The Motus O Dance Theatre Company performs “IMTA” – part of their show “Perspectives” in Saint John on October 14. The dancers have adapted the concept of IMTA – the farming of salmon, invertebrates and seaweeds – to the stage in a unique and entertaining marriage of art and science. IMTA is beautifully told through physical inventiveness, wonder and revelation. It is quite a long piece by dance standards (just short of 15 minutes), the longest of “Perspectives,” but people generally comment that they do not see the time pass because the piece is so captivating and unusual.

“I was mesmerized, glued to my seat. Now you were able to artistically transform the complicated scientific concept is absolutely breathtaking. What a message of hope for responsible seafood production for the future” are some of the comments Motus O often hears after they perform “IMTA”, and the audience of the Imperial Theatre reacted the same way.

I was particularly excited that people from the Saint John area would have an opportunity to see the show because IMTA is already practiced at several of our industrial partner’s Cooke Aquaculture Inc., sites in the Bay of Fundy. IMTA is an abstract concept. It is really happening in our backyard.

“IMTA” has become one of the great hits of the Motus O repertoire since they launched it in 2009. Motus O received the award of Ontario Artist of the Year in 2010. On October 14, we reached 493 people at the Imperial Theatre, and, hopefully, had an impact on people who are generally not our usual audience. For me, it is about disseminating the message outside the scientific community and giving a new perspective on science by translating it into new media for different audiences. As a scientist, I have the scientific primary publication (which has its role) in my tool box to reach the scientific community, but if we want our science to be relevant to and understood by society, complicated and specialized scientific publications will not do the trick.

I have to think outside of the usual box; I need to find the appropriate media to reach out to other audiences, be it a Geographic TV documentary, a video with Cooke Aquaculture Inc., an article in Time Magazine, or a dance performance. These provide a powerful way to reach, educate and dispel some perceptions to a wider audience, and show that aquaculture practices are evolving.

That evening was an amazing moment when science and dance met to create unique sparks. I always say that the solutions are at the interfaces of disciplines and that is why our IMTA project is inter-disciplinary (environmental, economic and social sciences). Add the artistic dimension and this becomes a feast at the theatre and a food for thought bag to take home after the performance.

This rare evening event was generously sponsored by Cooke Aquaculture Inc. and the Canadian Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture Network (CIMTAN, http://www.cimtan.ca).

Dr. Thierry Chopin, centre, and representatives from Cooke Aquaculture including Dr. Keng Pree Ang and Nell Ralhe, join the Motus O dancers in the entrance of the Imperial Theatre following their performance of “IMTA” in Saint John on October 14.