

Professor Stéphane Udry, Hon DSc

Thursday 25 July 2024, pm

Chancellor

It is a great pleasure to introduce our honorary graduand this morning, the esteemed astronomer and astrophysicist: PROFESSOR STEPHANE UDRY.

Stéphane Udry is Professor of Astronomy at the University of Geneva, a former Director of the Geneva Observatory and currently Co-Director of the Swiss National Center of Competency in Research (NCCR) PlanetS. He is one of the pioneers in the field of exoplanets (planets outside our own solar system), leading or participating in ambitious large planet-surveys and the interpretation of associated results and an essential partner for most of the major instrument developments in the field. Our own astronomers here at Warwick have a long history of fruitful collaboration with Professor Udry, including high-level and active participation in the development of the European Space Agency's PLATO mission, to be launched in 2026.

While Stéphane is motivated by his inquisitiveness in science, he radiates friendliness and amiability. During his time as Director of

Geneva Observatory his enthusiasm flowed through the entire organisation, reflecting an ambiance which helped everyone (including visitors) feel valued, and creating a happy and productive environment for all.

I met Stephane during the early days of exoplanet science when we approached the Swiss team to help with confirmatory observations of our WASP Planets. Just looking at the numbers of WASP planets being observed by the James Webb Space Telescope, I think it's fair to say that this was a successful collaboration. More to the point, we have invited each other's teams into subsequent projects, sealing a continuous career-long relationship.

While it is fair to say that Stephane is a connoisseur of fine wines (and especially those from Valais – his home Canton in Switzerland), I'm pleased to report a new skill he is developing in the tasting of single malt whisky. However, as he recently suggested a malt "with ice", I think this skill is still in its infancy. Still, I'm sure Stephane will persevere, and I look forward to many trips to Geneva to help him in his quest for perfection.

We have worked with Stephane on the PLATO project already for some 16 years. As with any space mission this hasn't always been a bed of roses but composed of highs and lows. The lows were often deeply depressing (e.g. mission rejection in 2011) but Stephane was always encouraging, helping us to prepare to rescue the mission at the next opportunity. During the upcoming excitement of the launch and when we face the multitude of commissioning problems, Stephane's steady mood and analytical thoroughness will be essential to help us get the best from the satellite. The PLATO mission will largely round off the exoplanet discovery phase by detecting and characterising many Earth-like planets. This will undoubtedly be the highlight of our careers!

Professor Udry is a high-profile astronomer in his native Switzerland. As Co-Director of NCCR PlanetS, he has made an important contribution to establishing an organisation that co-ordinates education, technical development, outreach and research in Switzerland in the field of planetary science. He was Chair of the Commission for Astronomy of the Swiss Academy of Sciences (2015-2021, an active member of the Commission for Space Affairs of the Swiss parliament, and, until 2023, Swiss delegate to the European Southern Observatory. In 2011, he was awarded the Prize of the City of Geneva for Science. He also has a strong international profile, participating in international scientific

committees, and as part of the advisory structure of the European Space Agency. He has published over 600 peer-reviewed articles, and in 2012 was awarded the Insigne du Mérite by the University of Montreal. We are delighted to welcome Stéphane to Warwick today.

Chancellor: in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, PROFESSOR
STEPHANE UDRY.