



## Science Communication and Public Engagement

*The Royal Institution: Christmas lectures*

### **Baroness Susan Greenfield (archive footage of 1994 Christmas Lecture):**

Here we have...inspiration of our journey, a human brain. But just by looking at this brain, I couldn't tell you anything about the person that it came from. We couldn't say whether it was a man or a woman, whether he or she likes listening to music or walking in the country, whether they were kind, whether they had a sense of humour, you could tell nothing just by looking at the brain in this box.

### **Baroness Susan Greenfield:**

So the Christmas lectures are really the flagship event of the Royal Institution. They've been televised for about 50 years now and they were instituted in 1826 to give, over Christmas, five exciting demonstrations and illustrated lectures to young people, that's teenagers. I myself did these, as the first woman, in 1994. It's amazing that it had to be long before a woman gave them.

They were very challenging and I think on the other hand very rewarding because once – they say never work with children and animals and I did both – but once you've done that you never fear anything ever again, you never fear ... you're standing outside these doors watching the clock ticking back on the monitor, knowing there's five cameras the other side of the door and a load of non-cooperative kids and non-cooperative animals and you're the kind of ringmaster and you're an amateur, you know. But on the other hand, it's hugely exciting to do and a real thrill, a real sense of teamwork. So it's marvellous and I'm very excited that we continue these and we will always continue them. You often find scientists say the reason I became a scientist is when I first watched those Christmas lectures and when I first came to the RI as a ... as a boy, sadly it's always as a boy. But that's I think why it's very important we continue them, especially now that they're televised and we're able to send them round the world.