

# The Presenter Network Conference 2020



The Presenter Network was set up in 2014 by the Royal Observatory Greenwich as a way for presenters to share best practice as well as watch others in action to develop their presenting style. Since then we run regular meet-ups in collaboration with other organisations and established hubs covering every aspect of presenting you could ever imagine: using comedy effectively, working with challenging audience members, how to look after your voice and everything in between.

The response to the conferences over the past few years had been overwhelmingly positive and so back by popular demand the fourth annual Presenter Network Conference was organised.

This special one-day event was held online on **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020** and was run by the Royal Observatory Greenwich in London. The day was jam-packed with sessions facilitated by members of the network with plenty of time to network and share best practice too.

## Frequently asked questions:

- Who was this event for? This network is created by presenters, for presenters so whether you are just starting out or want to freshen up your skills there will always be plenty to suit. If you are not actively involved in presenting, then I am afraid this is not the network for you.
- How much did it cost? This event was FREE - yes you read that right - FREE! This group operates purely on the good will of our members. All meet-ups leaders, speakers and workshops facilitators are offering their time and experience for free which we are very grateful for.
- What was the capacity? This year we ran the conference online and so it was open to 300 people - far more than we have previously be able to open it up to.
- Where and when was this event? The event was held online and was run by the Royal Observatory Greenwich in London on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.
- Was it all be about science? No we had people from across the public communication sector, however because the network is run by the team here at the Royal Observatory Greenwich our networks naturally included lots of science related places and people.

# Conference Programme

10:00am - Sign in and welcome

10:15am – *Keeping Things Sharp* - Liz Avery and Dan Plane

Presenting from your sofa in your joggers is enough to make anyone feel a little more...relaxed about their presenting style. In this session Liz and Dan will be running through some tips and tricks you can do at home to make sure your skills are kept razor sharp!

11:00am – *Presenting at a Wee Screen for a Big Audience* – Sam Langford and Sarah Cosgriff

How do you make a demo look good on camera? Is it possible to avoid the awkward silence of a Zoom call? Lockdown made us all have to learn new skills very quickly, including how to switch to presenting online. Sam and Sarah will share their highs and lows, including the tips that they wish they'd known back in April.

11:45am – *Taking practical science online...and making it work for EVERYONE!* - Sarah Bearchell

Let's face it: presenting practical science online is a huge challenge. However, since lockdown, Sarah has moved right out of her comfort zone to make YouTube videos and deliver a Virtual Lab science club via Zoom. She has learned a lot to share with you! All these online activities have been designed to be inclusive, because everyone should have the chance to join in. So, what can you do to make content which works for audiences with special needs?

Special note - to join in (and why not right?), you'll need: tray, tumbler 1/3 full of vinegar with (optional) food colouring/paint added, teaspoon, bicarb, washing up liquid, kitchen roll.

Find out more about our tip-top morning speakers in the **Appendix**.

12:30pm – Lunch break

1:15pm – *Networking and Discussions* - National Hub Leaders

Throughout the morning we will be collecting discussion topics for our hub leaders to facilitate sessions around. We will limit each session to 20 people only and spaces will be available to book during the lunch break via Eventbrite as soon as we know what it is you want to see!

## 2:00pm - *Once Upon A Time* - Jon Spooner

Telling stories is as much a science as it is an art. Storytelling has rules and structures that have been honed and crafted over millennia by artists who know exactly how to make you laugh, cry and become inspired to take action. In this session, writer and theatre maker Jon Spooner will share some of those 'secrets' with reference to his own work in science communication and a deeply practical introduction to the most common story system - The Hero's Journey.

## 2:45pm – *Sing About It!* - Matthew Kemp and Roberta Wilkinson

Geologise Theatre will take you on a journey from inception to performance of their science songs, focussing on how to tell stories about science through the medium of music. They will deconstruct songs from their latest musical to demonstrate some useful techniques that are applicable to performers and communicators of all kinds, including singers and non-singers! Expect dancing detectives and singing scientists aplenty.

## 3:30pm – *Presenting to Camera* - Marty Jopson

Presenting in front of a live audience is hard and scary. But once you start, you get the bug and come to love the adrenaline and feedback that the crowd gives you. How then do we do the same thing, keeping the same energy, when there is nothing more than a small disk of polished glass as your audience? Presenting to camera is a related but different skill set to performing to a live audience. Marty will discuss techniques and tips he uses to present to camera for TV and when live streaming.

## 4:15pm – Key Note Speech - *Sharing the Wonder: communicating physics from home* - Jim Al-Khalili

Professor Al-Khalili will talk a little about his journey into science communication while at the same time pursuing an academic career, teaching and carrying out research in theoretical physics. He will discuss how each has fed into and enhanced the other. He will talk about his new book, *The World According to Physics*, which was published a week before lockdown and how his international book tour became a series of talks given online via Zoom to science festivals and literary festivals around the world. He will present a shortened version of his talk to give an impression of not only the technology but the simple presenting skills that haven't had to change.

Find out more about our brilliant afternoon speakers in the **Appendix**.

For more information about the Presenter Network [click here](#).

# Conference photo 2020



## Appendix

### Key Note Speaker

#### Jim Al-Khalili

Jim Al-Khalili OBE FRS is a theoretical physicist at the University of Surrey where he holds a Distinguished Chair in physics as well as a university chair in the public engagement in science. He received his PhD in nuclear reaction theory in 1989 and has published widely in the field. His current interest is in open quantum systems and the application of quantum mechanics in biology. In 2018, he helped establish at Surrey the world's first doctoral training centre in quantum biology and recently set up a new Quantum Foundations Centre.

Jim is a prominent author and broadcaster. He has written 14 books on popular science and the history of science, between them translated into twenty-six languages. He is a regular presenter of TV science documentaries, such as the Bafta nominated Chemistry: a volatile history, and hosts the long-running weekly BBC Radio 4 programme, The Life Scientific.

Jim is a past president of the British Science Association. He is a trustee of the Institute of Physics and a member of the judging panel of the Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering. He is a recipient of the Royal Society Michael Faraday medal and the Wilkins-Bernal-Medawar Medal, the Institute of Physics Kelvin Medal and the Stephen Hawking Medal for Science Communication. He received an OBE in 2007 for 'services to science'.

@jimalkhalili

[jimal-khalili.com](http://jimal-khalili.com)

### Morning speakers

#### Dan Plane

Dan has been presenting science content, primarily to live audiences, for over 10 years. Working in museums, schools, theatres, and festivals, across the UK and internationally, Dan brings interactivity and humour to his presenting to keep audiences of all types engaged. As he specialises in live audiences, Dan has found lockdown a great opportunity to do the bathroom and put weight on. More importantly he has been looking for ways to keep the performance muscles ready for action.

@danplane

[contact@dan.science](mailto:contact@dan.science)

## Liz Avery (Royal Observatory Greenwich)

Liz is the Senior Manager of Astronomy Education at the Royal Observatory Greenwich and the founder of the Presenter Network - hooray! She has worked around the UK in a variety of science and discovery centres, universities and museums promoting public engagement with the sciences. She has spent her career writing, creating, presenting and developing learning programmes for people of all ages on all aspects of science from the science behind snot to living in space.

@lizroche

## Sam Langford (Glasgow Science Centre/Freelance)

Sam is a science communicator based in Glasgow with over 7 years experience in science communication and informal engagement. A seasoned science show presenter, Sam has spent lockdown presenting weekly quizzes, doing comedy and founding a virtual science festival.

@scottishscicomm

## Sarah Cosgriff (Freelance)

Sarah is a science communicator based in Swindon with experience of working with schools, community groups and presenting shows. During lockdown, Sarah has delivered training, presented talks, done comedy and chaired Q&A sessions focused on STEM careers.

@Sarah\_Cosgriff

## Sarah Bearchell (Freelance - Sarah's Adventures in Science)

Sarah is a freelance children's science writer and presenter based in Oxfordshire. She writes activities and articles for children's magazines and different organisations. She also develops and delivers hands-on workshops for children and families. Her approach is to make the sessions inclusive and super-sensory from the start; making the activity work for as many people as possible. Since lockdown, she has made online activity videos and run a Virtual Lab science club for children with SEN for the Lightyear Foundation. In 2014, Sarah won the Joshua Phillips Award for Innovation in Science Engagement, largely for her work in SEND schools.

@SarahBearchell

## Afternoon speakers

### Jon Spooner

Jon Spooner is a writer, performer, theatre director and producer specialising in collaborating with scientists to tell stories of leading edge research in contemporary science. He is the Artistic Director of Unlimited Theatre Director of Human Spaceflight Operations at the Unlimited Space Agency and currently a Visiting Scholar at Oxford University's Wolfson College where he is working with their theoretical quantum physicists as they work towards a Unified Theory of Everything.

@snoopfish

[www.linkedin.com/in/jonso](http://www.linkedin.com/in/jonso)

### Matthew Kemp and Roberta Wilkinson

Matthew and Roberta are PhD students in Earth Sciences at the University of Oxford. They have been studying geology and singing together for six years and now combine their passions for science and music as Geologise Theatre - because, of course, all the world's a stage! Their latest show is an hour-long musical for families, in which a team of science detectives solves the chilling case of "What Killed the Dinosaurs?".

@wearegeologise.

### Marty Jopson

Marty is a freelance science performer and TV presenter. He is best known for his work on the BBC One's prime time series, The One Show as their science reporter since it began over a decade ago. For over twenty years he has presented to audiences of all varieties, on stage and through the lens of a camera. In that time he has also worked extensively 'behind the camera', directing, producing and managing a TV production company. During lockdown he has turned his hand to live streaming microscopic investigations, so far producing over 400 minutes of content.

@martyjopson