



### Special Issue

The Orff approach to special music education and music therapy:  
Practice, theory and research

## **The Hellenic Orff-Schulwerk Association (ESMA): Historical Review, Evolution and Prospects**

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### **Abstract**

*This article provides a historical review of the Hellenic Orff-Schulwerk Association (ESMA) from its founding until today. Polyxeni Matéy introduced the Orff approach in Greece during the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and her students have played an important role in expanding the Orff approach in Greece. After a brief reference to the history of the two first decades of the successful function of ESMA, the article focuses on the associations' goals and perspectives in the third decade of its existence. In the current situation of Greece and its socioeconomic conditions, ESMA places great importance on linking its activity to fields such as inclusive education and social work providing scientific support to teachers that work in these areas.*

**Keywords:** relations; values; redefinition; goals; inclusive education; Greece

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### **Introduction**

The purpose of this article is to present the value orientation and goals of the Hellenic Orff-Schulwerk Association (ESMA). We shall therefore proceed, using archived materials and interviews, to outline a brief history of the association from its creation to the present day. We shall review the reasons that led to the foundation of ESMA as well as the association's relationship with the original aims of Orff-Schulwerk, the modern-day social issues and the development (update) of Orff-

Schulwerk as expressed in the International Orff-Schulwerk Forum. We also evaluate the way these factors affect ESMA. According to Carl Orff, the Schulwerk needs to remain open and in constant development by teachers and artists in all countries and at all times. It needs to be protected from being trapped in a fixed theoretical model or boxed in a strict method which would take away its simplicity (Haselbach 1992; Regner 1996, 2006). ESMA tries to keep the approach open, to highlight its values and aims. Constant contact with the Orff-Schulwerk Forum, liaison with other associations,

collaboration with national organisations of life-long education, as well as the conduct of seminars and production of publications are some of the main actions used by the association to achieve its goals.

### **The Orff approach in Greece: The process of creating ESMA**

Although Greece is a country that does not belong to central Europe, it received Orff's pedagogical ideas very early on. Polyxeni Matéy introduced the Orff approach in Greece during the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

After spending several years abroad, Matéy (1902–1999) returned to Greece in 1931 as a successful piano soloist. Until 1935 she worked in the school run by her first cousin, Koula Pratsika, and was introduced to Dalcroze Eurhythmics and the intellectual circles of Athens, as expressed by the literary current of the “1930s generation”. She became interested in pedagogical studies and decided to attend the Güntherschule (1935–1936). There, she met Carl Orff. It was the beginning of a collaboration and friendship between the two that was meant to last until the end of the composer's life. In 1938, she started the “*Polyxeni Matéy School of Rhythmic Gymnastics*” in Athens. It is there that she had the chance to explore the concept of music and movement within the Greek language, always aided by her lifelong friend, the teacher and renowned representative of the Demotic movement, Manolis Triantaphyllidis. Eventually, Matéy's school became a meeting place for the artists and intellectuals of its time (Tsioli-Plagianou & Alexiadi 1977).

In 1957, Carl Orff visited Athens bringing along the first Orff-Schulwerk publications. He encouraged Matéy to “work in this direction” and to create the Greek version of the Schulwerk, Matéy took his advice. The result was the first volume of the Greek Orff-Schulwerk; a bilingual work based on Greek traditional music and dance, published in 1963 (Matéy 1963).

Matéy attended the Salzburg international seminars, which paved the way for the founding of the Orff Institute in 1961 (Sarropoulou 2003). Among the first twenty students of the Institute was the then, 18-year-old Greek pupil of Matéy, Danae Apostolidou–Gagné, who had been living in the United States since 1965 and remained in close contact with Greece and ESMA.

The prevalence of the term “*Music and Movement Education*” in Greece is also attributed to Matéy based on the subtitle of “*Orff Schulwerk: Musik für Kinder: Elementare Musik-und Bewegungserziehung*” (Matéy 1986). Matéy used it to gradually replace the term “*Rhythmic*”. In her

earlier books, she uses the term “*Rhythmic*” to express what she later calls “*Music and Movement Education*”. The transition seems to be marked by Matéy's 1986 definition: “We use the term ‘*Rhythmic*’ to describe a music and movement education suggested to people as a physical, emotional and intellectual whole” (Matéy 1986: 7). Also due to Matéy, the Orff approach is known as the “*Orff system*”. Even today, most Greeks use this term to refer to this specific pedagogical approach.

In 1970, the Orff approach was taught in a Greek elementary school for the first time, namely in the Arsakeio Elementary School by Fotini Protopsalti. Protopsalti went on to teach in the Moraitis Elementary School. In 1985, she concluded her tenure there with a training seminar for teachers on the “*Orff system*”. The seminar was conducted in collaboration with the Greek Society for Music Education (EEME / GSME) and was attended by 240 teachers. Angelica Slavik, Matéy's close collaborator, was among the seminar teachers. Slavik was Matéy's student in Austria, whom Matéy invited to Greece in order to help her propagate Orff's ideas. Slavik took up residence in Greece and her contribution to the propagation of the Orff approach has been fundamental and constant until today. Among others, she collaborated with Matéy in the Greek Orff-Schulwerk published in 1993.

The success of the seminar resulted in the setting up of a one-year informative seminar supervised by Polyxeni Matéy and this contributed to the development of professional training in the Orff approach. In 1986, with the help and guidance of Herman Regner and Polyxeni Matéy, the Moraitis School started the two-year postgraduate course in Carl Orff Music and Movement Education. The course was the first form of professional training in the Orff approach offered outside of Austria in Europe, under the supervision of the Orff-Schulwerk Forum.

In November 1990, the graduates of the first two courses, together with others actively involved in the Orff approach, formed the Hellenic Orff-Schulwerk Association (ESMA). According to its charter, all graduates of the Moraitis School two-year postgraduate course and of the Orff Institute could be full members of the association. Anyone interested in the approach and propagation of Carl Orff's pedagogical ideas could be an assisting member. The association organises seminars, has published two books by Polyxeni Matéy and in 1991 started publishing the magazine “*Rhythmoi*”.

## On the way to today: Twenty-two years of history

The international Orff–Schulwerk associations are organisations of music and dance teachers, inspired and motivated by elemental music and movement pedagogy according to Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman’s Schulwerk, adapting its principles to the language and culture of their own country. Their goals are the furthering of various target groups in all the aspects of elemental music and dance education, as well as professional development and publications. The associations are in contact with the Orff-Schulwerk Forum along with the associations of other countries and exchange experiences.

ESMA is already in the third decade of its existence. Its course has been marked by several fluctuations in: a) the nature, frequency and intensity of its activities; b) the number of its assisting members; c) its value orientations; and d) its ability to accomplish its main goals.

During its first decade of running, ESMA focused on spreading the concept of Music and Movement Education to the fullest extent within the Greek teaching community and on supporting the graduates of the two–year postgraduate course in Carl Orff music and movement education, i.e. its full members. This was achieved by a long series of seminars, which became regular over time, and the publication of “*Rhythmoi*” magazine. The association’s seminars attracted full attendance. The teachers there were professors from Greece and abroad and the seminars were attended by members of the association, both full and assisting, as well as teachers and artists interested in learning about the Orff approach.

ESMA started its second decade by organising an international festival in the Moraitis School (2002). The festival brought ESMA even closer to the professors and teachers from the Orff Institute and to international developments. It also renewed ESMA’s connection with the professional course run by the Moraitis School. During that time, ESMA had approximately 800 full and assisting members, it organised seminars and lectures, set up its own library and published “*Rhythmoi*” magazine three times a year (Filianou 2003).

This period marked a significant surge in the propagation of the Orff system. In fact, the approach was becoming so popular, that the number of Greek participants in the international summer courses at Orff Institute was growing constantly. At the same time the number of conservatoires, private primary and elementary schools, which included the Orff system in their curriculum was increasing. The expansion was so great that even in public schools, with the collaboration of the parents’ associations and

support of the headteachers, Orff lessons were offered, sometimes after the standard morning programme of the schools or within the programme. For the rest of the second decade, ESMA focused on providing seminars aiming to provide lifelong learning to its members.

In Greece, the Orff system is taught in a number of settings, such as private schools, day care centres, special schools, dance schools, municipal projects and so on. Even the national curriculum and several university courses include elements of the Orff system, but one must be especially thorough in making sure they are in accordance with the original aims, means and content of Orff-Schulwerk.

We can also notice connections between the Orff approach, special education and inclusive education. According to ESMA’s records, two of our full members serve as music teachers in special schools and work with Orff-Schulwerk in special education. More specifically, Maria Filianou has a master’s degree in special education; she also worked with hearing impaired children and adults until 1986 and she is developing scientific and artistic activities combining the Orff approach and special education. Margarita Xanthaki is also interested in finding ways to combine the Orff approach with special education and to learn more about music therapy. There is also the music therapist Manolis Antonacakis who connects the Orff approach with music therapy techniques in children with developmental disorders and works in Crete as a music therapist.

The psychomotor therapist Cristina Sypsa and Olympia Agalianou (first author) are combining psychomotor techniques with the Orff approach working with people with autistic spectrum disorder and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (Sypsa & Agalianou 2009). Agalianou (2012) also uses Orff ideas in intercultural inclusive education. Also, in our review of the Greek literature, we identified one doctoral dissertation by Vavetsi (2004) dealing with the music-movement method of Carl Orff as a psychotherapeutic technique for children that suffer from autism.

As a large number of teachers specialising in several areas and within a variety of pedagogical settings became extensively involved, music and movement education became ‘fashionable’. One of the consequences of this phenomenon was a series of distortions and misinterpretations of the principles, aims and content of the Orff approach. Moreover, this ‘fashion’ trend resulted in an abundance of seminars offered by all kinds of organisations claiming or advertising that they teach the Orff system. These seminars were usually short-term and did not include ESMA in any way. Oddly enough, in spite of this increase, the

association's seminars began to slip into a decline, while the number of students on the two-year postgraduate course in Carl Orff music and movement education decreased. Further consequences included a decrease in the number of full and assisting members, difficulties in keeping the association running and a slump in its activities.

To make matters worse, the financial crisis that showed its first signs towards the end of the decade became a major factor in shaping the socioeconomic conditions in Greece during the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These are the circumstances under which ESMA entered the third decade of its existence. One of the consequences was the halting of the print publication of "*Rhythmoi*" magazine after twenty years of circulation and a total of forty-two issues.

ESMA entered a transitional period and is now required to redefine its existence, goals and policy within a general state of flux inherent not only in the Greek society, but also in the European and worldwide reality.

### Goals and perspectives for the third decade

According to the proceedings of the Board meetings and the statements of its members, ESMA focuses on two fields of action:

- a) ESMA feels obligated to redefine in greater detail the concept of the Orff approach, according the principles defined by the Orff-Schulwerk Forum and the international symposia, and its implementation in Greece, as well as to update its goals; and
- b) bearing in mind the particulars of the present socioeconomic conditions, ESMA places great importance on linking its activity to fields such as social work and inclusive education. The most important factor in ESMA's activity, which will be elaborated further on, in connection with these two fields is its relationship with the International Orff-Schulwerk Forum and with the professional training of music and movement education run by the Moraitis School.

Since 2009, members of the association have attended the annual meeting of the Orff-Schulwerk Forum without fail, held at the Orff-Institute in Salzburg, Austria. Members participate in the meeting, working groups, discussions and exchange concerns, ideas and reflections with other members of the Forum. ESMA wishes to continue and develop this connection, as it is regarded as a source of information, knowledge, motivation and inspiration. In addition, ESMA is in close contact and collaboration with the professional training of Music and Movement Education run by the

Moraitis School. It is important to note that this course has had a different structure and curriculum since 2011. The new curriculum, under the direction of Katerina Sarropoulou, founder member of ESMA, follows the updated recommendation lines of the Orff-Schulwerk Forum and takes the form of level courses. Level courses are taught by members of the Board and ESMA tries to support and promote the course whenever possible. The new structure and curriculum has attracted more students who will eventually become full members of the association.

As mentioned before, ESMA's current goal is the conceptual definition of issues regarding the original aims and identity of the Orff approach. Additional goals of this field include the constant updating of members on the current research activities taking place into Orff-Schulwerk, the latest trends, as well as the redefinition and evolution of the Orff approach. It cannot be stressed enough that Orff-Schulwerk is not a method, but rather a pedagogical concept that needs to remain open and in constant development in all countries and at all times. It needs to be protected from being trapped in a fixed theoretical model or boxed into a strict method which would take away its character. Orff himself, in a lecture he gave at the University of Toronto in 1962, mentioned:

"Those who look for a method or a ready-made system are rather uncomfortable with the Schulwerk; people with artistic temperament and a flair for improvisation are fascinated by it. They are stimulated by the possibilities inherent in a work which is never quite finished, in flux constantly developing" (Orff 1962/1992: 30).

Despite the fact that Matéy (1986) referred to the Orff approach with the term "system", she clarified that music and movement education does not consist of codified exercises, but represents a general pedagogic conception.

ESMA attempts to achieve the aforementioned goal through a series of actions. These are:

- a) the publication of articles in journals;
- b) lectures and organisation of workshops;
- c) a new website, currently under construction;
- d) the online reissue of *Rhythmoi*.

ESMA's next current goal is to link its activity to the fields of inclusive education and social work. The reasons that led to the setting of this goal are related to the specific socioeconomic situation that marks our time and its consequences on the social and educational structures. For ESMA, the idea of inclusive education does not apply only to people who from birth or through accident or illness live under other physical, psychical or cognitive conditions than the majority of people. Nowadays,

segregation because of the diversity due to ethnicity, social or economic status is happening increasingly often.

### **Inclusive education in Greece**

Inclusive education is a part of the official Greek education policy. This policy has emerged due to the special social and economic circumstances of the contemporary Greek community. Basically, it refers to three fields: special education, intercultural education and second chance schools (SCSs).

#### ***a) Special education in Greece***

A shift in the education of people with behavioural problems and pervasive developmental disorders occurred after the institution of Law 2817/2000. This law introduced the abolition of discriminating terminology and also promoted respect of individual differences. Its purpose was the educational and social integration of people characterised as ‘special’. The law 3699/2008, expanded on this and encourages a policy of education and integration of those with special educational needs. According to this law special education is compulsory, as well as mainstream education and functions as part of the public and free education system. The state is obliged to provide special education to children of preschool primary and secondary education. Special education aims specifically to address the:

“a) development of a handicapped students’ personality; b) improvement of their potential and capability for their effective integration or re-integration in mainstream schooling or anywhere else and any time; c) their integration in the education system, social life and vocational activity according to their potential; d) their mutual acceptance in society and their social development (art. 2). Handicapped students’ special educational needs are identified by Centres of Diagnosis and Support, the Special Committee for Diagnosis and Assessment and Medical-Pedagogical Centres of other Ministries that cooperate with Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs (art. 4)” (Law 2817/2000: 1565).

These Centres are responsible, among other things, to oversee the provision of continuous counselling support and information to teaching staff and to anyone who participates in the educational process, vocational training and the creation of information and training programs for parents.

According to article 6 of the aforementioned law (3699/2008) special education is provided:

(1) Within mainstream schools: a) with the support of the teacher of the classroom or with parallel support if the child has mild difficulties, and b) with the support of the integration class teacher if the child has mild-severe difficulties.

(2) in special schools if the child has serious difficulties. Qualifications of special education teachers include: a) PhD in the field of special educational needs, b) Post-graduate degree in the field of special education or school psychology, c) First degree from Pedagogy Departments of Primary Education or Special Education or Departments of Educational and Social Policy and d) a certificate of attendance of annual seminars degree on special education from Departments of Pedagogy (Law 3699/2008, art.20).

Despite the existence of these departments, Maraslio INSET College of Primary Education (Didaskalio) has trained the majority of teachers that work in special education today in life-long educational programs (Anastasiadis & Syriopoulou-Delli 2010).

Greek policy follows the model of the one-track approach as in Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, and Cyprus (Georgiadi, Kourkoutas & Kalyva 2007). According to this model, the main effort is focused on including students with special educational needs into mainstream school. Students with special needs have expanded over the recent decades. Integration programmes are implemented in mainstream schools and parents’ associations demand access to the education system and equal opportunities in the education and labour market and special needs associations’ demand independent living in society (Anastasiadis & Syriopoulou-Delli 2010). If we really target inclusion we have to think about two points: 1) it is obvious that the effective function demands special skills and attitudes of the mainstream school teachers, and ii) special education and inclusion can be contradictory.

#### ***b) Intercultural education in Greece***

The Greek educational policy for foreign children has undergone many changes during the last few decades. At first, the Greek state showed interest for the education of Greek people, who had repatriated to Greece from the USA, Australia, Canada, and Germany. During the 1990s repatriation from these countries decreased, while the collapse of the ‘Eastern-block’ brought with it an increase of the repatriation of Greek expatriates from the eastern European countries, as well as immigrants from Albania, Asia, and Africa. A number of so-called schools for “repatriated students of Greek origin” were found for phasing this situation. In 1996 these schools were gradually renamed as intercultural schools for offering

education to immigrants too. The law 2413/1996 about “the education of Greek people abroad and the intercultural education” is the first attempt of Greek policy to set aside the assimilation approach and establishes the intercultural approach. The composition that accompanies this law mentions: “Intercultural Education starts from the recognition of multiculturalism in societies and the special value of all civilisations”. Intercultural schools follow the same national curriculum as the mainstream schools (Law 2413/1996, art. 34, 35).

The intercultural model promotes the dialectical communication between people of different cultural groups. International organisations, such the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the European Union, use this term to declare not only the spirit that must inspire the school programme but also to undertake actions for the equal opportunities in education for everybody. Its principles are the equality of all civilisations, mutual understanding, empathy, tolerance, respect for the differences of the other, solidarity and discharge of ethnic and racial stereotypes and prejudices. In comparison to other educational models, intercultural education is the most complete approach, because it stresses the importance of the communication, cooperation and understanding between the different cultural groups. The objectives of intercultural education have been defined as: knowledge, acceptance and respect of diversity; mutual understanding and dialogue between different civilizations; rejection of stereotypes and prejudice and equal and constructive co-existence within a multicultural society (Landis, Bennett & Bennett 2004).

The political, economic and social situation is changing rapidly and this has resulted in the immigration of great masses of people in Greece. This phenomenon makes the development of the intercultural education in Greece necessary and inevitable. The law of 1996 defined intercultural education as an approach that “embraces all the student groups who are vulnerable to educational exclusion and the indigenous student population” (Law 2413/1996, art. 34: 2450). But the solution is far from an ideal one, because it leads to marginalisation, social exclusion and isolation of these children. Despite the fact that separate, segregated schools are called “intercultural”, they do not seem to promote intercultural education, because they do not encourage the communication and coexistence of people with different cultural traditions. Separate schools do not encourage cultural interaction, a key element, which contributes to mutual understanding, exchange of habits, cultural experiences and so on. Immigrants exceed 15% of the general Greek population. The economic migrants remain under conditions of legal uncertainty despite the three official efforts

for legalisation in 1998, 2001 and 2005 (Law 2910/2001, 3386/2005). This makes the situation demanding and complicated.

On the other hand, despite the existence of intercultural schools a great number of immigrants attend the mainstream schools. Greek educational policy has to find ways to include immigrants’ children into a different environment and help them to become familiar with a way of living, which differs from their own. The constantly increasing number of immigrant families living in Greece has forced teachers to deal with another factor affecting classroom dynamics: student attitudes towards their immigrant classmates, their families, and immigrants in general.

A study has suggested that students held negative opinions about immigrants. In addition, positive comments were limited to the cheap labour provided by immigrant workers. Implications for schools and the educational process are considered (Dimakos & Tasiopoulou 2010).

Training of teachers is also crucial. Teachers need further training in order to respond effectively to the challenges of a multicultural class. As a solution to this problem seminars of this kind should be organised all over Greece. One of potential target of these seminars should be the utilisation of diversity as an opportunity for personal, social and cultural development (Gurin, Naghta & Lopez 2004). Obviously, cultural minorities and cultural diversity should be recognised and the uniqueness of each civilisation should not be overwhelmed by global trends. Globalisation poses a serious threat to cultural diversity and heterogeneity.

### *c) Greek second chance schools (SCSs)*

Second chance schools were founded according to the law 2525/1997. Fifty-eight SCSs were established in the whole country especially after 2000. Eight of them operate within prisons. These are schools for adult learners that have not finished compulsory education. They follow a flexible curriculum according the special needs of their students. The main aims of SCSs are a) to reconnect learners with the education, b) to train them and cultivate a positive attitude towards learning, c) to support the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills, d) to enhance their personality, and e) to offer access to the labour market. There are very few data about these schools in the literature. The teachers and the students of SCSs have many initiatives to communicate and collaborate mainly through social networks. They continue to ask for new collaborations and they try to incorporate creative and expressive activities into their curriculum (Antonopoulou, Koutrouba & Babalis 2011).

## ESMA's potential contribution to inclusive education in Greece

The relationship between the Orff approach with inclusive education and social work has its roots in the values and the aims of the Orff approach. During the annual convention of the Orff-Schulwerk Forum (5-8 July 2012) Orff teachers from all over the world exchanged ideas on humanistic, artistic and pedagogical pillars of Orff-Schulwerk. This was the topic of the magazine *Orff-Schulwerk Informationen*<sup>1</sup>, issue 87. Up until today there have been six *Orff-Schulwerk Informationen* issues (50, 53, 62, 73, 81, and 89) dealing with Orff-Schulwerk and social work, special education or inclusive education. Shirley Salmon (2010) has also explained how all students can participate actively and experience expressive and creative forms during an Orff class.

Other indicative references in this direction which have inspired ESMA are described below. In the 2006 Orff symposium, Georg Feuser presented the topic *"From segregation via integration to inclusion: Theory and practice"* and held a dialogue with Shirley Salmon on the subject (Feuser 2007). In the same symposium, Royston Maldoom spoke about *"Community dance: Concept and practice"*. Among other things, he noted: "The best way to bring about a knowledge society is surely to begin by working to promote a healthy society: a society that strives for fairness and acceptance of difference" (Maldoom 2007: 306). Shirley Salmon (2010) also explained how all students can participate actively and experience expressive and creative forms during an Orff class. Many other key figures within the Orff society work on this (i.e., inclusive education through expressive and creative activities) in theory and in practice.

The creative impulse is present in everyone's life, regardless of their age or mental ability. Creative awareness is fundamental. It is the very thing that makes every human being feel worth living (Winnicott 2003). Obligatory compliance causes a sense of futility and the feeling that nothing is worthwhile (Winnicott 1971). The Orff approach can offer a genuine experience of expression and creativity, thus enhancing a person's self-esteem and self-perception. In the 2006 International Orff-Schulwerk Symposium *"In Dialogue"*, Georg Feuser, in a discussion with Shirley Salmon about integration, stated: "I believe that we (experts in Music and Dance Education or those attempting to explain educational phenomena scientifically) shouldn't be under the illusion that

these points provide possibilities for changing society" (Feuser 2007: 140). This is a precious note that promotes significantly the real social contribution.

ESMA's main effort is to communicate these ideas primarily among its members and additionally within the Greek educational community. EMSA is already in contact with several social organisations and has planned a number of activities in collaboration with organisations of both the public and the private sector. The outcome of this effort will be evaluated in the course of time.

## Conclusion

In the twenty-two years of its existence, ESMA has been through a variety of situations, depending on the stage of development and dissemination of the Orff approach, as well as the socioeconomic situation in Greece. Its overall course resembles a curve which peaked in the first years of the second decade, right in the middle of the whole period. As the third decade begins, ESMA is faced with a number of issues in a broader transition. Being in close contact with the International Orff-Schulwerk Forum in Salzburg and with the Orff level courses run by the Moraitis School, it is now planning its next steps. Observing and interpreting contemporary Greek society, it has redefined its objectives and organised its actions. The two aims on which ESMA currently focuses on are the clarification and redefining of the main concepts according to the three pillars (i.e., humanistic-artistic and pedagogical aspects) of the Orff approach and its social contribution. The humanistic values and goals within Orff-Schulwerk are now more relevant than ever.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.orff-schulwerk-forum-salzburg.org/english/orff\\_schulwerk\\_informationen/issues.html](http://www.orff-schulwerk-forum-salzburg.org/english/orff_schulwerk_informationen/issues.html)

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