

Preface

The 191st I.A.U. Symposium was held in Montpellier (France) from August 27 to September 01, 1998. Although several conferences on subjects related to AGB stars had already occurred, it was the first time that a full I.A.U. Symposium was dedicated to these objects. Major observational breakthroughs, in particular in the fields of high-angular resolution, many new developments in theoretical models, and a lively meeting between experts on meteorites and on AGB stars marked this conference. It was attended by 245 participants from 27 different countries who presented 202 contributions. We were pleased to note the presence of many bright young scientists, an indication that the field of “old” stars has a promising future !

This book contains the 30 reviews and the 48 contributed talks organised by topics. The poster contributions appeared in the Abstract Booklet published by the *Groupe de Recherches en Astronomie et Astrophysique du Languedoc* (University of Montpellier) and can be consulted on the ADS Abstract Service. A scientific summary of the conference has been presented in the Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (1999, PASP 111, 125-126).

Several events have been connected to the Conference. In an effort to make our discipline better known to the general public, exhibits from ESA and from the Observatory of Paris were presented in the Congress Hall. Also, on Friday August 28, the Chairman of the SOC gave a well attended public lecture. A Concert of Baroque Music was given to the participants on August 29 within a nicely restored medieval building. On Sunday 30, a tour to the Grotte des Demoiselles, or the “Fairies Cave” (a network of natural caves, 30 km away from the city), let most participants speechless in the presence of such underground marvels. The Conference banquet was held outdoors, in the beautiful park of the XVIIth century Flaugergues castle. Finally, several tours of the Montpellier city, conducted by the local history expert, J.P. Lafon, were organised for the participants and their family.

The Scientific Organising Committee consisted of:

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|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A. Alksnis (Latvia), | B. Gustafsson (Sweden), |
| H. Habing (The Netherlands), | S. Kleinmann (U.S.A.), |
| D. Lambert (U.S.A.), | T. Le Bertre (France), |
| J. Lépine (Brazil), | M.O. Mennessier (France), |
| A. Omont (France), | D. Schönberner (Germany), |
| A. Tielens (The Netherlands), | C. Waelkens (Belgium), |
| P. Whitelock (South Africa) and | P. Wood (Australia). |

The I.A.U. sponsoring bodies were the Division IV (Stars) and the Commissions 29 (Stellar Spectra), 36 (Theory of Stellar Atmospheres), 27 (Variable Stars) and 34 (Interstellar Matter).

In Montpellier, the Symposium was organised by the *Groupe de Recherches en Astronomie et Astrophysique du Languedoc* (GRAAL) of the Montpellier University of Sciences and Technology (CNRS and UMII). The Local Organising Committee consisted of:

D. Barthès, M. Belmas, M. Chadid, R. Coll,
P. Collard, G. Jasiewicz, J.P. Lafon, P. de Laverny,
A. Lèbre, A.M. Le Squeren, C. Magnan, M.O. Mennessier and
C. Mercier.

The AGB Symposium has been possible thanks to the generous support of:

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- the European Space Agency,
- the French Academy of Sciences,
- the French Ministry of Education (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de l'Enseignement Supérieur),
- the French Foreign Office (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères),
- the Region Languedoc-Roussillon,
- the Montpellier District,
- the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (INSU and GdR 968),
- the University of Montpellier (UMII),
- the ISTEEM (Institut des Sciences de la Terre, de l'Eau et de l'Espace de Montpellier),
- the Pôle Universitaire Européen de Montpellier et du Languedoc-Roussillon,
- the IAU French National Committee for Astronomy (CNFA) and
- the Observatory of Paris.

We address our warmest thanks to all the individuals and to all the institutions who have contributed to the success of this Symposium.

T. Le Bertre, A. Lèbre and C. Waelkens

Leuven, February 1, 1999