Department of Chemistry

Inorganic Chemistry

Professor Peter P. Edwards FRS ML

Tel. +44 (0)1865 272680
Tel. +44 (0)1865 272646 – Personal Assistant
Fax +44 (0)1865 272656
E-mail peter.edwards@chem.ox.ac.uk

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Dear Colleagues,

Professor Eric Scerri
Presentations on science, the history of science and the philosophy of science

Several years ago, I had the vision and dream of organising a very special meeting at the Royal Society in London as part of the celebrations of the 350th anniversary of the very first publication issue of the scientific journal, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society.*

I decided on the theme *"The new chemistry of the elements"*. That theme reflects the fact that the periodic table not only still represents the best way of understanding and mastering the diverse science and technological applications of the 114 known chemical elements, but also underpins many and diverse new advances and modern multidisciplinary research across the physical, biological and medical sciences.

In due course, The Hooke Committee of the Royal Society granted my wish. Since my very first thought of such a meeting, I only ever had one person in mind to give the opening lecture on the discovery, and evolution of the periodic table – that was Eric Scerri!

I have to record that, at that time, I had never met Eric, but obviously I was aware of his amazing and hugely influential work on the periodic table. I note just two of his brilliant books: *"The periodic table; its story and its significance"* (2007) and *"A tale of seven elements"* (2013), as well as, of course, his remarkable papers on, for example, prediction and the periodic table.

Hence, our Royal Society Discussion Meeting came to fruition in London in May 2014 and Eric gave an absolutely stunning, brilliant and insightful lecture for our opening entitled *"The discovery of the periodic table as a case of simultaneous discovery"*, E. Scerri, *Phil.Trans.R.Soc.A.,* **373**:20140172.

I must point out to you the 'challenge' that I had set Eric for this opening session; here we had a remarkably diverse audience at the Royal Society (some 350+ people) from all spheres of the physical, biological and medical sciences, together with representatives from the press and social media, etc. I asked Eric to deliver a lecture which examined the fascinating issue of priority and simultaneous discovery that surrounded the discovery and evolution of the periodic system – but, was accessible and understandable to all sectors of the audience. And let me say "Eric delivered!" His was a truly inspirational and superb lecture.

Without question, Eric Scerri is an outstanding public speaker – with a real and absolute skill – in tailoring a talk to a wide, general audience, supported by a deep, authoritative knowledge of the periodic table and its fascinating history.

His real strength is that of a speaker who can undoubtedly appeal to, and inspire, a wide and diverse audience – as I witnessed first-hand at our Royal Society Meeting last year. So much so, that I know several people have told me that Eric's was the best lecture that they have heard on the history of the periodic table – *sentiments I echo 100%.*

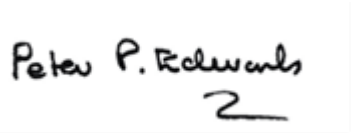
I know that Eric is planning to give popular talks on topics such as the periodic table, the history of atomic physics and the nature of science; let me say that I would be "first-in-the queue" to attend any of his lectures!

In summary, I can think of no other person who would be able to "deliver" – at the highest professional level in both speaking and presentational skills – these fascinating subject areas to a diverse audience.

Quite simply, Eric Scerri has a "gift" for such public speaking; any proposal along these lines has my complete and absolute support.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours faithfully,



Professor Peter P. Edwards FRS, ML

Inorganic Chemistry Laboratory • University of Oxford • South Parks Road • Oxford • OX1 3QR • UK
T +44 (0)1865 272600 • **F** +44 (0)1865 272690 • **W** www.chem.ox.ac.uk