Supplementary Information

A new generation of aprotic yet Brønsted acidic imidazolium salts: low toxicity, high recyclability and greatly improved activity

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1.0 General

Proton Nuclear Magnetic Resonance spectra were recorded on 400 MHz and 600 MHz spectrometers in CDCl₃ referenced relative to residual CHCl₃ ($\delta = 7.26$ ppm), DMSO-d₆ referenced relative to residual DMSO (H) ($\delta = 2.51$ ppm). Chemical shifts are reported in ppm and coupling constants in Hertz. Carbon NMR spectra were recorded on the same instruments (100 MHz and 150 MHz) with total proton decoupling. All melting points are uncorrected. Infrared spectra were obtained using neat samples on a Perkin Elmer Spectrum 100 FT-IR spectrometer equipped with a universal ATR sampling accessory. Flash chromatography was carried out using silica gel, particle size 0.04-0.063 mm. TLC analysis was performed on precoated 60F₂₅₄ slides, and visualised by UV irradiation, KMnO₄ or anisaldehyde staining. All aldehydes were sourced commercially and either distilled under vacuum (if liquid) or dissolved in CH₂Cl₂ and washed with NaOH (if solid) prior to use. Methanol and THF were distilled from sodium and stored under argon best results were obtained using freshly distilled methanol. All reactions were carried out in oven-dried glassware with magnetic stirrers under an atmosphere of argon, unless specified. Careful drying of all catalysts/salts is essential for best results a convenient procedure for this follows: the catalysts/salts were dissolved in dry toluene under argon. The solvent was removed in vacuo and the procedure was repeated twice, taking care the compound was not exposed to air. The catalysts/salts were then dried under high vacuum for 2 h and used in the reaction. Preparation of Catalyst 41, and 42 included in ESI.

2.0 Catalyst synthesis

1*H*-Imidazolium-2-carboxamide,1-methyl-3-[2-oxo-2-(1-pyrrolidinyl)ethyl] octylsulfate (8):



A flask was charged with 1*H*-Imidazolium-2-carboxamide, 1-methyl-3-[2-oxo-2-(1pyrrolidinyl)ethyl]-, bromide **9** (1.00 g, 3.15 mmol) and distilled water (10 mL). Sodium octylsulfate (0.731 g, 3.15 mmol) in distilled water (10 mL) was added in one portion and the suspension was stirred vigorously for 24 h at RT. The water was removed on the rotary evaporator and residue was dissolved in dichloromethane (20 mL) and washed with water. Organic layer was dried over anhydrous magnesium sulphate, filtered and solvent removed by rotary evaporation. The product was dried *in vacuo* for 72 h to give **8** as a white solid (0.649 g, 46%).

¹H-NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 0.89 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H), 1.31-1.33 (m, 10H), 1.47-1.54 (m, 2H), 1.87-1.82 (m, 2H), 2.00-1.94 (m, 2H), 3.36 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 3.52 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 3.70 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 4.03 (s, 3H), 5.37 (s, 2H), 7.83 (d, J = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 7.87 (d, J = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 8.83 (bs, 1H), 8.76 (bs, 1H)

¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 13.9, 22.1, 23.7, 25.4, 25.5, 28.7, 28.7, 29.0, 31.2, 36.8, 45.1, 46.0, 50.7, 65.5, 123.4, 124.1, 138.9, 154.6, 162.4,

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found $[M-OctOSO_3^-]^+ 237.1356$, $C_{11}H_{17}N_4O_2^+$ requires 237.1346 Melting Point: 122-124 °C. 1*H*-Imidazolium-2-carboxamide, 1-methyl-3-[2-oxo-2-(1-pyrrolidinyl) ethyl] Bromide (9):



A round-bottomed flask was charged with 1-methyl-1*H*-imidazole-2-carboxamide (2.00 g, 16.0 mmol) and THF (100 mL) under nitrogen. To this solution was added 2-bromo-1-(pyrrolidin-1-yl)ethanone (3.07 g, 16.0 mmol). The reaction mixture was refluxed for 2 days with vigorous stirring. The product precipitated as a white solid, was then washed with THF (5 x 50 mL). The solvent was removed on the rotary evaporator and the product **9** was dried *in vacuo* for 72 h to give **9** as a white solid (2.35 g, 47%).

¹H-NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.83-1.76 (m, 2H), 1.97-1.90 (m, 2H), 3.28 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 3.51 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 4.01 (s, 3H), 5.38 (s, 2H), 7.85 (d, J = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 7.88 (d, J = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 8.83 (bs, 1H), 8.73 (bs, 1H) ¹³C-NMR (150 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 23.7, 25.5, 36.9, 45.2, 46.0, 50.8, 123.4, 124.1, 139.0, 154.6, 162.4. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M-Br⁻]⁺ 237.1361, C₁₁H₁₇N₄O₂⁺ requires 237.1346 Melting Point: 197-198 °C

1*H*-Imidazolium-2-carboxamide, 1-methyl-3-[2-oxo-2-(1-pyrrolidinyl)ethyl] BF₄(10):



A flask was charged with 1*H*-Imidazolium-2-carboxamide, 1-methyl-3-[2-oxo-2-(1-pyrrolidinyl)ethyl]-, bromide **9** (1.20 g, 3.78 mmol) and ethanol (60 mL) under a Nitrogen atmosphere. Sodium tetrafluoroborate (0.415 g, 3.78 mmol) was added in one portion and the suspension was stirred vigorously for 24 hours at RT. The fine white precipitate was filtered

quickly in air and washed with ethanol. The filtrate and washings were combined and solvent removed by rotary evaporation, then *in vacuo* for 2 days to give **10** as a pale pink solid (0.764 g, 62%).

¹H-NMR (600 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.79-1.82 (m, 2H), 1.92-1.95 (m, 2H), 3.32 (t, J = 6.6 Hz, 2H), 3.54-3.48 (m, 2H), 4.00 (s, 3H), 5.35 (s, 2H), 7.82 (d, J = 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.84 (d, J = 1.8 Hz, 1H), 8.73 (bs, 1H), 8.82 (bs, 1H) ¹³C-NMR (150 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 23.6, 25.4, 36.8, 45.2, 46.0, 50.8, 123.4, 124.1, 138.9, 154.6, 162.4. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M–BF₄⁻]⁺ 237.1355, C₁₁H₁₇N₄O₂⁺ requires 237.1346 Melting point: 145-147 °C

2-(isobutoxycarbonyl)-1,3-dimethyl-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium iodide (11):



A round-bottomed flask was charged with isobutyl 1-methyl-1*H*-imidazole-2-carboxylate (2.00 g, 10.9 mmol) and diethyl ether (100 mL) under nitrogen. To this solution was added methyl iodide (6.24 g, 43.9 mmol) in one portion. The reaction mixture was refluxed for 2 days with vigorous stirring. The product precipitated as a light yellow solid, was filtered then washed with diethyl ether (5 x 50 mL). The residual solvent was removed on the rotary evaporator. The product was dried *in vacuo* for 24 h to give **11** as a light yellow solid (2.21 g, 62%).

¹H-NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.05 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 6H), 2.16 (sep.t, J = 6.8, 6.4 Hz, 1H), 4.30 (s, 6H), 4.31 (d, J = 6.4 Hz, 2H), 8.24 (s, 2H). ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 14.0, 22.3, 35.1, 69.2, 121.8, 127.1, 148.7. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M–I[–]]⁺ 197.1296, C₁₀H₁₇N₂O₂⁺ requires 197.1285 Melting Point: 116-117 °C.

2-(isobutoxycarbonyl)-1,3-dimethyl-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium NTf₂(12):



A round-bottomed flask was charged with 2-(isobutoxycarbonyl)-1,3-dimethyl-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium iodide **11** (0.500 g, 1.54 mmol) and distilled water (2 mL). Lithium bis(trifluoromethane) sulfonamide (0.443g, 1.54 mmol) in distilled water (2 mL) was added in one portion and the suspension was stirred vigorously for 4 h at RT. The product precipitated as a light yellow solid. The aqueous layer was removed, and the IL washed with water (3 x 4 mL) then the solvent removed on the rotary evaporator. The product was dried *in vacuo* for 48 h to give **12** as a pale yellow solid (0.630 g, 86%).

¹H-NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.07 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 6H), 2.16 (sep.t, J = 6.8, 6.4 Hz, 1H), 4.19 (s, 6H), 4.32 (d, J = 6.4 Hz, 2H), 7.54 (s, 2H). ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 19.1, 27.5, 39.6, 74.6, 119.7(q, J = 320 Hz, 2 CF₃), 126.5, 132.3, 153.6. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M–NTf₂⁻]⁺ 197.1283, C₁₀H₁₇N₂O₂⁺ requires 197.1285 Melting Point: 45-46 °C

2-(isobutoxycarbonyl)-1,3-dimethyl-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium BF₄(13):



A round-bottomed flask was charged with isobutyl 1-methyl-1*H*-imidazole-2-carboxylate (0.200 g, 1.1 mmol) and dry diethyl ether (10 mL) under nitrogen. To this solution was added trimethyloxonium tetrafluoroborate (0.162 g, 1.1 mmol) quickly. The reaction mixture was stirred vigorously for 24 h. The product precipitated as a white solid, was filtered, and then washed with diethyl ether (2 x 10 mL). The solvent was removed on the rotary evaporator. The product was dried *in vacuo* for 24 h to give **13** as a white solid (0.302 g, 97%).

¹H-NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.05 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 6H), 2.14 (sep.t, J = 6.8, 6.4 Hz, 1H), 4.16 (s, 6H), 4.29 (d, J = 6.4 Hz, 2H), 7.65 (s, 2H). ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 19.1, 27.5, 39.3, 74.2, 126.7, 132.2, 153.9. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M–BF₄⁻]⁺ 197.1295, C₁₀H₁₇N₂O₂⁺ requires 197.1285 Melting Point: 64-65 °C.

Ethyl 1H-imidazole-4-carboxylate (14a)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with 4imidazoledicarboxylic acid (250 mg, 2.2 mmol) in ethanol (5 mL). To this DMF (3 drops) was added followed by thionyl chloride (585 μ L, 8 mmol). The reaction mixture was fitted with a condenser and stirred at 80 °C for 48 h. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the residue was dissolved in water (5 mL). Aqueous sodium hydroxide was then added until the solution reached pH 9. The mixture was then extracted with EtOAc (2 x 10 mL) and the organic layer was concentrated *in vacuo* giving the pure ester **14a** (155 mg, 70 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.39 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H), 4.38 (q, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 7.81 (s, 1H), 7.95 (s, 1H).
¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 13.9, 60.3, 125.3, 129.4, 136.5, 161.7.
ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found 140.0479, C₆H₈N₂O₂ requires 140.0479
Melting point: 66-69 °C

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Diethyl 1*H*-imidazole-1,5-dicarboxylate (14b)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **14a** (150 mg, 1.08 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). To this K_2CO_3 (145 mg, 1.08 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred for 30 min under an argon atmosphere. Ethyl bromoacetate (215 µL, 1.95 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 2 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the resulting residue was extracted with dichloromethane (2 x 10 mL). The extracts were combined and concentrated *in vacuo* giving a pale yellow solid. This solid was washed with ether (20 mL) after which the crude product was purified by flash column chromatography (chloroform: MeOH, 10:1) resulting in the pure product **14b** as a pale yellow oil (161 mg, 70 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.32 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 1.38 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 4.27 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 4.32 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 5.04 (s, 2H), 7.63 (s, 1H), 7.80 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 14.1, 14.2, 29.7, 48.0, 60.7, 62.0, 137.3, 142.6, 160.4, 167.4. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found 226.0949, C₁₀H₁₄N₂O₂ requires 226.0954

3-Benzyl-1,5-bis(ethoxycarbonyl)-1H-imidazol-3-ium bromide (14)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **14b** (150 mg, 0.69 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Benzyl bromide (321 μ L, 2.7 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 3 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* resulting in a brown oil. This oil was washed with ether (20 mL) to remove excess benzyl bromide after which the pure product **14** was obtained as a pale yellow oil (174 mg, 65 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.36-1.39 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 6H), 3.55-3.60 (q, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 4H),
4.75 (s, 2H), 5.31 (s, 2H), 7.36-7.49 (m, 5H), 7.58 (s, 1H), 7.88 (s, 1H).
¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 15.1, 15.3, 49.2, 57.2, 61.1, 62.5, 126.7, 128.9, 129.7,
129.5, 134.4, 137.2, 145.8, 161.1, 168.4.
ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M–Br⁻]⁺ 317.1412, C₁₇H₂₁N₂O₄⁺ requires 317.1416.

3-Benzyl-1,5-bis(ethoxycarbonyl)-1H-imidazol-3-ium tetrafluoroborate (15)



To a 50 mL round bottomed flask fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, **14** (150 mg, 0.38 mmol) was added. To this NaBF₄ (75 mg, 0.68 mmol) and acetone (10 mL) were added and the mixture was placed under an argon atmosphere. The resulting suspension was stirred at room

temperature for 4 days, after which time a white precipitate was formed. This precipitate was filtered using a Buchner funnel under vacuum and washed with dry acetone (2 x 5 mL). The combined filtrate and washings were then concentrated *in vacuo* giving the pure product **15** as a pale yellow oil (146 mg, 96 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.32 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 6H), 3.56 (q, J = 6.8 Hz, 4H), 4.69 (s, 1H), 5.95 (s, 1H), 7.26-7.48 (m, 5H), 7.86 (s, 1H), 8.95 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 15.1, 15.2, 49.5, 58.1, 62.1, 62.5, 126.7, 128.9, 129.7, 130.1, 134.4, 137.5, 146.2, 161.2, 169.0. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M–BF₄⁻]⁺ 317.1423, C₁₇H₂₁N₂O₄⁺ requires 317.1422.

Ethyl 1-methyl-1*H*-imidazole-5-carboxylate (16a)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **14a** (120 mg, 0.86 mmol) dissolved in methanol (7.2 mL). To this methyl iodide (158 μ L, 1.71 mmol) in methanol (2.7 mL) was added. The flask was fitted with a condenser and stirred under reflux for 48 h after which the solvent was removed *in vacuo* giving a dark brown oil. This crude oil was purified by flash chromatography (CHCl₃: MeOH (1.5%)) giving the pure compound **16a** as a pale yellow oil (87 mg, 71 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.28 (t, J = 7.1, 3H), 3.83 (s, 3H), 4.25 (q, J = 7.1, 2H), 7.62, (s, 1H), 7.91 (s, 1H).
¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 14.2, 60.4, 125.3, 127.7, 133.2, 137.4, 160.4.
ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found 154.0745, C₇H₁₀N₂O₂ requires 154.0742.

3,5-bis(ethoxycarbonyl)-1-methyl-1H-imidazol-3-ium bromide (16)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **16a** (200 mg, 1.4 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Ethyl bromoacetate (320 μ L, 2.9 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 4 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* giving a light brown oil. This oil was washed with ether (30 mL) to remove excess ethyl bromoacetate giving the pure product **16** as a pale yellow oil (370 mg, 85 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.33 (t, 3H, J = 7.1), 1.36 (t, 3H, J = 7.1), 4.24 (s, 3H), 4.29 (q, 2H, J = 7.1), 4.41 (q, 2H, J = 7.1), 5.64 (s, 2H), 8.11 (s, 1H), 10.43 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 13.6, 36.6, 50.4, 62.3, 62.7, 123.9, 128.5, 141.3, 156.8,

165.5, 206.1.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: : Found $[M-Br^-]^+$ 241.1033, $C_{11}H_{17}N_2O_4$ requires 241.1032.

3,5-bis(ethoxycarbonyl)-1-methyl-1H-imidazol-3-ium tetrafluoroborate (17)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **14b** (150 mg, 0.69 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Trimethyloxonium tetrafluroborate (103 mg, 0.7 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 4 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* after which the pure product **17** was obtained as a pale yellow oil (197 mg, 90 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.26 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 1.32 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 4.07 (s, 3H), 4.22 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 4.36 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 8.50 (s, 1H), 9.38 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 13.9, 36.4, 49.9, 62.1, 62.5, 123.8, 129.3, 141.1, 157.2, 166.5, 206.6.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found $[M-BF_4^-]^+$ 241.1035, $C_{11}H_{17}N_2O_4$ requires 241.1032.

(1H-imidazol-5-yl)(pyrrolidin-1-yl)methanone (18a)



A 10 mL microwave reaction vial was fitted with a magnetic stirrer and to this **14a** (250 mg, 1.7 mmol) was added. This was dissolved in distilled pyrrolidine (1.2 mL, 15 mmol). The reaction vessel was fitted with a lid, placed in the microwave under reduced pressure and stirred for 3 h at 110 °C. Upon completion of the reaction the pyrrolidine was removed *in vacuo* and the resulting residue was purified by flash chromatography (CH₂Cl₂:MeOH, 1:0-10:1) giving **18a** as an off-white solid (217 mg, 77%).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.93 (m, 2H), 2.05 (m, 2H), 3.66 (t, J = 6.6 Hz, 2H), 3.80 (t, J = 6.6 Hz, 2H), 7.49 (s, 1H), 7.70 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 23.4, 26.0, 46.6, 47.7, 126.4, 129.9, 136.2, 160.4. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found 166.0979, C₈H₁₁N₃O requires 166.0980. Melting point: 92-93 °C

(1-methyl-1*H*-imidazol-5-yl)(pyrrolidin-1-yl)methanone (18b)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **18a** (150 mg, 0.91 mmol) dissolved in methanol (7.2 mL). To this methyl iodide (186 μ L, 3 mmol) in methanol (2.7 mL) was added. The flask was fitted with a condenser and stirred under reflux for 48 h after which the solvent was removed *in vacuo* giving a dark brown oil.

This crude oil was purified by flash chromatography (CHCl₃:MeOH (5%)) giving the pure compound **18b** as an orange oil (104 mg, 64 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.93-1.96 (m, 2H), 2.05-2.08 (m, 2H), 3.55 (t, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 2H), 3.67 (t, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 2H), 3.95 (s, 3H), 7.93 (s, 1H), 8.44 (s, 1H)
¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 23.2, 26.5, 34.4, 45.5, 46.8, 126.7, 129.9, 138.4, 161.2.
ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found 179.1053, C₉H₁₃N₃O requires 179.1055.

3-(ethoxycarbonyl)-1-methyl-5-(pyrrolidine-1-carbonyl)-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium bromide (18)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **18b** (100 mg, 0.56 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Ethyl bromoacetate (247 μ L, 2.24 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 4 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* giving a dark brown oil. This oil was washed with ether (30 mL) to remove excess ethyl bromoacetate giving the pure product **18** as an orange oil (133 mg, 69 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.13 (t, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3H), 1.95-1.97 (m, 2H), 2.04-2.06 (m, 2H), 3.54-3.57 (m, 2H), 3.66-3.69 (m, 2H), 3.75 (s, 3H), 4.16 (q, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 2H), 4.73 (s, 2H), 7.95 (s, 1H), 8.47 (s, 1H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 13.9, 23.2, 26.6, 34.4, 45.6, 46.8, 50.2, 62.0, 126.8, 130.1, 138.9, 161.5, 166.2.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found $[M-Br^-]^+$ 267.1535, $C_{13}H_{20}N_3O_3^+$ requires 267.1539.

3-(ethoxycarbonyl)-1-methyl-5-(pyrrolidine-1-carbonyl)-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium tetrafluoroborate (19)



To a 50 mL round bottomed flask fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, **18** (100 mg, 0.3 mmol) was added. To this NaBF₄ (70 mg, 0.64 mmol) and acetone (10 mL) were added and the mixture was placed under an argon atmosphere. The resulting suspension was stirred at room temperature for 4 days. After which a white precipitate was formed. This precipitate was filtered using a Buchner funnel under vacuum and washed with dry acetone (2 x 5 mL). The combined filtrate and washings were then concentrated *in vacuo* giving the pure product **19** as a yellow solid (100 mg, 98 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.16 (t, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3H), 1.95-1.98 (m, 2H), 2.11-2.14 (m, 2H), 3.65-3.67 (m, 2H), 3.71-3.74 (m, 2H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 4.18 (q, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 4.77 (s, 2H), 7.96 (s, 1H), 8.97 (s, 1H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 13.9, 23.1, 26.6, 34.4, 45.9, 47.1, 50.6, 62.7, 126.8, 130.4, 138.9, 161.6, 167.3.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found $[M-BF_4^-]^+$ 267.1537, $C_{13}H_{20}N_3O_3^+$ requires 267.1538. Melting point: 112-115 °C

1-benzyl-3-(2-ethoxy-2-oxoethyl)-5-(pyrrolidine-1-carbonyl)-1H-imidazol-3-ium bromide (18d)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **18c** (250 mg, 1.0 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Benzyl bromide (321 μ L, 2.7 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 3 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* resulting in a brown oil. This oil was washed with

ether (20 mL) to remove excess benzyl bromide after which the pure product **18d** was obtained as a pale yellow oil (270 mg, 64 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.13 (t, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3H), 1.95-1.98 (m, 2H), 2.04-2.06 (m, 2H), 3.54-3.57 (m, 2H), 3.66-3.69 (m, 2H), 4.16 (q, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 2H), 4.73 (s, 2H), 5.52 (s, 2H), 7.23-7.27 (m, 5H), 7.95 (s, 1H), 8.47 (s, 1H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 14.2, 25.2, 27.6, 47.3, 49.8, 52.3, 54.1, 63.8, 125.5, 126.9, 127.6, 129.4, 132.5, 137.2, 139.5, 160.4, 167.2.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found $[M-Br^-]^+$ 342.1810, $C_{19}H_{24}N_3O_3^+$ requires 342.1812.

Dimethyl 1H-imidazole-4,5-dicarboxylate (20a)



To a 50 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, 4,5imidazoledicarboxylic acid (500 mg, 3.2 mmol) was added. To this sulfuric acid (3.4 mL, 6.4 mmol) in methanol (10 mL) was added. The reaction mixture was fitted with a condenser and stirred under reflux for 24 h. Upon completion of the reaction the solution was brought to pH 5 with saturated NaHCO₃ and the product was extracted using EtOAc. The extracts were combined and concentrated under reduced pressure and the resulting ester **20a** was obtained as an off-white solid (456 mg, 78 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 3.80 (s, 6H), 7.91 (s, 1H).
¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 30.7, 52.0, 138.1, 206.6.
ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found 184.0565, C₇H₈N₂O₄ requires 184.0562.
Melting point: 78-82 °C

Dimethyl 1-(2-ethoxy-2-oxoethyl)-1*H*-imidazole-4,5-dicarboxylate (20b)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **20a** (500 mg, 2.7 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). To this K_2CO_3 (383 mg, 2.7 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred for 30 min under an argon atmosphere. Ethyl bromoacetate (598 µL, 5.4 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 2 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the resulting residue was extracted with dichloromethane. The extracts were combined and concentrated *in vacuo* giving a pale yellow solid. This solid was washed with ether after which the pure product **20b** was obtained as an off-white solid (597 mg, 82 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.21 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 3H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 3.81 (s, 3H), 4.17 (q, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 2H), 5.14 (s, 2H), 7.98 (s, 1H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 14.8, 31.5, 48.8, 53.1, 62.2, 124.2, 138.0, 142.7, 160.4, 163.9, 168.5.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found 270.0923, $C_{11}H_{14}N_2O_6$ requires 270.0930. Melting point: 72-74 °C

3-Benzyl-1-(2-ethoxy-2-oxoethyl)-4,5-*bis*(methoxycarbonyl)-1H-imidazol-3-ium bromide (20)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **20b** (500 mg, 1.9 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Benzyl bromide (452 μ L, 3.8 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 3 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* resulting in a yellow oil. This oil was washed with ether (15 mL) to remove excess benzyl bromide after which the pure catalyst **20** was obtained as a pale yellow oil (620 mg, 74 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.22-1.25 (m, 3H), 3.86 (s, 3H), 3.88 (s, 3H), 4.23 (q, J = 7.0 Hz, 2H), 5.42 (s, 2H), 5.67 (s, 2H), 7.24 (s, 1H), 7.37 (d, J = 7.3 Hz, 2H), 7.45 (t, J = 7.3 Hz, 2H), 9.61 (s, 1H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 14.0, 48.0, 50.2, 51.4, 54.1, 62.3, 123.4, 128.5, 129.1, 132.9, 137.7, 157.5, 159.5, 163.1, 166.1, 167.7.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M-Br⁻]⁺ 361.1390, C₁₈H₂₁N₂O₆⁺ requires 361.1394

3-Benzyl-1-(2-ethoxy-2-oxoethyl)-4,5-*bis*(methoxycarbonyl)-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium tetrafluoroborate (21)



To a 50 mL round bottomed flask fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, **20** (250 mg, 0.57 mmol) was added. To this NaBF₄ (74.8 mg, 0.68 mmol) and acetone (10 mL) were added and the mixture was placed under an argon atmosphere. The resulting suspension was stirred at room temperature for 4 days. After which a white precipitate was formed. This precipitate was filtered using a Buchner funnel under vacuum and washed with dry acetone (5 mL X 2). The combined filtrate and washings were then concentrated *in vacuo* giving the pure catalyst **21** as a pale yellow oil (249 mg, 98 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.23-1.26 (m, 3H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 3.81 (s, 3H), 4.22 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 5.39 (s, 2H), 5.62 (s, 2H), 7.26 (s, 1H), 7.43 (d, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 7.64 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 9.89 (s, 1H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 14.2, 47.9, 50.4, 51.5, 53.9, 62.1, 123.7, 128.9, 129.6, 133.2, 138.7, 157.8, 159.7, 164.2, 166.9, 168.2.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M-BF₄⁻]⁺ 361.1392, C₁₈H₂₁N₂O₆⁺ requires 361.1394

Dimethyl 1-methyl-1*H*-imidazole-4,5-dicarboxylate (22a)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **20a** (300 mg, 1.6 mmol) in methanol (7 mL). To this methyl iodide (187 μ L, 3 mmol) was added. The reaction mixture was stirred under argon at room temperature for 3 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the resulting residue was extracted with dichloromethane. The extracts were combined and concentrated *in vacuo* giving the pure product **22a** as a pale yellow oil (273 mg, 86 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 3.77 (s, 3H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 3.83 (s, 3H), 7.92 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 33.6, 51.8, 52.4, 124.7, 136.1, 141.2, 160.0, 162.9. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found 198.0717, C₈H₁₀N₂O₄ requires 198.0719.

1-(2-ethoxy-2-oxoethyl)-4,5-*bis*(methoxycarbonyl)-3-methyl-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium bromide (22)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **22a** (250 mg, 1.26 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Ethyl bromoacetate (277 μ L, 2.5 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 4 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* giving a light brown oil. This oil was washed with ether (20 mL) to remove excess ethyl bromoacetate giving the pure product **22** as a yellow oil (408 mg, 89 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.25 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 3.91 (s, 3H), 3.97 (s, 3H), 4.02 (s, 3H), 4.24 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 5.40 (s, 2H), 9.45 (s, 1H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 13.9, 24.5, 25.5, 36.6, 49.9, 53.9, 62.2, 125.6, 127.5, 141.8, 157.0, 166.1.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found $[M-Br^-]^+$ 285.1084, $C_{12}H_{17}N_2O_6^+$ requires 285.1081.

1-(2-ethoxy-2-oxoethyl)-4,5-*bis*(methoxycarbonyl)-3-methyl-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium tetrafluoroborate (23)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **20b** (250 mg, 0.93 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Trimethyloxonium tetrafluoroborate (137 mg, 0.93 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 4 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* after which the pure product **23** was obtained as a pale yellow oil (318 mg, 92 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.24 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 3.91 (s, 3H), 3.97 (s, 3H), 4.01 (s, 3H), 422 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 5.39 (s, 2H), 9.45 (s, 1H).
¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 14.8, 24.8, 25.9, 37.4, 50.7, 54.8, 63.1, 126.5, 128.4, 142.6, 157.9, 167.0.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found $[M-BF_4^-]^+$ 285.1079, $C_{12}H_{17}N_2O_6^+$ requires 285.1081

4,5-bis(methoxycarbonyl)-1,3-dimethyl-1H-imidazol-3-ium iodide (26)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **22a** (250 mg, 1.26 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Methyl iodide (79 μ L, 1.26 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 3 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* giving the pale yellow oil **26** (368 mg, 86 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 3.91-4.02 (m, 12H), 9.40 (s, 1H) ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 36.2, 53.8, 126.6, 141.2, 157.3 ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M–I[–]]⁺ 213.0877, C₉H₁₃N₂O₄⁺ requires 213.0875.

4,5-bis(methoxycarbonyl)-1,3-dimethyl-1H-imidazol-3-ium tetrafluoroborate (27)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **22a** (250 mg, 1.62 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Triemthyloxonium tetrafluoroborate (240 mg, 1.62 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 3 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* giving the pale yellow solid **27** (344 mg, 91 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 3.92-4.02 (br.s, 12H), 9.42 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 38.1, 53.8, 126.7, 141.2, 157.3 ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M–BF₄⁻]⁺ 213.0873, C₉H₁₃N₂O₄⁺ requires 213.0875. Melting point: 85-87 °C

(1H-imidazole-4,5-diyl)bis(pyrrolidin-1-ylmethanone) (24a)



A 10 mL microwave reaction vial was fitted with a magnetic stirrer and to this dimethyl imidazole-4,5-dicarboxylate **20a** (500 mg, 2.7 mmol) was added. This was dissolved in distilled pyrrolidine (1.2 mL, 14.4 mmol). The reaction was fitted with a lid, placed in the microwave under reduced pressure and stirred for 3 h at 110 °C. Upon completion of the reaction the pyrrolidine was removed *in vacuo* and the resulting residue was purified by flash chromatography (CH₂Cl₂: MeOH, 1:0-10:1) giving the pure product **24a** as an off-white solid (506 mg, 72 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.95-1.98 (m, 4H), 2.06-2.11 (m, 4H), 3.70 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 4H), 3.82 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 4H), 7.50 (s, 1H), 7.72 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 23.8, 26.3, 46.9, 47.8, 126.2, 136.5, 159.6. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found 262.1432, C₁₃H₁₈N₄O₂ requires 262.1429. Melting point: 123-124 °C

(1H-imidazole-4,5-diyl)*bis*(pyrrolidin-1-ylmethanone) (24b)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **24a** (250 mg, 0.95 mmol) in methanol (7 mL). To this methyl iodide (144 μ L, 2.3 mmol) was added. The reaction mixture was stirred under argon at room temperature for 3 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the resulting residue was

extracted with dichloromethane (2 x 5 mL). The organic layer was concentrated *in vacuo* giving the pure product **24b** as a pale yellow oil (220 mg, 84 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.91-1.98 (m, 8H), 3.63-3.70 (m, 8H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 7.93 (s, 1H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 23.9, 24.5, 26.2, 27.6, 35.2, 47.1, 48.2, 48.9, 49.5, 127.3, 138.9, 141.3, 161.2, 167.8.

ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found 276.1435, C₁₄H₂₀N₄O₂ requires 276.1431.

3-(2-methoxyacetyl)-1-methyl-4,5-*bis*[(pyrrolidin-1-yl)carbonyl]-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium bromide (24)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **24b** (200 mg, 0.72 mmol) in acetonitrile (2 mL). Ethyl bromoacetate (320 μ L, 2.9 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 4 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* giving a light brown oil. This oil was washed with ether (25 mL) to remove excess ethyl bromoacetate giving the pure product **24** as a yellow oil (282 mg, 89 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.36 (t, J = 6.5 Hz, 3H), 1.86-1.89 (m, 8H), 3.61-3.68 (m, 8H), 3.65 (s, 3H), 4.25 (q, J = 6.5 Hz, 2H), 4.73 (s, 2H), 8.96 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 23.4, 24.2, 25.9, 27.1, 33.2, 35.4, 46.9, 47.8, 48.6, 49.5, 53.4, 61.8, 127.3, 138.9, 141.3, 159.5, 161.2, 167.8. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M-Br⁻]⁺ 363.2029, C₁₈H₂₇N₄O₄⁺ 363.2032.

3-(2-methoxyacetyl)-1-methyl-4,5-*bis*[(pyrrolidin-1-yl)carbonyl]-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium tetrafluoroborate (25)



To a 25 mL round bottomed flask fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, **24** (250 mg, 0.56 mmol) was added. To this NaBF₄ (74.8 mg, 0.68 mmol) and acetone (10 mL) were added and the mixture was placed under an argon atmosphere. The resulting suspension was stirred at room temperature for 4 days. After which a white precipitate was formed. This precipitate was filtered using a Buchner funnel under vacuum and washed with dry acetone (2 x 5 mL). The combined filtrate and washings were then concentrated *in vacuo* giving the pure product **25** as a pale yellow oil (241 mg, 96 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.29 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 3H), 1.82-1.86 (m, 8H), 3.61-3.66 (m, 8H), 3.59 (s, 3H), 4.17 (q, J = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 4.73 (s, 2H), 9.35 (s, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 23.2, 24.5, 26.0, 27.3, 33.5, 35.7, 47.1, 47.9, 48.4, 49.1, 53.5, 62.0, 127.3, 138.6, 142.3, 159.6, 161.2, 167.7. ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M-BF₄⁻]⁺ 363.2030, C₁₈H₂₇N₄O₄⁺ 363.2032.

1-Benzyl-3-(2-ethoxy-2-oxoethyl)-4,5-*bis*(pyrrolidine-1-carbonyl)-1H-imidazol-3-ium bromide (24c)



A 25 mL round-bottomed flask, fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, was charged with **24a** (250 mg, 0.95 mmol) in acetonitrile (5 mL). To this K_2CO_3 (135 mg, 0.95 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred for 30 min under an argon atmosphere. Ethyl bromoacetate (421 µL, 3.8 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 2 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the resulting residue was extracted with dichloromethane. The extracts were combined and concentrated *in vacuo* giving a pale yellow solid. This solid was washed with ether after

which the pure product was obtained as an off-white solid. To this benzyl bromide (452 μ L, 3.8 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 3 days. Upon completion of the reaction, the solvent was removed *in vacuo* resulting in a yellow oil. This oil was washed with ether (15 mL) to remove excess benzyl bromide after which the pure catalyst **24c** was obtained as a pale yellow oil (355 mg, 72%).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.25 (t, *J* = 6.9 Hz, 3H), 1.93-1.95 (m, 4H), 2.03-2.09 (m, 4H), 2.24-2.27 (m, 2H), 3.59-3.69 (m, 8H), 5.23 (s, 2H), 5.84 (s, 2H), 7.23-7.29 (m, 5H), 8.21 (s, 1H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 21.2, 23.5, 25.8, 26.2, 33.7, 45.6, 46.7, 47.9, 48.1, 52.4, 54.8, 61.6, 125.6, 126.8, 127.6, 129.2, 137.3, 138.3, 141.2, 157.9, 160.6, 167.2.
ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M-BF₄-]⁺ 439.2338, C₂₄H₃₁N₄O₄⁺ 439.2340.





A RB flask was charged with 1*H*-Imidazolium-2-carboxamide, 1-methyl-3-[2-oxo-2-(1-pyrrolidinyl) ethyl]-, bromide **9** (1.00 g, 3.15 mmol) and distilled water (5 mL). Lithium bis(trifluoromethane)sulfonamide (0.905 g, 3.15 mmol) in distilled water (5 mL) was added in one portion and the suspension was stirred vigorously for 4 h at RT. The product precipitated as a white solid. The aqueous layer was removed, and the IL washed with water (3 x 10 mL). The solvent was removed on the rotary evaporator and the product was dried *in vacuo* for 72 h to give the title compound **41** as a colorless solid at RT in 73% yield (1.205 g, 2.33 mmol).

¹H-NMR (600 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 1.84-1.79 (m, 2H), 1.97-1.93 (m, 2H), 3.34 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 3.49 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 4.00 (s, 3H), 5.31 (s, 2H), 7.76 (d, J = 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.82 (d, J = 2.4 Hz, 1H), 8.74 (bs, 1H), 8.79 (bs, 1H).

¹³C-NMR (150 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 23.7, 25.4, 36.9, 45.1, 46.0, 50.7, 119.4 (q, J = 319 Hz, 2 CF₃), 123.4, 124.2, 139.0, 154.6, 162.4. Melting Point: 79-81 °C ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M– NTf₂⁻]⁺ 237.1348, C₁₁H₁₇N₄O₂⁺ requires 237.1346

1*H*-Imidazolium-2-carboxamide,3-(2-methoxy-2-oxoethyl)-1-methyl-, Bromide: (42)



A RB flask was charged with 1-methyl-1*H*-imidazole-2-carboxamide (0.500 g, 4.0 mmol) and THF (20 mL) under nitrogen. To this solution was added methyl bromoacetate (0.612 g, 4.0 mmol). The reaction mixture was refluxed for 4 days with vigorous stirring. The product precipitated as a pink colored solid and was then washed with THF (5 x 20 mL). The solvent was removed on the rotary evaporator and the product was dried *in vacuo* for 48 h to give the title compound **42** as a pink colored solid at RT in 17% yield (0.189 g, 0.68 mmol).

¹H-NMR (600 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 3.75 (s, 3H), 4.02 (s, 3H), 5.34 (s, 2H), 7.87 (d, J = 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.88 (d, J = 1.2 Hz, 1H), 8.82 (bs, 1H), 8.87 (bs, 1H) ¹³C-NMR (150 MHz, DMSO-d₆): 37.0, 49.9, 52.9, 123.9, 124.3, 138.4, 154.3, 166.7 Melting Point: 200 °C (decomposed) ES-MS (+ve) m/z: Found [M-Br⁻]⁺ 237.1356, C₈H₁₂N₃O₃⁺ requires 237.1346.

3.0 General Procedure - Acetalisation of aldehydes

A 20 mL reaction vessel was fitted with a magnetic stirring bar, charged with catalyst (0.08 mmol), fitted with a septum and flushed with argon. Benzaldehyde (170 μ L, 1.67 mmol) was added followed by dry methanol (3.4 mL) *via* syringe. The solution was then stirred under argon at room temperature for 24 h. When conversion was judged to be either complete or > 95% conversion (by H NMR spectroscopic analysis) the reaction was quenched with PhNHNH₂ and solvent was removed *in vacuo*. The crude product was purified by flash-chromatography or yield was calculated using an internal standard.

4.0 Characterization data

Benzaldehyde dimethyl acetal (6)



The desired dimethyl acetal was obtained following the general procedure using catalyst **21** (12.5 mg, 0.03 mmol), methanol (6.7 mL) and benzaldehyde (340 μ L, 3.34 mmol). After purification of the crude material by flash chromatography (5:1 hexane:EtOAc) the product **6** was obtained as a pale yellow liquid (466 mg, 92%).

The NMR spectra of **6** were consistent with those previously reported.¹

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 3.36 (s, 6H,), 5.42 (s, 1H), 7.34-7.39 (m, 3H), 7.47-7.49 (m, 2H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 52.2, 102.7, 126.2, 127.7, 128.0, 137.5.

2-Chlorobenzaldehyde dimethyl acetal (31, Table 4, entry 1)



The dimethyl acetal was obtained following the general procedure using catalyst **21** (1.5 mg, 0.003 mmol), methanol (6.8 mL) and 2-chlorobenzaldehyde (400 μ L, 2.56 mmol). After purification of crude material by flash chromatography (5:1 hexane: EtOAc) the product **31** was obtained as a pale yellow liquid (455 mg, 95 %).

The NMR spectra of **31** were consistent with those previously reported.²

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 3.32 (s, 6H), 5.39 (s, 1H), 7.28-7.35 (m, 3H), 7.48-7.52 (m, 1H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 52.2, 101.6, 124.4, 126.5, 128.1, 129.1, 133.8, 139.8.

3-Chlorobenzaldehyde dimethyl acetal (32, Table 4, entry 2)



The dimethyl acetal was obtained following the general procedure using catalyst **21**(1.5 mg, 0.003 mmol), methanol (6.8 mL) and 3-chlorobenzaldehyde (400 μ L, 2.56 mmol). After purification of crude material by flash chromatography (5:1 hexane: EtOAc) the product **32** was obtained as a pale yellow liquid (461 mg, 96 %).

The NMR spectra of **32** were consistent with those previously reported.²

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 3.41 (s, 6H), 5.66 (s, 1H), 7.29-7.31 (m, 2H), 7.38-7.40 (m, 1H,), 7.63-7.65 (m, 1H)

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 53.4, 100.5, 126.1, 127.6, 129.1, 129.3, 132.7, 134.8.

4-Chlorobenzaldehyde dimethyl acetal (33, Table 4, entry 3)



The desired dimethyl acetal was obtained following the general procedure using catalyst **21** (1.3 mg, 0.004 mmol), methanol (7.1 mL) and 4-chlorobenzaldehyde (500 mg, 3.56 mmol). After purification of the crude material by flash chromatography (5:1, hexane:EtOAc) the product **33** was obtained as a pale yellow liquid (653 mg, 98%).

The NMR spectra of **33** were consistent with those previously reported.¹

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 3.34 (s, 6H,), 5.39 (s, 1H), 7.32 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.48 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H) 8.5 Hz, 2H) ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 52.2, 101.6, 124.6, 126.4, 128.4, 133.8.

2-Methylbenzaldehyde dimethyl acetal (34, Table 4, entry 4)



The desired dimethyl acetal was obtained following the general procedure using catalyst **21** (3.9 mg, 0.01 mmol), methanol (2.3 mL) and 2-methylbenzaldehyde (100 μ L, 0.86 mmol). After purification of the crude material by flash chromatography (15:1 hexane:EtOAc) the product **34** was obtained as a pale yellow liquid (129 mg, 90%).

The NMR spectra of **34** were consistent with that previously reported.³

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 2.42 (s, 3H,), 3.37 (s, 6H), 5.51 (s, 1H) 7.06-7.25 (m, 3H), 7.57-7.59 (m, 1H) ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 18.4, 52.5, 101.3, 124.9, 126.1, 127.9, 130.1, 135.2, 135.8.

4-Methoxybenzaldehyde dimethyl acetal (35, Table 4, entry 5)



The desired dimethyl acetal was obtained following the general procedure using catalyst **21** (3.8 mg, 0.01 mmol), methanol (2.2 mL) and 4-methoxybenzaldehyde (100 μ L, 0.82 mmol). The reaction mixture was then heated at 35 °C for 24 h. **Note:** the use of PhNHNH₂ was not required. After purification of the crude material by flash chromatography (5:1 Hexane :EtOAc) the product **35** was obtained as a pale yellow liquid (137 mg, 92%). The NMR spectra of **35** were consistent with those previously reported.¹

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CD₃OD): 3.30 (s, 6H), 3.81 (s, 3H), 5.34 (s, 1H), 6.92 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 2H), 7.32 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 2H)

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 51.2, 53.7, 102.7, 112.5, 127.1, 129.7, 160.0.

3,3-Dimethoxypropenyl benzene (37, Table 4, entry 7)



The desired dimethyl acetal was obtained following the general procedure using catalyst **21** (2.9 mg, 0.008 mmol), methanol (2.1 mL) and cinnamaldehyde (100 μ L, 0.79 mmol). **Note:** the use of PhNHNH₂ was not required. After purification of the crude material by flash chromatography (8:1 hexane: EtOAc) the product **37** was obtained as a pale yellow liquid (128 mg, 90%).

The NMR spectra of **37** were consistent with those previously reported.⁵

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 3.41 (s, 6H), 5.00 (d, *J* = 5.1 Hz, 1H), 6.18 (dd, *J* = 16.4, 5.1 Hz, 1H), 6.69 (d, *J* = 16.4 Hz, 1H), 7.29-7.38 (m, 3H), 7.44-7.45 (m, 2H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 52.3, 102.5, 125.2, 126.3, 127.6, 128.2, 133.2, 135.6.

4-nitroacetophenone dimethyl ketal (38, Table 4, entry 8). (35 °C.)



The desired dimethyl ketal was obtained following the general procedure using catalyst **21** (3.7 mg, 0.01 mmol), methanol (2.6 mL) and 4-nitroacetophenone (165.2 mg, 1 mmol). The reaction mixture was then heated at 35 °C for 48 h. **Note:** the use of PhNHNH₂ was not required. After purification of the crude material by flash chromatography (15:1 hexane;EtOAc) the product **38** was obtained as a pale yellow solid (133 mg, 63%). M.p. 58-60 °C (lit.,^{7a} 60-61.5 °C).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.53 (s, 3H), 3.18 (s, 6H), 7.66 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 2H), 8.17 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 2H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 26.4, 48.6, 123.1, 123.9, 129.1, 146.7, 151.4

Phenyl-1,3-dithiolane (39)



The desired dithiolane was obtained following the general procedure using catalyst **21** (3.9 mg, 0.01 mmol), 1,2-ethanethiol (100 μ L, 1.19 mmol), THF (200 μ L) and benzaldehyde (110 μ L, 1.08 mmol). After completion of the reaction, the reaction mixture was poured onto a saturated NaHCO₃ solution (5 mL) and the product was extracted with ethyl acetate (2 x 10 mL) 25 mL water. The organic layer was separated, dried over MgSO₄ and concentrated *in vacuo*. After purification by flash chromatography (5:1 hexane:EtOAc) the product **39** was obtained as a colorless liquid (179 mg, 90 %).

The NMR spectra of **39** were consistent with those previously reported.⁷

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): 3.34-3.40 (m, 2H), 3.48-3.54 (m, 2H), 5.66 (s, 1H), 7.27-7.35 (m, 3H), 7.54-7.56 (m, 2H) ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): 39.8, 55.8, 127.5, 127.6, 128.1, 139.9.

5.0 Recyclability study

Phenyl-1,3-dithiolane (39)



The dithiane was obtained following the general procedure using catalyst **10** (68.3 mg, 0.27 mmol), 1,3-propanedithiol (300 μ L, 2.98 mmol), anhydrous THF (9.1 mL) and benzaldehyde (276 μ L, 2.71 mmol). (*E*)-stilbene (2.71 mmol) was added as an internal standard. After 24 h, the yield of product **39** was obtained by ¹H NMR spectroscopy with the internal standard. The catalyst was preciptated using hexane, dried *in vacuo* and reused in subsequent reaction.

6.0 NMR Spectra

Compound 8



















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Compound 42



7.0 References

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