

One & Other Project

VERY NOISY BACKGROUND

OK so my name is Tim Jones and I'm going to be interviewing you on behalf of the Wellcome Trust, it's the 6th of July 2009, could you please say into the microphone your name, surname, age if you are happy with that and where you come from.

My name is Steve Roser, I'm from Bristol and I'm 52.

Could you tell us a bit about how you found out about the One and Other project.

Well I think I probably found out about it just by generally surfing around the net. It was one of those things that popped up somewhere, I'm not quite sure where, when I saw it, I thought 'that's it', you've got to apply for this. I can't remember exactly where.

So what is it you are going to be doing on the plinth?

Well I thought very long and hard about it. I'm waking up every morning about half past 4 worrying ever since I found out. It was one of those things that once I'd decided I was going to do it, apply for it, 'oh great idea' and then, suddenly the actual moment of the text arriving from One and Other and [loud sirens in the background] deciding I had to do something, since then I went into decline and then I was very, very worried about it which is very, very unlike me because [sirens become louder] I love performing, I lecture, I'm used to public speaking but this is what really, really affects me quite deeply and I've had to think quite carefully [about] what I want to do and how I want to do it and things like that, what actually it means to me, so it's been quite profound in a way deciding what to do. I sort of, lots of people have made lots of suggestions, sort of really fantastically funny ones and some really ridiculous ones and, but basically the thing that people mostly said, you can just do what you want you can just be you and then I sort of found that quite intimidating because I didn't really know what me was on top of a plinth, on the top of Trafalgar Square not me as in my house or in front of a lecture theatre or whatever but with an [inaud] you don't know who they are, how many it is going to be and what's gonna happen and that sort of stuff, it is going to be quite strange so I sort of thought about all the suggestions people have made and it was, it was quite obviously, to me, they were going to be quite short so it's so a bit like *Britain Has Got No Talent*. I couldn't imagine any of them stretching for an hour, but equally I couldn't imagine just standing there like the guy who was on 2nd today standing there. I could imagine that was me so I had to think of something which was sort of, was me, but was active, wasn't sort of performing because I didn't think I could do that for the time so I thought well basically one is in a position of privilege but of no real power when you are standing up there I can talk to people but they don't have to listen I'm in a quite strong position in a way, I think when you are in that position you really have to do something that you feel strongly about so I thought, well I think like a lot of people, think positive for the world and I thought that's not really gonna, it's gonna sound a bit

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preachy and it's not going to be too much fun. So I thought I'll do little things that can change the world in little ways so basically what I thought was I would just try and do some very simple things that would make our lives a little better for only a few minutes. Maybe things like getting people to go and greet other people to say hello to somebody. They never met or hmm and then another one might be singing a song together, that we all know, just singing a song so I brought my ukulele and I'm gonna sing a song up there, hopefully everyone might join in and have a real cue [?] I thought, I just ask Green and Black chocolate whether they'd send me lots of chocolate and I could just distribute it and then I thought it's good chocolate, fair trade, organic, it's good stuff not good for you but its heart is in the right place and the idea of being able to give out large amounts of chocolate, I mean you are buying the crowd basically, I've sent them an email and I've got really, really nice phone calls back and they sent me lots of chocolate so I'm going to [chuckles] distribute 50 bars of Gold Green and Black organic chocolate to the crowd and hopefully that might win them over so that is the sort of thing I'm going to do, tiny things to make everyone's lives a bit happier for the odd minute possibly.

Thank you, so who would you say that you are ultimately doing this for?

Yeah very good question, hmm, I don't know, I think I'm doing it for myself really because I do like performing and generally giving out, hmm, but it's been difficult to find the right place that has been good for me, you know, because I think it's, I think I'm sort of doing it for, I'm doing it for myself, but I'm sort of pretending I'm doing it for everyone else really but actually in the end it's for me.

So how do you think people are going to react?

[Pause] Hmm I don't know, I hope they'll be quite positive because my main problem is, I want people to do things and you can't rely, I mean I've got friends coming to see what I say but everyone else might just go, hmm, and not do it and if they don't no one will die, nothing bad will happen but it would be a shame if people don't sort of join in. I'm just up there sort of trying to get people going, the trouble is, it all sounds sort of open-university-ice-breaker, you know, meet some people say 'hello' and things like that. They are all good things to do but we'll see anyway, see what happens.

So do you have any hopes or fears then for what will be going on?

Height is my fear, I'm really scared of heights. I think that's the thing that's going to be quite challenging getting up there, I'm slightly nervous that. Hmm, that I'm going to sort of just get up there and freeze because I think I don't like heights, I've never seen anyone do that, everyone seems to be quite happy up there. The guys talking about feeling safe and feeling OK so I've got that nerves, I've got lots of nerves, I

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don't know, it's always difficult when you sort of expose yourself somewhere. I'm worried people might think I'm a pillar [?], in the end I don't really care. I used to think that a couple of weeks ago and everyone would think you know *twat* but I don't think that now anyway it doesn't matter if they do, finally nothing matters.

So how do you hope they will react, how do you expect to react, how would you hope them to react?

I [pause], I hope they will get into the spirit of it really enjoy themselves and I mean, it should really be fun this. I've watched most of them up to until about 4 o'clock when I had to come down from Bristol and I didn't get the impression that people were really enjoying it too much, they were doing things that were nice and good but I just didn't get a sense of people, themselves and also the people on the ground enjoying it. Now it's a difficult balance between trying not to make it into a performance when you are trying to be a stand-up comic, it's not like I am, it's not what the idea is, but I sort of want people to enjoy it, have fun and to actually think that was a laugh what went on up there and it was interesting for 2 minutes sort of thing. So I hope people will enjoy it, I hope they will have fun and if they don't then I'm cool.

And how are you feeling then an hour before you go up?

Hmm, all right now, I'm all right, I'm good, I'm feeling, I've had a day off. I've been chilling at home and working through it and things like that so I feel, I feel happy now that it is all going to come together. I hope it's going to be fine and it's really getting into that place where it feels, actually it doesn't matter, I know how many people are going to be up there roughly. I had a sort of vision of a big Glastonbury crowd stretching over all the way and another vision nobody being there and things like that so now I know it is just the sort of, you know, it is a reasonable number of folk, pretty cheerful and chipper, everyone seems to be in a good mood, it'll be great. I'm looking forward to it now, as I said I'm slightly nervous about getting into the cherry picker and going up but apart from that I think it will be great.

Thank you, how would you describe yourself?

Hmm, quite extrovert, political, I like showing off, I'm a family person, my family is up here today, my daughter and my wife and some friends are here as well. I'm a pretty happy person. I enjoy my life and I love my work and I love the rest of my life as well. I like to try lots of new things as well, I don't have anything that I absolutely only fixate on, you know, so there's nothing I do that excludes anything else so I'm sort of quite a sort of cosmopolitan person, I like travelling around you know, that sort of stuff, I'm normal basically, pretty normal.

Are you saying you are a lecturer?

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I'm a chemist, I lecture in chemistry at [inaud] university.

And OK great. That's fantastic, anything else you'd like to say about going up there before you actually go up there?

Not really, I think I'm just looking forward to it, I think it will be fun, I'm, I was very nervous about having people here, to start off I didn't want anyone to come here and watch but now I'm really happy that I've got 10, 15 people coming to see me. I know they are going to be there, I know they are there to support me rather than make the effort to come up unless I do something good. It won't be worth coming, I know they are coming because they are my mates basically and I feel very, really pleased they are there.

And how have they been to the run up to this?

Hmm, there's been a combination of, my wife thought it's absolutely hilarious because she thinks it's very funny because I think she feels I'm *hoist by my own petard*¹ but, yeah, that would be a real laugh but actually 'calm down' and I wasn't breaking it you know [?]. She'd actually quite enjoy that in a supportive way but they have been great, most have thought it's really, really good fun. They love the idea of it, they say go for it, you know, there's been silly suggestions of things to do you know but apart from that, it's been pretty good, everyone has been pretty helpful and kind.

Good and well thank you very much, if you don't have anything else to say, that's OK.

Thank you.

END OF RECORDING

a) **1 Hoist by One's Own Petard, Shakespearean expression.**

A petard is an explosive device used in Medieval times to blast through doors and gates. If it malfunctioned, its user might be blown, or "hoisted" skyhigh. The original verb was "hoise," and "hoist" was its past tense.