

Conference Report

Basel Chemistry Symposium 2016 in Memory of Professor Jules Piccard

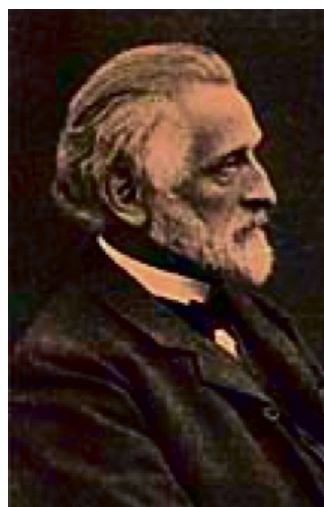
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For the fourth time, the graduate student organization from the University of Basel held the Basel Chemistry Symposium. This event has a special position in the academic agenda of the University of Basel as it is fully organized by PhD students and stimulates the academic interaction between the different institutes of the Chemistry Department. The Symposium held on the 30th November 2016 was dedicated to Professor Jules Piccard.

Prof. Dr. Jules Piccard (1840–1933)



Jules Piccard was born on 20th September 1840 in Lausanne. Piccard obtained his PhD in Heidelberg in 1862 and his habilitation from the ETH Zürich in the same year, where he stayed as a ‘Privatdozent’ for the next seven years. In 1868, he turned down an offer from the University of Turin. Jules Piccard was a full professor at the University of Basel from 1869 to 1903.^[1,2] His main scientific focuses were comprised of the natural product cantharidin (obtained from blister beetles) and the yellow dye chrysin (from the

essential oil of poplar buds). Moreover, he was interested in food chemistry and served as the cantonal chemist of Basel from 1876 to 1884. Jules Piccard installed the first telephone in Switzerland in 1905. His colleagues mocked him: “It’s a bit of fun, but it has no future.”^[3]

The PhD Chemistry Community (PCC)

The PhD Chemistry Community (PCC) is the assembly of graduate students and researchers at the Department of Chemistry at the University of Basel. The aim of the PCC is to enhance collaboration between research groups and stimulate community spirit across the department. Its activities include the organization of monthly research seminars in various disciplines and social networking events such as the annual summer party of the department, board game and movie nights, ski and snowboard weekends, and barbecues.



The organizing committee (from left): Lorenzo Delarue Bizzini, Sabine Malzkuhn, Cedric Stress, Diana Tahchieva, Mirjam Schreier, Linda Bannwart and Serena Rigo.

The Basel Chemistry Symposium 2016

Sabine Malzkuhn and **Linda Bannwart**, who chaired the symposium, opened the event by warmly welcoming the audience.



Dr. Michael Kessler, head of the Pharmacy Museum Basel, held a passionate laudation on the life and work of Prof. Piccard. In addition to providing fascinating insight into the life of Prof. Piccard, he also shed some light on the history of the chemical industry in Basel. He illustrated the important role of Prof. Piccard in these newly founded companies during that time, where he functioned less as a researcher but rather as a teacher for many generations of chemists.



PD Dr. Philipp Hübner is the current cantonal chemist of Basel Stadt and head of the cantonal laboratory. In his captivating presentation he elucidated the work of the cantonal laboratory especially in the field of food safety and restaurant cleanliness. Furthermore, he explained ‘The Ravioli Scandal’ to the younger participants in the audience.



Prof. Dr. Laura Nyström from the ETH Zurich (Institute of Food, Nutrition and Health) delivered a fascinating lecture on her group’s aim to improve the understanding of food components and their beneficial effects on human health. Her talk focused on the oxidative modification and degradation of beta-glucan, found in oats and

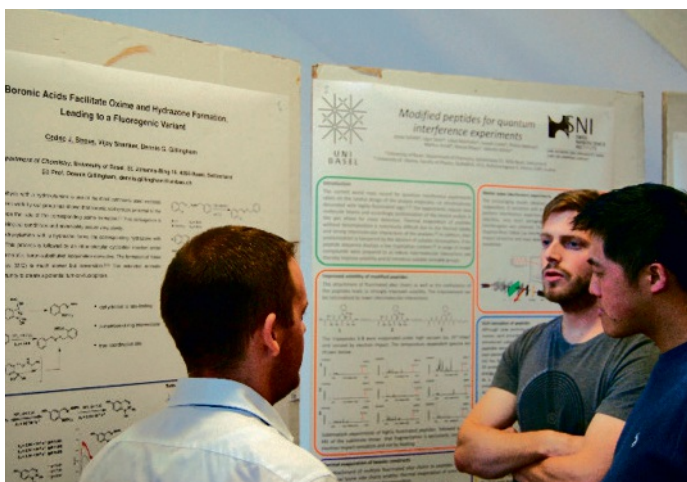
barley. These dietary fibres are commonly known for their health promoting properties, but the exact mechanisms behind these effects are still unknown.



Prof. Dr. Uwe H. F. Bunz from the University of Heidelberg (Institute of Organic Chemistry) completed the academic part of the conference with an enthralling talk about the possibilities of different fluorescence-based chemical tongues, which are able to differentiate between various white wines or to identify different fruit juices.

Poster Session

The poster session took place during the coffee break, providing the perfect atmosphere for stimulating scientific discussion and exchange of ideas. The three best posters were elected by a jury consisting of **Prof. Dr. Konrad Tiefenbacher**, **Prof. Dr. Oliver Wenger**, **Prof. Dr. Michael Nash** and **PD Dr. Daniel Häussinger**.



Impression of the poster session during the coffee break.

We congratulate **Serena Rigo** (Palivan group), **Thomas Brandl** (Mayor group) and **Anja Stampfli** (Seebeck group), who were awarded for their excellent posters.



The poster prize winners (from left): Serena Rigo, Thomas Brandl and Anja Stampfli

Christmas Dinner



Impression of the fondue dinner.

The symposium was ended with a mulled wine apéro and the traditional Christmas dinner. **Lorenzo Delarue Bizzini**, **Serena Rigo**, **Mirjam Schreier**, **Cedric Stress** and **Diana Tahchieva** delighted us with a great cheese fondue and charming atmosphere at the dinner.

Acknowledgements

The organizing committee would like to thank the speakers for their enlightening presentations, all poster authors for their interesting contributions, as well as the Chemistry Department of the University of Basel for financial support.

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- [1] H. Wichers, 'Piccard, Jules', in 'Historischen Lexikon der Schweiz (HSL)', URL: <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D48924.php>, assessed 17.3.2016.
- [2] URL: <http://www.chemie.unibas.ch/~web/history/index.html>, accessed 17.3.2016.
- [3] URL: <http://bertrandpiccard.com/tradition-familiale-in-brief/>, accessed 17.3.2016.