avi Pellegrinetti (BFA '26)

A. Raheim White Scholarship

(est. 2017) Merit-based award for an underrepresented/minority first-year student.

This award is named in honor of alumnus A. Raheim White (BFA '11), who has cultivated an imaginative, innovative, and sustainable artistic life.

Kayla Hernandez (BFA '28)

Ahmad D. and Dulce G. Issa Dance Scholarship

For overall outstanding achievements.

Tessa Olson (BFA '25)

Freshman (TBA)

Fernadina Chan Scholarship

(est. 2019) Given by alumna Fernadina Chan (MFA '72) to help make education more affordable for student dancers at UIUC.

TBA

Moe Family Dance Award

(est. 1996) Awarded to a dance major with potential for unique contributions to the profession which may lie outside the realm of performance in the traditional sense.

Dare Ayorinde (MFA '24)

Outstanding Undergraduate Performance Award

Tessa Olson (BFA '25)

Vannie L. Sheiry Memorial Scholarship

(est. 1994) Given to a dance major who has demonstrated exceptional performing talent. Priority given to graduate students.

Gabriel Bruno Eng Gonzalez (MFA '25)

Senior Magnolia Award

For a dance student who has shown the most growth and development throughout their four years.

Jaymes Crowder-Acres (BFA '24)

Leadership Award

(est. 2018) This award honors those who have served as leaders in our community.

Nawal Assougdam (BA '25)

Wanda M. Nettle Prize for Student Choreography

(est. 2002) This annual award is designated for best choreography by an undergraduate or graduate student.

Sojung Lim (MFA '24)

William McClellan Memorial Scholarship

(est. 2017) In Honor of William McClellan (BFA '00) for outstanding achievement in choreography and performance.

Landon Allender (BFA '24)

Lisa Carducci Memorial Scholarship

For an overall outstanding BFA student. Established in honor of Lisa Carducci (BFA '84) by her family.

Juliann Craft (BFA '24)

John C. and Pamela A. McKinley Rozehnal

Endowed Dance Scholarship Fund For an undergraduate student that has financial need.

Elizabeth Kramer (BFA '28)

Alumni News

Tuli Bera (BFA '15) invited a group of movement artists/educators to join in designing and leading a series of free workshops in Chicago devoted to exploring personal and professional relationships with Ballet. Tuli's role in this project is to produce the series overall and facilitate the development of each workshop, set to launch in fall 2024, supported by 3Arts Chicago.



William Ervin (MFA '20) joined the cast of the new Broadway production of *Cabaret* at the August Wilson Theatre in NYC. As part of the Prologue, Will and his fellow artists are the bridge between current reality and the Weimar Republic of 1920s Berlin.

Dr. Amy Swanson (BFA '08) will be joining the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance as a new Assistant Professor of Dance Studies, Theory, and History.

Raheim White (BFA '11) will be joining the University of Utah as the new Assistant Professor Head of Movement in the Department of Theater.

Tuli Bera photo by William Frederking
 Will Ervin photo by Luis Suarez
 Amy Swanson photo by Karo Zen
 Raheim White photo by Paul Francis



NYC ALUMNI CONCERT AT ARTS ON SITE

By Tere O'Connor

In November 2023, DAI, together with Arts on Site in NYC, produced a program of our alums which unfolded over two exciting evenings. Amber Sloan, one of our illustrious graduates, oversaw the organization of this event shaped by an application process selecting alums to perform original dances. We witnessed rich choreographic works by our alumni living in New York. The community we engender at Dance at Illinois travels, cultivating satellite centers in cities where our alums settle. We have a lot of folx in New York, and if this is any evidence, we are high kicking in the Big Apple!

CHICAGO ALUMNI CONCERT AT LINKS HALL

Dance at Illinois will be hosting its second Alumni Concert at Links Hall in Chicago on November 1-2, 2024, featuring alumni choreographers and performers from Chicagoland and the surrounding area. The selection committee includes Mark Kater (BFA '80), Paige Cunningham Caldarella (MFA '07), and Mariam Thiam (BFA '04).



¹ Olivia Papa (BA '25), Jackie O'Brochta (BA '25), Avi Pellegrinetti (BFA '26), and Jade Lajeune (BFA '27) in Isabella Saldaña's (BFA '24) *In Your Being* ² Ella Andersen (BFA '27), Jayla Anderson (BFA '27), Damiyah Williams (BFA '25), Hailey Brown (BFA '25), Jasmine O'Connor (BA '26), and Cheyenne Smith (BFA '27) in Genesis Medious's (BFA '24) *Resilient Reflections* ³ Jasmine O'Connor (BA '26), Sofia Saldaña (Dance Minor), Yuno Kimura (BFA '25), Nawal Assougdam (BA '25), Jeremiah Jordan (BFA '27), Genesis Medious (BFA '24), Jade Lajeune (BFA '27), Anna Lillig (BFA '25), Jayla Anderson (BFA '27), and Ella Andersen (BFA '27) in Kennedy Wilson's (BFA '24) *Look Here* ⁴ Jaymes Crowder-Acres (BFA '24) in his solo *Shadows of Obligation* ⁵ Yuno Kimura (BFA '25), Ashley Bruno (BFA '25), and Claire Rineberg (BFA '25) in Juliann Craft's (BFA '24) *In Too Deep*

⁶ Tessa Olson (BFA '25), Jayla Anderson (BFA '27), Jasmine O'Connor (BA '26), Brooklyn Lutz (BFA '25), and Gabriella Quaresima (BFA '27) in Alana Larry's (BFA '24) *oxymoron; but cheers!* ⁷ Lily Freebery (BFA '26) and Claire Rineberg (BFA '25) in Natalie Kunsemiller's (BFA '24) *And Then You Smile* ⁸ Brooklyn Lutz (BFA '25), Sarah Rose Vickerman (BFA '25), and Olivia Papa (BA '25) in Haley Krause's (BFA '24) *When we are, when am i?* ⁹ Nawal Assougdam (BA '25), Tessa Olson (BFA '25), and Lena Baumann (BFA '27) in Drina Canjura-Kaufmann's (BFA '24) *Resonance*

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2023–2024

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Tessa Olson (BFA '25), Ashley Bruno (BFA '25), Sojung Lim (MFA '24), and Juliann Craft (BFA '24) in Professor Tere O'Connor's *Poem*

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DONATE NOW

Donors play a pivotal role in the ongoing realization of the department's mission to become a national center for the development of dance artists and leaders. The collaborative work generated in our program has been spreading across campus and out into the world, and we can do even more to share what dance can contribute to our society. Dance Partners—our generous donors—provide the core strength for our students, our creative work, and our vision for advancing the art of dance.

Our Dance Partners Advancement Committee (DPAC), made up of a small group of dedicated Dance Partners, act as a bridge between Dance at Illinois and the community. Along with DPAC, we hope you will join us in our mission to cultivate imaginative, innovative, and sustainable artistic lives.

To make a gift, please designate the desired fund (e.g., "Scholarships" or "Production & Enrichment") on your check, made payable to the University of Illinois Foundation/ Department of Dance, and mail to University of Illinois Foundation, PO Box 734500, Chicago, IL 60673-4500.

For information on how to donate online:
go.illinois.edu/SupportDance.



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE DANCE PARTNERS ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE



Kelly Bradham
 Jerry Carden
 Tim Hutchison
 Masumi Iriye (new)
 Michael Lambert
 Len Lewicki
 Sally Shepherd
 Tim Temple
 Alicia Trezise

Top: DPAC members Jerry Carden and Tim Temple with Bethany Whoric

Middle: Head Sara Hook with donors Rich Erickson and Suki Ngai

Bottom: Claire Rineberg (BFA '25) and Michael Lambert (President, DPAC)

24-25

SEASON

Flatlands Film Festival
September 5
Spurlock Museum

October Dance
October 10-12
Tryon Festival Theatre

Student Works Concert
December 6-7
DRK

February Dance
January 30-February 1
Colwell Playhouse

Studiosdance
March 6-8
Studio Theatre

Spring Senior Thesis Concert
April 26-27
Studio Theatre



Juliann Craft (BFA '24) and Sara Hook in Anna Peretz Rogovoy's (MFA '24) *Good Girl*

AUDITION DATES

Undergraduate Program

- October 12, 2024
Open House and Audition
- January 25, 2025
Chicago

Graduate Program

- December 12, 2024 (virtual)
- January 29-30, 2025 (in-person)

Credits

DANCE FACULTY

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Serouj Aprahamian Assistant Professor

Alexandra Barbier Assistant Professor

Betsy Brandt Associate Teaching Professor and Non-Majors Program Director

Laura Chiaramonte Assistant Teaching Professor and Media Coordinator

Denis Chiaramonte Lecturer

Paige Cunningham Caldarella Associate Professor

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Natalie Fiol Photos unless

otherwise noted, Design

Anne Jackson Copy Editor

Front Cover: Alexis Chiet (BFA '27), Erin Fabian (BFA '26), and Anna Lillig (BFA '25) in Adanya Gilmore's (MFA '24) *so! what now?*

Back Cover: Kennedy Wilson (BFA '24), Sarah Rose Vickerman (BFA '25), Isabella Saldaña (BFA '24), Avi Pellegrinetti (BFA '26), Lily Freebery (BFA '26), and Haley Krause (BFA '24) in Sojung Lim's (MFA '24) *Chronic Translation*



Guest artist Alfonso Cervera and Associate Professor Paige Cunningham Caldarella (MFA '07) in their duet *Ponzy Scheme*



College of Fine & Applied Arts

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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