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Amidino ligands from coupling 1-methylcytosine and nitrile: a new method to incorporate biomolecules to luminescent $Re(CO)_3$ complexes†

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The formation of an amidino chelating ligand from the coupling reaction of 1-methylcytosine and nitrile is the new method herein reported for the incorporation of biologically relevant substrates into rhenium(I) tricarbonyl complexes. The reactions are carried out thermally or microwave assisted.

The use of luminescent rhenium(I) tricarbonyl complexes as labels and probes for biomolecules lies both on their intense and long-lived emission properties, and on the activity and binding selectivity of the biomolecules, which is retained in almost all cases.[1] Therefore, the incorporation of biologically relevant substrates into these complexes is one of the most important challenges for future inorganic medicinal chemistry.[1,2] More recently, IR spectroscopy has been used in these complexes to know the local environment without the need for labels or staining, allowing to combine bimodal IR and luminescent probes. This has been proposed and named as SCoMPIs, for "Single Core Multimodal Probe for Imaging", by Policar's group.[3]

Besides direct coordination of the nucleobase to the *fac*-$Re(CO)_3$ fragment,[4] three main strategies have been developed in order to graft biomolecules to the *fac*-$[ReX(CO)_3(N\text{-}N)]^n$ (N-N = diimine chelating ligand; X = halogen or pseudohalogen, n = 0; X = pyridyl type ligand, n = +1) complexes:[5] the biomolecule may be attached either to the diimine chelating ligand,[6] or to the pyridyl type ligand;[7] whereas the third option is attaching the biomolecule in a tripodal nitrogen-donor ligand on complexes *fac*-$[Re(CO)_3(N\text{-}N\text{-}N)]$ (N-N-N = tripodal nitrogen-donor ligand).[8]

Herein we present a new method to incorporate biomolecules, in this case a nucleobase, to the rhenium(I) tricarbonyl moiety: instead of attaching a biomolecule to a chelating diimine previously coordinated, a new chelating ligand is formed by the reaction of the nucleobase with a coordinated nitrile. This process may be carried out thermally, or microwave assisted.

This reaction is based on the activation of coordinated nitriles by the metal centre, which results in an enhancement of the electrophilicity of the carbon atom, and facilitates the addition of different nucleophiles.[9] For instance, the addition of amines bearing a proton leads to amidines, of particular interest due to their organic, medicinal, or coordination chemistries.[9c] When the amine belongs to a heterocycle containing a donor atom in the appropriate position, the involvement of their electron pair in aromatization makes the resulting chelating amidino ligand significantly interesting. Our previous studies on pyrazole complexes[10] led us to find that the formation of pyrazolylamidino complexes is base-catalysed,[10e] and to study their photochemistry[10f] or their properties as anion receptor.[10b] We envisaged a logical continuation of this previous work by attempting to make a new amidino complex from the reaction of a nucleobase and a rhenium(I) tricarbonyl nitrile precursor, since this reaction has not been previously reported for this metallic moiety, as indicated above. In fact, the field of metal ion-induced modifications to nucleobases is practically unexplored, although the coordination of nucleobases to metals has been profusely reported.[4] The only precedent of metal-mediated transformations coupling reactions with nitriles and nucleobases is the amidino complex $[ReCl_4\{NH{=}C(Me)(Me_2AdH\text{-}\kappa^2N,N\}]$, obtained after reaction of N^6,N^6-dimethyladenine (Me_2AdH) with *cis*-$[ReCl_4(NCMe)_2]$.[11] The rest of processes of this type previously reported included the deprotonation of the nucleobase, affording an anionic chelating amidino ligand in the complexes *cis*-$[L_2Pt\{NH{=}CR(MeAd\text{-}\kappa^2N,N\}]^+$ (MeAdH = 9-methyladenine) or *cis*-$[L_2Pt\{NH{=}CR(MeCy\text{-}\kappa^2N,N\}]^+$ (L = $PMePh_2$, PPh_3; R = Me, Ph; $MeCyH_2$ = 1-methylcytosine).[12]

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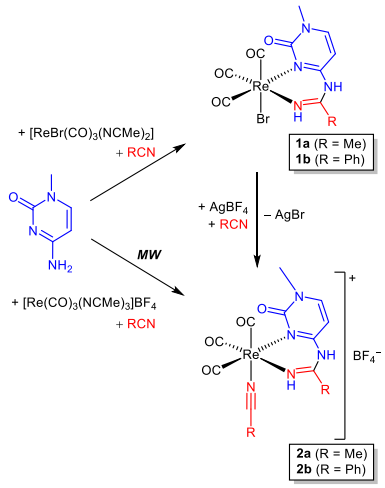
† Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI) available: Synthesis and characterization of the complexes, NBO charges and Wiberg indexes for **1a**, photophysical data, figure of the crystal structure of **2a**, frontier molecular orbital compositions in the ground and excited states, and calculated excited energies and dominant orbital excitations from TD-DFT for **1a** and **2a**. CCDC 1415524-1415525. See DOI: 10.1039/x0xx00000x

The reactions of *fac*-[ReBr(CO)$_3$(NCMe)$_2$][13] with equimolar amounts of MeCyH$_2$ in refluxing NCR (R = Me, Ph) lead cleanly to *fac*-[ReBr(CO)$_3${NH=C(R)(MeCyH-κ^2*N,N*}], (R = Me, **1a**; R = Ph, **1b**) as yellow microcrystalline solids (Scheme 1). The formation of the amidino chelating ligand by coupling of 1-methylcytosine and one molecule of acetonitrile is evident in the X-ray crystal structure of **1a**, shown in Figure 1 together with selected distances and angles. Tables with details of the structure determination, and the rest of spectroscopic data for both complexes in accordance with the geometry deduced by x-ray diffraction can be found in the ESI.



Scheme 1 Syntheses of the amidino complexes from coupling of MeCyH$_2$ and NCR.

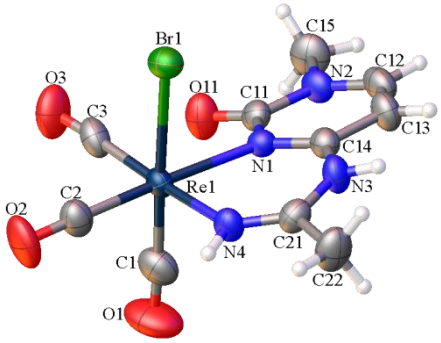


Fig. 1 Perspective view of *fac*-[ReBr(CO)$_3${NH=C(Me)(MeCyH-κ^2*N,N*}], **1a**, showing the atom numbering. Ellipsoids are drawn at 50 % probability. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (deg): Re1-N1 2.242(3), N1-C14 1.331(5), N3-C14 1.356(5), N3-C21 1.370(5), N4-C21 1.271(5), Re1-N4 2.132(3), N1-C11 1.409(5), N2-C11 1.400(4), N2-C12 1.346(5), C12-C13 1.322(6), C14-C13 1.417(5); C14-N1-Re1 125.5(2), N1-C14-N3 122.8(3), C14-N3-C21 133.3(3), N4-C21-N3 121.3(4), C21-N4-Re1 132.2(3), N4-Re1-N1 83.28(11).

As indicated above, there are not previous reports of crystal structures containing amidino ligands derived from the coupling of nitriles and MeCyH$_2$. The chelate six-membered ring containing the rhenium atom is almost planar, with a very slight distortion towards a boat conformation, where Re1 and N3 are 0.245(6) and 0.065(6) Å above the mean plane formed by N1, C14, C21 and N4. The latter mean plane forms an angle of 6.36(15)° with the cytosine ring, resulting in a twisted nucleobase ligand. Moreover, the mean plane of the whole nucleobase forms an angle of 12.79(12)° with the coordination plane defined by the C2, C3, N1, and N4 atoms. All these distorsions seem to be intended to move away the carbonyl group in the methylcytosine fragment from the carbonyl ligand in *cis* to the nitrogen donor atom of the nucleobase fragment. In fact, the O11-O3 and O11-C3 distances (2.948(4) and 2.591(6) Å) are well below the sum of the respective van der Waals radii, 3.04 and 3.22 Å, respectively). Obviously, the high steric crowding in this side of the molecule brings these two carbonyls apart from each other, and any chemical interaction between them should be discarded. The Re-N distances (2.242(3) and 2.132(3) Å) are similar to those previously found in pyrazolylamidino complexes,[10] whereas two different C-N distances are found in the chelate six membered ring: those where C=N bonds may be proposed (N1-C14 1.331(5) and N4-C21 1.271(5) Å) are in the expected range for double C(sp^2)=N(sp^2) bonds,[14] but the other CN distances (N3-C14 1.356(5) and N3-C21 1.370(5) Å) are shorter than those expected for a single C(sp^2)–N(sp^2) bond.[14] The tricoordinate N3 atom should be labelled as sp^2 since it is planar, what implies that its electron pair should be delocalized. In order to support this, an NBO study was performed on the minimum geometry to calculate the Wiberg indexes of the bonds in the coordinated chelating ligand. The results, collected in Figure S1, support that the bond distances found in the crystal structure have an electronic origin and they are not due to packing effects. Therefore, the best description for this ligand is that depicted in

Scheme 1, although resonance forms where the C-N3 bonds have a double character also contribute to the resonance hybrid, as expected for the planar geometry of N3. Concerning this point, it should be pointed out that determining the energy of the possible tautomers is essential in biological processes, since those energetically less stable may be active intermediates for many transformations, what affects the mechanism of the processes where the biomolecule is involved.[15] In fact, both the monodeprotonated cytosine anion, and the involvement of cytosine in hydrogen bonds or in coordination to metals have been theoretically evaluated.[16]

The *N*-bound hydrogen atom of the amidino ligand is involved in a hydrogen bond with the oxygen atom of a Me_2CO molecule present in the crystal. The distances and angles detected (H(3)···O(91), 2.015(3) Å; N(3)···O(91) 2.874(4) Å, N(3)–H(3)···O(91) 176.6(3)°) leads to consider this hydrogen bond as "moderate".[17]

The new chelating ligands are robust enough so they remain unchanged when the complexes undergo further reactivity. Thus, the reactions of complexes **1** with $AgBF_4$ in NCR afford the cationic complexes *fac*-[$Re(CO)_3$(NCR){NH=C(R)(MeCyH-κ^2*N,N*}]BF_4, (R = Me, **2a**; R = Ph, **2b**) after substituting the bromido ligand by NCR (Scheme 1). The crystallographic data for **2a** may be found in the ESI, as well as their spectroscopic data. The distances and angles found in the crystal structure of **2a** are very similar to those found for the structure of **1a**, discussed above.

These cationic complexes can also be obtained in a one-pot process from *fac*-[$Re(CO)_3(NCMe)_3$]BF_4,[18] 1-methylcytosine, and the nitrile by a microwave assisted reaction, in 10 min at 180°C. The yields are slightly lower than those obtained when the reaction is carried out by traditional methods (76% *vs*. 92% for **2a**, 60% *vs*. 83% for **2b**). However, they are clearly higher than those once the yields of the necessary previous steps of **1a** and **1b** are considered (global yields 53% and 46% respectively, considering that the yield of both parent complexes *fac*-[$ReBr(CO)_3(NCMe)_2$] and *fac*-[$Re(CO)_3(NCMe)_3$]BF_4 from *fac*-[$ReBr(CO)_5$] are higher than 90% and therefore are almost quantitative). Therefore the microwave assisted reaction is a better synthetic method considering the whole atomic economy, since the microwave assisted processes start from *fac*-[$Re(CO)_3(NCMe)_3$]BF_4. We are not aware of previous reports on the use of microwave to form amidines from nitriles and amines. However, microwave is not a suitable way to obtain the neutral bromido complexes **1**, as the yields in this case are much lower than those obtained by refluxing the nitriles.

As indicated above, the interest on these complexes lies on the incorporation of the nucleobase into a luminescent complex. It is well known that the $Re(CO)_3$ complexes with chelate N-donor ligands are likely to be phosphorescent.[19] In this way, we have recently described some similar complexes with pirazolylamidino ligands, and discussed which changes occur in the emission features when structural modifications are made.[10f] Nonetheless, we have measured some photophysical properties of compounds **1a** and **2a**, in order to check the luminescent behaviour of these nucleobase complexes. Their absorption spectra (see Figure S2 and Table S1 in the ESI) are very similar to those of pyrazolylamidino $Re(CO)_3$ complexes.[10f] Thus, the intense bands observed in the UV region at high energy (250-320 nm) have an intraligand (IL) origin, while the lowest energy absorption bands are assigned to a mixture of MLCT Re→π*(L), ligand-to-ligand charge-transfer (LLCT), and halide-to-ligand charge-transfer (XLCT) transitions. As expected, the substitution of the anionic σ-donor/π-donor bromido ligand by a neutral σ-donor acetonitrile ligand led to an hypsochromic shift, in this case of *ca*. 60 nm in the low energy absorptions. Emission spectra showed bands in the range 500-580 nm, with quantum yields from 0.009 to 0.013 %, values that are in accordance with those found for the pirazolylamidino complexes.

In order to support the assignment of the low-lying absorption transitions as MLCT, theoretical calculations at the same level of theory as for the pirazolylamidino complexes discussed above have been carried out for complexes **1a** and **2a**. These calculations showed that the highest occupied molecular orbitals (HOMOs) have a mixed Re/CO/Br character with different contributions in the case of the neutral complex **1a**, while the HOMOs of the cationic complex **2a** have a Re/CO character. In both cases the LUMO is mainly centred in the nucleobase ligand, confirming the metal to ligand charge transfer nature of the optical transitions (full details can be found in the ESI).

In summary, new luminescent rhenium(I) tricarbonyl complexes containing amidino chelating ligands are obtained by coupling nitriles and 1-methylcytosine. The formation of new amidino chelating ligands in this system by extending this reaction to couple different nitriles and new nucleobases (besides cytosine, adenine and guanine contain donor atoms in the appropriate position to form new amidino ligands) is to be expected. Neutral and cationic complexes have been synthesized, the latter may also be obtained in a microwave reactor, which opens the door to the coordination of a wide range of substrates to the system.

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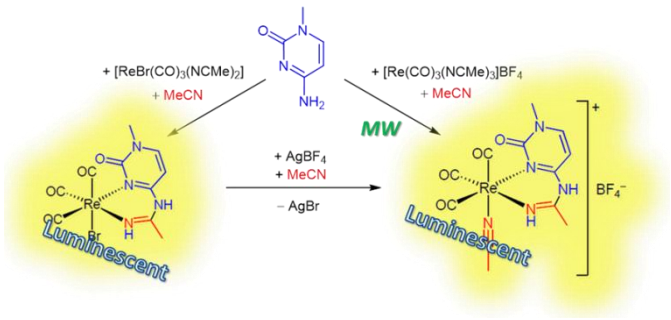

Electronic Supplementary Information

Amidino ligands from coupling 1-methylcytosine and nitrile: a new method to incorporate biomolecules to luminescent Re(CO)3 complexes

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Synthesis and characterization of the complexes

General Remarks. All manipulations were performed under N_2 atmosphere following conventional Schlenk techniques. Solvents were purified according to standard laboratory methods.[i] *fac*-[ReBr(CO)$_3$(NCMe)$_2$],[ii] *fac*-[Re(CO)$_3$(NCMe)$_3$]BF$_4$,[iii] and 1-methylcytosine[iv] were obtained as previously described. The microwave assisted reactions were carried out in an Anton Paar Monowave 300 apparatus. Infrared spectra were recorded in a Perkin-Elmer FT-IR spectrum BX apparatus using 0.2 mm CaF_2 cells for solutions or in a Perkin-Elmer Frontier spectrometer coupled to a Pike GladiATR-210 accessory for solid samples. NMR spectra were recorded in Varian MR500 instrument at room temperature (r.t.), and are referred to the internal residual solvent peak for ^{1}H and ^{13}C{^{1}H} NMR. Assignment of the ^{13}C{^{1}H} NMR data was supported by 2D HSQC and HMBC experiments and relative intensities of the resonance signals. UV-vis spectra were measured with a VARIAN-Cary 100 or Shimadzu UV-2550 spectrophotometers and emission spectra were recorded on a Jobin-Yvon FluoroLog 3.2.2 or in a Perkin–Elmer LS-55 luminescence spectrometer at room temperature. The luminescence quantum yields Ø of the complexes were determined using cresyl violet as a luminescence quantum yield standard.[v] All measurements were performed in deaerated solvents. Elemental analyses were performed on a Perkin-Elmer 2400B microanalyzer.

***fac*-[ReBr(CO)$_3${NH=C(Me)(MeCyH-κ^2*N,N*}], 1a**. A solution of *fac*-[ReBr(CO)$_3$(NCMe)$_2$] (0.216 g, 0.5 mmol) and 1-methylcytosine (MeCyH$_2$, 0.063 g, 0.5 mmol) in NCMe (20 mL) was stirred for 5 h at reflux. The volatiles were removed *in vacuo* and the yellow residue was crystallized in acetone/hexane at −20°C, giving a yellow microcrystalline solid, which was decanted, washed with hexane (3 x 3 mL approximately), and dried *in vacuo*, yielding 0.149 g (58 %). IR (THF, cm^{-1}): 2018 vs, 1912 vs, 1881 vs. IR (neat solid, cm^{-1}): 3462 m, 3225 m, 2027 vs, 1925 vs, 1902 vs, 1670 m, 1597 m, 1524 w, 1467 m, 1421 m, 1339 m, 1317 m, 1213 m, 1182 w, 1115 w, 1043 w, 806 w, 780 w, 650 w, 632 w, 552 w, 523 w. ^{1}H NMR (499.7 MHz, CD_3NO_2): 2.41 (s, NH=CC*H*$_3$, 3 H), 3.56 (s, C*H*$_3$ MeCy, 3 H), 6.21 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, C^5*H* MeCy, 1 H), 7.86 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, C^6*H* MeCy, 1 H), 8.73 (s, N*H* MeCy, 1 H), 9.89 (s,

N*H*=CCH$_3$, 1 H). ^{13}C{^{1}H} NMR (125.7 MHz, CD$_3$NO$_2$): 24.3 (s, NH=C*C*H$_3$), 40.5 (s, N*C*H$_3$), 97.1 (s, *C*^{5}H MeCy), 150.9 (s, *C*^{6}H MeCy), 155.7 (s, CO MeCy), 161.6 (s, NH=*C*CH3), 162.1 (s, *C*^{4} MeCy), 197.1 (s, Re*C*O), 198.0 (s, Re*C*O), 198.5 (s, Re*C*O). Anal. Calcd. for $C_{10}H_{10}BrN_4O_4Re$: C, 23.26; H, 1.95; N, 10.85. Found: C, 22.99; H, 2.01; N, 10.69.

***fac*-[ReBr(CO)$_3${NH=C(Ph)(MeCyH-κ^2*N,N*}], 1b**. The same procedure as for **1a**, using NCPh (7 mL) as solvent, gave 0.158 g (55%) of **1b** as a yellow microcrystalline solid. IR (THF, cm^{-1}): 2018 vs, 1913 vs, 1884 vs. IR (neat solid, cm^{-1}): 3194 w, 2918 m, 2849 m, 2015 vs, 1918 s, 1894 vs, 1867 vs, 1680 m, 1575 m, 1509 m, 1455 m, 1442 m, 1415 m, 1332 m, 1303 w, 1254 m, 1174 w, 1127 w, 1041 m, 1024 w, 874 w, 797 w, 776 w, 697 m, 650 w, 624 w, 607 w, 556 w, 523 m, 481 w, 399 w, 360 w, 303 w. ^{1}H NMR (499.7 MHz, CD$_3$NO$_2$): 3.61 (s, C*H*$_3$ MeCy, 3 H), 6.34 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, C^5*H* MeCy, 1 H), 7.6 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, *meta*-C$_6$H$_5$, 2 H), 7.69 (tt, *J* = 7.5 and 1.5 Hz, *para*-C$_6$H$_5$, 1 H), 7.77 (d, *J* = 7.5 Hz, *ortho*-C$_6$H$_5$, 2 H), 7.95 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, C^6*H* MeCy, 1H), 8.89 (s, N*H* MeCy, 1 H), 9.12 (s, N*H*=CCH$_3$, 1 H). ^{13}C{^{1}H} NMR (125.7 MHz, CD$_3$NO$_2$): 40.5 (s, N*C*H$_3$), 97.5 (s, *C*^{5}H MeCy), 128.2 (s, *ortho*-C$_6$H$_5$), 130.7 (s, *meta*-C$_6$H$_5$), 134.1(s, *para*-C$_6$H$_5$), 134.3 (s, *ipso*-C$_6$H$_5$), 151.1 (s, *C*^{6}H MeCy), 155.8 (s, *C*O MeCy), 161.8 (s, N=*C*Ph$_3$), 162.8 (s, *C*^{4} MeCy), 197.2 (s, Re*C*O), 197.7 (s, Re*C*O), 198.4 (s, Re*C*O). Anal. Calcd. for $C_{15}H_{12}BrN_4O_4Re$: C, 31.14; H, 2.09; N, 9.69. Found: 30.93; H, 2.28; N, 9.89.

***fac*-[Re(CO)$_3$(NCMe){NH=C(Me)(MeCyH-κ^2*N,N*}]BF$_4$, 2a.** *Method A.* A mixture of **1a** (0.103 g, 0.2 mmol) and AgBF$_4$ (0.045 g, 0.23 mmol) in NCMe (20 mL) was stirred at 30°C for 30 min with exclusion of light. Then the reaction mixture was filtered, the volatiles were dried *in vacuo*, and the yellow residue was crystallized in THF/Et$_2$O giving a pale yellow microcrystalline solid, which was decanted, washed with diethyl ether (3 x 3 mL approximately), and dried *in vacuo*, yielding 0.103 g (92 %). *Method B. fac*-[Re(CO)$_3$(NCMe)$_3$]BF$_4$ (0.048 g, 0.10 mmol), 1-methylcytosine (0.012 g, 0.10 mmol), and NCMe (2 mL) were placed in a dry 10 mL glass vessel equipped with a magnetic stirbar. The vessel was sealed with a

septum and placed in the microwave apparatus, and heated at 180°C during 10 min. The reaction mixture was then cooled to 50 °C, and the contents were transferred into a schlenk flask, and the volatiles were removed *in vacuo*. Crystallization from THF/Et_2O yielded 0.044 g (76 %) of **2a**. IR (THF, cm^{-1}): 2031 vs, 1932 vs, 1912 vs. IR (neat solid, cm^{-1}): 3274 m, 2961 w, 2028 vs, 1949 w, 1899 vs, 1697 m, 1673 m, 1582 m, 1525 w, 1464 w,1418 w, 1346 w, 1313 m, 1260 w, 1188 w, 1078 vs, 1053 vs, 1004 vs, 878 w, 781 m, 709 w, 649 w, 626 m, 553 w, 536 w, 477 w, 399 w, 375 w. ^{1}H NMR (499.7 MHz, CD_3NO_2): 2.35 (s, NCC*H*$_3$, 3 H), 2.46 (s, NH=CC*H*$_3$, 3 H), 3.59 (s, C*H*$_3$ MeCy, 3 H), 6.28 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, C^5*H* MeCy, 1 H), 7.95 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, C^6*H* MeCy, 1 H), 8.73 (s, N*H* MeCy, 1 H), 9.02 (s, N*H*=CCH$_3$, 1 H). ^{19}F NMR (470.2 MHz, CD_3NO_2): –152.87 (s, $^{10}BF_4$, 4 F), –152.92 (s, $^{11}BF_4$, 4 F). ^{13}C{^{1}H} NMR (125.7 MHz, CD_3NO_2): 3.0 (s, NC*C*H$_3$), 24.1 (s, NH=C*C*H$_3$), 40.5 (s, N*C*H$_3$), 97.1 (s, *C*^{5}H MeCy), 122.8 (s, N*C*CH$_3$) 151.6 (s, *C*^{6}H MeCy), 155.9 (s, CO MeCy), 162.1 (s, NH=*C*CH3), 163.6 (s, *C*^{4} MeCy), 194.4 (s, Re*C*O), 195.5 (s, Re*C*O), 197.0 (s, Re*C*O). Anal. Calcd. for $C_{12}H_{13}BF_4N_5O_4Re$: C, 25.54; H, 2.32; N, 12.41. Found: C, 25.63; H, 2.44; N, 12.15.

***fac*-[Re(CO)$_3$(NCPh){NH=C(Ph)(MeCyH-κ^2*N*,*N*}]BF$_4$, 2b.** *Method A.* A mixture of **1b** (0.056 g, 0.1 mmol) and $AgBF_4$ (0.023 g, 0.12 mmol) in THF (10 mL) was stirred at 30°C for 30 min with exclusion of light. Then the reaction mixture was filtered, the volatiles were dried *in vacuo*, and the yellow residue was redissolved in NCPh (3 mL) and stirred for 30 min. The volatiles were again dried *in vacuo*, and the yellow residue was crystallized in THF/Et_2O giving a pale yellow microcrystalline solid, which was decanted, washed with diethyl ether (3 x 3 mL approximately), and dried *in vacuo*, yielding 0.057 g (83 %). *Method B.* The same microwave procedure as for **1b**, using NCPh (2 mL) as solvent gave 0.041 g (60 %) of **2b**. IR (THF, cm^{-1}): 2027 vs, 1920 vs, 1900 vs. IR (neat solid, cm^{-1}): 3293 m, 3262 m, 3196 w, 3112 w, 2027 vs, 1926 m, 1897 vs, 1654 m, 1567 m, 1506 w, 1492 w, 1454 m, 1447 m, 1406 m, 1338 w, 1302 w, 1243 w, 1131 w, 1054 s, 1025 s, 998 m, 809 w, 796 w, 779 w, 761 m, 699 m, 686 m, 633 m, 562 w, 529 m, 401 w, 363 w. ^{1}H NMR (499.7 MHz, CD_3NO_2): 3.66 (s, C*H*$_3$ MeCy, 3 H), 6.52 (d, *J* = 7.5 Hz,

C^5H MeCy, 1 H), 7.58 (t, J = 7.5, *meta*-C_6H_5, 2 H), 7.62 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, *meta*-C_6H_5, 2 H), 7.73 (m, *para*-C_6H_5, 2 H), 7.81 (d, J = 7.5 Hz, *ortho*-C_6H_5, 2 H), 7.86 (d, J = 7.5 Hz, *ortho*-C_6H_5, 2 H), 8.06 (d, J = 7.5 Hz, C^6H MeCy, 1 H), 9.20 (s, N*H*, 1 H), 9.21 (s, N*H*, 1H). ^{19}F NMR (470.2 MHz, CD_3NO_2): −152.87 (s, $^{10}BF_4$, 4 F), −152.92 (s, $^{11}BF_4$, 4 F). $^{13}C\{^1H\}$ NMR (125.7 MHz, CD_3NO_2): 40.6 (s, N*C*H$_3$), 97.3 (s, C^5H), 128.6 (s, *ortho*-C_6H_5),130.6 (s, *ortho*-C_6H_5), 130.8 (s, *meta*-C_6H_5), 133.5 (s, *meta*-C_6H_5), 134.7 (s, *para*-C_6H_5), 136.4 (s, *para*-C_6H_5), 152.3 (s, C^6H MeCy), 156.0 (s, *C*O MeCy), 163.0 (s, N=*C*Ph$_3$), 163.1 (s, C^4 MeCy), 194.1 (s, Re*C*O), 195.1 (s, Re*C*O), 196.9 (s, Re*C*O). *ipso*-C_6H_5 and N*C*Ph not detected. Anal. Calcd. for $C_{22}H_{17}BF_4N_5O_4Re$: C, 38.38; H, 2.49; N, 10.17. Found: C, 38.59; H, 2.29; N, 10.37.

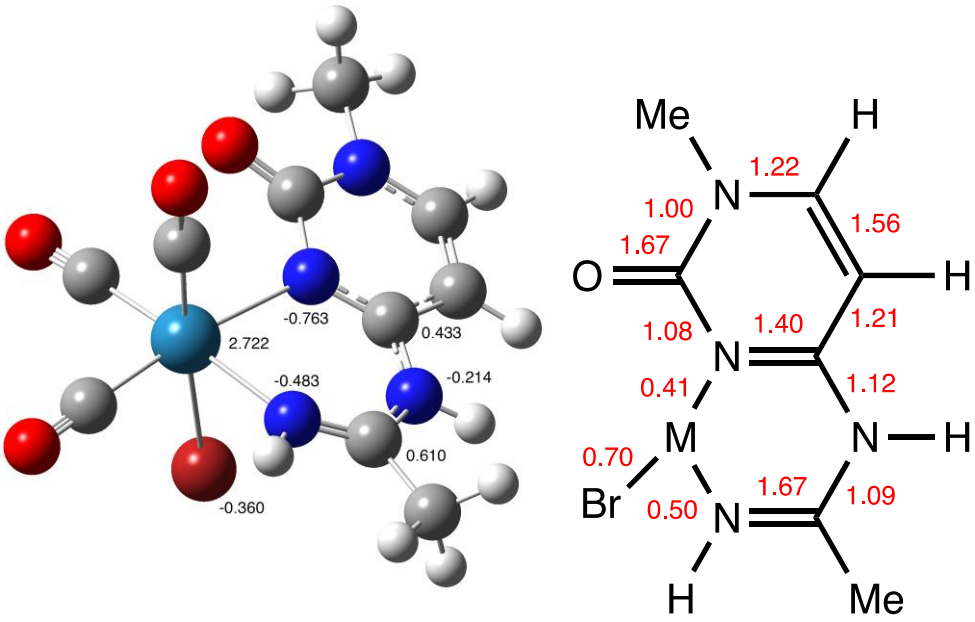


Figure S1. NBO charges and Wiberg indexes found for **1a**.

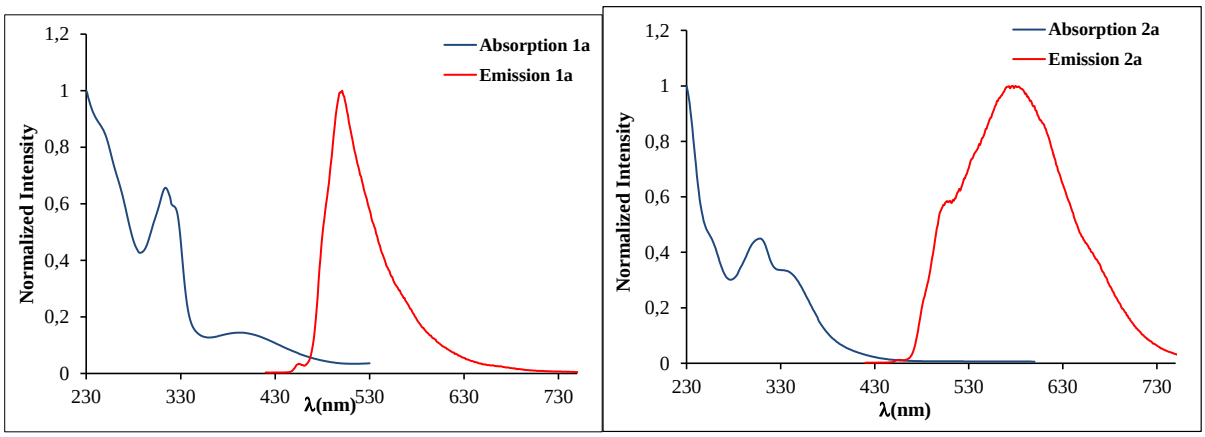


Figure S2. Normalized emission (red) and absorption (blue) spectra recorded in CH2Cl2 of complexes **1a** and **2a** at 298 K.

Table S1. Photophysical data:[(a)]

	Absorption	**Emission**	
	CH_2Cl_2[(b)] at 298 K λ_{abs} nm ε ($M^{-1}cm^{-1}$)	CH_2Cl_2[(b)] at 298 K λ_{em} (nm) [λ_{excit} =390 nm]	$\emptyset_L$ x10^{-3} (%)
1a	316 (16100), 326 sh (14200), 399 (3580)	455 sh, 501	9
2a	259 sh (16800), 308 (17200), 337 sh (12700)	505 sh, 576	13

(a) Measurement Conditions: Concentration = 10^{-5} M; Excitation: 390 nm; Range: 420-800 nm.

(b) NMR and IR spectra demonstrate that some donor solvents such as MeCN produce partial substitution of the "sixth" ligand (Br in **1a**, MeCN in **1b**) and therefore the photophysical measurements in these solvents are not reliable. CH_2Cl_2 has been chosen because both complexes are stable, even though their solubility is low.

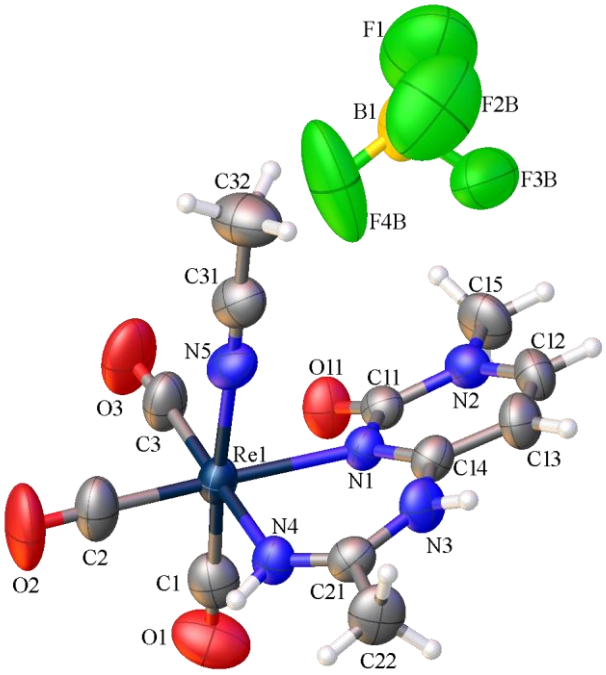


Figure S3. Perspective view of *fac*-[Re(CO)$_3$(NCMe){NH=C(Me)(MeCyH-κ^2*N,N*}]BF$_4$, **2a**, showing the atom numbering. Ellipsoids are drawn at 50 % probability. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (deg): Re1–N1 2.219(4), N1–C14 1.329 (6) N3–C14 1.379(6), N3–C21 1.379(6), N4–C21 1.255(6), Re1–N4 2.133(4); N1–C11 1.408(6), N2–C11 1.391(6), N2–C12 1.336(6), C12–C13 1.335(7), C14–C13 1.413(7); C14–N1–Re1 124.7(3), N1–C14–N3 122.8(5), C14–N3–C21 131.5(4), N4–C21–N3 122.0(4), C21–N4–Re1 131.1(4), N4–Re1–N1 83.65(14).

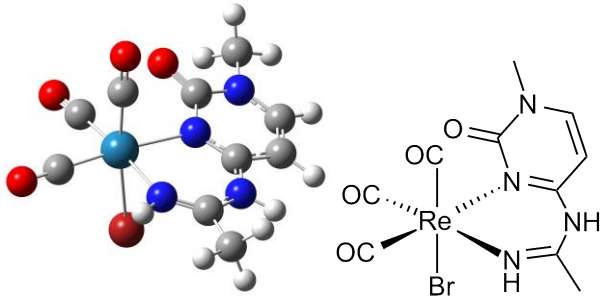
Computational Details.

All calculations have been performed using the Gaussian 09 program package,[vi] in which the PBE1PBE method was applied. This hybrid Hartree-Fock/ density functional model is based on the Perdew-Burke-Erzenhof (PBE) functional,[vii] where the HF/DFT exchange ratio is fixed a priori to 1/4, and was used to optimize the ground and excited state geometries. Geometry optimizations were performed under no symmetry restrictions, using initial coordinates derived from X-ray data of the same complexes, and frequency analyses were performed to ensure that a minimum structure with no imaginary frequencies was achieved in each case. On the basis of the optimized ground and excited state geometries, the absorption and emission properties in dichloromethane solution were calculated by TD-DFT[viii] at the PBE1PBE level associated with the PCM method to introduce the solvent effects.[ix] Spin-orbital coupling is not included in the current TD-DFT method, and it influences the excitation energies in which the Re electrons are involved,[x] whereas it has a negligible effect on the transition character of this complexes. Hence, although TD-DFT cannot exactly estimate the excitation energies, it can still provide a reasonable spectral feature for our investigated complexes. This kind of theoretical approach has been proven to be reliable for transition-metal complex systems.[xi] In the calculations, effective core potentials (ECP) and their associated double-ζ LANL2DZ basis set were used for the rhenium and bromide atoms,[xii] while the light elements (O, N, C, and H) were described with the 6-31+G(d,p) basis.[xiii] This level of theory was proved to be adequate in our previous theoretical study of the similar pirazolylamidino complexes.[xiv] The contribution of every fragment in the molecules studied to the different orbitals involved in the optical transitions was calculated with the AOMix program,[xv] and the graphical representation of the orbitals was made with the help of GaussView.[xvi] Wiberg bond indexes[xvii] were calculated with the NBO 5.9 program.[xviii]

Crystal Structure Determination for Compounds 1a and 2a. Crystals were grown by slow diffusion of hexane into concentrated solutions of the complexes in acetone (for **1a**) or THF (for **2a**) at −20 °C. Relevant crystallographic details can be found in the CIF. A crystal was attached to a glass fiber and transferred to an Agilent SuperNova

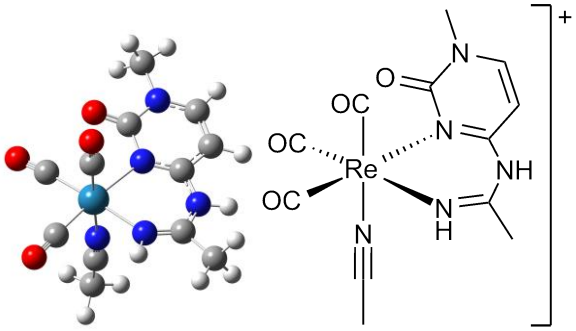
diffractometer fitted with an Atlas CCD detector. The crystals were kept at 293(2) K during data collection. Using Olex2,[xix] the structure was solved for complex **1a** with the ShelXS structure solution program using direct methods,[xx] and with olex2.solve structure solution program using Charge Flipping for complex **2a**,[20] and then, the structures were refined with the ShelXL refinement package using least squares minimisation.[xxi] All non-hydrogen atoms were refined anisotropically. Hydrogen atoms were set in calculated positions and refined as riding atoms, with a common thermal parameter. All graphics were made with Olex2, and distances and angles of hydrogen bonds were calculated with PARST[xxii] (normalized values).[xxiii]

Table S2. Frontier Molecular Orbital Compositions (%) in the Ground State for Complex **1a** at the PBE1PBE Level



		Contribution (%)				
Orbital	Energy (eV):	Re:	Br:	CO:	nucleob:	main bond type
HOMO-3	-7.27	8.10	32.61	2.57	56.73	p(Br) + π(nucleob)
HOMO-2	-6.80	64.02	7.42	24.69	3.87	d(Re) + π(CO)
HOMO-1	-6.42	44.64	32.45	19.79	3.12	d(Re) + p(Br) + π(CO)
HOMO	-6.32	48.88	24.50	19.53	7.08	d(Re) + p(Br) + π(CO)
LUMO	-2.15	0.97	0.07	2.82	96.14	π*(nucleob)
LUMO+1	-0.92	27.18	4.64	21.20	46.98	p(Re) + π*(CO) + π*(nucleob)
LUMO+2	-0.54	12.37	1.49	30.90	55.24	p(Re) + π*(CO) + π*(nucleob)

Table S3. Frontier Molecular Orbital Compositions (%) in the Ground State for Complex **2a** at the PBE1PBE Level



		Contribution (%)				
Orbital	Energy (eV):	Re:	NCMe:	CO:	nucleob:	main bond type
HOMO-3	-7.89	7.56	1.11	2.42	88.91	π(nucleob)
HOMO-2	-7.37	68.88	0.98	25.95	4.19	d(Re) + π(CO)
HOMO-1	-7.22	58.19	3.90	24.43	13.48	d(Re) + π(CO)
HOMO	-7.03	58.13	3.33	23.15	15.40	d(Re) + π(CO)
LUMO	-2.57	0.85	0.00	2.79	96.52	π*(nucleob)
LUMO+1	-1.32	23.38	1.85	25.37	49.40	p(Re) + π*(CO) + π*(nucleob)
LUMO+2	-1.18	33.48	22.26	43.01	1.24	p(Re) + π*(NCMe) + π*(CO)

Table S4. Calculated Excited Energies, Dominant Orbital Excitations, and Oscillator Strength (*f*) from TD-DFT Calculations for Complex **1a**

state	excitation	Coef.	E_{calc} (eV)	λ_{calc} (nm)	*f*	λ_{exp} (nm)	Character
S_1	HOMO → LUMO HOMO-1 → LUMO	0.66 0.25	3.23	384	0.0192	399	MLCT/LLCT/XLCT

S_2	HOMO → LUMO HOMO-1 → LUMO	-0.25 0.66	3.35	370	0.0426		MLCT/LLCT/XLCT
S_5	HOMO-3 → LUMO	0.68	4.23	293	0.1858	316	XLCT/ILCT

Table S5. Calculated Excited Energies, Dominant Orbital Excitations, and Oscillator Strength (*f*) from TD-DFT Calculations for Complex **2a**

state	excitation	Coef.	E_{calc} (eV)	λ_{calc} (nm)	*f*	λ_{exp} (nm)	Character
S_1	HOMO → LUMO	0.69	3.50	354	0.0203	337	MLCT/LLCT
S_2	HOMO-1 → LUMO	0.68	3.78	328	0.1331	308	MLCT/LLCT
S_4	HOMO-3 → LUMO HOMO → LUMO+1 HOMO → LUMO+2	-0.35 -0.35 0.45	4.39	282	0.0441		MLCT/LLCT/ILCT
S_5	HOMO-3 → LUMO HOMO → LUMO+2	0.48 0.44	4.44	279	0.1103	259	ILCT

Table S6. Molecular orbital Compositions in the Excited States.

			Contribution (%)			
Complex	Orbital	Energy (eV):	Re:	NCMe:	CO:	nucleob:
1a	HOMO	-6.79	30.02	15.64	11.02	43.32
	LUMO	-3.83	1.57	0.05	3.01	95.38
2a	HOMO	-7.48	43.04	2.10	13.80	41.06

	LUMO	-4.28	14.05	0.56	4.76	80.62

Table S7. Calculated Emission Energies and Dominant Orbital Emissions from TD-DFT Calculations.

Complex	state	Excitation	Coef.	E_{calc} (eV)	λ_{calc} (nm)	λ_{exp} (nm)	Character
1a	T_1	HOMO → LUMO	0.94	1.71	725	501	^{3}MLCT/^{3}ILCT/
2a	T_1	HOMO → LUMO	0.86	1.63	762	576	^{3}MLCT/^{3}ILCT/

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