



# CANTERBURY FESTIVAL

## YOUNG CRITICS 2013

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### Mercury: Window On The Invisible

St Mary's Hall Studio Theatre – Saturday 26 October

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Mercury is an unfamiliar element to many people but Dr. Andrea Sella captured everyone with his talk about the fascinating element.

On Saturday 26th October in St Mary's Studio Theatre, Dr Sella, a chemist at UCL, explained why Mercury is so important from the earliest tools to the industrial revolution. Mercury is used in simple objects, like Thermometers to fluorescent lamps, however Mercury is also used to make Mercury Mirrors. When the Mercury is spun a parabolic shape occurs giving us the chance to look far in the universe. This can only be done because Mercury is a liquid at room temperature because its bonding structure is weaker than most metals. The electrons that spin around Mercury nuclei don't easily bond with other Mercury atoms.

Dr. Sella used videos to give a further understanding. My favorite part of the talk was when Dr. Sella showed the density of Mercury. The element is very dense and everything floats but gold. Furthermore, Dr. Sella showed an experiment that he created where the Mercury was sucking gold and dissolving it until all the gold disappeared. I was very surprised when Dr Sella explained how Mercury can be used to predict weather. This can be done by measuring air pressure and temperature.

A big concern with Mercury is Health. Mercury is poisonous and could lead to death. Dr. Sella explained how if Mercury is inhaled once, no harm will be done, however if inhaled repeatedly, the mercury will want to bond with Sulfur which will lead to death.

Finally, Dr Sella conducted an experiment to test the noise of mercury when it is touched by iron. This was very interesting because we were allowed up close to the experiment. Luckily, the experiment worked and we could hear a buzzing noise given by the mercury.