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## THAWALLS Art Talks: Kelly Anderson Dance Theatre



THAWALLS - MULTIDISCIPLINARY ART PARTY AND EXHIBITION · MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2017

Interview by Elisa Shoenberger

THAWALLS is just around the corner! We're so excited about all the artists that will be performing and exhibiting that night and in the weeks to come. We are going to interview several performers for THAWALLS to let you know about their awesome work. We talked via email with the amazing Kelly Anderson of Kelly Anderson Dance Theatre (KADT).

We asked her how to define the work that she does. She explained: "I think the best way to describe my work is: theater heavy, comedy-based contemporary modern dance. I am greatly inspired by pop culture and nostalgia plays a significant role in my work. I guess the best way to sum it up...my first comic idol was Carol Burnett."

We then asked about her plans for THAWALLS where she'll be performing "Growing Fins." She wrote. "'Growing Fins' is an excerpt from a larger work titled VAUDEVILLE! (2015). VAUDEVILLE! was a variety inspired dance theater work that paid tribute to the history and charm of the vaudevillian era. Politically charged comedy acts were often present in the vaudeville circuit. So, I decided to create a cheeky 'water ballet' act targeting the controversial topic of global climate change."

When we asked her what she was most excited about for THAWALLS, Kelly Anderson told us, "I'm totally pumped that this year will be at Navy Pier. What I appreciate most about THAW is the creative commitment Links has made to hosting the event in non-conventional spaces. THAWALLS will present a unique experience for everyone involved and for all who

attend. Navy Pier is such an iconic Chicago attraction, it will be exciting to see the space transform.”

We asked about her experience at performing at THAWALLS in the past, she said, “I have had the great pleasure of performing in THAW since I arrived in 2013. It is an event that I look forward to every year and I’m not alone. It is so rich in community. Having the opportunity to see so much diverse, independent work all in one night is a rare gift. Plus, it is a SERIOUS party. My very first THAW was an absolute blast. I performed as a bride in my solo work titled ‘To Have and To Hold.’ By the end of the night I was barefoot, my wedding dress was soaked in beer and to this day, there are a few missing parts to the evening. It was almost like the real thing. “

We asked her what Links Hall has meant to her and Kelly Anderson Dance Theatre. She explained, “Links Hall has been the home of KADT since our company premiere in 2014. Through the time exchange program Links provides, I was able to create a more affordable independently produced dance work. In addition, I had the opportunity to build a relationship with the staff and the community as a whole. As a transplant, their commitment to community building really aided in its success.”

We asked her one fun fact about herself. Kelly Anderson explained, “Every year I have a huge family reunion on a potato farm in Antigo, WI. It is always themed, people dress up and we have a variety show, complete with an emcee and a yearly crowning of our family Potato Queen. This is where I got my start, lip syncing Whitney Houston next to potato crates and plum dumplings. If it weren’t for these family reunions, I don’t think my aesthetic would be the same.”

We can’t wait to see Kelly Anderson and the rest of the company at THAWALLS! Click here for Ticket Deets: <http://www.linkshall.org/thawalls/>

For more information on Kelly Anderson Dance Theatre, check out their website: <http://www.kellyandersondancetheatre.com/>

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**Karen Anderson** Nice preview Kelly and kudos to the family reunion!

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## THAWALLS Art Talks: Phaedra Darwish



THAWALLS - MULTIDISCIPLINARY ART PARTY AND EXHIBITION · THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 2017

Interview by Elisa Shoenberger

The days are getting closer and closer to THAWALLS...We're so excited! This year, we are pleased to announce that Phaedra Darwish will be performing at the THAWALLS on March 9th. We took some time to chat with Ms. Darwish via email in anticipation for the event.

Phaedra Darwish describes her work as Middle Eastern dance. She explains that she "fell into belly dance after studying different types of ethnic dance from bachata to Bollywood in Chicago, and she was mesmerized by it. She now regularly performs and teaches workshops and classes in Chicago, hoping to spread enthusiasm and respect for Middle Eastern dance as more and more people get acquainted with its health benefits and enchanted by its beauty" (website). She has previously performed at THAW and at Links Hall in the past. We asked her about the experience and she told us, "I loved it! A wonderful night to see many different aspects and styles of dance found in Chicago under one roof." We asked her what Links Hall means for her and she said, "Links Hall is a valuable resource to the community. This organization helps artists who are up and coming or with smaller monetary resources to have accessible performance and rehearsal space."

We asked about her plans for THAWALLS next week. She explained, "First [piece] is an uptempo modern traditional belly dance choreographed by Ekaterina Goncharenko; second is with a stick or 'assaya', a dance style called "saïdi" which is based off the men's stick fighting called 'tahtib'." We're super excited to see her perform. We asked Phaedra Darwish what excited her most about her art. She told us that it was "exposing the public to the beauty

of Middle East culture.”

Finally, we asked her to tell us what she thought people should know about her work. She explained, “When I teach a class, one of the first things I tell my students is “Bellydance is HARD” (I actually had it printed on a t-shirt that I wear to the first class of each session!). This statement is not meant to intimidate them, but rather to emphasize the point that to be a good Oriental dancer, it takes focus and discipline, patience, years of study, and lots of practice, just as in any form of dance. It is a common misconception that belly dancers just get up there and “shake it”. Don’t let the shiny, colorful costumes fool you!”

We can’t wait to see Phaedra Darwish perform at THAWALLS. Check out her website here: <http://www.bellydancebyphaedra.com/>

# THAWALLS

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**Phaedra Darwish** Thank you, THAW and Links Hall! Looking forward to the event.

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## THAWALLS Art Talks - Movement Revolution Dance Crew



THAWALLS - MULTIDISCIPLINARY ART PARTY AND EXHIBITION · FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2017

Interview by Elisa Shoenberger

We are so excited that Movement Revolution Dance Crew (MRDC) will be performing at THAWALLS on March 9th! This week, we had a chance to talk to Monternez Rezell, founder and creator of MRDC about their exciting work.

We asked Monternez Rezell to describe the work of Movement Revolution Dance Crew and he said, "MRDC is a dance crew that performs all styles of hip-hop including breaking, popping, locking, waving, housing and tricking. MRDC also uses the elements of jazz, lyrical, contemporary and African dance to create movement in a way that pushes the limits of dance and creates new possibilities for endless style." He explained that their mission "as Movement Revolution Dance Crew is to spread the message of positive hip hop and teach youth in the Chicagoland area the benefits of healthy living through our 'Healthy Hip Hop' dance programs. We use the elements of hip hop to inspire positive change in our community. We strive to REVOLUTIONIZE our industry by showcasing and sharing movement in a way never before seen. Using Hip Hop, Funk, Jazz, African dance and our unique creativity, we want to inspire the youth of the world to take movement to a higher level, as well as promote a positive message of self-expression through music, dance and movement. We also strive to promote culture through innovative events, creative performances, and professional workshops. Our goal is to master the many styles of dance while we unite talents around the world."

We asked about MRDC's plans for THAWALLS; he said, "MRDC will be performing excerpts

from our 1st ever full-length show titled "Opposites Attract" the premiered at Links Hall Feb. 12, 2017. The excerpts will describe what hip hop means to us, and how we can use of voice through dance to empower and uplift women. Then we will end the set with a fun freestyle to entertain the crowd as we always do at THAW." We asked what they are most excited about for THAWALLS this year. Monternez Rezell told us, "We are excited that it will be at Navy Pier! The venue, the layout, and the theme sounds like this will be one of the best THAW events to date!" We inquired what Links Hall means to the MRDC, he explained, "Links Hall has been great and crucial at giving all artist a beautiful, safe, creative space to display their art. For this, we are very thankful!" We asked him what was the most exciting part of MRDC and he told us, "What excites me the most about the group is the fact that MRDC has so many diverse, talent, beautiful, kind people in the crew. These are not only great dancers but wonderful people to work with, create with and dance with!"

MRDC's motto is "Dance is our ART, Movement is our paint brush and the World is our Canvas!" We can't wait to see them at THAWALLS. For more information, check out their website: <http://www.movementrevolutiondancecrew.com/>

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## THAWALLS Art Talks - Global Pungmul Institute



THAWALLS - MULTIDISCIPLINARY ART PARTY AND EXHIBITION · MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2017

We are so excited to have the Global Pungmul Institute (GPI) play at THAWALLS on March 9th. We were able to catch up with them this week and talk about this wonderful organization by email.

We asked Byoung Sug Kim, Executive Artistic Director of Global Pungmul Institute, to describe GPI. He told me, "Global Pungmul Institute (GPI) is a non-profit 501(c)3 cultural organization dedicated to promoting Korean drumming called pungmul. We have youth and adult pungmul programs with about 120 members and present four annual shows in Chicago and suburban areas and make about 40 performances and workshops each year at community-based events and festivals." We asked him what excited them most about GPI's work. He said, "As the community-based cultural and educational organization, we put a lot of emphasis on educating youth as well as presenting professional performing arts. We have 32 youth members in GPI's youth program called SoriBeat and also teach about 50 youth members in our partner organizations. Watching the growth of youth members' musicianship and leadership through pungmul activities is the most exciting aspect of our work."

We asked what was thrilling about this year for GPI and Byoung Sug Kim told us at THAWALLS, "One of GPI's annual projects is Rhythm Connections Concert that focuses on the collaboration between Korean drums and other western musical instruments in a jazz style. We're launching its concert series this year and the concerts will take place on May 5 and July 28 at Elastics and some time in November at Ganz Hall.

We asked him what the plans were for THAWALLS and he said, "We will present a Korean

drumming piece called Samul-nori. It is a modern interpretation of traditional rhythms and a contemporary percussion genre developed for the modern stage. The word "samul-nori" translates into "the play of four instruments"- kwenggari (small gong), jing (large gong), jangu (hourglass drum), buk (barrel drum). The two gongs signify the heavens, while the two drums signify earth. The small gong symbolizes thunder and lightning. The large gong symbolizes the wind. The hourglass drum symbolizes rain, and the barrel drum symbolizes clouds. The playing of these instruments thus signifies the harmony of nature and people." THAWALLS participants should expect to see incredible percussion. Global Pungmul Institute is simply not to be missed.

Finally, we inquired Byoung Sug Kim what he wanted us to know about GPI and he explained, "Korean drumming goes beyond just musical elements. The nature of this performing art form is coupled with solidarity in the community and a sense of shared identity among community members. Thus, our ultimate goal of pungmul activities is to let people know who we are and to build a community through the music. If you're interested in Korean music, just come to us!"

Check out the Global Pungmul Institute at THAWALLS on March 9th!

For more information about the Global Pungmul Institute, check out their website:

<http://soribeat.org/>

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## THAWALLS Art Talks - Groundhog



THAWALLS - MULTIDISCIPLINARY ART PARTY AND EXHIBITION · TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2017



Interview by Elisa Shoenberger

THAWALLS is only three days away! Make sure to get your tickets for this amazing arts party with 40+ artists! For this installment of THAWALLS Art Talks, we were thrilled to have a chance to talk to Groundhog.

We asked Groundhog to describe the work he does and he explained, "Groundhog is a Spiritual Traveler, Tap Dancer, Writer, Emcee, DJ, B-Boy, Choreographer and Director. The original Earl "Groundhog" Basie was a Tap Dancer from the Jazz Era. This Groundhog is a reimagined interpretation of who he would be today, with a new vessel to guide his journey." We inquired what was the most exciting part about his work. Groundhog said, "I'm most excited that as Groundhog I get to do everything I'm into. Instead of just Tap Dancing or just Emceeing, I can do both and then some."

We wanted to know what Groundhog was planning for THAWALLS. He told us, "*Rebirth & Regeneration* is the origin story of Groundhog and his crew, MDK. For THAWALLS, Groundhog will be presenting a few samples from the show, but nothing story based like the show itself." We asked what he was most excited about for THAWALLS and he said, "Being able to enjoy it as a performer and spectator. I had a great time last year, but I didn't get to perform. As an artist, I always love a combination of the two."

At the end of the interview, Groundhog left us with this final message, "I've been in an extended hibernation, but I'll soon be making more appearances. It would be best to follow me on Instagram @GroundhogTaps."

We are so thrilled that we get to have Groundhog performing at THAWALLS on March 9th.  
Come on and check it out!

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## THAWALLS Art Talks: Semi-Circus



THAWALLS - MULTIDISCIPLINARY ART PARTY AND EXHIBITION · WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017



Interview by Elisa Shoenberger

We are one day out from THAWALLS! We can't wait to share so many great performers and visual artists with you all. We had a chance to talk with Semi-Circus, another exciting group that will be at THAWALLS.

We talked to Kim Campbell with Semi Circus this week. We asked her to describe the group and she told us: "Semi-Circus is a circus-based theater company which uses dance, physical theater, and acting to augment the story-telling capacity of circus. We aim to use art and especially the transformative power of circus as an expressive tool to discuss socio-political issues and how to address the challenges that modern humanity faces." Kim Campbell also noted about the group: "What excites us most about our group is the fun we have interacting together and collaborating with other creators. We also get pretty excited about the prospect of touring our show."

We asked what Semi-Circus had in the works for THAWALLS. She said, "At Thawalls, we plan to roam our characters through the space and interact in thought-provoking but non-intrusive ways with our guests. The characters will perform activities based around their worldview, do some superhuman stunts and explore both what all people have in common and what people are capable of. And just for kicks, there may be some stage combat." In the lead up to THAWALLS, we asked what they were most excited about. Kim Campbell explained, "Semi-Circus is most excited about meeting our fellow artists and the rich atmosphere that everyone will create together in the beautiful setting of Navy Pier!"

We inquired what Links Hall meant for Semi Circus. She said, "Links Hall means a place to

see innovative and exciting works from many artistic disciplines. For Semi-Circus, it also means an opportunity to rehearse, develop work, network with artists and to produce our work. It is a tremendous and important resource for performing artists in Chicago.”

We can't wait to see their work at THAWALLS and their new work!

For more information about Semi-Circus, you can follow them on Instagram at

<https://www.instagram.com/semicircuschicago/?hl=en> or on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/semicircuschicago/>.

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## THAWALLS Art Talks - Rhonda Wheatley



THAWALLS - MULTIDISCIPLINARY ART PARTY AND EXHIBITION · WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017

Interview by Elisa Shoenberger

One day to THAWALLS! Don't miss your chance for a great art party! Our last THAWALLS Art Talks is with the incredible Rhonda Wheatley.

We asked her to describe her work and she said, "My objects, paintings, and written works are grounded in the speculative and metaphysical and draw on spirituality and science fiction. I make assemblage based sculptures—healing power objects and hybrid devices—that combine materials such as barnacle clusters, vintage electronics, crystals, fossils, plants, and snake skin sheddings. I also perform readings of my written works, including personal journal entries, and give tarot card readings and personal development workshops to engage with people more directly and meaningfully. Essentially, I'm interested in stretching the imagination and tapping into other realms and dimensions to bring about healing, transformation, and the expansion of consciousness."

We inquired what she had planned for THAWALLS. Rhonda Wheatley explained, "I will be giving tarot card readings to guests, which can also entail helping people formulate their questions. People tend to have a general idea of what they want to ask, but the key to getting the most useful and insightful answers is in the framing of specific questions, drilling down to the core of what they need to know. I also encourage people to ask questions that tap into ways that they may shift their perspectives or actions to bring about the results they desire, rather than questions like "what's my future," as our point of view and actions inform the choices that create our future. Plus, the future is a moving target! I chose the medium of

tarot cards because it is a great way for me to provide a meaningful one-on-one experience in a short time-frame, and because I trust my ability to interpret the cards in positive and useful ways.” We asked her what she was most excited about for THAWALLS: “This is my first time participating in the event, so I’m excited to be a part of THAWALLS. I’m also excited to be present among the art installations of so many local artists whose work I admire, as well as to witness as many of the live and roaming performances as I can.”

Finally, we concluded the interview by asking her what she thinks of Links Hall: “To me, Links Hall is about support, exposure, and connecting. The organization’s support of artists’ growth and the exposure it provides artists via its performance space means artists have the chance to connect with new audiences. It means I get to connect with artists and witness new, innovative works.” We can’t wait to check out Rhonda Wheatley’s work tomorrow!

For more information on Rhonda Wheatley’s work, check out:

<http://www.rhondawheatley.com/>

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