



# Tirgan Annual Report 2020

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# Land Acknowledgement

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Tirgan acknowledges this land, known as Tkaronto, and honours the stewardship, past, present and future of the Wendat, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Cre'dit First Nation. Tkaronto is part of the 'Dish With One Spoon territory. The Dish With One Spoon is a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee that bound them to share the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous Nations and peoples, Europeans, and all newcomers have been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work in this community, on this territory.

# Message From The CEO

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While nothing could have prepared us for all of the issues that 2020 brought to bear for the arts and culture sector, I applaud the resilience of the Tirgan community. I am extremely appreciative of our staff, board, and the volunteers for the way they approached the situation, with confidence, optimism, and true empathy and compassion. I share my humble gratitude to you, our donors and volunteers who stuck with us during a year in which we were unable to present any physical festivals, as you patiently participated in our transition to digital programming. We felt your support throughout, proving how strong and lasting our community is; it further strengthened my belief in what we are striving to achieve together.

To keep the spirit of the community alive and to continue to support the artists, we moved our programming online and found innovative ways to keep our community engaged. We moved our Nowruz 2020 festival online, produced a 13-episode series for children, Tirgan Kid's Time, and also started to work on developing a digital platform that specifically supports ethnic artists.

We used the federal government's wage subsidy and other government support to maintain employment and keep almost all of our workforce. All of this allowed us to keep working and creating cultural programs for the community, protect our artists and employees, and that for me is a huge success.

The year 2020 was quite a ride, it pushed us to come up with creative ways of engagement and we have certainly come out of it stronger.



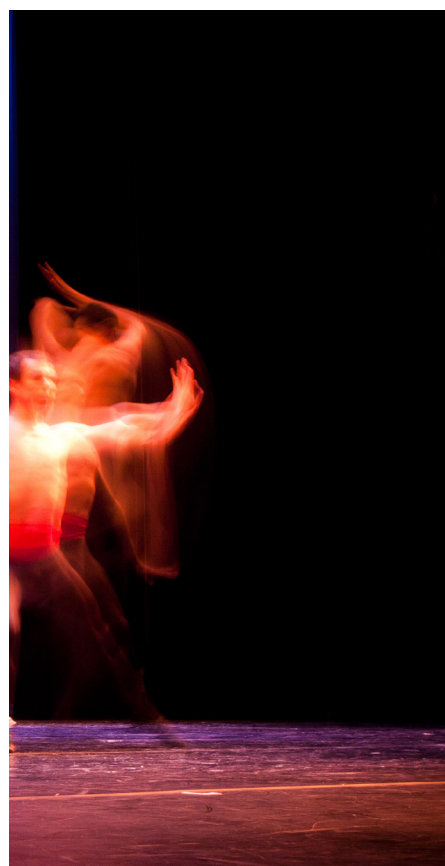
**Mehrdad Ariannejad**  
President & Chief Executive Officer

# Who We Are

The Iranian-Canadian community is one of the fastest growing ethnic minorities in Canada. Since the early 1980s, the community has grown from around 5000 residents to over 300 thousand. Nurtured by the vibrant Iranian-Canadian community over the past 12 years, Tirgan is firmly established as a major artistic and cultural organization in North America. Our extensive programs have helped support Artists and cultural figures of all backgrounds in Canada and around the world. This success story has paved the way for Tirgan to become a major artistic and cultural hub to celebrate Iranian arts and culture in the world.

As a multidisciplinary Canadian arts and culture charity that is recognized as a cultural anchor for the Iranian-Canadian community in Canada and across the world, our mission is to serve as the catalyst for creating a cohesive cultural framework that fosters a thriving community through the arts. We aim to provide a platform of unity and equal opportunity to engage artists, art-enthusiasts, volunteers, and the community at large.

Our vision is to preserve, promote, and celebrate Iranian arts by educating the public on our culture, and creating cross-cultural dialogue. Our signature events, Nowruz Festival (held annually in March) and Tirgan Festival (held biennially in July), are large-scale multidisciplinary cultural festivals with music, dance, theatre, cinema, visual arts, literature, and children's activities.



# Our Values

**Equality** - We value and respect people of all backgrounds, religions and gender identities. We believe a diverse and inclusive community at Tirgan fosters innovation and creativity, and we are committed to building a space where everyone feels valued, safe and respected.

**Excellence** - We strive for excellence in our artistic and cultural programming through various offerings to the public. We aspire to excellence in the governance of our resources and will exceed the expectations of our supporters because their loyalty and trust is vital to our future.

**Passion** - We are passionate about sharing a love for Iranian arts and culture that enriches the lives of those around us.

**Partnership** - We value the power of partnership with other organizations, people, and corporations through which our arts programming is enriched and made accessible to the greater community.

**Stewardship** - We value the trust of our greater community - people, corporations, and fellow foundations that contribute time and effort to our organization and mission.



# Diversity, Inclusion And Equity Statement

Tirgan was founded in 2007 to resonate with the ever-growing Iranian diaspora around the world and create a cohesive cultural framework for a thriving community. This was partly a result of extreme limitations imposed on cultural activities inside Iran, and partly due to the lack of a dedicated cultural platform that could unify the efforts of intellectuals and artists worldwide.

Canada is a culturally pluralistic society; different ethnic communities tend to have their own subculture that is not necessarily shared. Our carefully curated artistic events break these barriers, preserve and promote our culture while providing opportunities for Iranian-Canadians to flourish. The need for interactions between ethnic communities and the community at large is very strong, otherwise our multicultural society will consist of pockets of isolated communities that interact only among themselves without any cross-cultural exchange. Tirgan facilitates this interaction between communities through large-scale events while strengthening the bond within the Iranian-Canadian community.

Tirgan has helped introduce, shape, enhance and further elevate many artists and cultural figures. Tirgan's dedication to the celebration of traditional and classical arts continues to enlighten new generations to understand the depth and breadth of Iranian culture. We have consistently balanced this approach by introducing a variety of modern arts programs that appeal to a growing second and third-generation of Iranian immigrants. The limitations imposed on arts and artists inside Iran have been detrimental to the realization of the full potential of Iranian arts and culture. Tirgan's unbiased guardianship of the arts – which promotes systematic patronage for culture – has been instrumental to the continued



growth of Iranian arts and culture. As one of the world's leading democracies, Canada has many similarities to the Iran's multiculturalism and history. Over the years, Tirgan has been the golden thread that weaves the Iranian community into Canada's diverse cultural quilt. Tirgan's success record includes the assembly of a vibrant young community of artists, scholars, specialists, activists, organizers and patrons of the arts around a unified vision.

We have created a grassroots, volunteer-based environment by engaging community members with a common cause. Iran has a diverse culture including different ethnicities such as Turks, Lors, Kurds, Baluchis, Gilaks, etc. who live in Iran. Iranian-Canadians and other ethnic communities such as Kurds, Azerbaijanis, Tajiks, and Afghans in Canada celebrate Nowruz as their new year. As it is one of our signature festivals, we provide a platform for everyone to come together and celebrate the beginning of spring through this ancient celebration centered around art, culture and heritage.

The non-partisan, non-religious nature of Tirgan's vision and a steadfast focus on the celebration of one of the richest cultures in human history, has proven to be the most effective unifier of Iranians, irrespective of their geographical location and background. 'Unity in Diversity' is the essence of Tirgan's vision as a cultural organization with global aspirations. Tirgan's efforts have culminated in creating a major global focal point for Iranian arts and culture.

One that not only drives the passion of artists and art enthusiasts, but also the meaningfully engaged patrons of Iranian arts to participate in the celebration of our rich cultural heritage. By creating this focal point, Tirgan is the perfect platform upon which we can collectively realize our dream. The Tirgan vision is a global invitation to participate in building unity, celebrating diversity, and helping to maintain our rich culture.



# Our Culture Our Identity



# Impact

Tirgan's impact over the years has been substantial on many levels. Our signature festivals have turned into the world's largest celebrations of Iranian art and culture and a popular meeting point for the very best of local and international talents presenting Iranian cultural programs. Our festivals are held in multiple prestigious locations in Toronto, such as the Harbourfront Centre, the Distillery Historic District in downtown Toronto, and TO Live venues in downtown and North York. These events attract over 150,000 visitors from within Canada and around the world, 250+ artists, and include 140+ performances, talks, presentations, and workshops. Over the years, we have presented 1000+ minority artists, have earned the support of 30+ community partners, 40 official sponsors, over 120 individual monthly donors and dozens of loyal major donors. Our 2000+ dedicated volunteers have helped raise over \$6 million in cash and \$4 million as in-kind support.

## Impact Statistics 2020

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54

No. Of Artists Involved



90

Number Of Volunteers



2 M

TV And Other Media Partners



10,000

Volunteer Hours



80,000

Social Media Reach

## Geographic Reach



Canada



Germany



US



Netherlands



UAE



Australia



Iran



France



Sweden



UK

## 2020 Focus

This year, we have seen the most extraordinary periods in Tirgan's history to advance the public appreciation of Arts and Culture. Appropriately, Tirgan adapted to these exceptional circumstances and mustered its resources on digital programs to support the community's spirit and, wherever possible, reduce the financial impact of Covid-19.

Hence, Tirgan's goals pivoted quickly on adjusting its strategies and promoting understanding of Iranian Arts & Culture by curating and producing digital enjoyments. Tirgan has worked closely with artists, business partners, government bodies to enrich people's lives by screening an insightful documentary to creating entertaining performances for all ages together with intelligently crafted children's puppet plays.

In 2020, Tirgan's strategic objectives focused on expanding digital reach, hosting online celebrations of significant days, digital production of artistic performances, virtual puppet plays for children and laying the foundation for a multi-experience platform for the creative world.

# Program Highlights

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1. Expansion of Tirgan's digital programs and making them accessible globally.
2. Increase and diversify private funding sources and government grants.
3. Create a learning experience for children in support of cultural diversity and familiarize them with important traditions.
4. Deliver an excellent digital experience.
5. Screening a documentary to further educate and, most importantly, offer the opportunity to viewers to reflect on the biases through different perspectives.
6. Conducting comprehensive research to produce a white paper in support of creating a platform with five different components that include a digital artists' repository, arts education, a marketplace, virtual performance along with artists' tools and resources.
7. Fostering the spirit of volunteerism to advocate teamwork and compassion through social responsibility.

# Nowruz Persian New Year



Tirgan's Nowruz 2020 events were held with all necessary health and safety precautions. We did our best to respect our commitments to our volunteers, artists, sponsors, organizations involved, service and product providers, and to consider the opinions and concerns of the Iranian community and the community at large. The process of making major decisions in a large organization like Tirgan – with more than 500 volunteers, artists, numerous sponsors, and interactions with other institutions – was very complicated. Altering programs that have been in the works for months, demanded time, thorough consideration, and collective wisdom. We decided to move the program online, offered a refund to the ticket holders through the box office at the Meridian Arts Centre, and the performances were recorded live or pre-recorded and broadcast on TV and through social media. We tried our very best to not let the spirit of the festival get dampened. Everyone involved with the Tirgan community, including the artists and the volunteers, were remarkably understanding of the situation and offered support in whatever capacity feasible. By moving the Nowruz 2020 Festival online, we were able to reach a much wider and diverse audience. These decisions were difficult, but it not only helped to prevent the spread of the COVID-19, but also brought the Iranian Canadian and the global Iranian communities together stronger while promoting Iranian art and culture. We managed to keep a variety of our planned performances in our online program which included music, dance, storytelling, theatre, and a visual arts exhibition. While the pandemic-related restrictions impacted our activities significantly in 2020, we had to adapt and evolve quickly as our Nowruz festival in 2020 was right at the beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020.


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# Yalda Night

We celebrated Yalda night, a deeply cherished gathering in the longest and darkest night of the year, with our very special guests, Niaz Nawab and Erwin Kachikian, along with Boshra Dastournezhad. The production was an hour-long live, interactive event held on Zoom. The format was designed to fill the hearts with live music and poetry recital. The show brought together a wider audience, individuals sharing “in-the-moment” experiences together yet from afar. We ensured that this program offered families an emotional engagement on a significant symbolic night of the year, hoping for brighter days ahead.



NIAZ NAWAB



BOSHRA

**YALDA  
VIRTUAL  
CONCERT**

PRODUCED IN COLLABORATION WITH  
ERWIN KHACHIKIAN

**SATURDAY  
DEC 19TH**

**9 PM (EST)**

**TICKET  
\$30**

PER HOUSEHOLD



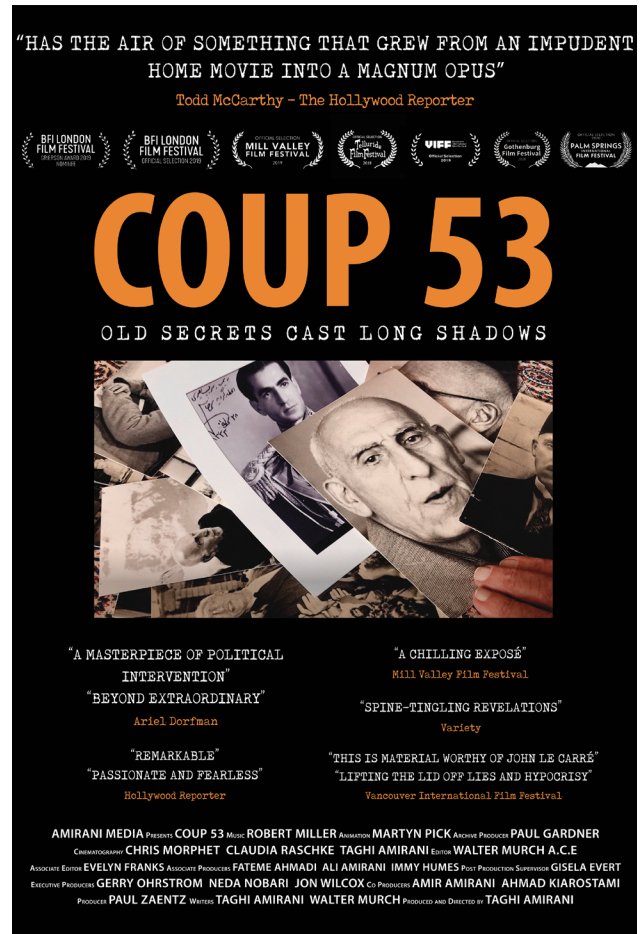
**LUCKY  
SEAT  
TICKET  
GIVEAWAY**





# Coup 53: Movie Screening

This was the story of the 1953 Anglo-American coup in Iran that overthrew the democratically elected Prime Minister Mossadegh and reinstalled the Shah, featuring never-before-seen archives which were hidden for decades. While making a documentary about the Anglo-American coup in Iran in 1953, Iranian director Taghi Amirani and Editor Walter Murch (Apocalypse Now, The Conversation, The English Patient) discover extraordinary never-before-seen archive material hidden for decades. The 16mm footage and documents not only allow the filmmakers to tell the story of the overthrow of the Iranian government in unprecedented detail, but also lead to explosive revelations about dark secrets buried for 67 years. What begins as a history documentary about four days in August 1953, turns into a live investigation, taking the filmmakers into uncharted cinematic waters. The roots of Iran's volatile relationship with Britain and America has never been so forensically and dramatically exposed. The event included an exclusive Q&A with Ralph Fiennes, Walter Murch and Taghi Amirani.



# Tirgan Kids Time

Nowruz 2020 festival's success gave us the impetus to extend our programming throughout the year, and in fall of 2020 we worked on a 13-episode series, Tirgan Kids Time, based on Iranian folklore specifically for children. This kind of programming was new for Tirgan and we received a very positive response from our community. Producing online festivals requires very specialized skills. At the same time, it was challenging to keep our volunteers engaged and motivated without physical festivals. This created a unique opportunity where we could engage our volunteers by having them participate in the production of Tirgan Kids Time which to them was akin to a workshop. Under the guidance of our artistic director, the volunteers were fast learners and attained key skills for future events.

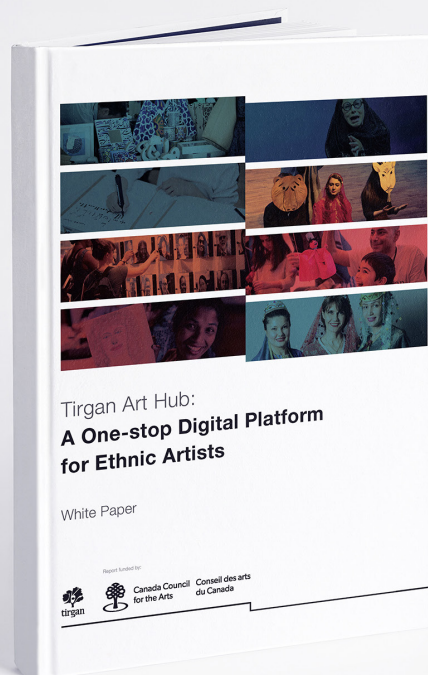
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# Tirgan Art Hub

Tirgan conducted a thorough research and produced a white paper on a one-stop digital platform to support ethnic artists along with a basic prototype of the platform. This platform, 'Connected Dots', would have five different components that include a digital artists' repository, arts education, a marketplace, virtual performance along with artists' tools and resources. For this project, our focus was on the repository; Canadian Ethnic Artists' Digital Repository (CEADR). We hired a researcher to review existing literature, look into similar platforms, map out the stakeholders, interview the artists, initiate a survey and also do a stakeholder consultation to write this white paper. We also consulted with a UX/UI designer and a software architect to understand the specifics of the requirements to develop this platform. This white paper will serve as the foundation for us to be able to build an open-access, interactive platform to enable the digital discoverability of the ethnic artists in Canada. It has infinite possibilities and ample scope to bring diverse voices together in the multicultural tapestry of the Canadian creative economy. In the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, the Connected Dots platform will help create sustainability, meaningful discoverability, exposure, and career support to help ethnic artists and arts professionals. The ethnic artists' profile, their work, and biography will form the foundation of this multi-layered platform which will help us populate the interactive environment.

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# Our Volunteers

We have strong roots in the community through our Board of Directors and Trustees, who are very well respected in the community. We also have a vast network of over 2000 volunteers that support our activities. Tirgan is a community-based arts and culture organization and understandably, our community is our greatest strength. We were an entirely volunteer-run organization until 2016, but as our programming and operations continue to expand, we need a strong team to carry our vision forward. Despite being away from their home country, the community members that are well-rooted in ancient Persian culture are very driven to ensure that the next generation gets ample exposure to the traditional arts and culture, compelling them to contribute their time and energy towards our mission as well. At the same time, the immersive events that we organize provide an opportunity for them to create collective memories, feel a sense of pride in their culture and also share it with their friends from other diverse backgrounds. Our volunteers have helped us grow, thrive, and sustain. During the pandemic, the volunteers continued supporting the organization, working together and learning from each other. The journey to making these large-scale festivals is as important as the festivals themselves.

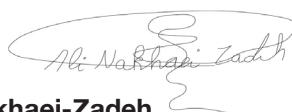


# Financial Overview

Treasurer's Report for the fiscal year of February 01, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

The financial statement has been manifested by the firm FSTP Professional Corporation.

Despite all the challenges due to the pandemic in 2020, Tirgan was able to maintain its operations due to responsive support from provincial, federal, and municipal governments, and through donations, contributions, and sponsorships. During the past year, Tirgan's programming was mainly conducted online and continued throughout the year. The board of directors and the executive team took all reasonable steps to achieve our goals and build the foundation for our future operations in the most effective way. As we move forward towards upcoming arts and culture events such as Nowruz 2022, we will continue to promote and improve the growth of our relationship with our donors and corporate sponsors to reinforce and establish sustainable revenue.



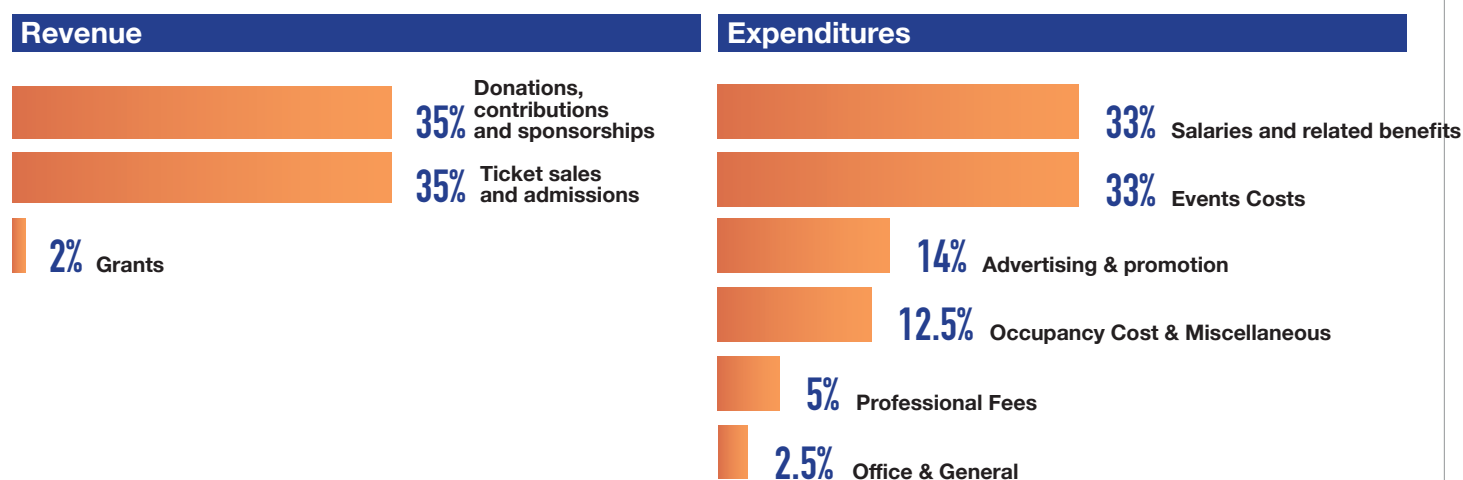
**Ali Nakhaei-Zadeh**

Board Treasurer

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## Report

Below is the information for fiscal year of 2020 which has been derived from FSTP Professional Corporation audition:



# Funding Sources

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Tirgan's exceptional reputation in support of Arts & Cultural development has been recognized as responsible, sensitive to multiculturalism, and competent to deliver the activities for the benefit of the community by Government & Financial institutions, Commercial and Private sources. Consequently, Tirgan is delighted to have been trusted with public funding repeatedly and carries out its accountability for the proper use in line with its purposes.

In 2020, Tirgan rose to the challenge of shutdowns due to Covid 19 Pandemic, switched its popular programs to digital streaming, and retained and received public funding commercial and private sponsorships to support its objectives. Nowruz 2020 received federal and provincial grants as well as private sponsorship support. Tirgan Kids Time was funded by United Ways and private sponsorship.

Tirgan Art Hub, Tirgan's solution to organize, enable and develop creativity, exposure, and accessibility for artists was funded by Canada Council for the Arts. Tirgan is deeply grateful to its partners and donors for their generous support of its mission; notably, we like to highlight that our approach to fundraising is professional and abides by the Code of Fundraising practices.

# Major Supporters

## Government Partners



## Presenting Partner



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## Corporate Partners

### Platinum Sponsors



### Diamond Sponsors



## Gold Sponsors



## Venue Partner



## Media Partners





tirgan

[www.tirgan.ca](http://www.tirgan.ca)

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Charity Number: 852053610RR00010001

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