The mission of The Karen L. Charles Threads Dance Project (Threads) is to examine, expose, and celebrate the threads that connect us.

We pursue this mission through our 3 pillars of dance, education, and outreach as we:

- Create dances that touch on themes of human connectedness
- Promote dialogue, understanding, and acceptance of all individuals
- Celebrate the human spirit through dance performance, arts education, and community-building

Our vision is to be a national organization that betters humanity through dance and reflect our core values of: Diversity, Artistic Excellence, Accessibility, Storytelling, and Human Connection.
Threads Dance Project was founded by Karen L. Charles in 2010 when her father passed away, leaving her just enough money to produce one professional performance. Karen’s father, a U.S. Postal Clerk, always wished to become a doctor. Karen decided to learn from his legacy, and realized a 10-year dream of becoming a choreographer and director of her own dance company. Since then, Threads has successfully produced 2 shows every year, toured nationally, and collaborated with local and national artists and musicians including Grammy-nominated Sweet Honey In The Rock. Threads has produced over thirty works since its first performance in 2011 and was nominated for a MN SAGE Dance Award in 2015 for its evening-length work *The Secrets of Slave Songs*. The company was selected to co-host the McKnight International Choreographer, Salia Sanou, in 2017.

Threads Dance Project not only seeks to connect people via their performances, but also works to connect youth in under-served communities through dance outreach in schools and the community. Since 2011, Threads has offered ballet and modern dance instruction to students in the Twin Cities Metro area and has reached over 2000 youth with matinees and workshops. Additionally, Threads offers the community open showings, panel discussions and movement-based workshops related to their mission.

Threads Dance Project also serves the community by presenting emerging choreographers via its *Tapestries* Program. *Tapestries* supports emerging choreographers by providing them the space, dancers, and technical support to produce a new work that can be added to their professional portfolio. The program has a special emphasis on supporting choreographers of color and female choreographers. Since Its inception, *Tapestries* has supported twelve choreographers with over half of the choreographers identifying as female or a choreographer of color.

Threads is currently developing a strategic plan for *Dance Nexus*, a physical space that will accommodate administrative, rehearsal, and classroom needs for the organization and its outreach constituents. *Dance Nexus* will be a movement center that aims to utilize the talents and resources of Threads and the dance community at large, to serve the Twin Cities through the arts, education, health and wellness.
A dedicated performer, teacher and creator, Karen Long Charles received a BFA Ballet/BS Computer Science from Texas Christian University and M.Ed. in Administration from Georgia State University. Charles has performed with numerous dance companies including Room to Move Dance Company (Atlanta, GA), Susan Warden Dance Company (Kansas City, MO) and studied at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as a fellowship recipient. Charles served as Director at Perpich Arts High School and she was the founding Principal/Executive Director at Main Street School of Performing Arts. Charles has created/presented works for James Sewell Ballet, Carleton College, Macalester College, Main Street School of Performing Arts and Perpich Arts High School.

Threads Dance Project was founded by Karen L. Charles when her beloved father passed away leaving her just enough money to produce her first show in 2011 and realize her dream of becoming a choreographer and director of her own company.

In addition to seasonal performances in the Twin Cities, Threads has successfully toured work to Atlanta, GA and Sioux City, IA. In February 2017, Threads toured The Secrets of Slave Songs to sold-out audiences.

**Accolades include:**
- Guest artist with University of Iowa Dance Program
- Guest artist with the Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Arts
- Franklin Visiting Scholar/Artist in the Department of Dance at the University of Georgia
- Guest Artist in MN Dance Medicine Conference
- Guest Choreographer at Macalester College
- Commissioned Guest Choreographer for James Sewell Ballet’s Ballet Works Project
- Guest Choreographer Carleton College Dance Department
- Guest Artist in MN Dance Festival
- Guest Artist in Renovate Choreographer’s Evening
- Guest Choreographer for Summit Invitational Dance Program
REPERTOIRE

**Childless Mother** (2010-11) / 10:22 minutes
A dance in 3 parts depicting a mother’s struggle when they lose a child

**Humanity & Elysian Fields Ave** (2012) / 23:23 minutes
A haunting depiction of the destructive force of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath

**Hush** (2012) / 6:28 minutes
An emotional expression of trying to control our pain, grief, and distress

**Sacred Feminine** (2013) / 11 minutes
A sociopolitical exploration of the value of the feminine in a patriarchal world, this dance reminds us of the sacred position of the female in the universe and questions why and how that value is diminished

**Call** (2013) / 15 minutes
Based on the African American Tradition of Call & Response. Call tells the story of a dancer’s love/hate relationship with their craft and their struggle with the call to dance

**Malignant** (2013) / 33 minutes
A 4-part work drawn from the stories of real people who experienced cancer in their lives, set to a compelling musical score created by a commissioned New York composer, Nioka Workman

**The Secrets of Slave Songs** (2014) / 60 minutes
In several sections, this dance seeks to explore whether America has truly acknowledged slavery and its impact on our society; whether America has forgiven itself for participation in the slave trade.

**Warriors of Light** (2015) - 60 minutes
An evening-length dance with music created by local composer and musician Sanford Moore. Threads created a fable of sorts about becoming a warrior and discovering how we all, as warriors, can be leaders that foster positive change in the world.

**Uncertain Reality** (2017) / 60 minutes
Explores concepts of chaos theory to create the dance – recursion, fractals, self-similarity, intermittency, butterfly effect and others.

**To Hear Like Me** (2018) / 30 minutes
How do we hear the experiences of others? How can we see difference before we see deficit? What would happen if we listened with our hearts?

For booking inquiries contact Threads at Mgr@ThreadsDance.org
“Most notable for me was the diversity representative in your work throughout the performance, whether in the people (ethnic, gender, appearance/size, music selections, etc.)”

– Anonymous, 2013

“The celebration of “body” ... Body as inherently good and part of a person - not an object...things that are sometimes used to degrade or make fun of women became beautiful and fun and celebrated. I think sometimes only dance can accomplish those things. I needed to see that!”

– Anonymous, October 2013

“I went to the show last night as a casual observer and was absolutely floored. The show was steeped with emotion and fusion of live organic music, using only their bodies as an instrument and incredible dance inspired everything creative in me to keep pushing forward...(I) have had the unique opportunity to see many creative dance shows, but for me, this one was my favorite show. Excellent work, Threads.”

– Eric Kramlinger: Development Manager at the Nerdery, March 2014

“I was moved and amazed.”

– Kristin Ahles
“...The dancers were elegant and graceful under a southern sun. There is one piece set to Strange Fruit by Nina Simone that will give you chills... The final piece of the show called “In This Skin” was enough to make me want to take of all my clothes. Not in the Nelly-its-getting-hot-in-here-2002-summer-hit-sense. But in the love myself-express myself-free myself-be myself vein. I wanted to strip not for sex, but for liberation. To rejoice in my body, flaws and perfections. If you need a dose of that and who doesn’t? Check out the show.”

– H. Adam Harris, Minnesota Playlist, August 2012

“...an exploration of life’s fleeting aspects. Sweet Honey’s accompanying lyrics remind us that we never know how the day will end or what the next day will bring. With the entire Threads troupe onstage... the impact was celebratory even though death was the main subject. Here Charles demonstrated her strong ability to summon up a stirring collective spirit.”

– Caroline Palmer, Star Tribune, March 2014