

# Hydrosilylation of Esters Catalyzed by Bisphosphine Manganese(I) Complex: Selective Transformation of Esters to Alcohols

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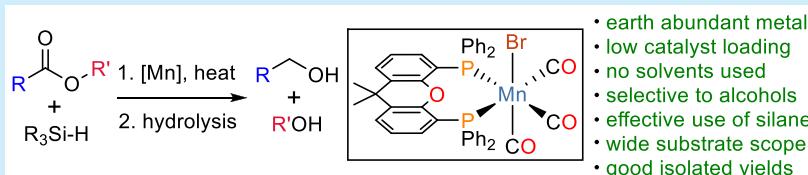
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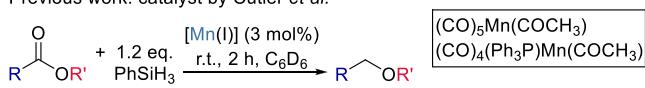
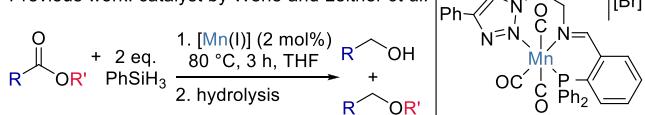
**ABSTRACT:** Selective and efficient hydrosilylations of esters to alcohols by a well-defined manganese(I) complex with a commercially available bisphosphine ligand are described. These reactions are easy alternatives for stoichiometric hydride reduction or hydrogenation, and employing cheap, abundant, and nonprecious metal is attractive. The hydrosilylations were performed at 100 °C under solvent-free conditions with low catalyst loading. A large variety of aromatic, aliphatic, and cyclic esters bearing different functional groups were selectively converted into the corresponding alcohols in good yields.

The reduction of carboxylic acids and esters to the corresponding alcohols is one of the most important transformations in synthetic chemistry. The conventional method of using a stoichiometric amount of reactive hydrides such as LiAlH<sub>4</sub>, LiBH<sub>4</sub>, and DIBALH is an efficient but tricky reaction.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the formation of a stoichiometric amount of byproducts is detrimental. Therefore, catalytic hydrogenation is often desirable. However, hydrogenation of esters by molecular hydrogen suffers from poor selectivity, and drastic reaction conditions (high temperature and high hydrogen pressure) are required.<sup>2</sup> Transfer hydrogenation (TH) and hydrosilylation are gaining a lot of attention as easy alternatives to classical hydrogenation. Although transition-metal (TM)-catalyzed THs of aldehydes and ketones are abundant,<sup>3</sup> the number of TM catalysts for TH of esters is small. To the best of our knowledge, only three examples of TH of esters have been reported.<sup>4</sup> In 2015, cationic half-sandwich Ru complexes ( $[\text{Cp}(\text{PiPr}_3)\text{Ru}(\text{CH}_3\text{CN})_2]\text{[PF}_6]$ ,  $[\text{Cp}^*(\text{phen})\text{Ru}(\text{CH}_3\text{CN})]\text{[PF}_6]$ ) were reported as efficient catalysts for the TH of esters with isopropanol as sacrificial hydrogen source.<sup>4a</sup> Thereafter, Ru-SNS<sup>4b</sup> and Fe-PNP<sup>4c</sup> pincer complexes were also effectively utilized for the reduction of ester. Besides TH, hydrosilylation of esters to the corresponding alcohols is an area of growing interest. In the 1990s, titanocene dichloride and titanium alkoxides were reported as effective catalysts for the hydrosilylation of esters to alcohol.<sup>5</sup> MoO<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> was also utilized for the same purpose.<sup>6</sup> Besides early TMs, noble metals such as rhodium,<sup>7</sup> palladium,<sup>8</sup> and ruthenium<sup>9,10</sup> were also reported.

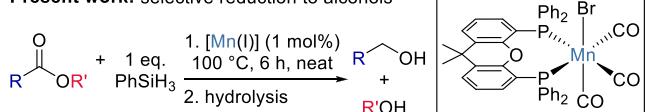
Although the utilization of earth-abundant, nonprecious TMs as catalysts is sustainable and thus desirable, the reports on the catalytic hydrosilylation of esters by base metals are

extremely limited. Few iron complexes were utilized for the hydrosilylation of esters to ethers, aldehydes, and alcohols.<sup>11</sup> Whereas the use of manganese catalysts for the hydrosilylation of carbonyls is well established,<sup>12</sup> only a few reports have described the hydrosilylation of carboxyl substrates. The reduction of carboxylic acids by Mn<sub>2</sub>(CO)<sub>10</sub> yielded aldehydes rather than alcohols.<sup>13</sup> However, Mn(II) complexes with pentadentate redox-active bis(imino)pyridine based ligand<sup>14</sup> and N-phosphinoamidinate (potentially redox-active) ligand<sup>15</sup> were utilized as active catalysts for the reduction of ester to alcohol. To the best of our knowledge, there are only two reports on the hydrosilylation of esters catalyzed by Mn(I) complexes. In the mid-1990s, hydrosilylation of esters to ethers was reported by using Mn(I)–acetyl complexes (L)(CO)<sub>4</sub>Mn(COCH<sub>3</sub>) (L = CO, PPh<sub>3</sub>) (Scheme 1).<sup>16</sup> Very recently, Mn(I) complexes with triazole-based ligands were utilized for the hydrosilylation of esters, yielding a mixture of alcohols and ethers (Scheme 1).<sup>17</sup> In the last 8–10 years, Mn(I) complexes have gained immense interest for their catalytic applications in a variety of chemical transformations.<sup>18,19</sup> Herein we address the use of a readily available Mn(I) complex with a commercially available bisphosphine ligand as an effective catalyst for the selective hydrosilylation of a large variety of esters to the corresponding alcohols under solvent-free

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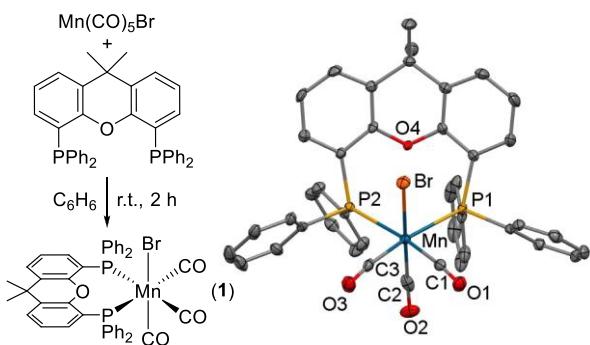
**Scheme 1. Hydrosilylation of Esters by Mn(I) Catalysts**Previous work: catalyst by Cutler *et al.*Previous work: catalyst by Werle and Leitner *et al.*

Present work: selective reduction to alcohols



conditions (**Scheme 1**). Thus pyrophoric hydride reagents for conventional reduction can be avoided by using silane as a much milder reagent. Because classical hydrogenation requires an expensive high-pressure reactor, the present hydrosilylation protocol is much more economical and is safer. In addition, this hydrosilylation is highly selective, whereas the hydrogenation of ester suffers poor selectivity.

We selected xantphos for the synthesis of the corresponding Mn(I) complex because it is readily available and is one of the most used ligands for the development of a large variety of metal catalysts.<sup>20</sup> The neutral Mn(I) complex *fac*-[Mn(xantphos)(CO)<sub>3</sub>Br] (**1**) was synthesized in high isolated yield (95%) by reacting the commercially available precursor Mn(CO)<sub>5</sub>Br with the commercially available bisphosphine ligand xantphos at r.t. (**Scheme 2**). The resulting yellow-orange

**Scheme 2. Synthesis of *fac*-[Mn(xantphos)(CO)<sub>3</sub>Br] (**1**) (Molecular Structure Showing 50% Ellipsoid)**

complex **1** is diamagnetic and was characterized by <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C, and <sup>31</sup>P NMR spectroscopy. The NMR spectra of **1** are consistent with the overall *C<sub>s</sub>* symmetry. The bisphosphine ligand framework was clearly seen in the <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra of **1**. A broad resonance at 26.14 ppm appears in the <sup>31</sup>P NMR spectrum, which is shifted downfield compared with the free xantphos ligand (-17.97 ppm). Complex **1** was also characterized by IR spectroscopy. Three strong CO stretching vibrations at 2023, 1950, and 1909 cm<sup>-1</sup> were observed in the IR spectrum, which is consistent with the previous reports.<sup>21</sup> The mass analysis of **1** shows that the peak at 716.1161 corresponds to [M<sup>+</sup> - Br]. Complex **1** was further characterized by single-crystal X-ray analysis (**Scheme 2**). The geometry around manganese in **1** is distorted octahedral, and the bond distances and bond angles are consistent with

similar complexes *fac*-[Mn(*i*Pr<sub>2</sub>P(CH<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub>P*i*Pr<sub>2</sub>)(CO)<sub>3</sub>Br] and *fac*-[Mn(*n*Pr<sub>2</sub>P(CH<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub>*n*Pr<sub>2</sub>)(CO)<sub>3</sub>Br].

We set out to examine the catalytic activity of **1** under various reaction conditions for the hydrosilylation of ester, using benzyl benzoate as the standard substrate (Table 1). A

**Table 1. Performance of **1** for the Hydrosilylation of Benzyl Benzoate under Different Reaction Conditions<sup>a</sup>**

en.	<b>1</b> (mol %)	silane (equiv)	temp (°C)	time (h)	1. Complex <b>1</b> (1-5 mol%) neat, 80-100 °C, 4-12 h		2. base workup	<b>P</b> <sub>1</sub>
					yield (%) <sup>b</sup>			
1	2	PhSiH <sub>3</sub> (2)	100	6	>99 (92) <sup>c</sup>			
2	1	PhSiH <sub>3</sub> (2)	100	6	>99 (91) <sup>c</sup>			
3	1	PhSiH <sub>3</sub> (2)	100	5	>99 (91) <sup>c</sup>			
4	1	PhSiH <sub>3</sub> (2)	100	4	95			
5	1	Ph <sub>2</sub> SiH <sub>2</sub> (2)	100	4	51 (>99) <sup>d</sup>			
6	1	Ph <sub>3</sub> SiH (2)	100	4	45 (>99) <sup>d</sup>			
7	1	Et <sub>3</sub> SiH (2)	100	4	46 (>99) <sup>d</sup>			
8	1	PhSiH <sub>3</sub> (2)	80	4	46 (>99) <sup>d</sup>			
9	1	PhSiH <sub>3</sub> (2)	90	4	53 (>99) <sup>d</sup>			
10	1	PhSiH <sub>3</sub> (1)	100	5	>99 (92) <sup>c</sup>			
11	1	PhSiH <sub>3</sub> (1)	100	4	93			

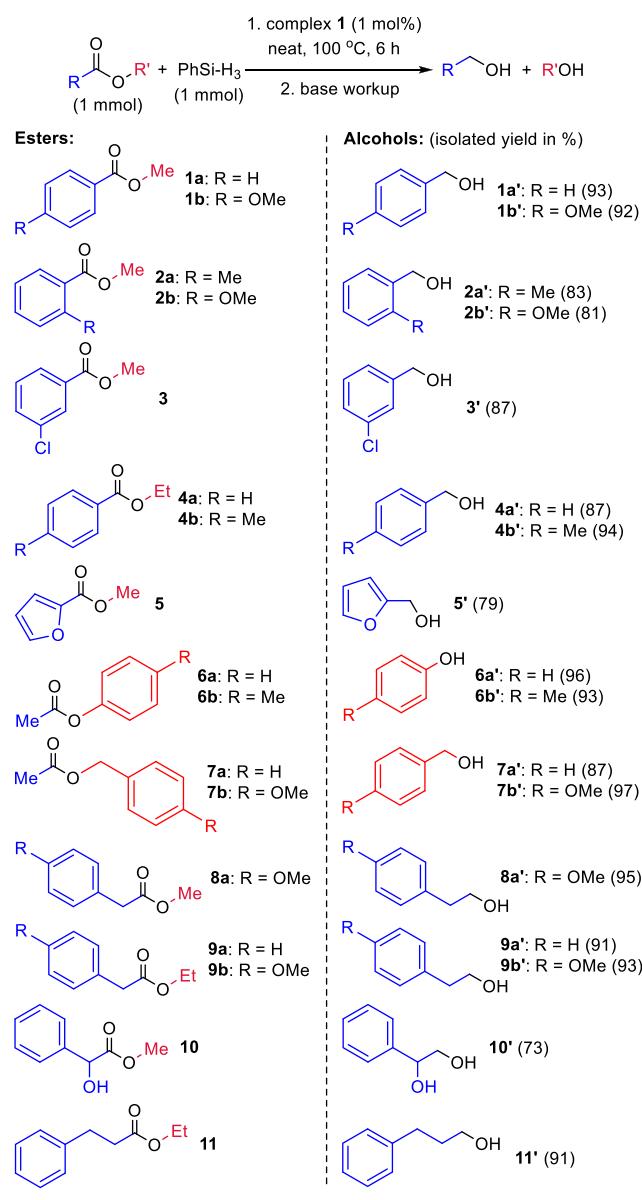
<sup>a</sup>Reactions conducted in a pressure tube (10 mL) with 0.5 mmol **S**<sub>1</sub>, 0.5/1.0 mmol of silane, and 1/2 mol % of **1**. <sup>b</sup>Yields of **P**<sub>1</sub> were determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy using ferrocene (0.1 mmol) as an external standard. <sup>c</sup>Isolated yields of **P**<sub>1</sub>. <sup>d</sup>NMR yields of **P**<sub>1</sub> for 12 h reaction. Key parameters for each entry are indicated in bold.

complete conversion of benzyl benzoate (**S**<sub>1</sub>) to benzyl alcohol (**P**<sub>1</sub>) was observed when **S**<sub>1</sub> (0.5 mmol) was heated with phenylsilane (1.0 mmol) to 100 °C for 6 h in the presence of 2 mol % catalyst **1** (entry 1). Reducing the catalyst loading to 1 mol % (entry 2) led to the complete conversion of **S**<sub>1</sub> to **P**<sub>1</sub> in just 6 h with >90% isolated yield. Decreasing the reaction time to 4 h gave **P**<sub>1</sub> in 95% NMR yield (entry 4). We also tested various secondary and tertiary silanes such as diphenylsilane (entry 5), triphenylsilane (entry 6), and triethylsilane (entry 7), and we obtained **P**<sub>1</sub> in approximately 40–50% yield in 4 h. Therefore, phenylsilane proved to be the best one under the reaction conditions. Thereafter, the hydrosilylation of **S**<sub>1</sub> was tested at lower temperatures. Upon lowering the temperature to 80 (entry 8) and 90 °C (entry 9), a poorer yield (approximately 40–50%) of **P**<sub>1</sub> was obtained in 4 h. Thereafter, we varied the amount of silane used for the hydrosilylation of **S**<sub>1</sub>. The use of 1 equiv of phenylsilane led to the complete conversion of **S**<sub>1</sub> to **P**<sub>1</sub> (92% isolated yield) in just 5 h at 100 °C with 1 mol % catalyst loading (entry 10).

Thereafter, we explored various additional esters for the hydrosilylation of esters to alcohols based on the optimized conditions (1 mol % catalyst loading, neat, 100 °C, 6 h) to expand the substrate scope (**Scheme 3**).

First, we tested various aromatic esters. Methyl and ethyl benzoate derivatives (**1a**, **1b**, **2a**, **2b**, **3**, **4a**, **4b**) were reduced to benzyl alcohol derivatives in high isolated yields (**1a'**: 93%, **1b'**: 92%, **2a'**: 83%, **2b'**: 81%, **3'**: 87%, **4a'**: 87%, **4b'**: 94%). Another aromatic ester, methyl 2-furoate (**5**), was also easily reduced to furfuryl alcohol (**5'**: 79%). This catalytic system is also very effective for the reduction of phenyl acetates (**6a**, **6b**) to phenols (**6a'**: 96%, **6b'**: 93%). Therefore, the catalytic system is compatible with both electron-donating and electron-

**Scheme 3. Hydrosilylation of Various Esters to Alcohols Catalyzed by 1**

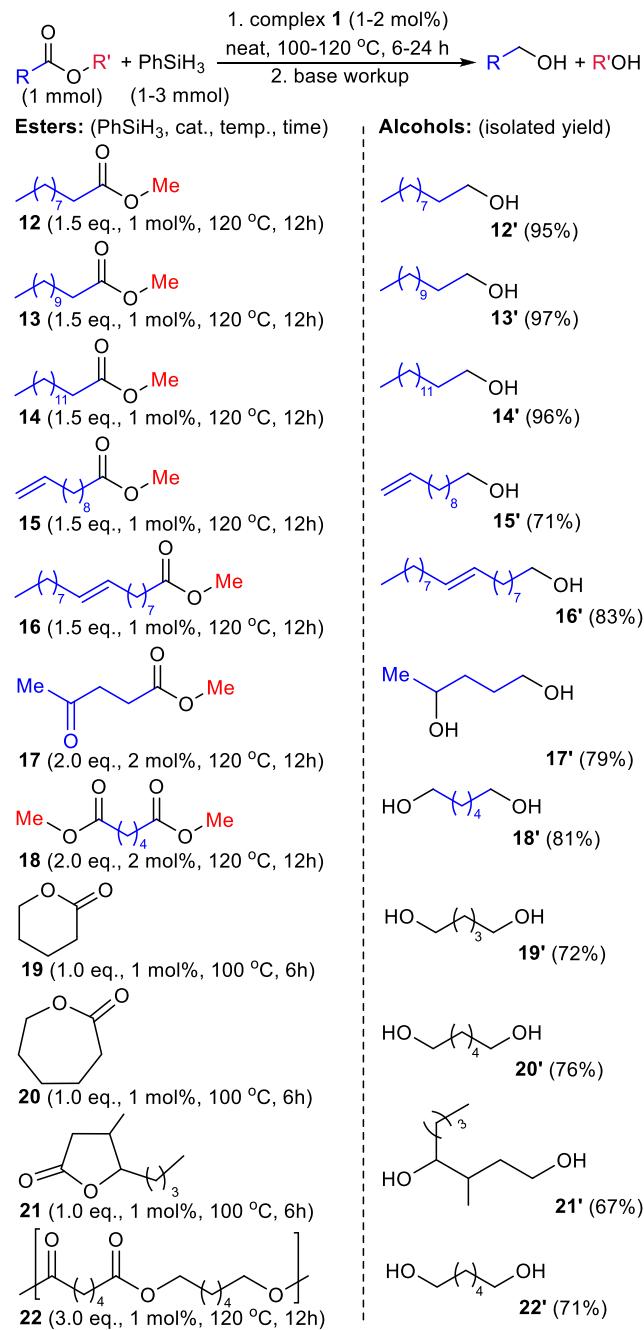


withdrawing functionalities. Thereafter, more challenging aliphatic esters were tested. We were pleased to see that benzyl acetate derivatives (**7a**, **7b**) were reduced to benzyl alcohols (**7a'**: 87%, **7b'**: 97%) in excellent yield. This catalytic system is equally effective for methyl and ethyl phenyl acetates (**8a**, **9a**, **9b**) to give corresponding 2-phenylethanols (**8a'**: 95%, **9a'**: 91%, **9b'**: 93%). Similarly, methyl 2-hydroxy-2-phenylacetate (**10**) gave 1-phenyl-1,2-ethanediol (**10'**: 73%) in good yield. A high yield was also obtained for the reduction of ethyl 3-phenylpropionate (**11**) to 3-phenyl-1-propanol (**11'**: 91%). To test the robustness of the present catalytic system, the hydrosilylation of methyl 4-methoxybenzoate (**1b**) and 4-methoxybenzyl acetate (**7b**) was scaled up 10 times, and we obtained almost quantitative yields of 4-methoxybenzyl alcohol (96 to 97%).

The reduction of esters for the production of alcohols is an extremely important process for the chemical industry. For example, long-chain fatty alcohols are widely utilized in consumer products such as lubricants, surfactants, plasticizers,

flavorings, and solvents for paints, and the global demand is drastically increasing. Presently, a major portion of fatty alcohols is produced through the hydrogenation of fatty esters derived from coconut and palm oil using a heterogeneous catalyst under harsh reaction conditions (250–300 °C and 2000–3000 psig of H<sub>2</sub> pressure).<sup>22</sup> CE-1270, an industrial sample obtained from coconut oil, contains mostly methyl laurate, **13** (~71–75%), and methyl myristate, **14** (~24–29%), with a small portion of methyl caprate, **12** (~1%). We set out to reduce those fatty esters by using **1** (Scheme 4). Hydrosilylation of **12**, **13**, and **14** gave the corresponding fatty alcohols in almost quantitative yields (**12'**: 95%, **13'**: 97%, **14'**: 96%). Under identical reaction conditions, methyl 10-

**Scheme 4. Catalytic Hydrosilylation of Esters with Practical Implications**



undecenoate (**15**) underwent the reduction of only the ester moiety, whereas the terminal alkene moiety remained intact (**15'**: 71%). A gram-scale hydrosilylation of **13** (10.0 mmol, 2.14 g) was also successfully accomplished (in almost quantitative yield). Thereafter, we focused our attention on methyl oleate (**16**), methyl levulinate (**17**), and dimethyl adipate (**18**) due to their relevance in biomass conversion and renewable chemistry.<sup>23</sup> Again, only the ester moiety of **16** was selectively reduced (**16'**: 83%), whereas the alkene part was unaltered. Thereafter, methyl levulinate (**17**) was subjected to hydrosilylation. It was not surprising that both keto and ester functionalities were reduced to the corresponding diol **17'** (79%). Similarly, dimethyl adipate (**18**) was cleanly reduced to the 1,6-hexanediol (**18'**: 81%). A higher temperature, higher silane amount, and longer reaction time were required for the fatty esters due to their unreactive nature. We also applied this hydrosilylation method for the reduction of lactones, which can be derived from natural sources. The six- and seven-membered lactones,  $\delta$ -valerolactone (**19**) and  $\epsilon$ -caprolactone (**20**), were reduced to the corresponding diols in good yields (**19'**: 72%, **20'**: 76%). Using the same protocol, whiskey lactone (**21**) was also reduced to the desired diol **21'** (77%). Because the present catalyst is very effective for the reduction of various esters, we targeted polyester as a potential substrate relevant to polymer recycling. The number of homogeneous catalysts for this purpose is very scarce.<sup>4c,24</sup> We choose the industrial sample dynacoll-7360, or poly(1,6-hexamethylene adipate) (**22**), which is produced by the condensation polymerization of 1,6-hexanediol and adipic acid. We were pleased to see that 1,6-hexanediol was obtained as a recycled product in good yield (71%) if **22** was submitted to the present catalytic protocol.

In conclusion, we have developed a readily accessible base-metal catalyst that is very efficient for the selective hydrosilylation of esters to alcohols. The substrate scope includes various aromatic, aliphatic, and cyclic esters. Industrially valuable fatty alcohols were also obtained under much milder reaction conditions from fatty esters. Furthermore, the catalytic system is also applicable to important substrates relevant to renewable chemistry and recycling of plastic waste. Previously reported Mn(I)-acetyl complexes<sup>16</sup> catalyzed the hydrosilylation of esters to ether as a partially reduced product, and Mn(I)-triazole complexes<sup>17</sup> converted esters to a mixture of alcohol and ethers; the complete reduction of esters could not be achieved. Compared with those previous reports, the present catalyst is much more active and selective for the reduction of esters to alcohols. Previously known Mn(II)-bis(imino)pyridine complexes<sup>14</sup> showed high activity only for the reduction of formates, however, they displayed sluggish reactivity for other simple esters such as phenyl acetate (1 mol % cat., r.t., 10 days) and *tert*-butyl acetate (1 mol % cat., 80 °C, 10 day). In the other report of the Mn(II)-phosphinoamidinate catalyst,<sup>15</sup> the reduction of methyl benzoate derivatives was only considered. For the hydrosilylation of esters to alcohols, all known Mn catalysts (including Mn(II) species) were highly air-sensitive, involved a complex ligand synthesis, and showed a very limited (5 to 8) substrate scope with simple esters such as formates, acetates, and methyl benzoates. In contrast, we synthesized a readily available Mn(I) catalyst (air-sensitive in solution, but stable for days in solid) by using a cheap and commercially available ligand with a wide substrate scope (28), including relatively unreactive substrates such as fatty esters and polyesters. Another advantage of this catalytic

protocol is the solvent-free hydrosilylation. Further investigations will involve the utilization of this catalyst for the hydrosilylation of various other substrates such as alkynes and in different hydrofunctionalization reactions such as hydrogenation and hydroboration.

## ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### SI Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.orglett.0c01144>.

Experimental procedures, spectral data, and copies of  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectra of the products of hydrosilylations, mechanistic analysis, and crystal data of manganese complex (**1**) ([PDF](#))

### Accession Codes

CCDC 1982008 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge via [www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data\\_request/cif](http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif), or by emailing [data\\_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk](mailto:data_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk), or by contacting The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, UK; fax: +44 1223 336033.

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### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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