



The
work
we do to

lift
the
moon

*A Social Expertise Exchange about inclusive performing
arts practices by choreographer Margot Greenlee.*

Welcome to the Workshop



“Welcome. My name is Margot. What’s your name? I’m pleased to meet you. Join the big circle.”

This is the simple introduction I am able to say in Russian to greet workshop participants. Once the group is assembled, my translator helps me give some guidelines:

- Everyone is in charge of their own body.
- There are many ways to participate. Trust your way.
- Everyone is 100% prepared to be successful because we will source what we already know about moving and make that the building blocks of our choreography.

From there, some introductions. We say our names one at a time and the group echoes it back to us. We then add some rhythm or movement. We use our faces and voices to add

expression. In the process, we wake up our skin, muscles and bones. We are alert to the whole group and watch closely so that we know when it’s our turn to lead.

Our **physical warm up** focuses on opposites: moving up and down, side to side, forward and back. The full body is engaged. This dance is performed first as an ensemble and then given to duets and trios to transform into new variations. The creative mind begins to work. We pause briefly to tell our partner something we appreciate about their dancing. “Sasha, the way you stomped both feet reminded me of a mountain warrior.” “Olya, your movement was rhythmic. You know what’s coming next and move with confidence.”

Improvisation allows us to make spontaneous movement choices within clear parameters. A favorite during this trip includes four simple prompts: stretch, get up and down, move in a circle, find a new place in the room.

We may take an **observation break** so that half of the group improvises while the other half watches to see the choices people make during the improvisation. “Sonya, your shoulder circles look like they feel really good! I’m going to try that too.” “Misha, great job navigating the traffic jam!”

To **craft short dances**, we work in small groups and first collect movements from each member to generate a short, repeatable

hop



sequence. Then, I ask the groups to apply compositional techniques one step at a time. For example:

- Repeat one of your movements many times.
- Take another off the ground.
- Do one movement extremely slowly or quickly.
- Splice in a surprise.
- Use the whole room to do your dance.

These short dances are shared with the full group so that we can again **practice observation and communication skills**. What's interesting about this dance? What might we want to borrow from their approach? What meaning is starting to suggest itself? Many rounds of experimentation and editing can follow.

To conclude, we **share takeaways**.

What was surprising or satisfying about today's work? What do we want to do next? "I want to keep dancing all day." "I want to draw my dance." "I'm going to tell my friends." "More waltzing tomorrow, please!"

We close with a simple **bow**. We reach one hand out around the arc of the circle, trying to make eye contact as we go, and then we use the other hand to go back the way we came. We lift one arm up and take a breath in. We bow to our bodies and imaginations. We rise up to the power of the gathered group.

**"Thank you.
See you later."**

choice



DAY
14

Friday, August 3

Ykaterinburg

I am a choreographer based in Washington DC, USA. About half of my work is designed for professional proscenium stages and the other half is for healthcare, education and corporate settings involving places like schools, libraries, museums, community centers, and business offices. I like to think of my work as dance applied to real life. Everywhere I look I see ways to use dance to benefit people in their work, learning, and healing process.

For the past three years, I've directed the movement arts program at MVLE, a nonprofit in Virginia that serves people with disabilities. My company and I offer weekly classes to more than 150 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities such as autism, Down syndrome, and cerebral palsy. The program's early success inspired us to create an additional performance group at MVLE which creates original mixed-ability productions that we tour locally.

My mission during this Eurasia Foundation sponsored Social Expertise Exchange was to

visit inclusive performing arts companies in Moscow and Yekaterinburg, gather 10 best practices and share them with the US artistic and I/DD community. Big surprise: I discovered more than 10. My encounters provided me many new and helpful insights. This handbook is indeed the tip of the iceberg. I hope to write more extensively once I have the opportunity to digest and reflect further. The online version of this handbook (www.bodywisedance.com) will also include video links.

I'm writing this journal while in the field, so I will highlight takeaways – What did we discuss? What dances and discoveries did we make? What was meaningful about that conversation and what did it set in motion?

This handbook is a snap shot and a catalyst for reflection, a to-do list and a series of queries to the field. This is the start of what I believe can be a long and fruitful exchange among artists, directors, and arts managers.

And now let me go back to the beginning . . .

DAY
1

Saturday, July 21, 2018

Activity: Travel to Moscow

Travel to Moscow via Venice where I discover that what Eurasia Foundation program manager Olga Khudyakova told me about personal space is indeed true. The empty space I love to have around me is seen as an invitation by my Russian travel mates to cut in line. I get wise and get close.



In front of the Bolshoi with Elizaveta

DAY
2

Sunday, July 22, 2018

Activity: Visit the Bolshoi Theater with my translator, Elizaveta Kaveda.

We catch up on the schedule and workshop plans. I tell her that in addition to the serious work before us, I'm on a quest for pelmeni (Russian dumplings) and she assures me they will not be hard to find.

DAY
3

Monday, July 23, 2018

Activity: Leading movement workshop for Best Buddies Russia, a service organization for people with intellectual disabilities.

Five minutes to class time and no one is at the studio. Oh, please let me not have come all this way for a no-show. Then suddenly a boisterous



A colorful archway inspires mobility

shout from down the hall and a stream of people come rushing my way.

Everyone has arrived together and the group is beyond excited to begin. Sweet relief! This is really happening.

Of the roughly 25 people gathered, 15 are Best Buddies Russia members. They have medical diagnoses such as autism, Down syndrome, and cerebral palsy. AND they are all interested in dancing. The other 10 people are staff, volunteers, and family members who are there to dance along with us as equal partners during the class. BBR runs on volunteers and is a great example of how inclusive activities (excursions, classes, and special events) support community engagement.

NEXT STEP: Connect with Best Buddies in Virginia to see if any of their members are interested in dance. We might be able to start something together!

Query: How can you benefit from involving volunteers in your work? What are all the daily projects volunteers can help you accomplish?

DAY
4

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

Activity: Meeting with Krug 2, an inclusive theater company.

The Krug 2 theater company has studio spaces in a business park. It reminds me of the industrial park where my company and I lead performing arts training programs for members of MVLE—except this place has a great cafeteria. Krug 2 is a full-time



Sharing a stretch



Opening a meeting with movement



Stunning stage masks

professional company and as such they have a busy performance calendar. When they're not on the road, however, performers spend three or four hours a day in the visual arts studio making props and artwork. Combining visual and performing arts makes a lot of sense. It provides additional creative outlets and contributes to the company's production quality.

NEXT STEP: The MLVE performance program is now growing from one hour per week to one day per week. I've been thinking that visual arts would be a good addition to our curriculum and seeing Krug 2's work makes me sure of it.

Query: What ideas have you been waiting to implement? What might get you to try them?

has an ambassador program in which their members act as spokespeople to host events in the Moscow community. Build on that.

NEXT STEP: Back home, I can apply this same idea to our rehearsals and performances. I will meet Denise Roza, the director of BBR's parent organization Perspektiva, when she is in Washington DC in mid-August to discuss further.

Query: What fundraising challenges exist for you? How might you build on your organization's unique capabilities to help fundraise?

Activity: Meeting with Best Buddies Russia staff and volunteers

BBR has been struggling to compete with larger organizations' fundraising activities, such as walkathons and festivals. I suggest that they think about what makes them unique—the members, the volunteers, the inclusive activities that happen on a daily basis—and turn those into special fundraising events. Who wouldn't want to go on an excursion with Natasha or take an English class with Misha? Instead of relying on technology heavy events that need a robust website, use low-tech person-to-person approaches to build relationships with potential donors. BBR already

DAY
5

Wednesday, July 25, 2018

Activity: Meeting with program directors from Tretyakovskaya Gallery's inclusion program.

As Alla Orlova, Curator of Tretyakovskaya Gallery's "Better Together" program, describes the momentum of her inclusive program, she pours her hands down onto the table one after the other, right, left, right, left, like a waterfall. It's thrilling to hear about a top public art gallery making a commitment to long-term inclusive programming. "Better Together" is a month-long exhibition of famous Russian artists and juried children's arts. Children from her year-round program have highly visible roles as docents and ticket-takers during the festival.



Sergie coordinates his whole body



Creative comradery



Conversation after class

NEXT STEP: Include our MVLE performers in high-visibility roles such as meeting presenters, helping at fundraising events, ushering at performances, thanking the audience at the end of performances.

Query: What is keeping you from including people with disability in leadership or highly visible roles?

Activity: Leading second movement workshop for Best Buddies Russia

Sergie, a tall slender young man, watched the action during the first class on Monday and I doubted that he'd return today. I thought the class may have been too stimulating—it might have overwhelmed him. Regardless, I was wrong. After his initial shyness on Monday, he becomes very comfortable and thrives during today's improvisation. To balance his physical excitement, I add periodic calming breaks, using techniques such as gentle breathing and stretching. His favorite part of class is the floor work: improvised rolling, crawling and sliding to warm up all the muscles of the body.

NEXT STEP: Understand that some MVLE performers may decide later in rehearsal that they want a bigger part. Find ways to accommodate people's day-to-day participation levels.

Query: What assumptions do you tend to make in class or rehearsals? How might you challenge or test your assumptions?

DAY 6

Thursday, July 26, 2018

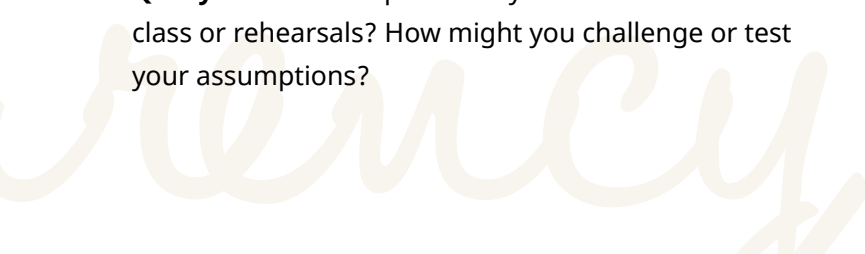
Activity: Gaga dance class

The teacher at today's Gaga class, Toma Nuevo, is now a Facebook friend! She leads a fantastic and sweaty Gaga class. Afterward, we talk about generating dance opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. She is both an osteopath and a dancer. Once reticent about admitting her artistic side to professionals due to concerns about stigma, she now proudly states it and is accomplishing great things.

NEXT STEP: Connect Toma Nuevo and Elizaveta Kabeva with BBR to think about dance class opportunities.

Query: Who might you connect to help others? What stigmas may be related to the arts and how might you address those stigmas?

Gentle contact generates new movement ideas



Benefits of Dance For people with I/DD



Physical Benefit

When we dance together, we strengthen our bodies and voices, becoming more agile and resilient overall. We reach, balance, march, and kick to make our bodies more expressive.

leg strength • fall prevention • confidence

Emotional Benefit

When we create performances together, we express our fullest range of emotions and the result is a sense of satisfaction, connection, and delight.

eye contact • feeling of belonging • friendship

Cognitive Benefit

When we rehearse together, we edit and refine our work by clarifying our choices, learning sequences, and setting cues. We practice and make progress. We volunteer ideas.

communication • self-advocacy • independence





Social Benefit

When we perform together, we participate in a community - sometimes leading, sometimes following - always aware of the ensemble.

awareness • sensitivity • compassion

Communal Benefit

When we include the audience in our performances, we become more aware of our shared interests and experiences.

changed attitudes • acceptance • support

inclusion



Victoria invents movement with partner

DAY
7

Friday, July 27, 2018

Activity: Third and final dance class with BBR.

Today, Victoria Khrenova of Krug (not to be confused with Krug 2, they are completely separate organizations) comes to dance with us. She partners beautifully with the BBR group. We try a new improvisation: the goal is to move across the room with a partner, mirroring each other as best as possible, with no pre-planning and no appointed leader. This requires incredible concentration and responsive physicality.

Krug's creative process, inspired by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, is based on the idea that we first experience something physically, then emotionally and then rationally. Very cool to talk pedagogy and theater with her. We both agree that we don't do inclusive dance-theater just because we're nice people. We do it because we learn how to be better performers and creators.

I learn from Victoria that Krug has been running a festival, ProTeatr, for the past 25 years. ProTeatr brings inclusive companies from all over Russia to be part of a curated festival.

NEXT STEP: Apply to the ProTeatr festival! Consider starting a festival??

Query: Is there a wild idea or dream you would like to try? What is holding you back? How might you bring people together to collaborate and learn from one another in your community?

DAY
8

Saturday, July 28, 2018

Activity: Travel from Moscow to Yekaterinburg.

I am struck by a massive case of self-doubt. Will these people be interested in how I work? What are they expecting and will our cultural differences be too much to overcome? Yeltsin Centre's Lena Vozmishcheva picks me up at the airport and we click right away.



Lena Vozmishcheva of the Yeltsin Centre

DAY
9

Sunday, July 29, 2018

Activity: Rehearsal visit with So-bytie, a dance company that includes people who are blind.

During the rehearsal today I am especially interested to see how performers with and without sight will work together. The director of So-bytie, Andrey Zakarov, explores new ways for people with and without vision to partner each other in professional stage work. He uses props and tactile partnering (in the vein of contact improvisation) to enable dancers to utilize all of their physical smarts and negotiate the stage space. One prop is a long large tube, maybe four feet long and 5 inches in diameter, that has a long strap attached to both ends. During the course of the dance it takes on multiple meanings: a musical instrument, a candle, strength, and a bow and arrow. Sometimes the dancer hangs the strap over his shoulder, sometimes from his neck. The continual transformation of images creates a psychedelic



Directing performers who are blind through words and contact

effect for me. I continually invent meaning and then let the idea go as another image emerges.

NEXT STEP: Think about how to utilize props in our rehearsals back home.

Query: How might literal interpretation be holding you back creatively?

Activity: Workshop for people ages roughly 3 – 75 with and without disabilities.

Understandably the Eurasia Foundation expects me to document all workshop participation and outcomes. The question is how to do that in a way that's appropriate for people of different ages and abilities? A traditional written survey doesn't always cut it; I'm experimenting with incorporating reflection and evaluation in the dance class itself.

Here's an example of what I mean: During a break between two high-energy improvisations, I ask the group to talk to a partner about highlights from the class experience so far and then I ask for volunteers to share their answers. Among the responses:

I feel happier during the duet because I'm connected to my partner.

I like seeing someone else make different choices than I do.

I like improvising because I don't have to remember a sequence.

Then later, before our final bow, I ask people what they're going to do differently tomorrow based on today's experience. Some of their responses:

Stretch in the morning when I wake up

Take a dance break during work

Tell my friends about it

Take my dog for a walk

Post to social media

For people who do want to sit and reflect with a written process, we always have that available.

NEXT STEP: Consider devising multiple feedback opportunities for participants (e.g., written, verbal, dictated, online).

Query: What are your favorite and least favorite way of providing feedback? What approaches best support your learning process?



Small groups use a shared dance to create their own variations

DAY
10

Monday, July 30, 2018

Activity: Workshop for adults with autism at Anna Kryshova's "Open City" studio.

This studio is just off a big pedestrian shopping street, through an alley, over an auto repair shop. Lena remarks that parking is a problem in this area. Reminds me of my neighborhood!

After the workshop, the dancers show me three dances that guest artists and teachers

have choreographed. One is a large group dance entitled *Evolution* that includes both set choreography and improvisation. The take away for me is that these adult dancers with autism are acquiring a solid repertory. Since I'll get to work with them for three masterclasses we agree to get a start on dances that they can then continue working on after I'm gone. I'm curious to hear what they want to make dances about.

NEXT STEP: Exploring the passions of people with intellectual disabilities in the MVLE performance group.

Query: How do you learn about people's passions?



Warmup includes a gentle jog

DAY
11

Tuesday, July 31, 2018

Activity: Workshop with teen actors who have autism.

Today's plan goes out the window almost from the start. During the opening name-and-movement intro, the participants come up with such varied and interesting ways to introduce themselves that I realize I can begin an activity I've done with college-level introductory composition students. I ask them to form small groups and add their movements together to create a short phrase. I

follow with additional edits – add repetition, take some of the movement down to the ground or up in the air, make the movement fill the room – and each time the groups revise accordingly.

The final stage of today's project is to shape the movement and communicate something specific. To do this, each group shows their phrase and the rest of us put our imaginations to work. How does the movement speak to us? Is there a story? An idea? A feeling? We then tell the group a few responses so that they can choose one to pursue for a last round of edits. Dances made: *Japanese Workaholics in Love, A Boat in a Storm, Electrical Magic, Pigeons Take the Metro.*

NEXT STEP: Try this at home with MVLE performance group. I'm eager to see what we'll generate together. Why haven't I tried this before?

Query: What creative successes have you experienced for people without disabilities that you could adapt for people with disabilities?

Activity: Public presentation about inclusive dance at the Yeltsin Center for artists and community members of all ages and abilities.

At today's public presentation, I bring the audience into our workshop experience by leading a brief body percussion exercise. We then debrief about how our bodies feel afterwards. Some people say they are more relaxed. One man says that even though it is late in the day, he feels suddenly wide awake. Using a PowerPoint, I review the physical, emotional, cognitive, and communal benefits of dancing for people with disabilities (see page 8). Much nodding of heads. A nurse is especially curious about art in healthcare settings and many others ask questions about this practice, excited about the potential for transforming hospital



Opening a meeting with movement

environments utilizing visual and performing arts. Maria Taff of the US Consulate and I discuss their interest in inclusion.

NEXT STEP: Continue to talk with Maria about offering professional development programs for dance and theater artists who are interested in starting inclusive programs.

Query: How might you incorporate movement in meetings or public presentations? How can you support others in the inclusive arts field?

DAY
12

Wednesday, August 1, 2018

Activity: Inclusive choreography workshop at the Yeltsin Center for people of all ages and abilities.

Today Masha and Lev, professional performers here in Yekaterinburg, partner each other in class. She is sighted and he is blind. They maintain almost constant physical contact so that she can guide him. This inspires me to have all of the workshop participants try this approach. Dancing

Refining movement choices



in duets we use gentle touch as a way to influence a partner's movement choices.

Activity: Excursion to the Blind Gallery.

This is on the 4th floor of the local mall, right across from a restaurant. I'm starting to appreciate the mall culture here which serves as a place for people to meet during the cold winter months. This mall, like the Yeltsin Centre is designed for nearly round-the-clock activity.

The Blind Gallery is a collection of rooms – all pitch black – that give sighted people a brief experience without sight. I, along with six other people, enter a model apartment and are asked by our blind docents to identify various objects and then decide who lives there. As we spread out to discover, people shout out "I've got a purse in a cabinet. A woman must live here." "There are stuffed animals on a couch, so there's a child too." "Oh! A fur hat!" We find three toothbrushes in the bathroom and gradually a story develops.

NEXT STEP: The two events today inspire me to develop the home class curriculum with vision-impaired and blind participants in mind. I'd also like to learn more about their physical awareness skills and find ways to incorporate this knowledge in our classes. Functional physical cuing for a blind partner is a great skill for EVERYONE to have.

Query: What unique skills do people with disability possess and how can those skills be incorporated into dance training for all people?

Leaving the Blind Gallery



DAY
13

Thursday, August 2, 2018

Activity: Inclusive choreography workshop at the Yeltsin Center for people of all ages and abilities.

Many new faces at today's workshop! I lead a few introductory warm-ups to help the newcomers get acclimated and then we dive into composition. To change things up for those dancers who have been with me all week, I add a new wrinkle. Combine two completely different compositions to make one new unified dance. For example, a duet joins forces with a septet. The rest of us observe the combination and suggest titles before another round of rehearsals. New dances created today: *The Emotional Life of the City*, *There's an Ocean Between Us*, and *Mysterious Fish*.

NEXT STEP: These titles are so evocative for the dancers and me. Unexpected combinations give us the excuse to make dances we never would otherwise. It's freeing. This will be useful in rehearsals back home.

Query: How can you trick yourself into new creative pursuits?

DAY
14

Friday, August 3, 2018

Activity: Inclusive choreography workshop at the Yeltsin Center for people of all ages and abilities.

In this third workshop of the series, I fully take on the director's role. The group is my company for the day. I instigate the dance-making and they bring all of their newfound composition tools to the effort.

I need new movement for a project back home about supported-employment for people with disability. My starter title prior to this week was *Work We Want*. A decent title; it's got alliteration going for it. It's short and snappy. But . . . meh. So I try these instead: *The Work We Do to Lift the Moon* and *The Factory Under the Volcano*. These titles really capture people's imaginations and kinesthetic smarts. Today's newly created dances give me a more poetic vantage point from which to keep working.

NEXT STEP: Use poetic imagery in titles to elicit imaginative movement and audience reaction.

Query: How can prosaic and poetic approaches inform each other to spark art-making that is both accessible and evocative?

Activity: Excursion to the Blind Library

Thanks to Maria Taff at the US Consulate, I've been invited to create a short video for an upcoming Inclusion symposium sponsored in part by the Blind Library (not to be confused with the Blind Gallery). To get a better handle on how to approach the video, Maria and I meet with the library's director, Irina Gilfanova. She gives me an overview of the Library's current programming and then I get a tour. With a super fun kid's room, storage stacks, a meeting hall, and administrative offices, this place is well equipped to reach the region's blind community. The upcoming conference is a way for cultural institutions to share best-practices, exemplary programs and new policies.

Listening



Reflecting together at the end of our workshop

Thank Yous

I extend thanks to many people. Firstly, here in Washington, D.C., the Eurasia Foundation for supporting this project, especially intrepid program manager Olga Khudyakova and her colleagues Aliya Candeloro and Laurens Ayvazian who oversee this and many other Eurasia Foundation projects. Jocelyn Rapaport and the whole BodyWise Dance artistic team including Jeremy Hunter, JJ Johnson, Kelly King, Judy Musolf, Tuyet Pham and Claire Schad, kept our home projects going full blast while I was away. Yury Ornov, theater director and faculty member at Towson University helped me connect with Krug and ProTeatr.

IN MOSCOW

Diana Anishchenko, Host, Best Buddies Russia
 Elizaveta Kabaeva, Translator
 Viktoriya Khrenova, Performer, Krug

Alla Orlova, Curator of "Better Together," Tretyakovskaya Gallery
 Dmitry Petukhov, Development Director, Krug 2
 Viktoria Podolskaya, Development officer, Krug 2

IN YEKATERINBURG

Lena Vozmishcheva, Host, Yeltsin Centre; founder of ZAzhivee inclusive theater project
 Tatiana Kaminskaya, Founder, "Iskorka dobra" (Sparkle of Good)
 Julia Yaroshevskaya, Founder "Pro.dobro"(About Good), Head of municipal information project "Kultura dlya vseh"(Culture for Everybody)
 Andrey Zakarov, Director, "So-Bitye"
 Anna Kleshchova, Head of "Center dvigatelnyh praktik" (body practice center) and "Drugie"(Others) inclusive dance theater
 "Otkrytiy gorod" (Open city)

Foundation
 Alexandra Rubtsova, founder, Gallery in the dark "Smotri serdcem" (Looking by the heart)
 Irina Gilfanova, the head of Blind Library
 Maria Taff, US Consulate's assistant
 Andrey Zakarov, Director, "So-Bitye"
 Anna Kleshchova, Head of "Center dvigatelnyh praktik" (body practice center) and "Drugie"(Others) inclusive dance theater
 "Otkrytiy gorod" (Open city) Foundation
 Alexandra Rubtsova, founder, Gallery in the dark "Smotri serdcem" (Looking by the heart)
 Irina Gilfanova, the head of Blind Library
 Maria Taff, US Consulate's assistant

Shared Leadership



Top 10 Best Practices

Normalize. Place individuals with disability at all strata of our cultural institutions so that inclusion is expected rather than a surprise.

See with knees. Rely on more than one sense when problem-solving, storytelling, etc., so that many forms of knowing are valued. Touch, smell, sound . . . these can take the place of sight.

Throw a party. Host public events like festivals and symposiums in order to increase visibility for Inclusive Arts.

The work we do to lift the moon. Conjure rich metaphor to excite a group's collective imagination.

Location. Location. Location. Place inclusive programs in the middle of busy community centers so that people with and without disability regularly come into contact with each other

brave



Transforming a solo into a quartet

Pass the baton. Build shared-leadership into the art-making process so that all individuals can strengthen their leadership capacity over time.

Copy. There's no need to be original. Replicate successful inclusive programs in other institutions to expand access for people with disability.

Ask for help. Invite volunteers to participate alongside people with disability to enhance understanding across ability spectrums.

Include everyone in the evaluation process. Make developmentally appropriate evaluation tools so that people of all abilities can contribute to programmatic improvements.

Make sure it lives beautifully online. Devote resources to high-quality film and online communications about Inclusive Art practices so that people all over the world who have access to the Internet can learn from one another.

space



Gentle contact generates new movement ideas

choice brave space
transparency
invention rigor



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EURASIA
FOUNDATION