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'When dance and science meet'

KATHY KAUFELD
KV STYLE

The idea struck Dr. Thierry Chopin at a dinner party.

A leading Canadian expert on an innovative approach to aquaculture, Chopin is always looking for new ways to engage non-scientists in his work.

So when his dinner guests – members of the Ontario dance troupe Motus O – said they wanted to include a performance about food production in a future show, Chopin immediately thought his aquaculture research project could be a dance.

"If I want to address the general public, I have to find other ways... Why not a dance piece?" says Chopin, a marine biology professor at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John and a resident of Quispamsis for 22 years. "Sometimes approaching things in a surprising way does the trick. It's quite powerful that way."

Next weekend, about four years after that dinner party, a Saint John audience will get the chance to see a dance interpretation of Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) when Motus O Dance Theatre takes the stage at the Imperial Theatre to perform its show Perspectives. A collage of short contemporary dances, Perspectives also includes pieces about everything from nuclear war and Parkinson's Disease to violence against women.

"How they translate salmon, seaweed and mussels into dancing together, that is quite unbelievable," says Chopin, who saw the show's Ontario debut in 2009. "I was just so captivated. It is beautiful."

It's predicted the world will face a seafood shortage of 50 million tonnes to 60 million tonnes by 2030 that fisheries will not be able to meet.

"We have a world population that wants more and more seafood. How will we secure seafood in the future? The fisheries have pretty much reached their maximum. So the extra seafood production won't come from fisheries. It will have to come from aquaculture," Chopin says. "Most people don't realize but approximately half the seafood that you buy at your grocery store is farmed."

Chopin has spent the last decade re-



Dancers create a swirl of kelp in The Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture piece by Motus O Dance Theatre.

JAMES CROKER PHOTO

searching Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture, an ecosystem-based approach to farming the sea. When fed species, such as salmon, and extractive species, such as mussels and kelp, are grown close to one another, they recreate a food chain and mimic natural ecosystems. The mussels and kelp use leftover nutrients from the salmon as food and fertilizer.

With Chopin providing the inspiration and scientific perspective, Motus O turned this concept into a beautifully choreographed dance

"Fish can jump so you can do jumps and all these things and dancing. Seaweed... everyone sees them at low tide when they are flat on a piece of rock but at high tide, these things are swinging with the waves. It's quite beautiful to do," says Chopin. "Mus-

sels, that was difficult because what does a mussel do? They are just attached to the rocks... sit there. They close a little, open a little. But they were able to do something with blue mussels. The mussels move, but slowly."

"There's a bit of a freedom of interpretation," he adds, laughing.

The performance also includes video of IMTA sites, pictures, text and narration to help explain the concept to audiences.

"The whole performance uses many things. It's quite a clever way of combining dancing and music and information."

A native of the Beaujolais region of France, Chopin did both rhythmic and classical dance at the Dance School of Villefranche sur Saône for

about six years as a young boy. He quit after a new dance teacher told him it was too difficult to choreograph dances with only one male dancer, but he always kept an interest in dancing. He got to know the members of Motus O when his daughters Marine and Morgan got the opportunity to dance with them in Saint John several years ago.

He's particularly excited that people from the Saint John area will get the chance to see the show because Chopin, his colleagues at UNB and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are working with Cooke Aquaculture Inc. and Acadian Sea-plants Ltd. at eight IMTA sites in the Bay of Fundy.

"(IMTA) is not an abstract concept. It is really something that is happen-

ing in our backyard," he says.

Chopin says when he attended the Ontario performance, he was quite amazed by the reaction of the audience to the IMTA dance. He said the dance was really effective in getting people to understand the concept and see its importance in future food production.

"The message went through," he says. "It is unbelievable what we can do when dance and science meet."

Motus O Dance Theatre's production Perspectives is scheduled for Friday, October 14 at 8 p.m. at the Imperial Theatre. Tickets cost \$26 for adults, \$21 for insiders and \$20 for Youth 18 years of age and under. Tickets can be purchased online at www.imperialtheatre.nb.ca/motus_o_dance.php.

Marine biology professor Dr. Thierry Chopin and some dance troupe friends have taken his research and put it on the stage... complete with dancing salmon, mussels and seaweed



JAMES CROKER PHOTO

From The Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture piece by Motus O Dance Theatre.



MORGAN CHOPIN PHOTO

The three co-artistic directors of Motus O Dance Theatre join the Chopins. L-R: James Croker, Kathy Chopin, Cynthia Croker, Thierry Chopin and Jack Langenhuizen.



THIERRY CHOPIN PHOTO

A line of the cultivated kelp, *Alaria esculenta*, at an IMTA site in Back Bay.



HEMMINGS HOUSE PICTURES

Dr. Thierry Chopin, a seaweed expert and scientific director of the Canadian Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture Network.