

## Roald Hoffmann, Doctor *Honoris Causa* of the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv

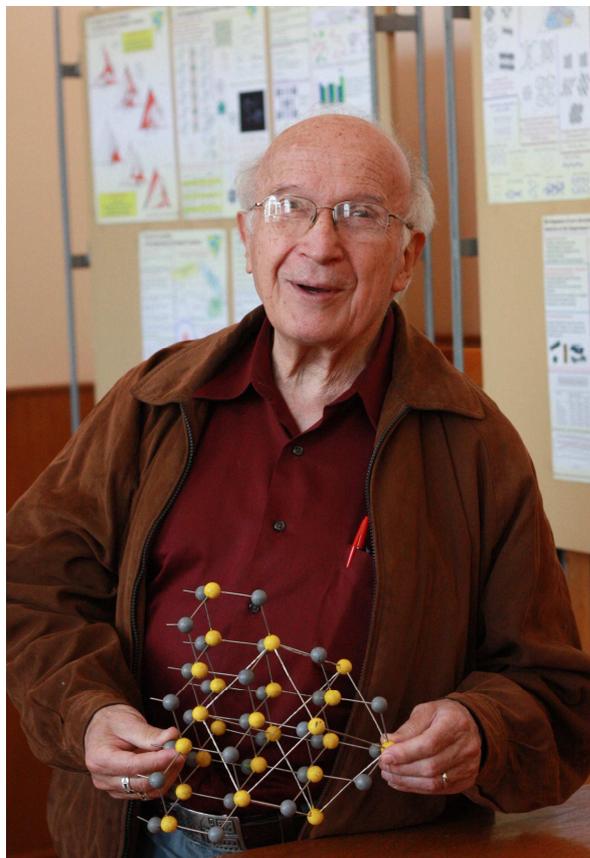
In May 2015, the Council of the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv decided unanimously to propose the title of Doctor *Honoris Causa* to Professor Roald Hoffmann from Cornell University in the United States.

Roald Hoffmann is the most eminent scientist born in Lviv region, and as such promotes a positive image of Ukraine beyond the borders. He maintains contacts with different sections of the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv and the Polytechnical University of Lviv and supports Ukrainian science and art. In January 2014, he cosigned, together with other intellectuals from all over the world, an article in *The Guardian* entitled “Support Ukrainians and they can help us build a fairer Europe”.

Roald Hoffmann was born under the name Roald Safran in the village of Zolochiv in 1937. This was the beginning of one of the darkest periods in the history of Europe, in particular for Jewish families, and as a small boy Roald had to spend 18 months hidden in the attic of a village school in Univ, together with his mother. His father and other members of his family were killed, but Roald survived the Holocaust, and after having transited *via* different refugee camps in Europe, he immigrated to the United States at the age of 11. After having finished his primary education in New York City, he rapidly deviated from the family’s intention to make him a medical doctor, but hesitated some time between chemistry and art history. He received his B.A. in chemistry at Columbia University and then moved to Harvard University, where he earned a Philosophical Degree in chemical physics in 1962, for a thesis dealing with the molecular theory of polyhedral molecules. During the three years he still remained at Harvard University, he further developed a semiempirical method of calculation of the electronic structure of molecules, referred to as the extended Hückel method. In 1965 Roald Hoffmann joined the Department of Chemistry at Cornell University, where he is still active. In 1974 he became the John. A. Newman Professor of Physical Science and since 1996 he is also the Frank H.T. Rhodes Professor of Human Letters, now *emeritus*.

The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1981 was awarded jointly to Kenichi Fukui and Roald Hoffmann “for their theories developed independently, concerning the course of chemical reactions”. Roald Hoffmann’s Nobel lecture was entitled “Building Bridges between Inorganic and Organic Chemistry”.

His contributions to what he calls “applied theoretical chemistry” are numerous, and the list of awards he has received, among which more than 25 titles Doctor *Honoris Causa*, is impressingly long. He is the only person to have been awarded by the



American Chemical Society in three different disciplines: organic chemistry, inorganic chemistry, and chemical education.

The pedagogic aspect is effectively very important to Roald Hoffmann, and he has published several articles on teaching chemistry. In the late 1980’s he collaborated on, and presented, a TV series in 26 parts, “The World of Chemistry”, which has been shown in several countries.

Roald Hoffmann is not only a brilliant chemist and pedagogue, but also a poet and a writer. He has published several collections of poems, and three plays. The first of these, “Oxygen”, written in collaboration with another chemist, Carl Djerassi, deals with the ambiguity in attributing scientific discovery to a particular person (did Lavoisier discover oxygen, or did Priestly, and what about Scheele?). It has been translated to several foreign languages, and performed in different theatres, as well as on TV and radio. His most recent play, an autobiographic play entitled “Something that belongs to you”, has been performed at different theatres around the world, and is about to be translated to Ukrainian.

The wish to bring science to a broader public and reveal the links between different fields, proving that “everything is connected to everything else”, has motivated many collaborations. In 2001 Roald Hoffmann co-launched a venture called “Entertaining Science”, where, once per month, authors, artists and scientists are invited to perform and express their thoughts on particular themes, such as “nothing”, “heavy metal” or “fear”, at a cafe cabaret in Greenwich village. A recent book, “Roald Hoffmann,

on the Philosophy, Art, and Science of Chemistry”, tries to gather his contributions to philosophy.

We are happy and honored that Professor Roald Hoffmann has accepted to officially become one of the most prominent ambassadors of the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv abroad. On September 30, 2015 he gave a broad-public lecture entitled “Protochemistries are a Bridge” to mark the event.

Roman GLADYSHEVSKII