

SUN Post

CRYSTAL / ROBBINSDALE / NEW HOPE / GOLDEN VALLEY

Election results will be available online

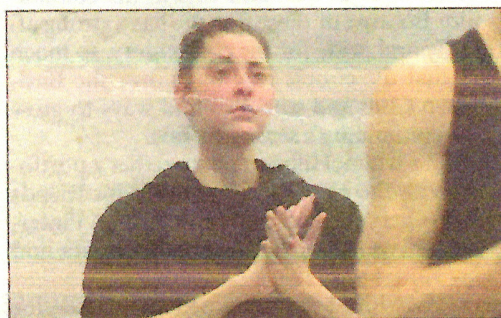
The Sun Post, Current and Sailor editions went to press before the Tuesday, Nov. 6,

General Election. Election results for city councils, school boards and referendums,

Hennepin County Board seats, Minnesota House Districts and Congressional Districts will be available as soon as results are available

Tuesday evening at current. mnsun.com, post.mnsun.com and sailor.mnsun.com.

We will update as information becomes available.



(SUN POST STAFF PHOTOS BY ALAINA ROOKER)

Threads Dance Project rehearses for "In The Margins," a production debuting Nov. 16 at the O'Shaughnessy. Guest artist Canae Weiss (top left) is a Threads dancer and deaf person based in the Twin Cities. Karen Charles (bottom left) is the founder and artistic director.

Expressing a perspective 'unheard'

Arts school educator,
founder anticipates
opening of 12th show

By **ALAINA ROOKER**
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Karen Charles likens her company of young modern dancers to the multicolored scraps of fabric her grandmother kept on reserve in a quilting bag. Charles is not an

avid quilter, though she kicks herself now that she never asked her grandmother to teach her.

She did, however, see the wisdom in the loose bits.

"What others would think of as throw-away things, she would piece them together to make something beautiful," said Charles. "I'm an African American woman; I'm hyper-aware of how race, and class and sexuality, and all of those things, impact how we move through the world. I wanted to find a way to connect those things."

Her company, Threads Dance Project, is named for those stray pieces of fabric. The company won a SAGE Dance Award for Outstanding Performance in 2015. It is in its 12th production of many that have found ways to express a host of perspectives. The latest, "In The Margins," will hone in on the experiences of the deaf/hard of hearing.

"In The Margins" will be performed Friday and Saturday, Nov. 16-17, at The O'Shaughnessy in St. Paul.

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Dance

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Most notable is the latest work "To Hear Like Me," which focuses on the experience of the deaf and hard of hearing.

Guest artist Canae Weiss is a dancer and choreographer in the cast. She attended Ballet Arts MN, the SUNY Purchase Dance Conservatory and the University of Minnesota. She is also a deaf person.

Charles said the dancers were initially "nervous" about the communication barrier between themselves and Weiss, but coming together for an art that is primarily visual required less verbal communication than they thought.

"I was immediately reminded how dance was truly a universal language, the passion and the drive and desire that the dancers have to express through movement," she said.

Fellow guest artist Abby Magalee knows American Sign Language and is able to translate between Weiss, their fellow dancers and Charles.

Charles brushed up on some ASL she learned while teaching some younger deaf dancers in Atlanta, Georgia. She learned the signs for counting measure and phrases like "from the top," "do it again" and "run." It was one of those first experiences with the deaf community that led to this show.

Educators from Gallaudet University, perhaps the most well-known deaf

university in the United States, advised Charles and the company. ASL consultants Terryann Nash and Reecca Demming helped Threads create "deaf hearts," as Nash likes to call it.

The works are meant to communicate more than visual dancing to those in the audience who know ASL or are deaf/hard of hearing. Tones of bass that can be felt as well as heard are used and signs are incorporated into the numbers. This adds the challenge of making the flow of dance compatible with a motion that needs to be correct and visible

enough to be understood as language.

Threads united

After the intermission, dancers will perform previous work "Femthology."

Though the themes are separated by a 15-minute break, Charles thinks women and deaf people are united by their tendency to be discriminated against.

"Both groups can be discounted and under-appreciated from time to time," she said. "I've worked in corporate America, in education, and as an artist, there are many times when

I've been in a room full of mostly men and I've had to consciously advocate for myself otherwise I'm going to be overlooked.

"The same is true for a deaf person. If you can't find a way to communicate with them it's easier to just run away or look away, and they need to say, 'no, you're going to look at me and listen to me even if it's in another way.'"

Charles remembers how angry she was for her son's girlfriend when the girl lost a job interview after the company learned she had requested an interpreter. She thinks what could have been the

outcome had the girl been given the chance to interview for the job.

But on the same hand, she remembers watching five of her deaf students in Georgia flawlessly perform in front of their school alongside their hearing peers. Those moments of connection are what she and her company strive for since its founding in 2011.

Charles created Threads Dance Project after her father died. She had previously been the principal of Perpich Arts High School in Golden Valley and founder of Performance Institute of Minnesota in

the Hopkins School District. She left her post at PIM to start the dance company.

The performances of "In The Margins" will begin at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 16-17. Tickets are \$30, with additional discounts for students, seniors, MPR members, and military. The shows will have open captioning and American Sign Language interpretations.

A post-show discussion will follow the Nov. 16 performance.

For more information, visit threadsdance.org. Tickets available at bit.ly/inthemargins.