University knowledge, especially in the hard sciences, often seems inaccessible and esoteric to the public. Some academics and artists have addressed this problem through informal art/science projects that engage public audiences in innovative and creative ways. The Matter of Origins, a contemporary dance experience that pushes the boundaries of how science is typically taught and experienced, is one such project. Our evaluation showed that the dance and tea were an effective way for all groups traditionally underrepresented in science to learn about physics.

Our evaluation showed that The Matter of Origins was effective in translating complex scientific concepts to general audiences through contemporary art/dance. Audience members’ attitudes, interest, knowledge, and behavior concerning science showed positive changes, which suggests that the dance and tea were an effective way for them to learn about science.

The tea experience, audience members reported feeling more positive emotions (such as engaged, curious, and stimulated) and were less likely to report negative emotions (such as boredom). These emotional outcomes correlate with positive changes in audience members’ attitude, interest, knowledge, and behavior concerning science—which suggests that emotional engagement with the science content leads to positive changes in audience members’ attitude, interest, knowledge, and behavior concerning science.