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Foreword to the Festschrift in honour of Professor Attila G. Császár: molecules (always) in motion

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A university student is called in Hungarian ‘hallgató’, i.e., listener, a person who listens.

Attila Császár has been professor at ELTE, Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, where he has taught theoretical chemistry, spectroscopy, and special courses about quantum nuclear motion theory. In his courses, we, at that time students, did not listen but were actively involved in discussions about the quantum mechanics of molecular rotations and vibrations. A question was never wrong, our imagination was never limited, and this also meant that we sometimes had to continue in the library after the class to prepare for the next week.

We got to know Attila as an extremely positive and generous person, and we both had a great and inspiring time with him as PhD students (more than 15 years ago).

Attila Császár was born in Dorog, Hungary. He went to school in Zalaegerszeg, where he developed a passion for mathematics. Attila studied chemistry at ELTE, the oldest and largest university for pure sciences in Hungary, and earned his PhD from ELTE in theoretical chemistry in 1985. Then, he was a post-doctoral fellow at Oregon State University (with Ken Hedberg), a visiting scholar at the University of Vienna (with Hans Lischka), Stanford University (with Wesley Allen), the University of Cambridge (with Nick Handy), and the University of Reading (with Ian Mills). Since the late 1990s, he has been a regular visitor at the Center of Computational (Quantum) Chemistry in Athens, GA (with Wesley Allen and Fritz Schaefer), and an honorary research fellow at UCL (with Jonathan Tennyson) since 2006.

Attila has been working on molecular spectroscopy, he used and developed theoretical and computational approaches for solving the rovibrational Schrödinger equation, he worked on thermochemistry, and most recently, he introduced graph-theoretical tools to analyze

and systematically refine (experimental) spectroscopic networks.

Attila maintains an extensive international scientific network, and he has not only been a regular visitor and long-term collaborator of several leading research groups in molecular spectroscopy, but he also hosted visitors from around the world. With colleagues from ELTE, he launched the Kapuy lecture series 25 years ago with the first speaker Fritz Schaefer in 2000. As to longer-term visits, Brian Sutcliffe (Université Libre de Bruxelles) was a visiting professor at ELTE in 2005, and Bill Poirier (Texas Tech University) in 2017.

Between 2015 and 2019, Attila Császár was the Chair of the EU COST Network MOLIM: Molecules in Motion, which promoted (quantum) nuclear motion theory developments, applications, and collaborations through activities from numerous research groups from 29 countries.

Between 2016 and 2018, Attila Császár was a Titular Member of the IUPAC’s Physical and Biophysical Chemistry Division. Since 2016, Professor Császár has served as the Head of the Hevesy György PhD School of Chemistry of ELTE and became a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2022.

This Festschrift of Molecular Physics brings together good colleagues, collaborators, and former students, as well as inspiring contributions from anonymous reviewers. Together with all contributors to this Festschrift, it is our great pleasure to celebrate Attila Császár and his achievements in research, teaching, mentoring, and scholarship on the occasion of his 65th birthday!

Dear Attila, on this festive occasion, we wish you lots of good further inspiration, great insights and breakthroughs in molecular spectroscopy, quantum chemistry, and in general, towards understanding Nature in the language of mathematics!