Ao. Univ.Prof. i.R. Dr. Robert Jarosch

16. 12. 1929 - 20. 8. 2021

Prof. Dr. Robert Jarosch was born in Vienna and studied - following the family tradition – astronomy. Because of the „unpleasant mathematics“ he changed to biology and became a student of the plant physiologist Karl Höfler at the University of Vienna. After finishing his thesis on cytoplasmic streaming in 1955, he worked in the research department of the Österreichische Stickstoffwerke and at the Naturkundliche Station in Linz, where he held the position of a director temporarily. Together with Ewald Schild, Robert Jarosch established an internationally renowned Laboratory for Microscopy. As a lecturer and instructor for microscopy at the Volkshochschule he shared his knowledge and enthusiasm for the dynamics of cells with the interested public. Among his first students was the protozoologist Wilhelm Foissner (†20. 3. 2020), in whose scientific career he played a major role.

In 1968 Heinrich Wagner called Robert Jarosch as an assistant to the newly founded Institute of Botany at the University of Salzburg, where he contributed significantly to the organization of the study program. He habilitated on the subject "Anatomy and Physiology of Plants, Cell Physiology and Molecular Biology" and in 1973, because of his physiological orientation, moved to Botany II which later became the Institute of Plant Physiology. Full professor of this chair was Oswald Kiermayer, a former fellow student and colleague. After Kiermayer’s death, Robert Jarosch took over as director of the institute from 1988 to 1990.

As a scientist and internationally respected expert in light microscopic live observations, Robert Jarosch was far ahead of his time. As a pioneer, he contributed to the development of microscopic photography and cinematography. He was the first to demonstrate the rotation of the bacterial flagellum and the (then unidentified) central microtubule pair of the eukaryote flagellum. His observations were confirmed decades later by new methods. In addition to flagellar movement, he was primarily interested in organelle dynamics and cytoplasmic streaming in plant cells. The interpretation of his precise observations was uninfluenced by scientific dogmas. He always strove to combine inductive and deductive research and elaborated an explanation for the mechanism of movement alternative to the current doctrine. This hypothesis was later applied to the movement of muscles. Under his guidance, several theses and dissertations were written. He was an excellent supervisor and gave his students freedom in their work and interpretation of their results. The scientific work of Robert Jarosch includes more than 60 papers in international journals and books and was presented at numerous congresses.

Members of “Botany 2”

Front: Ursula Lütz-Meindl (†14. 5. 2020), Robert Jarosch (†20. 8. 2021), Doris Pinegger (Wittmann)
Back: Ilse Foissner, Heinz Edenhofner, Johanna Schulz-Üblagger, Annemarie Schmid (†17. 5. 2013), Christa Skrinjar (Ferner), Oswald Kiermayer (†23. 12. 1988)

After his retirement in 1992, Robert Jarosch devoted more time to his family and to those interests that had previously been neglected, especially philosophy, music, sailing and astronomy. Robert Jarosch was very popular among students and colleagues because of his helpfulness, his amiable nature and his fine sense of humour. He passed away after a long, full life and a short illness.

Ilse Foissner

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