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Supporting Information

for

Chemoselective Efficient Synthesis of Functionalized β-oxonitriles through Cyanomethylation of Weinreb Amides

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Material and Methods

Melting points were determined on a Reichert-Kofler hot-stage microscope and are uncorrected. Mass spectra were obtained on a Shimadzu QP 1000 instrument (EI, 70 eV) and on a Bruker maXis 4G instrument (ESI-TOF, HRMS). IR spectra were recorded on a Perkin-Elmer FTIR 1605 spectrophotometer. ¹H, ¹³C, ¹⁵N, ¹⁹F and ¹⁷O NMR spectra were recorded with a Bruker Avance III 400 spectrometer (400 MHz for 1 H, 100 MHz for 13 C, 40 MHz for 15 N, 376 MHz for 19 F, 54 MHz for ¹⁷O) or a Bruker Avance 500 spectrometer (500 MHz for ¹H, 125 MHz for ¹³C, 50 MHz for ¹⁵N, 470 MHz for ¹⁹F) at 297 K using a "directly" detecting broadband observe (BBFO) probe. The center of the solvent signal was used as an internal standard which was related to TMS with δ 7.26 ppm (¹H in CDCl₃) and δ 77.0 ppm (¹³C in CDCl₃). ¹⁵N NMR spectra (gs-HMBC, gs-HSQC) were referenced against neat, external nitromethane, ¹⁹F NMR spectra by absolute referencing via Ξ ratio. ¹⁷O NMR spectra were taken from approximately 1M solutions and are referenced against external H₂O (0 ppm). For the latter 10 000 to 300 000 scans were accumulated (pulse width 90°, acquisition time 0.15 s. relaxation delay 0.2 s, spectral width 500-600 ppm) and Fourier transformed after a 200-250 Hz line broadening by exponential multiplication. To decrease acoustic ringing a pre-scan delay $DE = 100 \ \mu s$ was used in the pulse sequence. Spin-spin coupling constants (J) are given in Hz. In some cases, full and unambiguous assignment of all resonances was performed by combined application of standard NMR techniques, such as APT, HSQC, HMBC, COSY and NOESY experiments. Light petroleum refers to the fraction with boiling point 40-65 °C.

All the reactions were carried out under inert atmosphere of nitrogen. Acetonitrile derivatives were purified immediately before their use by distillation. THF was distilled over Na / benzophenone. Chemicals were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich, Acros, Alfa Aesar and TCI Europe. Starting Weinreb amides were prepared according to our previously reported method.¹

General Procedures for the Cyanomethylation of Weinreb amides

• Cyanomethylation of α,β-unsaturated Weinreb amides (General Procedure 1)

To a solution of dry acetonitrile derivative (2.0 equiv) in anhydrous THF cooled at -78 °C, MeLi-LiBr (1.5 M in Et₂O, 1.5 equiv) was added dropwise during 5 min and the resulting mixture was stirred for 30 min. Then, a solution of Weinreb amide (1.0 equiv) in THF was added and the stirring was continued for additional 1.5 h at -78 °C. A solution of saturated aqueous NH₄Cl was added and after removing of the cooling-bath the system was allowed to reach rt. After extracting the organic phase with diethyl ether, two additional washings with brine followed. Finally, the organic phase was dried over Na₂SO₄ and, the pure cyanoketones were recovered upon removal of the solvent under vacuum.

• Cyanomethylation of non α,β-unsaturated Weinreb amides (General Procedure 2)

To a solution of dry acetonitrile derivative (4.5 equiv) in anhydrous THF cooled at -78 °C, MeLi-LiBr (1.5 M in Et₂O, 4.0 equiv) was added dropwise during 5 min and the resulting mixture was stirred for 30 min. Then, a solution of Weinreb amide (1.0 equiv) in THF was added and, the stirring was continued for additional 1.5 h at -78 °C. A solution of saturated aqueous NH₄Cl was added and after, removing of the cooling-bath, the system was allowed to reach rt. The organic phase was extracted with diethyl ether and two additional washings with brine followed. Finally, the organic phase was dried over Na₂SO₄ and the pure cyanoketones were recovered upon removal of the solvent under vacuum.

(4*E*)-3-oxo-5-phenyl-4-pentenenitrile (2)



By following the general procedure 1, starting from (2*E*)-*N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl-3-phenylacrylamide **1a** (0.191 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.08 g, 0.1 mL, 2.0 mmol, 2.0 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (1.0 mL, 1.5 mmol, 1.5 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **2** was obtained in 86% yield (0.147 g) as a yellow solid.

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.68 (d, ${}^{3}J$ = 16.0 Hz, 1H, PhC<u>H</u>=CH) 7.58 (m, 2H, Ph H-2, 6), 7.45 (m, 1H, Ph H-4), 7.44 (m, 2H, Ph H-3,5), 6.86 (d, ${}^{3}J$ = 16.0 Hz, 1H, PhCH=C<u>H</u>), 3.73 (s, 2H, CH₂CN). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 186.3 (C=O), 146.5 (Ph<u>C</u>H=CH), 133.3 (Ph C-1), 131.6 (Ph C-4), 129.1 (Ph C-3,5), 128.8 (Ph C-2,6), 122.4 (PhCH=<u>C</u>H), 114.0 (CN), 30.8 (<u>C</u>H₂CN). ¹⁵N NMR (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -126.6 (CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 2253, 1792, 1683, 1608, 1470, 1379. **Mp:** 97 °C (lit.,² 97-98 °C). **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₁H₉NO. Calcd: C, 77.17; H, 5.30; N, 8.18. Found: C, 77.31; H, 6.99; N, 8.29.

(4E)-4-methyl-3-oxo-5-phenyl-4-pentenenitrile (4a)



By following the general procedure 1, starting from (2*E*)-*N*-methoxy-*N*,2-dimethyl-3-phenylacrylamide (0.205 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.08 g, 0.1 mL, 2.0 mmol, 2.0 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (1.0 mL, 1.5 mmol, 1.5 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4a** was obtained in 87% yield (0.161 g) as a yellow solid.

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.44 (s, 1H, C<u>H</u>=CCO), 7.43 (m, 4H, Ph H-2,3,5,6), 7.40 (m, 1H, Ph H-4), 3.97 (s, 2H, CH₂CN), 2.10 (s, 3H, CH=CC<u>H</u>₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 189.1 (C=O), 141.8 (<u>C</u>H=CCO), 135.4 (CH=<u>C</u>CO), 134.6 (Ph C-1), 129.9 (Ph C-2,6), 129.4 (Ph C-4), 128.6 (Ph C-3,5), 114.3 (CN, ²*J*(CN,CH₂) = 10.3 Hz), 28.6 (<u>C</u>H₂CN, ¹*J*(CH₂) = 134.6 Hz), 13.1 (CH=C<u>C</u>H₃, ¹*J*(CH₃) = 129.0 Hz, ³*J*(CH₃=CH) = 8.0 Hz). ¹⁵N NMR (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -127.4 (CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 2253, 1793, 1684, 1469, 1382. **Mp:** 80°C. **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₂H₁₁NO. Calcd.: C, 77.81; H, 5.99; N, 7.56. Found: C, 77.97; H, 6.11; N, 7.70.

(4E)-5-(2-methoxyphenyl)-3-oxo-4-pentenenitrile (4b)



By following the general procedure 1, starting from (2*E*)-*N*-methoxy-3-(2-methoxyphenyl)-*N*-methylacrylamide (0.221 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.08 g, 0.1 mL, 2.0 mmol, 2.0 equiv) and

MeLi-LiBr (1.0 mL, 1.5 mmol, 1.5 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4b** was obtained in 85% yield (0.173 g) as a yellow semi-solid mass.

¹**H NMR** (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.97 (d, J = 16.2Hz, 1H, Ph-C<u>H</u>=CH), 7.54 (m, 1H, Ph H-6), 7.42 (m, 1H, Ph H-4), 6.99 (m, 1H, Ph H-5), 6.94 (m, 1H, Ph H-3), 6.94 (d, J = 16.2Hz, 1H, Ph-CH=C<u>H</u>), 3.91 (s, 3H, OCH₃), 3.74 (s, 2H, CH₂CN). ¹³**C NMR** (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 186.9 (C=O), 158.9 (Ph C-2), 141.9 (Ph-<u>C</u>H=CH), 133.0 (Ph C-4), 129.4 (Ph C-6), 123.2 (Ph-CH=<u>C</u>H), 122.3 (Ph C-1), 120.9 (Ph C-5), 114.2 (CN), 111.1 (Ph C-3), 55.6 (OCH3), 30.5 (<u>C</u>H₂CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 3076, 2258, 1691. **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₂H₁₁NO₂. Calcd.: C, 71.63; H, 5.51; N, 6.96. Found: C, 71.77; H, 5.62; N, 7.10.

(4E,6E)-3-oxo-7-phenyl-4,6-heptadienenitrile (4c)



By following the general procedure 1, starting from (2E,4E)-*N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl-5-phenyl-2,4-pentadienamide (0.217 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.08 g, 0.1 mL, 2.0 mmol, 2.0 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (1.0 mL, 1.5 mmol, 1.5 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4c** was obtained in 90% yield (0.184 g) as a brown solid.

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.46 (dd, J = 15.2, 10.9 Hz, 1H, H-5), 7.49 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 7.37 (m, 3H, Ph H-3,4,5), 7.06 (d, J = 15.6 Hz, 1H, H-7), 6.91 (dd, J = 15.6, 10.9 Hz, 1H, H-6), 6.41 (d, J = 15.2 Hz, 1H, H-4), 3.64 (s, 2H, CH₂CN). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 186.2 (C=O), 146.4 (C-5), 144.5 (C-7), 135.4 (Ph C-1), 129.9 (Ph C-4), 128.9 (Ph C-3,5), 127.6 (Ph C-2,6), 125.7 (C-6), 125.4 (C-4), 114.1 (CN), 30.6 (<u>C</u>H₂CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 2253, 1792, 1467, 1379. **Mp:** 69-70 °C. **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₃H₁₁NO. Calcd: C, 79.16; H, 5.62; N, 7.10. Found: C, 79.29; H, 5.71; N, 7.19.

2-oxo-3-phenylpropanenitrile (4d)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methylbenzamide (0.165 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4d** was obtained in 90% yield (0.130 g) as a light yellow solid.

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.91 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 7.66 (m, 1H, Ph H-4), 7.52 (m, 2H, Ph H-3,5), 4.10 (s, 2H, CH₂CN). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 187.1 (C=O), 134.7 (Ph C-4), 134.2 (Ph C-1), 129.1 (Ph C-3,5), 128.4 (Ph C-2,6), 113.8 (CN), 29.4 (<u>C</u>H₂CN). ¹⁵N NMR (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -126.0 (CN). ¹⁷O NMR (54 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 542 (C=O). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 3070, 2253, 1696, 1605, 1002. **Mp:** 80-82 °C (lit.,³ 81 °C). **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₉H₇NO. Calcd: C, 74.47; H, 4.86; N, 9.65. Found: C, 74.61; H, 4.99; N, 9.80.

3-[4-(2-methyl-2-propanyl)phenyl]-3-oxopropanenitrile (4e)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from 4-*tert*-butyl-*N*-methylbenzamide (0.221 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4e** was obtained in 92% yield (0.185 g) as a white solid.

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.85 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 7.53 (m, 2H, Ph H-3,5), 4.06 (s, 2H, CH₂CN) 1.34 (s, 9H, C(CH₃)₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 186.6 (C=O), 158.8 (Ph C-4), 131.7 (Ph C-1), 128.5 (Ph C-2,6), 126.1 (Ph C-3,5), 113.9 (CN), 35.3 (<u>C</u>(CH₃)₃), 30.9 (C(<u>C</u>H₃)₃), 29.2 (<u>C</u>H₂CN, ¹*J*(CH₂) = 134.3 Hz, ²*J*(CN,CH₂) = 10.2 Hz). ¹⁵N NMR (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -126.5 (CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 3076, 2258, 1700. **Mp:** 75°C (lit.,⁴ 74-77°C). **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₃H₁₅NO. Calcd.: C, 77.58; H, 7.51; N, 6.96. Found: C, 77.72; H, 7.65; N, 7.06.

3-(4-methoxyphenyl)-3-oxopropanenitrile (4f)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*,4-dimethoxy-*N*-methylbenzamide (0.195 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4f** was obtained in 83% yield (0.141 g) as a white solid.

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.89 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 6.97 (m, 2H, Ph H-3,5), 4.02 (s, 2H, CH₂CN), 3.89 (s, 3H, OCH₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 185.4 (C=O), 164.7 (Ph C-4), 130.9 (Ph C-2,6), 127.2 (Ph C-1), 114.3 (Ph C-3,5), 114.1 (CN), 55.6 (OCH3, ¹*J*(OCH₃) = 144.9 Hz), 29.0 (<u>C</u>H₂CN, ¹*J*(CH₂) = 134.2 Hz, ²*J*(CN,CH₂) = 10.2 Hz). ¹⁵N NMR (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -126.7 (CN). ¹⁷O NMR (54 MHz, CD₃CN) δ: 521 (C=O), 65 (OCH₃). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 3081, 2250, 1701, 1602, 1524,999. **Mp:** 119-120°C (lit.,³ 123-126 °C). **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₀H₉NO₂. Calcd.: C, 68.56; H, 5.18; N, 8.00. Found: C, 68.69; H, 5.26; N, 8.12.

3-oxo-3-(3,4,5- trimethoxyphenyl)propanenitrile (4g)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from N,3,4,5-tetramethoxy-N-methylbenzamide (0.225 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4g** was obtained in 79% yield (0.190 g) as a white solid.

¹**H NMR** (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 7.15 (s, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 4.05 (s, 2H, CH₂CN), 3.94 (s, 3H, Ph 4-OCH₃), 3.92 (s, 6H, Ph 3,5-OCH₃). ¹³**C NMR** (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 185.8 (C=O), 153.3 (Ph C-3,5) 144.1 (Ph C-4), 129.2 (Ph C-1), 113.8 (CN), 106.1 (Ph C-2,6), 61.0 (Ph C-4-O<u>C</u>H₃), 56.4 (Ph C-3,5-O<u>C</u>H₃), 29.2 (<u>C</u>H₂CN). ¹⁵**N NMR** (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : -126.0 (CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max}, cm⁻¹): 3077, 2253, 1706, 1598, 1520. **Mp:** 129-130°C. **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₂H₁₃NO₄. Calcd.: C, 61.27; H, 5.57; N, 5.95. Found: C, 61.40; H, 5.69; N, 6.09.

3-(2-chlorophenyl)-3-oxopropanenitrile (4h)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from 2-chloro-*N*-methoxy-*N*-methylbenzamide (0.200 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4h** was obtained in 89% yield (0.162 g) as a yellow solid.

¹**H NMR** (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.63 (m, 1H, Ph H-6), 7.51 (m, 1H, Ph H-4), 7.47 (m, 1H, Ph H-3), 7.40 (m, 1H, Ph H-5), 4.15 (s, 2H, CH₂CN). ¹³**C NMR** (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 189.4 (C=O), 135.6 (Ph C-1), 133.7 (Ph C-4), 131.7 (Ph C-2), 131.0 (Ph C-3), 130.4 (Ph C-6), 127.5 (Ph C-5), 113.3 (CN), 32.9 (<u>C</u>H₂CN). ¹⁵**N NMR** (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -126.5 (CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 3082, 2256, 1698, 1002. **Mp:** 51-54 °C (lit., ⁵ 50-54°C). **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₉H₆CINO. Calcd.: C, 60.19; H, 3.37; N, 7.80. Found: C, 60.30; H, 3.48; N, 7.89.

3-(4-biphenylyl)-3-oxopropanenitrile (4i)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl-4-phenylbenzamide (0.241 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4i** was obtained in 91% yield (0.203g) as a yellow solid.

¹**H NMR** (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 8.00 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 7.74 (m, 2H, Ph H-3,5), 7.63 (m, 2H, Ph' H-2,6), 7.49 (m, 2H, Ph' H-3,5), 7.43 (m, 1H, Ph' H-4), 4.11 (s, 2H, CH₂CN). ¹³**C NMR** (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 186.6 (C=O), 147.5 (Ph C-4), 139.2 (Ph' C-1), 132.9 (Ph C-1), 129.1 (Ph C-2,6, Ph' C-3,5), 128.7 (Ph' C-4), 127.7 (Ph C-3,5), 127.3 (Ph' C-2,6), 113.8 (CN), 29.4 (<u>C</u>H₂CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻

¹): 3078, 2252, 1703, 1595, 996. **Mp:** 112 °C (lit.,⁶ 112-113 °C). **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₅H₁₁NO. Calcd.: C, 81.43; H, 5.01; N, 6.33. Found: C, 81.52; H, 5.12; N, 6.48.

3-(4-fluorophenyl)-3-oxopropanenitrile (4j)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from 4-fluoro-*N*-methoxy-*N*-methylbenzamide (0.183 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4j** was obtained in 93% yield (0.151 g) as a light yellow solid.

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.96 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 7.20 (m, 2H, Ph H-3,5), 4.08 (s, 2H, CH₂CN). ¹³**C** NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 185.6 (C=O), 166.6 (Ph C-4, ${}^{1}J_{C,F}$ = 258.1 Hz), 131.3 (Ph C-2,6, ${}^{3}J_{C,F}$ = 9.7 Hz), 130.7 (Ph C-1, ${}^{4}J_{C,F}$ = 3.0 Hz), 116.4 (Ph C-3,5 ${}^{2}J_{C,F}$ = 22.2 Hz), 113.6 (CN), 29.4 (<u>C</u>H₂CN). ¹⁵N NMR (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -125.6 (CN). ¹⁷**O** NMR (54 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 536. ¹⁹F NMR (376 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -101.6 (m). IR (NaCl, ν_{max} , cm⁻¹): 3078, 2252, 1703, 1595, 996. Mp: 85-86°C (lit.,³ 84-86 °C). Elemental Analysis (%) for C₉H₆FNO. Calcd.: C, 66.26; H, 3.71; N, 8.59. Found: C, 66.38; H, 3.79; N, 8.71.

3-(2-furyl)-3-oxopropanenitrile (4k)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl-2-furancarboxamide (0.155 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4k** was obtained in 82% yield (0.114 g) as a light yellow solid.

¹**H NMR** (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.65 (d, J = 1.6 Hz, 1H, Furyl H-5), 7.36 (d, J = 3.6 Hz, 1H, Furyl H-3), 6.62 (dd, J = 3.6, 1.6 Hz, 1H, Furyl H-4), 3.98 (s, 2H, CH₂CN). ¹³**C NMR** (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 175.8 (C=O), 150.3 (Furyl C-2), 147.8 (Furyl C-5), 119.3 (Furyl C-3), 113.4 (CN), 113.3 (Furyl C-4), 28.8 (<u>C</u>H₂CN, ¹*J*(CH₂)=135.6 Hz). ¹⁵**N NMR** (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -126.9 (CN). ¹⁷**O NMR** (54 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 510 (C=O), 239 (Furan-O). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 2247, 1699, 998. **Mp:** 69 °C (lit.,⁷ 66-68 °C). **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₇H₅NO₂. Calcd.: C, 62.22; H, 3.73; N, 10.37. Found: C, 62.35; H, 3.81; N, 10.46.

3-oxo-3-(2-thienyl)propanenitrile (4l)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl-2-thiophenecarboxamide (0.171 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7

mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **41** was obtained in 80% yield (0.123 g) as a yellow solid.

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 7.79 (dd, J = 4.9, 1.1 Hz, 1H, Th H-5), 7.78 (dd, J = 3.9, 1.1 Hz, 1H, Th H-3), 7.20 (dd, J = 4.9, 3.9 Hz, 1H, Th H-4), 4.01 (s, 2H, CH₂CN). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 179.5 (C=O), 140.8 (Th C-2, ²*J*(C-2,H-3) = 7.0 Hz, ³*J*(C-2,H-4) = 9.0 Hz, ³*J*(C-2,H-5) = 5.9 Hz), 136.3 (Th C-5, ¹*J*(C-5,H-5) = 186.4 Hz, ²*J*(C-5,H-4) = 7.2 Hz, ³*J*(C-5,H-3) = 10.9 Hz), 133.7 (Th C-3, ¹*J*(C-3,H-3) = 167.8 Hz, ²*J*(C-3,H-4) = 5.5 Hz, ³*J*(C-3,H-5) = 9.3 Hz), 128.7 (Th C-4, ¹*J*(C-4,H-4) = 171.6 Hz, ²*J*(C-4,H-3) = 4.1 Hz, ³*J*(C-4,H-5) = 4.1 Hz), 113.4 (CN, ²*J*(CN,CH₂) = 10.3 Hz), 29.5 (<u>C</u>H₂CN, ¹*J*(CH₂) = 135.0 Hz). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 3079, 2254, 1691. **Mp:** 133 °C (lit.,³ 131-135 °C). **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₇H₅NOS. Calcd.: C, 55.61; H, 3.33; N, 9.26; S, 21.21. Found: C, 55.71; H, 3.41; N, 9.40; S, 21.12.

3-oxo-4-phenylbutanenitrile (4m)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl-2-phenylacetamide (0.179 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4m** was obtained in 84% yield (0.132 g) as a yellow solid.

¹**H NMR** (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.35 (m, 2H, Ph H-3,5), 7.31 (m, 1H, Ph H-4), 7.20 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 3.82 (s, 2H, Ph-C<u>H</u>₂), 3.48 (s, 2H, CH₂CN). ¹³**C NMR** (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 195.6 (C=O), 131.9 (Ph C-1), 129.3 (Ph C-2,6), 129.0 (Ph C-3,5), 127.7 (Ph C-4), 113.7 (CN), 48.9 (Ph-<u>C</u>H), 31.2 (<u>C</u>H₂CN). ¹⁵**N NMR** (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -126.8 (CN) ¹⁷**O NMR** (54 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 574 (C=O). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 2248, 1702. **Mp:** 30 °C (lit.,⁸ 29 °C). **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₀H₉NO. Calcd.: C, 75.45; H, 5.70; N, 8.80. Found: C, 75.55; H, 5.82; N, 8.94.

4,4-dimethyl-3-oxopentanenitrile (4n)

By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*,2,2-trimethylpropanamide (0.145 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **4n** was obtained in 74% yield (0.092 g) as a light brown solid.

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 3.64 (s, 2H, CH₂CN), 1.18 (s, 9H, C(CH₃)₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 202.8 (C=O), 114.1 (CN), 44.5 (<u>C</u>(CH₃)₃), 27.4 (<u>CH₂CN</u>, ¹*J*(CH₂) = 134.1 Hz), 26.0 (C(<u>C</u>H₃)₃, ¹*J*(CH₃) = 127.6 Hz). ¹⁵N NMR (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -127.8 (CN). ¹⁷O NMR (54 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 560 (C=O). IR (NaCl, ν_{max} , cm⁻¹): 2252, 1699. Mp: 70 °C (lit.,² 70 °C). Elemental Analysis (%) for C₇H₁₁NO. Calcd.: C, 67.17; H, 8.86; N, 11.19. Found: C, 67.29; H, 8.97; N, 11.31.

3-(adamantan-1-yl)-3-oxopropenenitrile (40)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl-1-adamantanecarboxamide (0.223 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), CH₃CN (0.18 g, 0.24 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **40** was obtained in 68% yield (0.145 g) as a white solid.

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 3.58 (s, 2H, CH₂CN), 2.08 (m, 3H, Adamant H-3,5,7), 1.82 (d, J = 2.8 Hz, 6H, Adamant H-2,8,9), 1.76 (m, 3H, Adamant H-4,6,10) 1.68 (m, 3H, Adamant H-4, 6, 10). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 202.2 (C=O), 114.1 (CN), 46.8 (Adamant C-1), 37.9 (Adamant C-2,8,9), 36.1 (Adamant C-4,6,10), 27.6 (Adamant C-3,5,7), 27.0 (<u>C</u>H₂CN). ¹⁵N NMR (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -127.5 (CN). ¹⁷O NMR (54 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 561 (C=O). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 2249, 1703, 998. **Mp**: 112 °C. **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₃H₁₇NO. Calcd.: C, 76.81; H, 8.43; N, 6.89. Found: C, 76.92; H, 8.52; N, 6.99.

2,2-dimethyl-3-oxoheptanenitrile (6a)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methylpentanamide (0.145 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), (CH₃)₂CCN (0.31 g, 0.4 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β-oxonitrile **6a** was obtained in 82% yield (0.121 g) as a light yellow oil. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 2.77 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 2H, CH₂CO), 1.59 (m, 2H, CH₂CH₂CO), 1.47 (s, 6H, C(CH₃)₂), 1.32 (m, 2H, CH₂CH₃), 0.91 (t, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 3H, CH₂CH₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 204.3 (C=O), 122.0 (CN), 43.5 (C(CH₃)₂), 38.3 (CH₂CO), 25.6 (CH₂CH₂CO), 23.8 (C(CH₃)₂), 22.0 (CH₂CH₃), 13.7 (CH₂CH₃). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 2253, 1709. **Elemental Analysis** (%) for C₉H₁₅NO. Calcd.: C, 70.55; H, 9.87; N, 9.14. Found: C, 70.77; H, 10.01; N, 9.28.

2, dimethyl-3-oxo-3-phenylpropanenitrile (6b)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methylbenzamide (0.165 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), $(CH_3)_2CCN$ (0.31 g, 0.4 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **6b** was obtained in 86% yield (0.149 g) as a light yellow oil.

¹**H NMR** (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 8.14 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 7.58 (m, 1H, Ph H-4), 7.47 (m, 2H, Ph H-3,5), 1.69 (s, 6H, $C(C\underline{H}_3)_2$). ¹³**C NMR** (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 193.7 (C=O), 133.6 (Ph C-4), 133.4 (Ph C-1), 129.2 (Ph C-2,6), 128.5 (Ph C-3,5), 122.4 (CN), 40.6 (<u>C</u>CN), 25.4 (C(<u>C</u>H₃)₂). ¹⁵**N NMR** (40 MHz, CM) (40 MLz) (40 MLz

CDCl₃) δ : -129.0 (CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 3081, 2260, 1713, 1523, 1491, 1001. **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₁H₁₁NO. Calcd.: C, 76.28; H, 6.40; N, 8.09. Found: C, 76.39; H, 6.54; N, 8.22.

3-(4-biphenylyl)-2,2-dimethyl-3-oxopropanenitrile (6c)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl-4-phenylbenzamide (0.241 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), (CH₃)₂CCN (0.31 g, 0.4 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **6c** was obtained in 87% yield (0.217 g) as a white solid.

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 8.26 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 7.73 (m, 2H, Ph H-3,5), 7.64 (m, 2H, Ph' H-2,6), 7.49 (m, 2H, Ph' H-3,5), 7.42 (m, 1H, Ph' H-4), 1.76 (s, 6H, $(CH_3)_2C$). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 193.3 (C=O), 146.5 (Ph C-4), 139.4 (Ph' C-1), 132.1 (Ph C-1), 130.1 (Ph C-2,6), 129.0 (Ph' C-3,5), 128.5 (Ph' C-4), 127.3 (Ph C-3,5, Ph' C-2,6), 122.7 (CN), 40.7 (<u>C</u>CN), 25.6 (C(<u>C</u>H₃)₂). ¹⁵N NMR (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -130.3 (CN). IR (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 3081, 2260, 1713, 1523, 1491, 1001. Mp: 96-97 °C. Elemental Analysis (%) for C₁₇H₁₅NO. Calcd.: C, 81.90; H, 6.06; N, 5.62. Found: C, 82.12; H, 6.18; N, 5.77.

3-(4-biphenylyl)-2-(4-methoxyphenyl)-3-oxopropanenitrile (6d)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl-4-phenylbenzamide (0.241 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), 4-Methoxyphenylacetonitrile (0.66 g, 0.36 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **6d** was obtained in 80% yield (0.261 g) as a pink solid

¹**H NMR** (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 8.01 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 7.67 (m, 2H, Ph H-3,5), 7.59 (m, 2H, Ph' H-2,6), 7.47 (m, 2H, Ph' H-3,5), 7.41 (m, 1H, Ph' H-4), 7.38 (m, 2H, Ph'' H-2, 6), 6.92 (m, 2H, Ph'' H-3, 5), 5.59 (s, 1H, -HCCN), 3.79 (s, 3H, OCH₃). ¹³**C NMR** (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 188.6 (C=O), 160.1 (Ph'' C-4), 147.0 (Ph C-4), 139.2 (Ph' C-1), 132.2 (Ph C-1), 129.8 (Ph C-2,6), 129.5 (Ph'' C-2,6), 129.0 (Ph' C-3,5), 128.6 (Ph' C-4), 127.5 (Ph C-3,5), 127.2 (Ph' C-2,6), 122.2 (Ph'' C-1), 116.8 (CN), 115.1 (Ph '' C-3,5), 55.3 (OCH₃) 46.0 (-<u>C</u>HCN). ¹⁵**N NMR** (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -127.1 (CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 3083, 2256, 1708, 997. **Mp**: 108 °C. **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₂₂H₁₇NO₂. Calcd.: C, 80.71; H, 5.23; N, 4.28. Found: C, 80.84; H, 5.32; N, 4.36.

2-(4-methoxyphenyl)-3-oxo-4-phenylbutanenitrile (6e)



By following the general procedure 2, starting from *N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl-2-phenylacetamide (0.179 g, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv), 4-methoxyphenylacetonitrile (0.66 g, 0.36 mL, 4.5 mmol, 4.5 equiv) and MeLi-LiBr (2.7 mL, 4.0 mmol, 4.0 equiv) in THF, β -oxonitrile **6e** was obtained in 77% yield (0.204 g) as a viscous yellow oil.

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 7.31 (m, 3H, Ph H-3,4,5), 7.24 (m, 2H, Ph' H-2,6), 7.07 (m, 2H, Ph H-2,6), 6.94 (m, 2H, Ph' H-3,5), 4.73 (s, 1H, CHCN), 3.83 and 3.76, (AB-System, ${}^{2}J$ = 15.9 Hz, 2H, COC<u>H</u>₂), 3.82 (s, 3H, OCH₃). ¹³**C** NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: 196.6 (C=O), 160.2 (Ph' C-4), 132.1 (Ph C-1), 129.5 (Ph' C-2,6), 129.4 (Ph C-2,6), 128.8 (Ph C-3,5), 127.5 (Ph C-4), 121.3 (Ph' C-1), 116.3 (CN), 115.0 (Ph' C-3,5), 55.3 (OCH₃), 49.0 (<u>C</u>HCN), 46.3 (CH₂). ¹⁵N NMR (40 MHz, CDCl₃) δ: -126.3 (CN). **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 2261, 1702. **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₇H₁₅NO₂. Calcd.: C, 76.96; H, 5.70; N, 5.28. Found: C, 77.10; H, 5.81; N, 5.40.

Synthesis of ethyl (2E)-4-cyano-3-phenyl-2-butenoate (7)



To a solution of cyanoketone **4d** (145 mg, 1.0 mmol, 1.0 equiv) dissolved in dry 2-MeTHF (2 mL) was added (carbethoxymethylene)triphenylphosphorane (383 mg, 1.1 mmol, 1.1 equiv) and the resulting mixture was stirred for 16 h at rt. Then, a saturated solution of NH_4Cl (aq) was added and the organic phase directly extracted in 2-MeTHF, dried over Na_2SO_4 and filtered. After removal of the solvent under reduced pressure and purification of the crude through silica gel chromatography (petroleum ether – ethyl acetate, 95:5), compound 7 was obtained as a yellowish oil (187 mg, 87% yield).

¹**H** NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 7.50 – 7.33 (m, 5H, Ph-H), 5.78 (s, 1H, alkene-H), 4.13 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H, OCH₂), 3.89 (s, 2H, CH₂CN), 1.19 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H, CH₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 168.6, 155.9, 136.9, 129.0, 126.10, 116.8, 99.1, 61.5, 39.3, 13.9. **IR** (NaCl, v_{max} , cm⁻¹): 2250, 1711, 1490, 998. **Elemental Analysis (%)** for C₁₃H₁₃NO₂. Calcd: C, 72.54; H, 6.09; N, 6.51. Found: C, 72.74; H, 6.26; N, 6.31.

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Copies of ¹H and ¹³C spectra for all the compounds. 2





210 200 190 180 170 160 150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 -10 f1 (ppm)







4c



210 200 190 180 170 160 150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 -10 f1 (ppm)

4d





210 200 190 180 170 160 150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 (fl(ppm)





210 200 190 180 170 160 150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 -10 f1(ppm)

4g

4h



200 190 180 170 160 150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 f1 (ppm)



4j









210 200 190 180 170 160 150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 -10 f1 (ppm)



4m



210 200 190 180 170 160 150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 -10 f1 (ppm)



210 200 190 180 170 160 150 140 130 120 110 100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 -10 f1 (ppm)



4o



6a





— 1.69





6c











Copies of ¹⁵N NMR spectra for selected compounds 2 (¹H,¹⁵N - HMBC)

8.5

8.0

7.5

7.0

6.5

6.0

5.5

5.0



4.5 4.0 f2 (ppm)

3.5

3.0

2.5

2.0

1.5

1.0

0.5

--119 --118 --117 --117 --116 --115

0.0

4d (¹H,¹⁵N - HMBC)







4f (¹H,¹⁵N - HMBC)



4h (¹H,¹⁵N - HMBC)



4k (¹H,¹⁵N - HMBC)



4n (¹H,¹⁵N - HMBC)



6b (¹H,¹⁵N - HMBC)





Copies of ¹⁷O NMR spectra for selected compounds













4k (¹⁷O)



4n (¹⁷O)



40 (¹⁷**O**)

