

Conference Report

Christmas Symposium Basel, December 4, 2020

Daniel Joss*, Alain Baiyoumy, Vittoria Chimisso, Claire E. Meyer, Dzmitry A. Miarzlou, Gosia M. Murawska, Nadja Niggli, Björn Pfund, Ksenia Reznikova, and Pascal Rieder

*Correspondence: D. Joss, University of Basel, Department of Chemistry, St. Johannis-Ring 19, CH-4056 Basel. E-mail: daniel.joss@unibas.ch

Keywords: Chemistry Symposium Basel · Christmas Symposium · PhD Chemistry Community Basel

Introduction

For many years, the Christmas Symposium Basel organized by the board members of the PhD Chemistry Community (PCC) offers the opportunity for an enriching scientific exchange between researchers at the Department of Chemistry of the University of Basel and its guests. In 2020, the symposium consisted of four lectures given by professors from other research institutes, 3 minutes short talks of ambitious PhD students as well as a digital poster session.

The PCC is driven by PhD students that, besides pursuing their own PhD research projects, contribute to the scientific community by organizing academic and social events, as research seminars, symposia and the PCC snow retreat in the beautiful nature of the Swiss mountains.



Fig. 1. The PCC meeting remotely in order to discuss organization and proceedings in December 2020 with masks for those in the research lab and without masks for those working from home (Top row, left to right: Björn Pfund, Daniel Joss, Nadja Niggli, Gosia Murawska, Ksenia Reznikova. Bottom row, left to right: Claire Meyer, Pascal Rieder, Vittoria Chimisso, Alain Baiyoumy, Dzmitry Miarzlou).

Christmas Symposium Basel 2020

In 2020, the Chemistry Department at the University of Basel was hit as all people around the globe by the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to provide nonetheless an adequate format for

a scientific conference, the schedule of the symposium included remote lectures given by four established professors from France, Netherlands and Switzerland. A PhD short talk session offered the PhD students to present their research projects to the public and to get insights in other projects to strengthen the collaborations within and outside the department. Furthermore, a digital poster session allowed to get a thorough impression of the large variety of chemical branches at the department of chemistry. We are very pleased, that up to 86 participants simultaneously joined the audience in order to follow the online conference talks.

Prof. Dr. **Marcellus Ubbink** (Leiden University) offered insights into the design and intriguing applications of paramagnetic probes for NMR and EPR experiments in structural biology.

Dr. **Michal Shoshan** (University of Zurich) presented how peptidic scaffolds, *e.g.* novel cyclic tetrapeptides, can be used in order to develop next-generation chelating agents effective against lead poisoning.

Dr. **Martin Blackledge** (Institute de Biologie Structurale, Grenoble) introduced the audience into NMR studies of the role of large scale motion in protein function.

Prof. Dr. **Michal Juríček** (University of Zurich) dived into the astonishing electrocyclic ring closure in helical cethrene that proceeds both thermally and photochemically in a conrotatory mode.

PhD Session and Prizes

Both the PhD short talk session and poster presentations offered the participating PhD students to enhance the visibility of their scientific work and to train their communication skills. The prizes for the best poster presentations were awarded by the judges Prof. Dr. **Catherine Housecroft**, Prof. Dr. **Christof Sparr** and Prof. Dr. **Jonathan de Roo** to **Riccardo Wehr**, **Annika Huber** and **Basilus Sauter**. The two awardees of the novel PhD short talks (3 min.) were: **Björn Pfund** and **Eric Sidler**. Despite the difficult situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, highly valuable insights into a large variety of topics in chemistry were provided by the online edition of the Christmas Symposium and an enriching scientific exchange over all specific branches of chemistry united in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Basel took place.

The Department of Chemistry at the University of Basel is gratefully acknowledged for its generous financial support and we thank all poster presentation and PhD short talk participants for their valuable scientific contribution and all speakers for their highly inspiring talks.

Received: December 8, 2020