

An Analytic Language for 2D CFT

Eric Perlmutter, IPhT Saclay & IHES

An Analytic Language for 2D CFT

Eric Perlmutter, IPhT Saclay & IHES

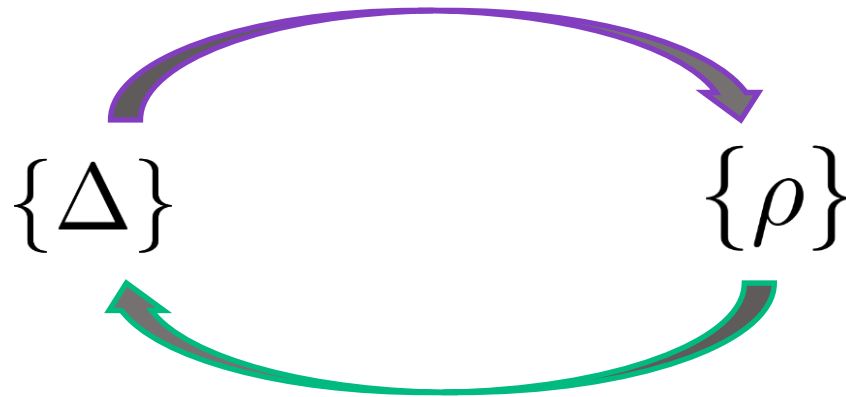
Strings 2025

L

One motivation: to probe *substructure* of black hole microstate spectra in AdS_3 quantum gravity.

In 2D CFT, this means finding and solving constraints that act solely on high-energy states.

We propose that the analytic language of \mathbb{L} -functions is the right one to address this.



Outline

- 1) L-functions for 2D CFT
- 2) Random Matrix Universality as Subconvexity
- 3) New Modular Bootstrap: Proof of $\frac{c}{12}$
- 4) Hints of a Lattice

L-functions

An L -function is a Dirichlet series that meromorphically continues to the whole complex plane under a certain type of functional equation, and perhaps possessing other special properties.

$$L(s) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{a_n}{n^s}, \quad a_n \in \mathbb{C}$$

The *completed* L -function $\Lambda_L(s) := q^{s/2} \gamma(s) L(s)$, $\gamma(s) := \pi^{-ds/2} \prod_{i=1}^d \Gamma\left(\frac{s + \kappa_i}{2}\right)$ *Gamma factor*

has poles at most at $s=0,1$, and obeys $\Lambda_L(s) = \epsilon \overline{\Lambda}_L(1-s)$ (“analytic normalization”).

e.g. Riemann zeta: self-dual L -function of degree-one with unit conductor, root number $+1$, and $\kappa_1 = 0$.

$$\xi(s) = \pi^{-s/2} \Gamma\left(\frac{s}{2}\right) \zeta(s) = \xi(1-s)$$

L-functions

An L -function is a Dirichlet series that meromorphically continues to the whole complex plane under a certain type of functional equation, and perhaps possessing other special properties.

The completed L -function

$$L(s) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{a_n}{n^s}, \quad a_n \in \mathbb{C}$$

Conductor $q \in \mathbb{Z}_+$

Degree- d

Spectral parameters $\kappa_i \in \mathbb{C}$

$$\Lambda_L(s) := q^{s/2} \gamma(s) L(s), \quad \gamma(s) := \pi^{-ds/2} \prod_{i=1}^d \Gamma\left(\frac{s + \kappa_i}{2}\right)$$

Gamma factor

has poles at most at $s=0,1$, and obeys $\Lambda_L(s) = \epsilon \overline{\Lambda_L}(1-s)$ (“analytic normalization”).

Root number $|\epsilon| = 1$

Dual L -function (series coefficients $\overline{a_n}$)

e.g. Riemann zeta: self-dual L -function of degree-one with unit conductor, root number $+1$, and $\kappa_1 = 0$.

$$\xi(s) = \pi^{-s/2} \Gamma\left(\frac{s}{2}\right) \zeta(s) = \xi(1-s)$$

L-functions

- L-functions are often attached to **automorphic forms**, both holomorphic and non-holomorphic.

$$f(\tau) = \sum_n a_n e^{2\pi i \tau n} \mapsto L_f(s) = \sum_n \frac{a_n}{n^s}$$

(e.g. Maass cusp forms for $\mathbf{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$ + congruence subgroups)

$$f(\tau) = f(\gamma\tau) \mapsto \Lambda_f(s) = \epsilon \bar{\Lambda}_f(1-s)$$

Langlands: *all* L-functions (suitably defined) are attached to automorphic forms.

- Standard L-functions also admit an **Euler product**,

$$L(s) = \prod_{i=1}^d \prod_p (1 - \alpha_i(p) p^{-s})^{-1}$$

which guarantees **zero-free regions** and connects to the primes (more generally, a set of **primitives**)

- Most well-studied, narrowest class of L-functions are the “Selberg class”.

On the other hand, natural generalizations lack an Euler product and/or violate Riemann (e.g. Hurwitz zeta)

Generally speaking, mathematicians’ definition of L-functions is broadening over time.

L-functions

Main open problems in the land of L-functions

1) Where are the zeros?

- **Grand Riemann Hypothesis:** all non-trivial zeros lie on the critical line.
- Zero-free regions/density estimates (**Density Hypothesis**)
- Random matrix statistics
- Highest lowest zero

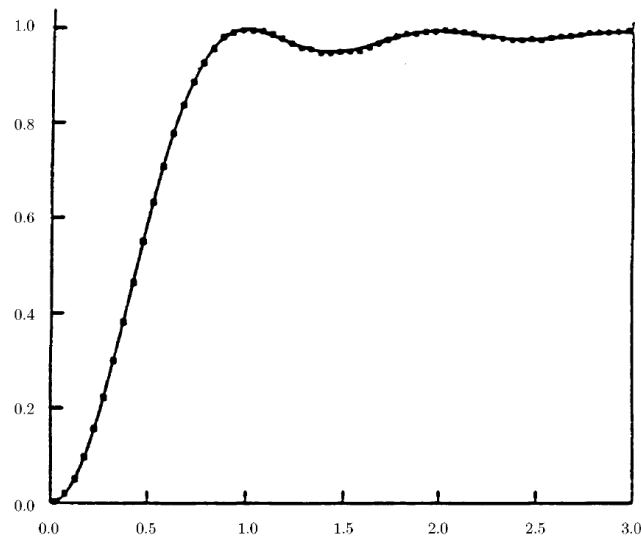
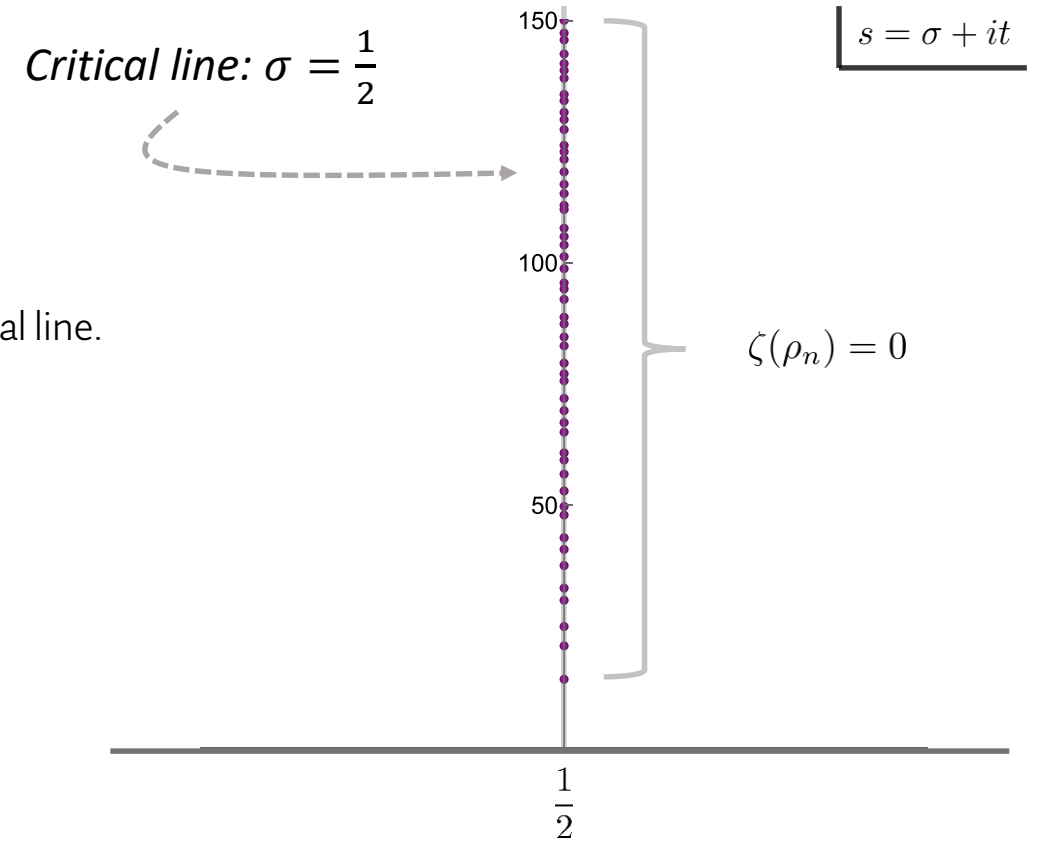


FIGURE 2. Pair correlation for zeros of zeta based on 8×10^6 zeros near the 10^{20} -th zero, versus the GUE conjectured density $1 - \left(\frac{\sin \pi x}{\pi x}\right)^2$.

[Montgomery;
Odlyzko;
Katz, Sarnak]



[de la Vallée Poussin; Littlewood; Siegel; Iwaniec; Iwaniec, Sarnak; Rudnick, Sarnak; Miller; Tang, Miller; Conrey; Kowalski; Ivic; Hiary; ...]

L-functions

Main open problems in the land of L-functions

1) Where are the zeros?

- **Grand Riemann Hypothesis:** all non-trivial zeros lie on the critical line.
- Zero-free regions/density estimates (**Density Hypothesis**)
- Random matrix statistics
- Highest lowest zero

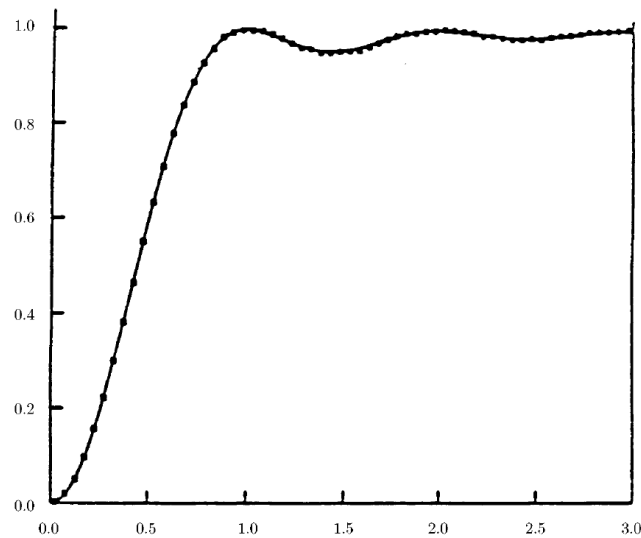
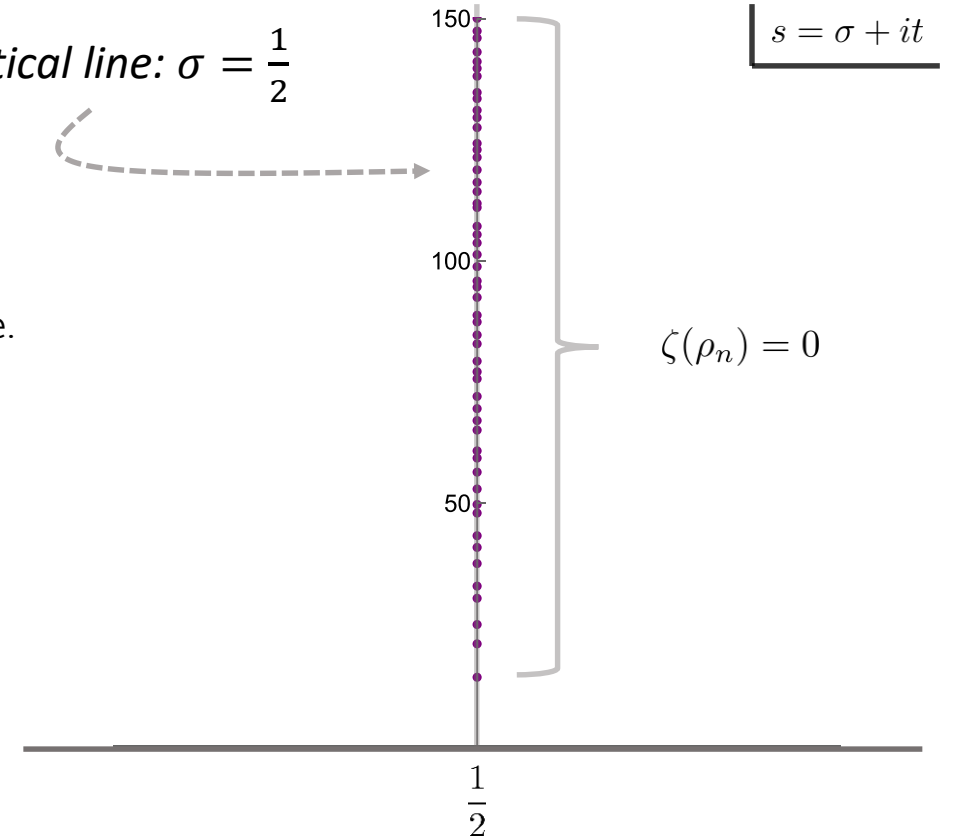


FIGURE 2. Pair correlation for zeros of zeta based on 8×10^6 zeros near the 10^{20} -th zero, versus the GUE conjectured density $1 - \left(\frac{\sin \pi x}{\pi x}\right)^2$.

[Montgomery;
Odlyzko;
Katz, Sarnak]

Critical line: $\sigma = \frac{1}{2}$



REMARKS. Needless to say we believe that every L -function (subject to our definition in Section 5.1) satisfies the Grand Riemann Hypothesis. Yet, proving this even for one L -function would be an achievement on a historical scale for human beings. Note that an L -function may have zeros on the line $\text{Re}(s) = 0$ (certainly some trivial zeros, probably not the genuine ones) but as we already

[Iwaniec-Kowalski, Ch. 5]

[de la Vallée Poussin; Littlewood; Siegel; Iwaniec; Iwaniec, Sarnak; Rudnick, Sarnak; Miller; Tang, Miller; Conrey; Kowalski; Ivic; Hiary; ...]

L-functions

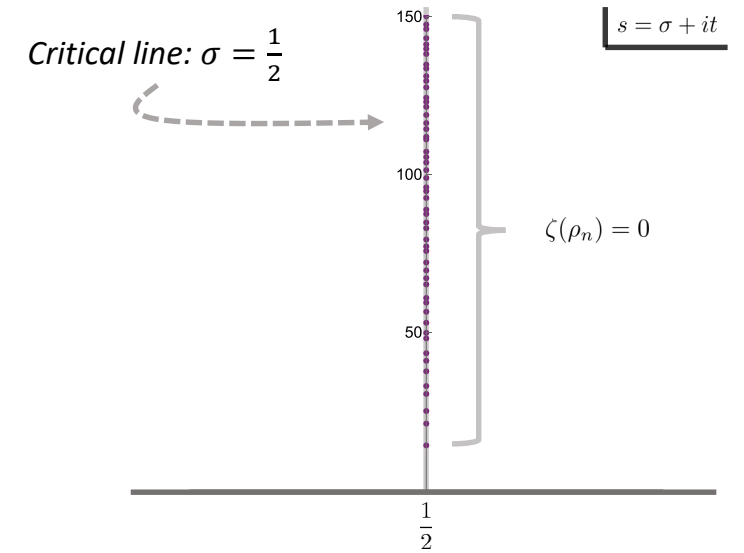
Main open problems in the land of L-functions

1) *Where are the zeros?*

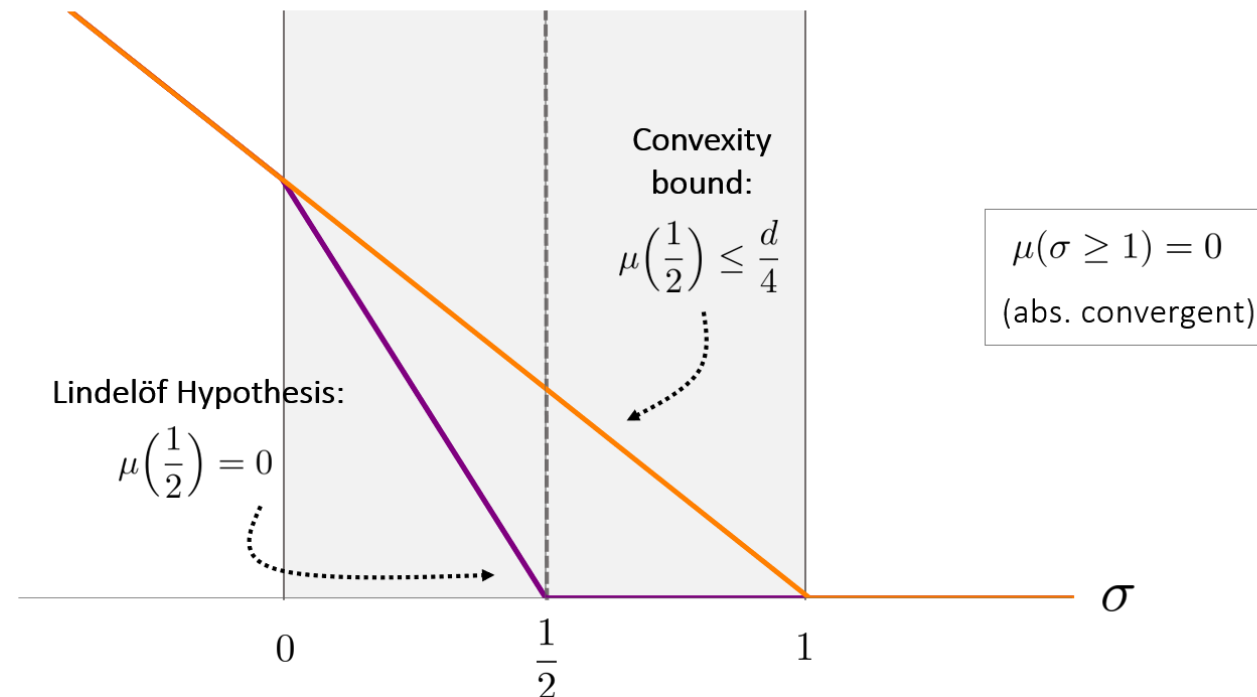
- **Grand Riemann Hypothesis:** all non-trivial zeros lie on the critical line.
- Zero-free regions/density estimates (**Density Hypothesis**)
- Random matrix statistics
- Highest lowest zero

2) *Subconvexity: how do L-functions grow high on the critical line?*

- **Lindelöf Hypothesis:** slower than any power of t .



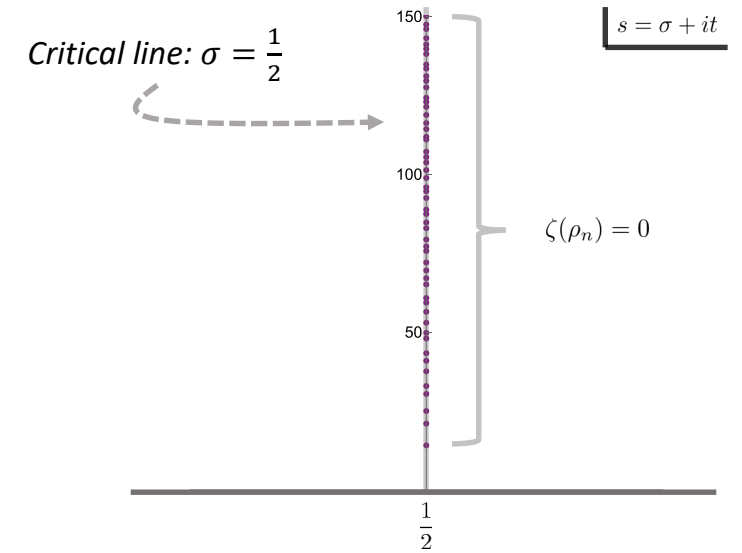
$$\mu(\sigma) := \inf(x \mid L(\sigma + it) = O(t^{x+\varepsilon}))$$



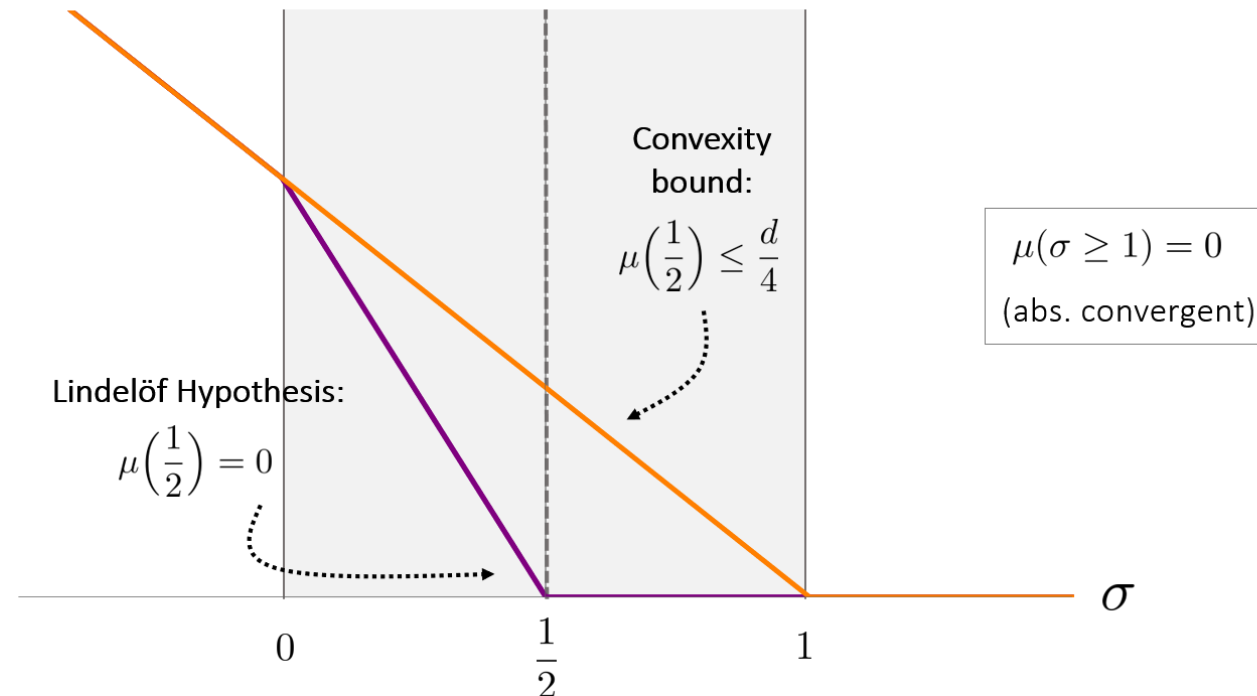
L-functions

Main open problems in the land of L-functions

- 1) *Where are the zeros?*
 - **Grand Riemann Hypothesis:** all non-trivial zeros lie on the critical line.
 - Zero-free regions/density estimates (**Density Hypothesis**)
 - Random matrix statistics
 - Highest lowest zero
- 2) *Subconvexity: how do L-functions grow high on the critical line?*
 - **Lindelöf Hypothesis:** slower than any power of t .



$$\mu(\sigma) := \inf(x \mid L(\sigma + it) = O(t^{x+\varepsilon}))$$



Note: RH \Rightarrow Lindelöf \Rightarrow Density

Note: Best Riemann zeta bound is

$$\mu_{\zeta}\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) \leq \frac{13}{84} \approx .155$$

[Bourgain '14]

L-functions

Main open problems in the land of L-functions

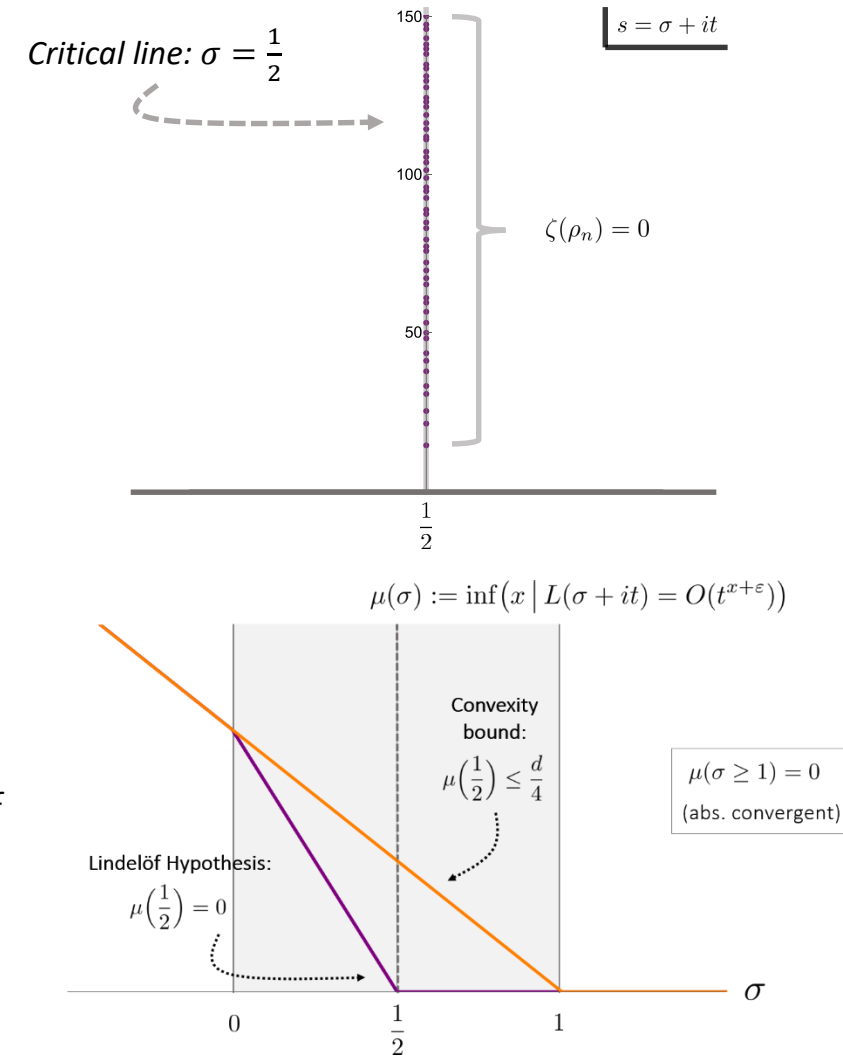
1) *Where are the zeros?*

- **Grand Riemann Hypothesis:** all non-trivial zeros lie on the critical line.
- Zero-free regions/density estimates (**Density Hypothesis**)
- Random matrix statistics
- Highest lowest zero

2) *Subconvexity: how do L-functions grow high on the critical line?*

- **Lindelöf Hypothesis:** slower than any power of t .
- Different “aspects” (height t , conductor q , spectral parameters, families, ...)
- Moments of L-functions (“Lindelöf on average”), random matrix heuristics thereof
- Progress from bounding exponential sums (cf. approximate functional eqs.)

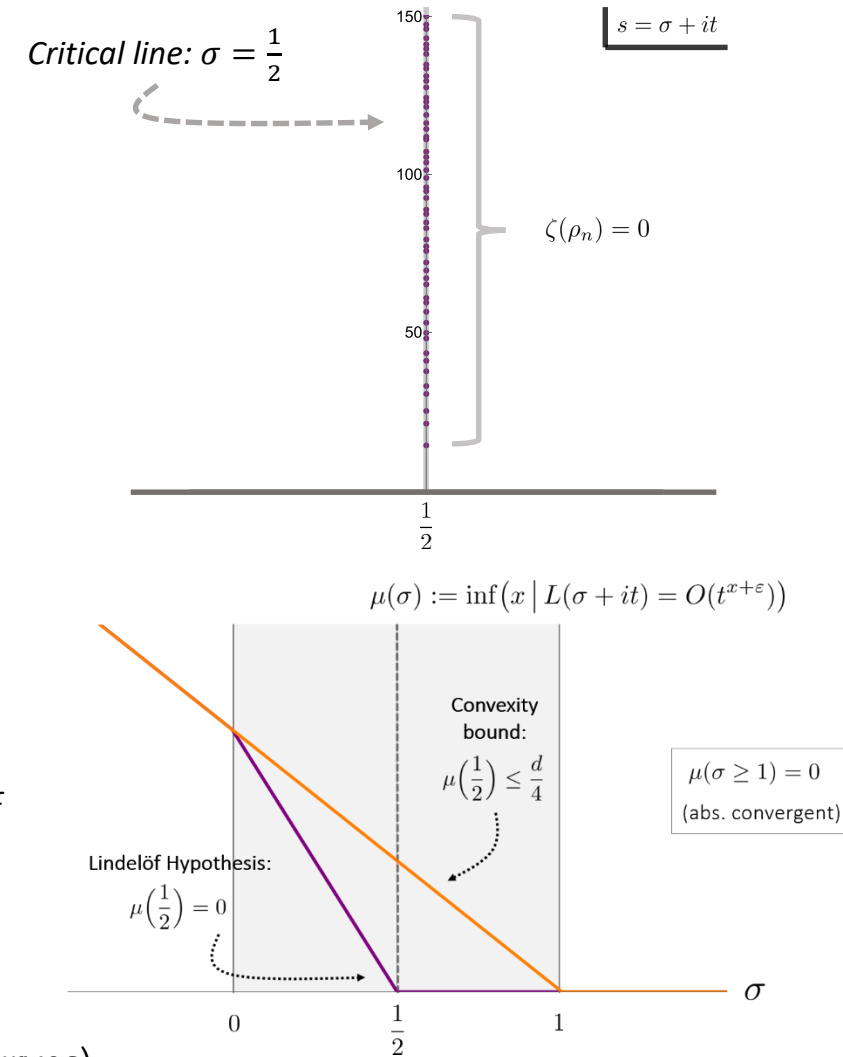
[Weyl; Ingham; Hardy, Littlewood; Bourgain; Nelson; Michel, Venkatesh; Duke, Friedlander, Iwaniec; Soundararajan; Heath-Brown; Keating, Snaith; Conrey, Farmer, Keating, Rubenstein, Snaith; Blomer; Radziwill; Jutila, Motohashi; Harper; ...]



L-functions

Main open problems in the land of L-functions

- 1) *Where are the zeros?*
 - **Grand Riemann Hypothesis:** all non-trivial zeros lie on the critical line.
 - Zero-free regions/density estimates (**Density Hypothesis**)
 - Random matrix statistics
 - Highest lowest zero
- 2) *Subconvexity: how do L-functions grow high on the critical line?*
 - **Lindelöf Hypothesis:** slower than any power of t .
 - Different “aspects” (height t , conductor q , spectral parameters, families, ...)
 - Moments of L-functions (“Lindelöf on average”), random matrix heuristics thereof
 - Progress from bounding exponential sums (cf. approximate functional eqs.)
- 3) *Central values*
 - Distribution of zeros near central point ($s = 1/2$) for families of L-functions
 - Deep connections to arithmetic (e.g. Birch-Swinnerton-Dyer conjecture, elliptic curves)
- 4) *Distributions of Fourier coefficients a_n (e.g. Sato-Tate/Ramanujan conjectures)*
- 5) *Proving conjectured analytic properties of automorphic L-functions*
- 6) *Applications to equidistribution on modular domains (e.g. Quantum Unique Ergodicity)*



[Artin; Langlands; Sarnak; Katz, Sarnak; Iwaniec, Sarnak; Miller; Blomer, Thorner; Humphries, Khan; Ichino; Watson; Lindenstrauss; Soundararajan; ...]

Introducing L-functions for 2D CFT

Now we construct L-functions – rather, a generalization thereof – for CFTs (Virasoro, compact, $c > 1$).

Taking $\tau = x + iy$, the Virasoro primary partition function is

$$Z_p(\tau) := \sqrt{y} |\eta(\tau)|^2 Z(\tau) = \sqrt{y} \sum_{j \in \mathbb{Z}} e^{2\pi i j x} \sum_{\Delta}' d_{\Delta}^{(j)} e^{-2\pi \Delta y}$$

Where are the L-functions?

Whereas Hecke-Maass cusp forms have a single constant a_n characterizing the n^{th} Fourier mode, things must work differently here: each mode is labeled by an infinite set of data $\{\Delta, d_{\Delta}^{(j)}\} \dots$

,

Introducing L-functions for 2D CFT

Now we construct L-functions – rather, a generalization thereof – for CFTs (Virasoro, compact, $c > 1$).

Taking $\tau = x + iy$, the Virasoro primary partition function is

$$Z_p(\tau) := \sqrt{y} |\eta(\tau)|^2 Z(\tau) = \sqrt{y} \sum_{j \in \mathbb{Z}} e^{2\pi i j x} \sum_{\Delta}' d_{\Delta}^{(j)} e^{-2\pi \Delta y}$$

Where are the L-functions?

Whereas Hecke-Maass cusp forms have a single constant a_n characterizing the n^{th} Fourier mode, things must work differently here: each mode is labeled by an infinite set of data $\{\Delta, d_{\Delta}^{(j)}\} \dots$

To start, we could construct a *spectral zeta function* for the primaries: $\zeta_Z(s) = \sum_{\Delta}' \frac{d_{\Delta}}{\Delta^s}$

But this is badly divergent for all s : $\Delta_{n+1} - \Delta_n \sim e^{-S_{\text{Cardy}}(\Delta_n)}, \quad n \rightarrow \infty$

Introducing L-functions for 2D CFT

Instead, take a difference of two primary partition functions with the *same light spectra*, $\Delta \leq \frac{c-1}{12}$

$$\mathcal{Z}(\tau) := Z_p(\tau) - \tilde{Z}_p(\tau) \stackrel{!}{=} Z_H(\tau) - \tilde{Z}_H(\tau)$$

Then form its *scalar zeta function*

$$\zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \sum_{\{\lambda\}} \frac{a_{\lambda}}{\lambda^{s-\frac{1}{2}}}$$

$$\begin{aligned} a_{\lambda} &\mapsto d_{\lambda} - \tilde{d}_{\lambda} \\ \lambda &\mapsto \Delta^{(0)} - \frac{c-1}{12} \end{aligned}$$

with frequencies $\{\lambda \mid 0 < \lambda_1 < \lambda_2 < \dots, \lambda_{n \rightarrow \infty} \rightarrow \infty\}$ supported on the CFT spectra.

Introducing L-functions for 2D CFT

Instead, take a difference of two primary partition functions with the *same light spectra*, $\Delta \leq \frac{c-1}{12}$

$$\mathcal{Z}(\tau) := Z_p(\tau) - \tilde{Z}_p(\tau) \stackrel{!}{=} Z_H(\tau) - \tilde{Z}_H(\tau)$$

Then form its *scalar zeta function*

$$\zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \sum_{\{\lambda\}} \frac{a_{\lambda}}{\lambda^{s-\frac{1}{2}}}$$

$$\begin{aligned} a_{\lambda} &\mapsto d_{\lambda} - \tilde{d}_{\lambda} \\ \lambda &\mapsto \Delta^{(0)} - \frac{c-1}{12} \end{aligned}$$

with frequencies $\{\lambda \mid 0 < \lambda_1 < \lambda_2 < \dots, \lambda_{n \rightarrow \infty} \rightarrow \infty\}$ supported on the CFT spectra.

Claim I: $\zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ converges for $\sigma > 1$, and admits a meromorphic continuation to the whole complex plane.

Claim II: Multiplying by a zeta factor – $L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) := \zeta(2s)\zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ – this transforms as an L-function:

$$\begin{aligned} \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) &:= 2^s \gamma(s) L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) \\ \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) &= \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(1-s) \end{aligned} \quad \gamma(s) = \pi^{-2s} \prod_{i=1}^4 \Gamma\left(\frac{s + \kappa_i}{2}\right), \quad \kappa_i = 0, 1, \pm \frac{1}{2}$$

Introducing L-functions for 2D CFT

[Hardy, Riesz; Titchmarsh]

[Iwaniec, Terras]

We can prove this by appeal to $SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$ spectral resolution and the theory of general Dirichlet series.

I. $\mathcal{Z}(\tau) \in L^2(\mathcal{F})$. In particular, *unitarity* can be shown to imply that $Z_p(\tau) < \infty \quad \forall \quad \tau \in \mathcal{F} \setminus \{i\infty\}$ ($\mathcal{F} = SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$
fundamental domain)

It thus resolves into a complete $SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$ -invariant eigenbasis (1 + Eisensteins + Maass cusp forms), w/ scalar mode

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{Z}_0(y) &= \langle \mathcal{Z} \rangle + \frac{1}{2\pi i} \int_{\text{Re}(s)=\frac{1}{2}} ds (\mathcal{Z}, E_{1-s}) y^{1-s} \\ &\stackrel{!}{=} \sqrt{y} \sum_{\lambda} a_{\lambda} e^{-2\pi \lambda y} \end{aligned}$$

Introducing L-functions for 2D CFT

[Hardy, Riesz; Titchmarsh]

[Iwaniec, Terras]

We can prove this by appeal to $SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$ spectral resolution and the theory of general Dirichlet series.

I. $\mathcal{Z}(\tau) \in L^2(\mathcal{F})$. In particular, *unitarity* can be shown to imply that $Z_p(\tau) < \infty \quad \forall \quad \tau \in \mathcal{F} \setminus \{i\infty\}$ ($\mathcal{F} = SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$
fundamental domain)

It thus resolves into a complete $SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$ -invariant eigenbasis (1 + Eisensteins + Maass cusp forms), w/ scalar mode

$$(\mathcal{Z}, E_{1-s}) = (2\pi)^{\frac{1}{2}-s} \Gamma\left(s - \frac{1}{2}\right) \zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$$

$$\mathcal{Z}_0(y) = \langle \mathcal{Z} \rangle + \frac{1}{2\pi i} \int_{\text{Re}(s)=\frac{1}{2}} ds (\mathcal{Z}, E_{1-s}) y^{1-s}$$

II. The inner product must factorize like *this* (cf. “Converse Mapping Theorem”) to yield *this*.

$$\stackrel{!}{=} \sqrt{y} \sum_{\lambda} a_{\lambda} e^{-2\pi \lambda y}$$

Introducing L-functions for 2D CFT

[Hardy, Riesz; Titchmarsh]

[Iwaniec, Terras]

We can prove this by appeal to $SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$ spectral resolution and the theory of general Dirichlet series.

I. $\mathcal{Z}(\tau) \in L^2(\mathcal{F})$. In particular, *unitarity* can be shown to imply that $Z_p(\tau) < \infty \quad \forall \quad \tau \in \mathcal{F} \setminus \{i\infty\}$ ($\mathcal{F} = SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$
fundamental domain)

It thus resolves into a complete $SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$ -invariant eigenbasis (1 + Eisensteins + Maass cusp forms), w/ scalar mode

$$(\mathcal{Z}, E_{1-s}) = (2\pi)^{\frac{1}{2}-s} \Gamma\left(s - \frac{1}{2}\right) \zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) \qquad \mathcal{Z}_0(y) = \langle \mathcal{Z} \rangle + \frac{1}{2\pi i} \int_{\text{Re}(s)=\frac{1}{2}} ds (\mathcal{Z}, E_{1-s}) y^{1-s}$$

II. The inner product must factorize like *this* (cf. “Converse Mapping Theorem”) to yield *this*.

$$\stackrel{!}{=} \sqrt{y} \sum_{\lambda} a_{\lambda} e^{-2\pi \lambda y}$$

III. By modularity/analyticity of the Eisenstein series, the inner product is regular for $\text{Re}(s) > 1$ (hence the zeta function converges there) and obeys a functional equation $\Rightarrow \quad \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(1-s)$

J-subtraction

Given a partition function, we can construct the corresponding L-function in a canonical way.

We call this ***J-subtraction***: in the q -expansion of $Z(\tau)$, replace every light state with the unique linear combination of modular J-functions which introduces no further light states nor singularities on \mathcal{F} .

$$\mathcal{Z}(\tau) := Z_p(\tau) - Z_p^{(J)}(\tau) = \sqrt{y} O(|q|^\varepsilon)$$

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} J(\tau) = J(\gamma\tau), \gamma \in SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \\ \approx q^{-1} + 196884q + \dots \end{array} \right]$$

J-subtraction

Given a partition function, we can construct the corresponding L-function in a canonical way.

We call this **J-subtraction**: in the q -expansion of $Z(\tau)$, replace every light state with the unique linear combination of modular J-functions which introduces no further light states nor singularities on \mathcal{F} .


$$\mathcal{Z}(\tau) := Z_p(\tau) - Z_p^{(J)}(\tau) = \sqrt{y} O(|q|^\varepsilon)$$

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} J(\tau) = J(\gamma\tau), \gamma \in SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \\ \approx q^{-1} + 196884q + \dots \end{array} \right]$$

That is, define a non-holomorphic (Hecke-like) operator

$$T_{\alpha, \beta}(\tau) = J(\tau)^\alpha J(\bar{\tau})^\beta \sum_{m, n=0}^{m+n \leq \alpha + \beta - \frac{1}{12}} \gamma_{mn} J(\tau)^{-m} J(\bar{\tau})^{-n} \quad (\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{R}_+)$$

Defines constants
 γ_{mn} uniquely.



$$\stackrel{!}{=} q^{-\alpha} \bar{q}^{-\beta} + O(|q|^{-\frac{1}{12} + \varepsilon})$$

Then the fiducial partition function $Z^{(J)}(\tau) = \sum_{\Delta \leq \frac{c-1}{12}} d_{h, \bar{h}} T_{\frac{c}{24} - h, \frac{c}{24} - \bar{h}}(\tau)$ enables the desired subtraction.

J-subtraction

Given a partition function, we can construct the corresponding L-function in a canonical way.

We call this **J-subtraction**: in the q -expansion of $Z(\tau)$, replace every light state with the unique linear combination of modular J-functions which introduces no further light states nor singularities on \mathcal{F} .

$$\mathcal{Z}(\tau) := Z_p(\tau) - Z_p^{(J)}(\tau) = \sqrt{y} O(|q|^\varepsilon)$$

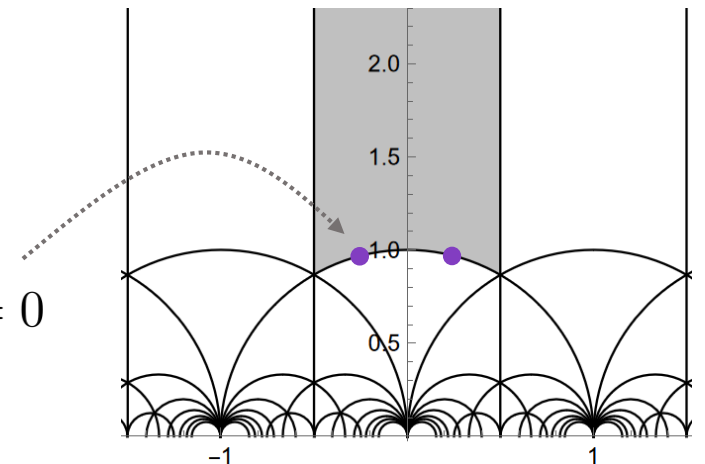
$$\left[\begin{aligned} J(\tau) &= J(\gamma\tau), \quad \gamma \in SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \\ &\approx q^{-1} + 196884q + \dots \end{aligned} \right]$$

That is, define a non-holomorphic (Hecke-like) operator

$$T_{\alpha, \beta}(\tau) = J(\tau)^\alpha J(\bar{\tau})^\beta \sum_{m, n=0}^{m+n \leq \alpha + \beta - \frac{1}{12}} \gamma_{mn} J(\tau)^{-m} J(\bar{\tau})^{-n} \quad (\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{R}_+)$$

$\mathcal{Z}(\tau)$ is

- ✓ Modular-invariant (cf. spin quantization)
- ✓ Discrete
- ✓ $\in L^2(\mathcal{F})$: J-subtraction does *not* add new poles: $J(\tau_*) = J(\bar{\tau}_*) = 0$



J-subtraction

Given a partition function, we can construct the corresponding L-function in a canonical way.

We call this **J-subtraction**: in the q -expansion of $Z(\tau)$, replace every light state with the unique linear combination of modular J-functions which introduces no further light states nor singularities on \mathcal{F} .

That is, c

$Z(\tau)$ is

✓

✓

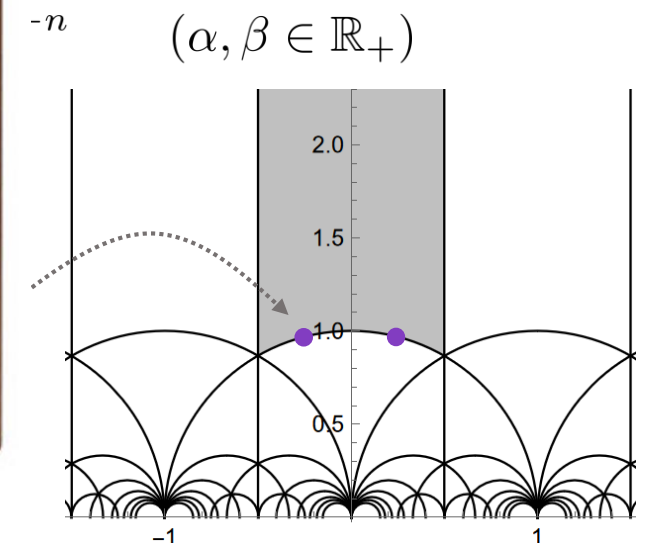
✓

$$Z(\tau) \supset q \bar{q}^{-2} \mapsto \frac{J(\bar{q})^2}{J(q)} < \infty \quad \forall \tau \in \mathcal{F} \setminus \{i\infty\}$$

\nearrow Spin-3 operator, $\Delta - \frac{c}{12} = -1$

\nwarrow $= J(q) \times (\text{phase})$

$$\left[\begin{aligned} J(\tau) &= J(\gamma\tau), \quad \gamma \in SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \\ &\approx q^{-1} + 196884q + \dots \end{aligned} \right]$$



L-functions for 2D CFT

Attached to every compact, unitary Virasoro CFT is a self-dual, degree-four L-function.

It has a universal gamma factor with spectral parameters $\kappa_i = 0, 1, \pm \frac{1}{2}$,
root number $+1$, and a simple zero at the central point.

L-functions for 2D CFT

Attached to every compact, unitary Virasoro CFT is a self-dual, degree-four L-function.

It has a universal gamma factor with spectral parameters $\kappa_i = 0, 1, \pm \frac{1}{2}$,
root number $+1$, and a simple zero at the central point.

(These are not your father's L-functions.)

Analytic Structure

The analytic structure of $L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ is determined by discreteness & the functional equation.

$$\operatorname{Res}_{s=1} L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) \propto \langle \mathcal{Z} \rangle$$

Poles

✗ $s = 1$: due to modular average

Zeros

● *Trivial zeros*: $s = \frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{3}{2}, \dots$

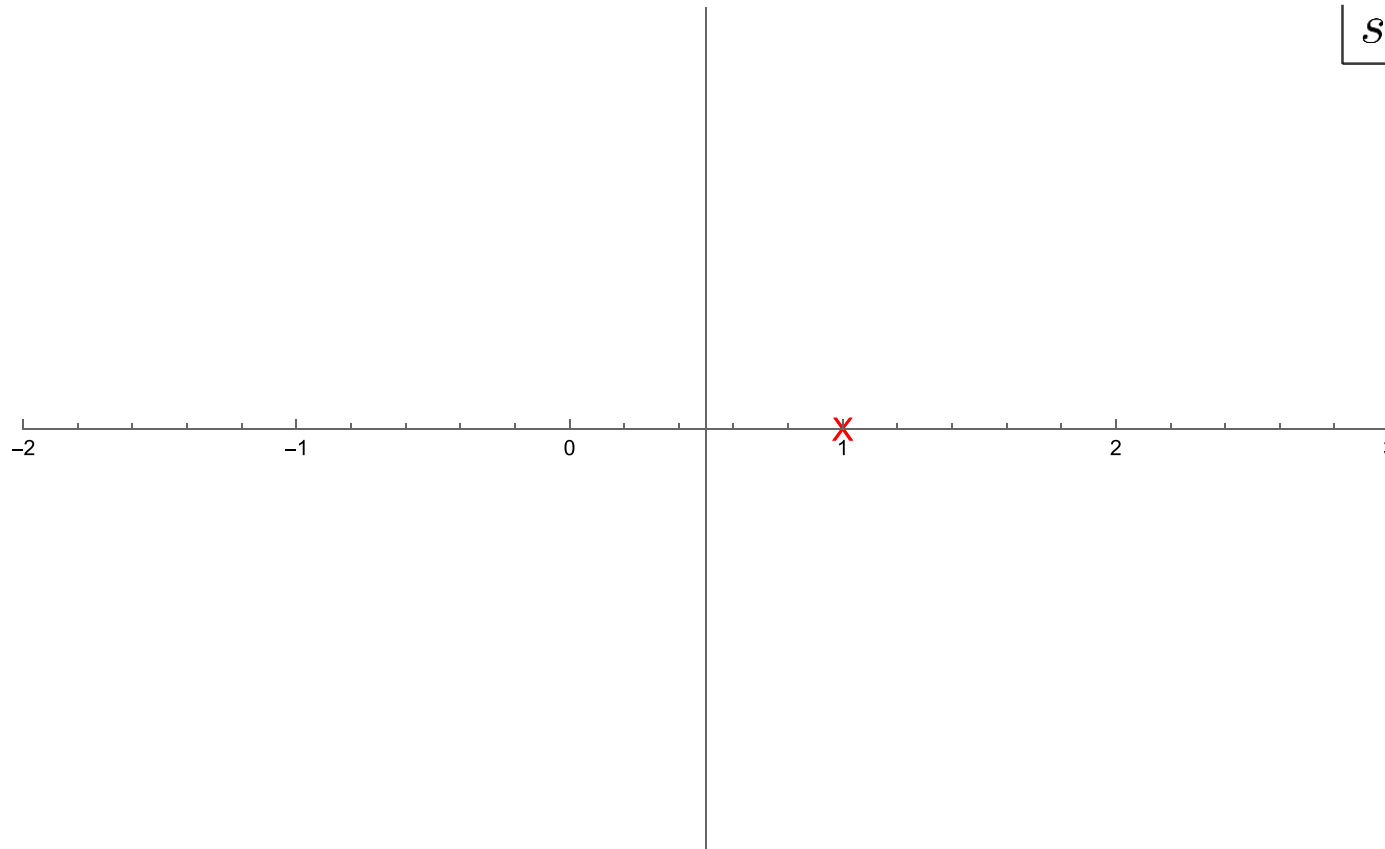
○ *Possible zeta zeros*:

$$s \in \left\{ \frac{\rho_n}{2}, 1 - \frac{\rho_n}{2} \right\} \quad (\zeta(\rho_n) = 0)$$

● *Non-trivial zeros* $\{\rho_{\text{NT}}\}$

Infinitely many, \mathcal{Z} -dependent.

Self-duality $\Rightarrow \mathbb{Z}_4$ symmetry.



All poles/zeros are simple.

Analytic Structure

The analytic structure of $L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ is determined by discreteness & the functional equation.

$$\operatorname{Res}_{s=1} L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) \propto \langle \mathcal{Z} \rangle$$

Poles

✗ $s = 1$: due to modular average

Zeros

● *Trivial zeros*: $s = \frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{3}{2}, \dots$

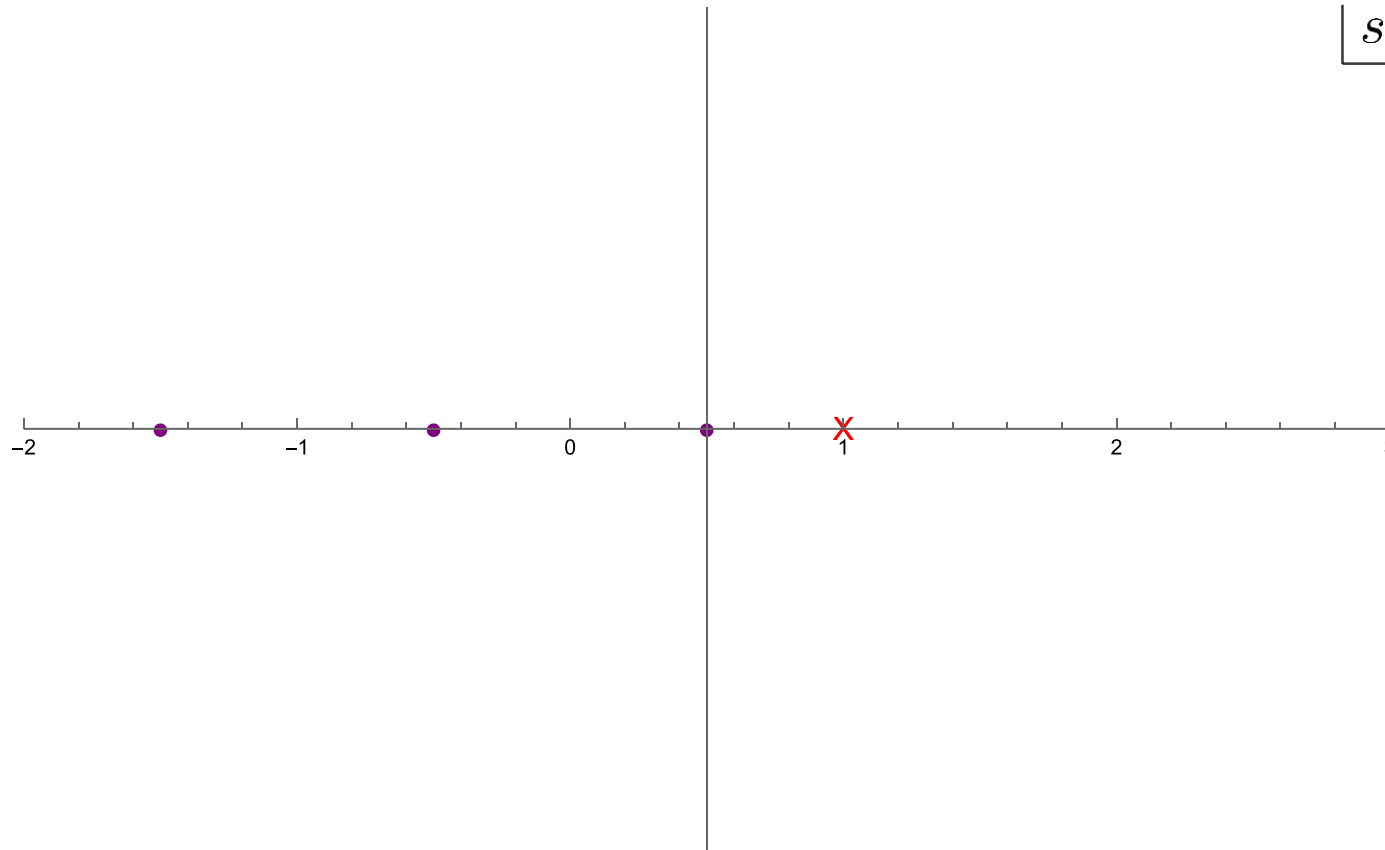
○ *Possible zeta zeros*:

$$s \in \left\{ \frac{\rho_n}{2}, 1 - \frac{\rho_n}{2} \right\} \quad (\zeta(\rho_n) = 0)$$

● *Non-trivial zeros* $\{\rho_{\text{NT}}\}$

Infinitely many, \mathcal{Z} -dependent.

Self-duality $\Rightarrow \mathbb{Z}_4$ symmetry.



All poles/zeros are simple.

Analytic Structure

The analytic structure of $L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ is determined by discreteness & the functional equation.

$$\operatorname{Res}_{s=1} L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) \propto \langle \mathcal{Z} \rangle$$

Poles

✗ $s = 1$: due to modular average

Zeros

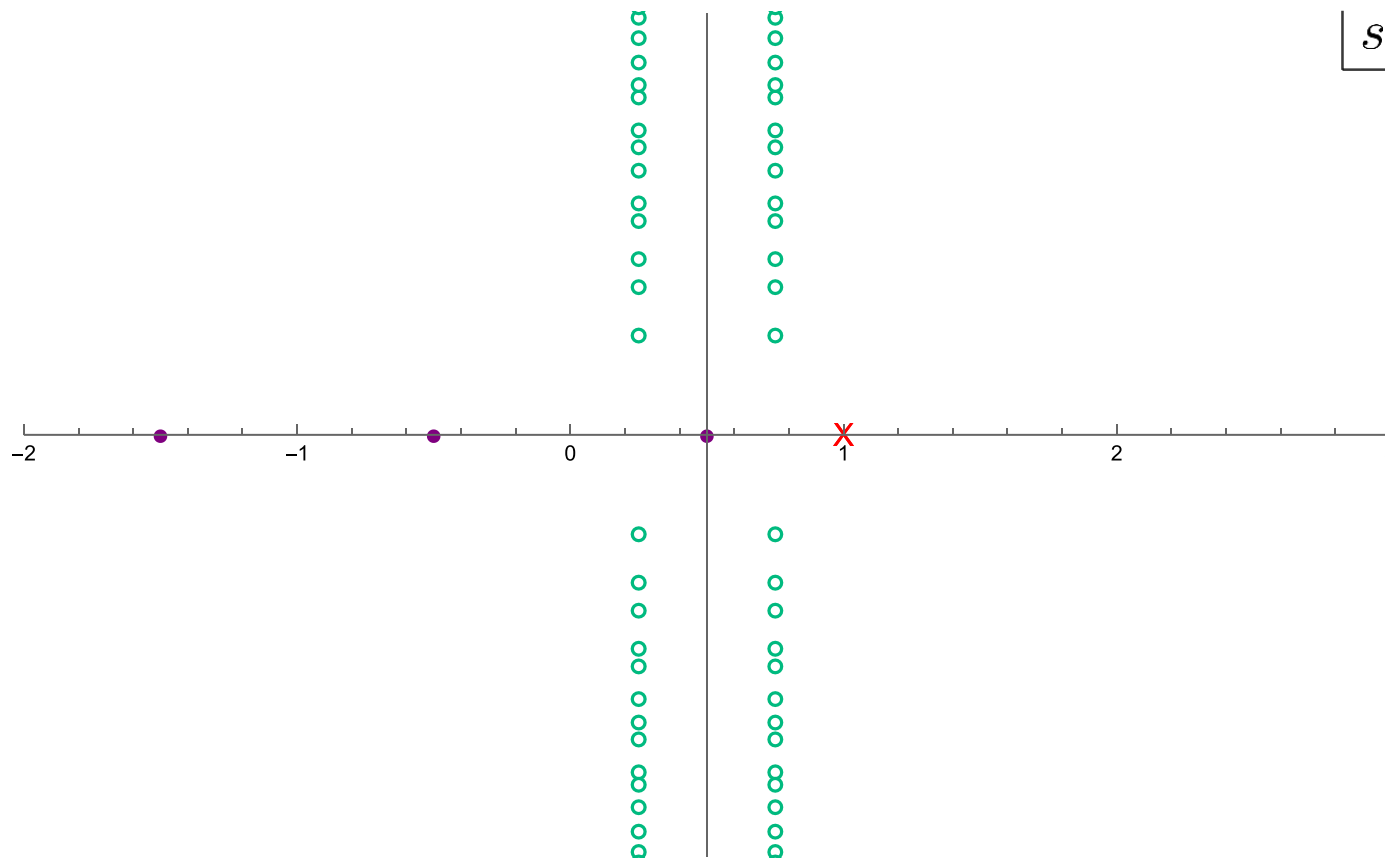
● *Trivial zeros*: $s = \frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{3}{2}, \dots$

○ *Possible zeta zeros*:

$$s \in \left\{ \frac{\rho_n}{2}, 1 - \frac{\rho_n}{2} \right\} \quad (\zeta(\rho_n) = 0)$$

● *Non-trivial zeros* $\{\rho_{\text{NT}}\}$
Infinitely many, \mathcal{Z} -dependent.

Self-duality $\Rightarrow \mathbb{Z}_4$ symmetry.



All poles/zeros are simple.

Analytic Structure

The analytic structure of $L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ is determined by discreteness & the functional equation.

$$\operatorname{Res}_{s=1} L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) \propto \langle \mathcal{Z} \rangle$$

Poles

✗ $s = 1$: due to modular average

Zeros

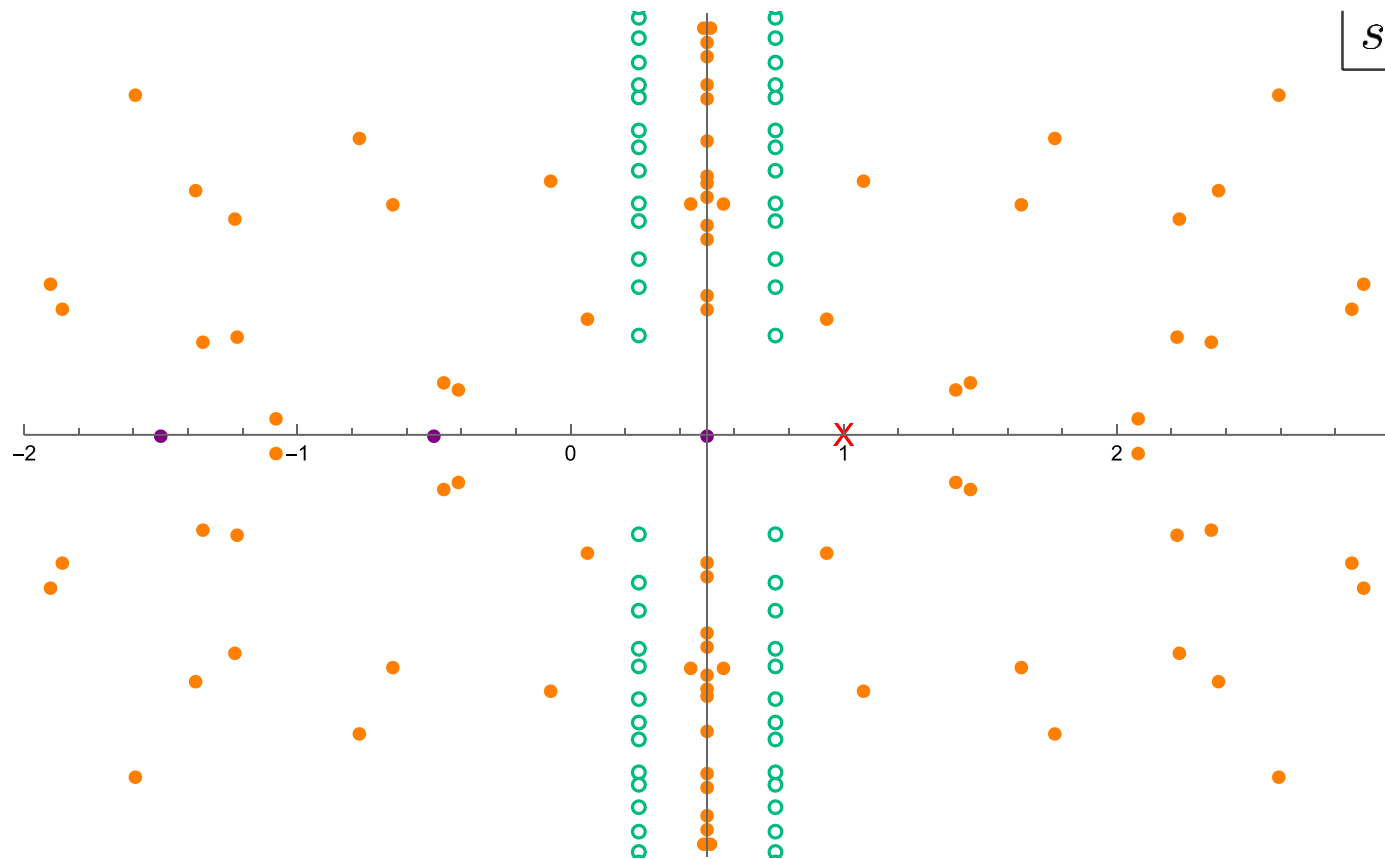
● *Trivial zeros*: $s = \frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{3}{2}, \dots$

○ *Possible zeta zeros*:

$$s \in \left\{ \frac{\rho_n}{2}, 1 - \frac{\rho_n}{2} \right\} \quad (\zeta(\rho_n) = 0)$$

● *Non-trivial zeros* $\{\rho_{\text{NT}}\}$
Infinitely many, \mathcal{Z} -dependent.

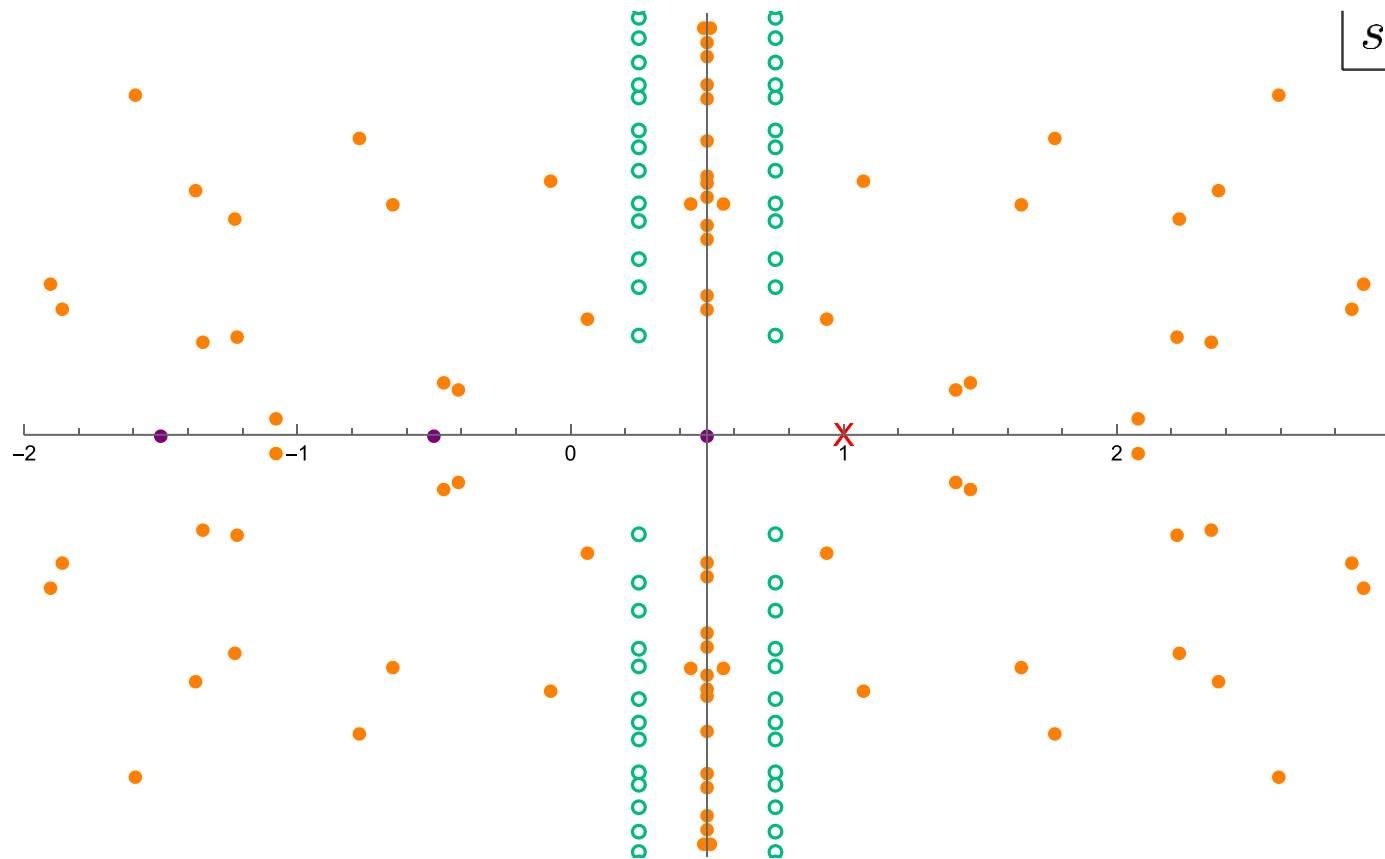
Self-duality $\Rightarrow \mathbb{Z}_4$ symmetry.



All poles/zeros are simple.

Analytic Structure

The analytic structure of $L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ is determined by discreteness & the functional equation.



Poles

✗ $s = 1$: due to modular average

Zeros

● *Trivial zeros*: $s = \frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{3}{2}, \dots$

○ *Possible zeta zeros*:

$$s \in \left\{ \frac{\rho_n}{2}, 1 - \frac{\rho_n}{2} \right\} \quad (\zeta(\rho_n) = 0)$$

● *Non-trivial zeros* $\{\rho_{\text{NT}}\}$
Infinitely many, \mathcal{Z} -dependent.

Self-duality $\Rightarrow \mathbb{Z}_4$ symmetry.

$$-\sum_{\rho} \frac{1}{\rho} = 1 - 2\gamma_E - \log(8\pi^2) + \frac{L'_{\mathcal{Z}}(0)}{L_{\mathcal{Z}}(0)} < \infty$$

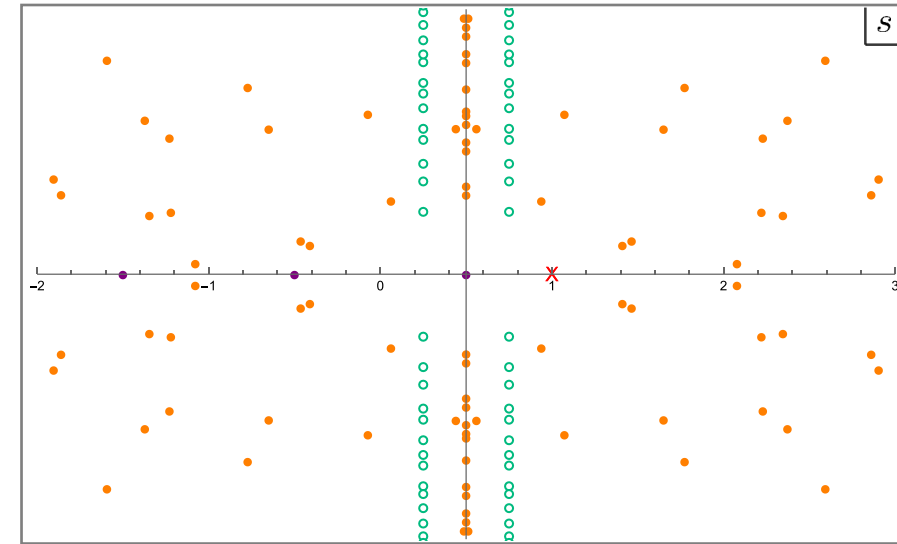
All poles/zeros are simple.

The high-energy spectrum (what's left in the UV?)

Two features of a_λ , the subtracted high-energy density of states:

1) It vanishes “on average”:

$$\zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}\left(\frac{1}{2} - n\right) = 0 = \sum_{\lambda} a_{\lambda} \lambda^n \Big|_{\text{regularized}} \quad \forall n \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$$



Note: $\text{ord}_{s=\frac{1}{2}} L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = 1$

Interesting in view of Birch-Swinnerton-Dyer conjecture

2) Square root cancellation:

$$\sum_{\lambda} \frac{a_{\lambda}}{\lambda^{\frac{1}{2} + \varepsilon}} < \infty \quad \sum_{\lambda \leq \lambda_N} a_{\lambda} \sim \sqrt{\lambda_N}$$

The high-energy spectrum (what's left in the UV?)

Two features of a_λ , the subtracted high-energy density of states:

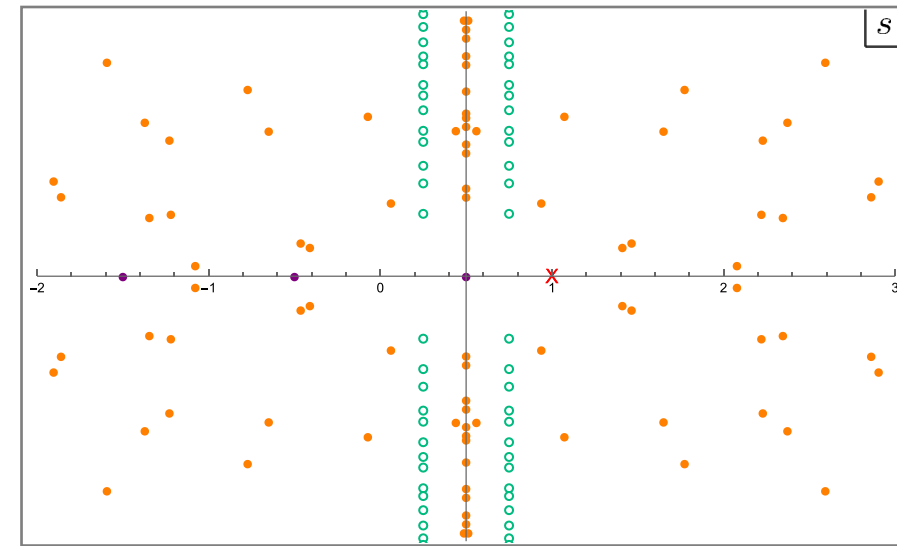
1) It vanishes “on average”:

$$\zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}\left(\frac{1}{2} - n\right) = 0 = \sum_{\lambda} a_{\lambda} \lambda^n \Big|_{\text{regularized}} \quad \forall n \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$$

\Rightarrow Very strong UV-IR relations in 2D CFT.

2) Square root cancellation:

$$\sum_{\lambda} \frac{a_{\lambda}}{\lambda^{\frac{1}{2} + \varepsilon}} < \infty \qquad \sum_{\lambda \leq \lambda_N} a_{\lambda} \sim \sqrt{\lambda_N}$$



Note: $\text{ord}_{s=\frac{1}{2}} L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = 1$

Interesting in view of Birch-Swinnerton-Dyer conjecture

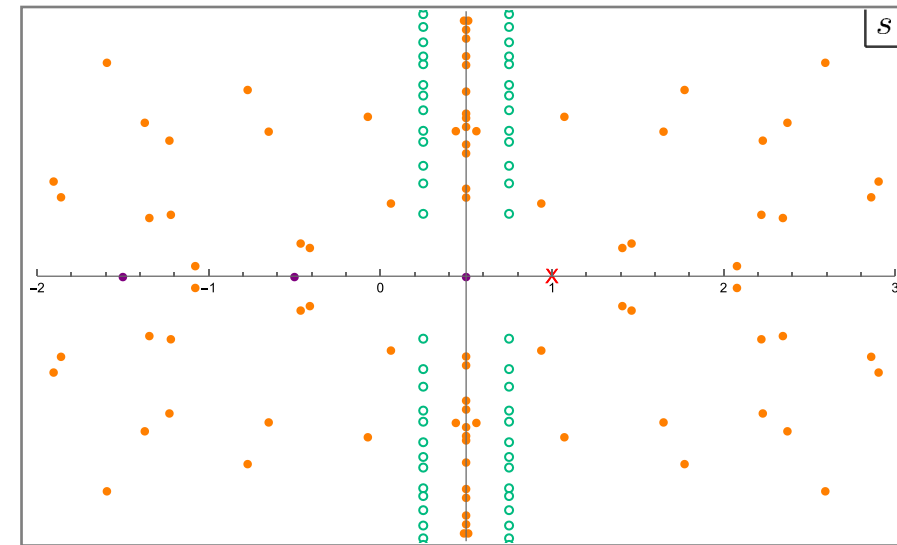
The high-energy spectrum (what's left in the UV?)

Two features of a_λ , the subtracted high-energy density of states:

1) It vanishes “on average”:

$$\zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}\left(\frac{1}{2} - n\right) = 0 = \sum_{\lambda} a_{\lambda} \lambda^n \Big|_{\text{regularized}} \quad \forall n \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$$

\Rightarrow Very strong UV-IR relations in 2D CFT.



Note: $\text{ord}_{s=\frac{1}{2}} L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = 1$

Interesting in view of Birch-Swinnerton-Dyer conjecture

2) Square root cancellation: $\sum_{\lambda} \frac{a_{\lambda}}{\lambda^{\frac{1}{2} + \varepsilon}} < \infty$ $\sum_{\lambda \leq \lambda_N} a_{\lambda} \sim \sqrt{\lambda_N}$

This is a central concept in analytic number theory; Lindelöf and Riemann are equivalent to it.

$$\sum_{n \lesssim \sqrt{t}} n^{-\frac{1}{2} - it} = O(t^{\varepsilon})$$

$$\sum_{n \leq N} \mu(n) = O(N^{\frac{1}{2} + \varepsilon})$$

\Rightarrow Existence of compact irrational CFTs is a “miracle” of precisely the same type.

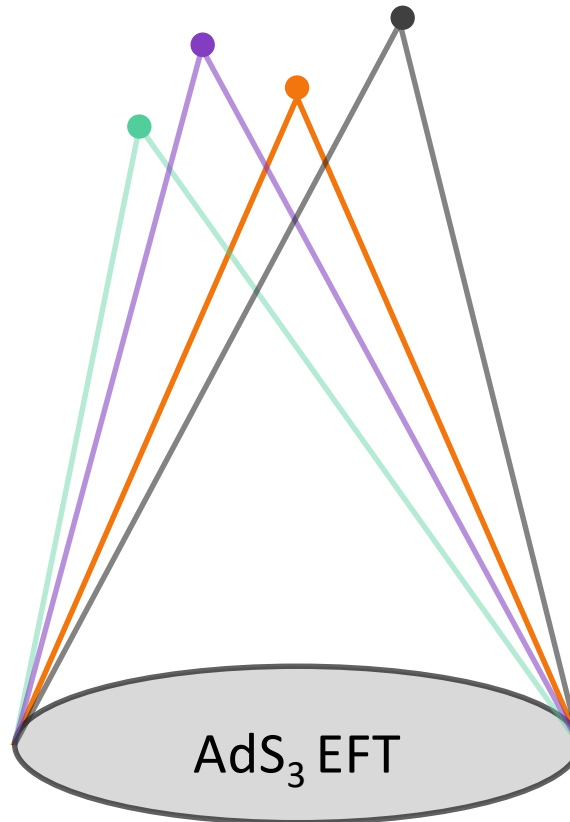
Comments (CFT)

- Consistency constraints on $L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ act on high-energy states “after crossing”.
- $L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ knows about the central charge c , but only via asymptotic level spacings... this is suggestive.
- We are heading towards a bootstrap based on *modularity*, *discreteness*, and *square-integrability*... and a little bit of unitarity:
 - i) $\mathcal{Z}(\tau) \in L^2(\mathcal{F})$ follows from (but does not require) unitarity
 - ii) *Reality* of the degeneracies \Rightarrow *Self-duality* of the L-function
- (\exists L-functions for other torus observables, e.g. $\langle \mathcal{O} \rangle_{T^2}$, $\langle \mathcal{O}\mathcal{O}\mathcal{O}\mathcal{O} \rangle_{\mathbb{R}^2}$)

Comments (gravity)

High-energy 2D CFT primaries are dual to black hole microstates in AdS_3 quantum gravity.

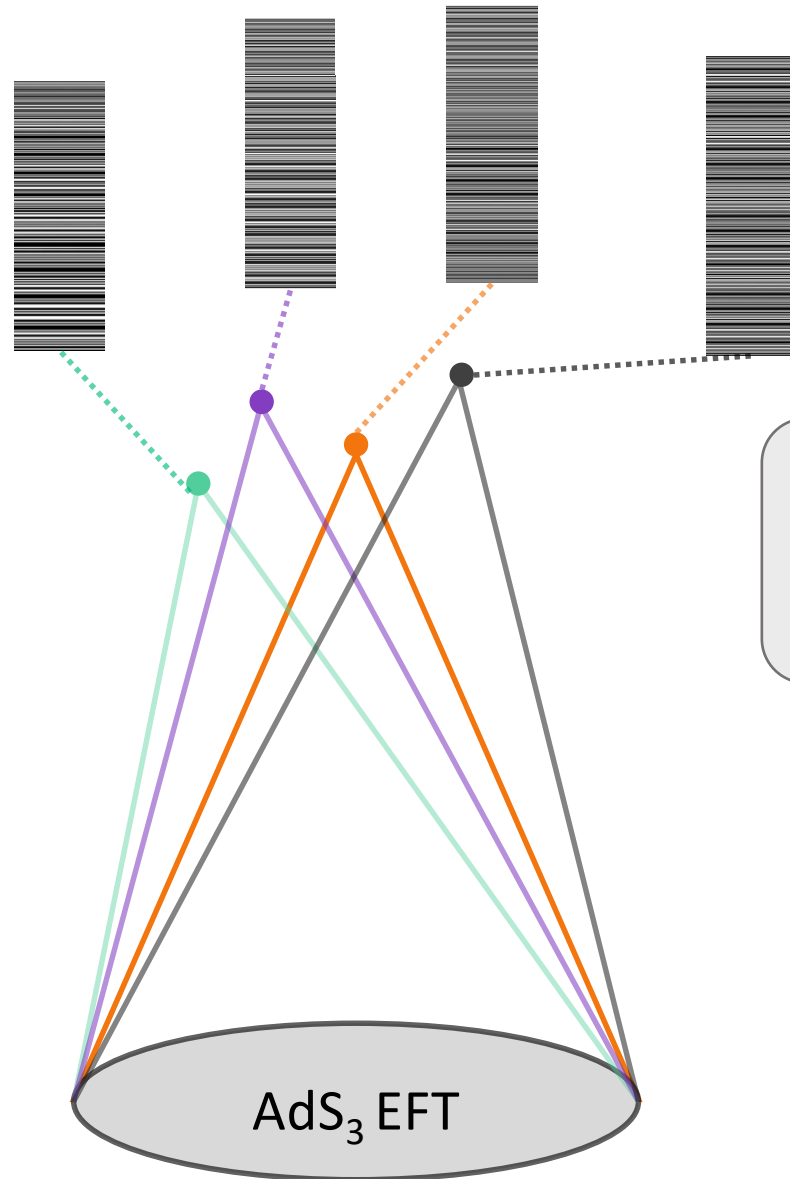
Space of UV completions
=
Space of L-functions



Comments (gravity)

High-energy 2D CFT primaries are dual to black hole microstates in AdS_3 quantum gravity.

Space of UV completions
=
Space of L-functions

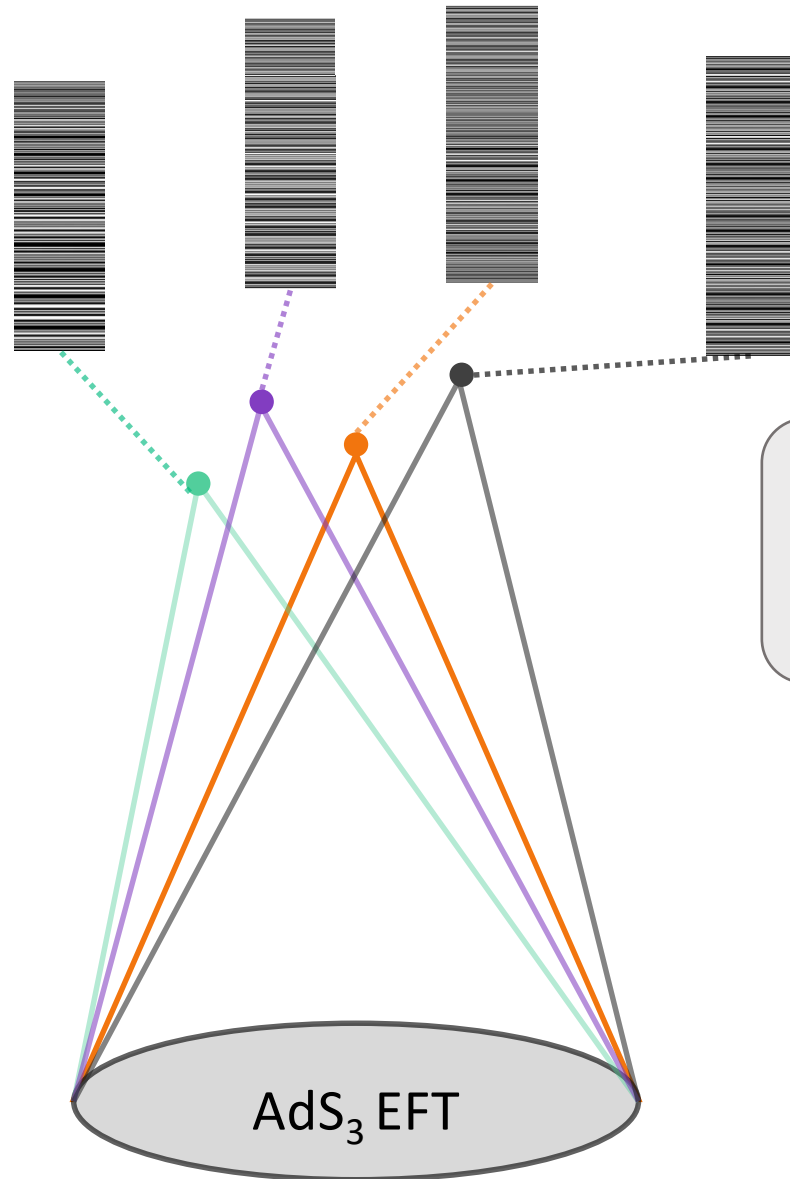


Space of BH microstate spectra
=
Space of L-functions

Comments (gravity)

High-energy 2D CFT primaries are dual to black hole microstates in AdS_3 quantum gravity.

Space of UV completions
=
Space of L-functions



Space of BH microstate spectra
=
Space of L-functions[★]

★ Can trade the spectrum of black hole masses $\{\Delta\}$ for *black hole zeros* $\{\rho\}$.

How do properties of 2D CFTs look in the language of L-functions?

Here is a nice example:

Random Matrix Universality as Subconvexity

Quantum chaotic systems exhibit random matrix universality (RMU).

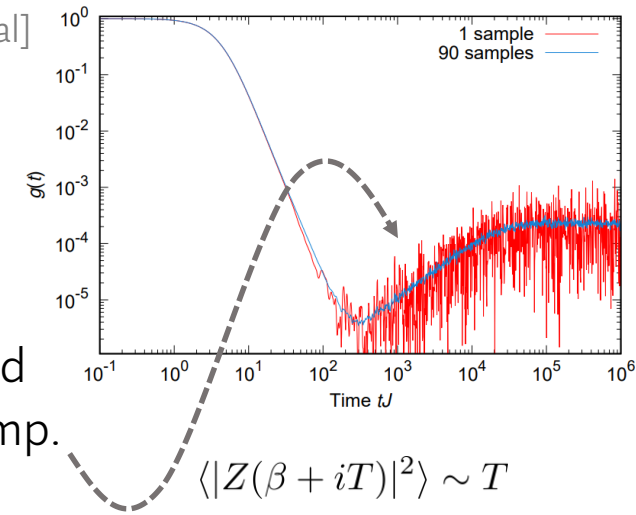
A conformally- and modular-invariant definition of RMU for 2D CFTs was formulated in [Di Ubaldo, EP '23], + a necessary/sufficient condition on high-energy states for a ramp.

That condition implies

$$\left| L_{\mathcal{Z}}\left(\frac{1}{2} + it\right) \right| \ll |t|^{\frac{1}{2} + \varepsilon} \quad \longleftrightarrow \quad \mu_L\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) \leq \frac{1}{2} \quad (\text{RMU})$$

On the other hand,

[Cotler et al]



[Bohigas
Giannoni
Schmit]

Random Matrix Universality as Subconvexity

Quantum chaotic systems exhibit random matrix universality (RMU).

A conformally- and modular-invariant definition of RMU for 2D CFTs was formulated in [Di Ubaldo, EP '23], + a necessary/sufficient condition on high-energy states for a ramp.

That condition implies

$$\left| L_{\mathcal{Z}}\left(\frac{1}{2} + it\right) \right| \ll |t|^{\frac{1}{2} + \varepsilon} \iff \mu_L\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) \leq \frac{1}{2} \quad (\text{RMU})$$

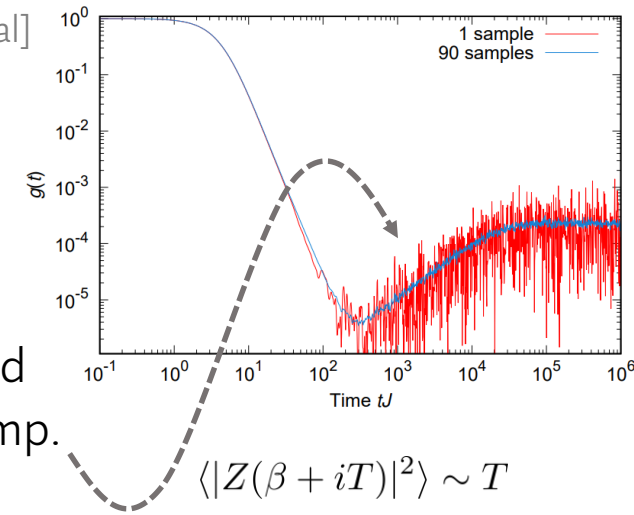
On the other hand,

$$\left| L_{\mathcal{Z}}\left(\frac{1}{2} + it\right) \right| \ll |t|^{1 + \varepsilon} \iff \mu_L\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) \leq 1 \quad (\text{Convexity bound for degree-4})$$

RMU \Rightarrow Subconvexity

- Why? Phase incoherence of chaotic phases $\sum_{\lambda} e^{-it \log \lambda}$ (cf. “approximate functional equation”)
- Random matrices are used to build heuristic models for computing moments of L-functions [Conrey et al]. This is different: we are *inputting* RMU as a physical property of *frequencies*, not *observing* RMU of *zeros*.

[Cotler et al]



[Bohigas
Giannoni
Schmit]

Reformulating 2D CFT with L-functions offers new proof strategies for old problems.

New Modular Bootstrap

This setup is well-suited for bootstrapping the spin-0 spectral gap, $\Delta_1^{(0)}$:

Consider the L-function attached to a difference of primary partition functions with gaps to at least $\frac{c-1}{12}$.

$$\text{If } \lambda_1 \leq \lambda_* \quad \Rightarrow \quad \Delta_1^{(0)} \leq \frac{c-1}{12} + \lambda_* \quad \text{with a single possible exceptional spectrum.}$$

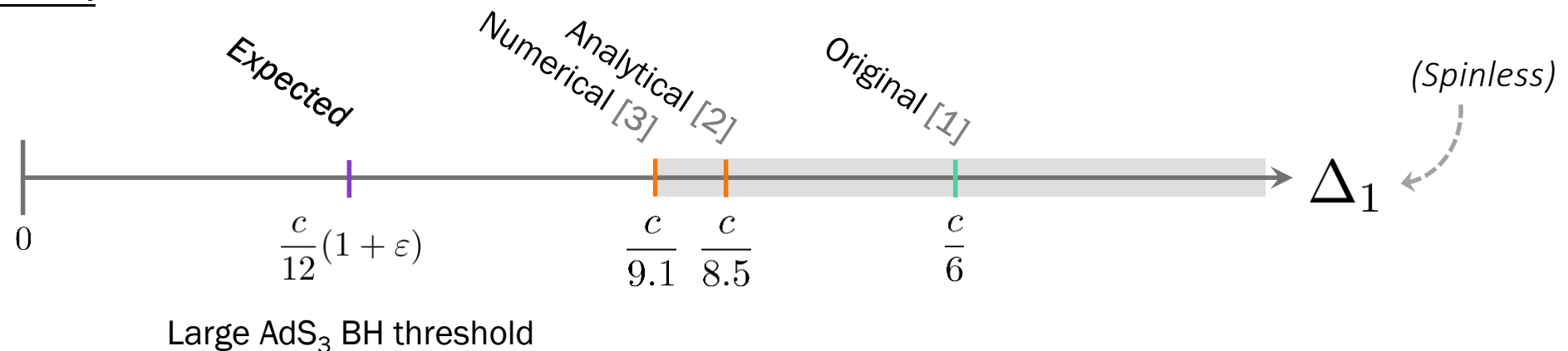
New Modular Bootstrap

This setup is well-suited for bootstrapping the spin-0 spectral gap, $\Delta_1^{(0)}$:

Consider the L-function attached to a difference of primary partition functions with gaps to at least $\frac{c-1}{12}$.

$$\text{If } \lambda_1 \leq \lambda_* \Rightarrow \Delta_1^{(0)} \leq \frac{c-1}{12} + \lambda_* \text{ with a single possible exceptional spectrum.}$$

State-of-the-art at $c \rightarrow \infty$:



$\Delta_1 \lesssim \frac{c}{12}$ has long been the horizon for this problem.

L-functions can get us there.

[1: Hellerman '09]

[2: Hartman, Mazac, Rastelli '19]

[3: Afkhami-Jeddi, Hartman, Tajdini '19]

Proof

The idea of the proof is to play two representations of the L-function off of each other:

$$\begin{array}{lll} \text{[Hadamard]} & \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \frac{\#}{s(1-s)} \prod_{\rho} \left(1 - \frac{s}{\rho}\right) & \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = 2^s \gamma(s) \zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) \quad \text{[Dirichlet]} \end{array}$$

Proof

The idea of the proof is to play two representations of the L-function off of each other:

$$\text{[Hadamard]} \quad \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \frac{\#}{s(1-s)} \prod_{\rho} \left(1 - \frac{s}{\rho}\right) \qquad \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = 2^s \gamma(s) \lambda_1^{\frac{1}{2}-s} \hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) \quad \text{[Dirichlet]}$$

Proof

The idea of the proof is to play two representations of the L-function off of each other:

$$\text{[Hadamard]} \quad \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \frac{\#}{s(1-s)} \prod_{\rho} \left(1 - \frac{s}{\rho}\right) \qquad \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = 2^s \gamma(s) \lambda_1^{\frac{1}{2}-s} \hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) \quad \text{[Dirichlet]}$$

Taking the log derivative,

$$\boxed{\sum_{\rho} \frac{1}{s - \rho} = -\log \lambda_1 + \frac{\hat{\zeta}'_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)}{\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)} + F(s)} \quad \xrightarrow{\text{dashed arrow}} \quad = \frac{1}{s} - \frac{1}{1-s} - \log(8\pi^2) + 2\psi(2s-1) + 2\frac{\zeta'}{\zeta}(2s)$$

Suppose for a moment that the last two terms were absent at large λ_1 :

$$\sum_{\rho} \frac{1}{s - \rho} \approx -\log \lambda_1 \quad (\lambda_1 \rightarrow \infty)$$


This equation must be satisfied pointwise *for all* s where these representations converge, namely $\sigma > 1$. But no such solution exists.

Proof

The idea of the proof is to play two representations of the L-function off of each other:

$$\text{[Hadamard]} \quad \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \frac{\#}{s(1-s)} \prod_{\rho} \left(1 - \frac{s}{\rho}\right) \qquad \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = 2^s \gamma(s) \lambda_1^{\frac{1}{2}-s} \hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) \quad \text{[Dirichlet]}$$

Taking the log derivative,

$$\boxed{\sum_{\rho} \frac{1}{s - \rho} = -\log \lambda_1 + \frac{\hat{\zeta}'_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)}{\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)} + F(s)}$$

$$= \frac{1}{s} - \frac{1}{1-s} - \log(8\pi^2) + 2\psi(2s-1) + 2\frac{\zeta'}{\zeta}(2s)$$

Suppose for a moment that the last two terms were absent at large λ_1 :

$$\sum_{\rho} \frac{1}{s - \rho} \approx -\log \lambda_1 \quad (\lambda_1 \rightarrow \infty)$$

This equation must be satisfied pointwise *for all* s where these representations converge, namely $\sigma > 1$. But no such solution exists.

Strategy: validate the approximation (thus bounding $\Delta_1^{(0)}$) when $\lambda_1 = \frac{c}{12}\varepsilon$, $c \rightarrow \infty$, $\varepsilon > 0$ fixed

Proof

Again, the log derivative is

$$\sum_{\rho} \frac{1}{s - \rho} = -\log \lambda_1 + \frac{\hat{\zeta}'_{\mathcal{Z}}}{\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}}(s) + F(s)$$

First, the hatted zeta:

$$\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \left(\sum_{\hat{\lambda}=1}^{\varepsilon^{-1}} + \sum_{\hat{\lambda}=\varepsilon^{-1}}^{\infty} \right) \frac{a_{\lambda}}{\hat{\lambda}^{s-\frac{1}{2}}}, \quad \hat{\lambda} := \frac{\lambda}{\lambda_1}$$

Proof

Again, the log derivative is

$$\sum_{\rho} \frac{1}{s - \rho} = -\log \lambda_1 + \frac{\hat{\zeta}'_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)}{\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)} + F(s)$$

First, the hatted zeta:

$$\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \left(\sum_{\hat{\lambda}=1}^{\varepsilon^{-1}} + \sum_{\hat{\lambda}=\varepsilon^{-1}}^{\infty} \right) \frac{a_{\lambda}}{\hat{\lambda}^{s-\frac{1}{2}}}, \quad \hat{\lambda} := \frac{\lambda}{\lambda_1}$$

Finite range

*HKS \Rightarrow Can evaluate semiclassically
($\sqrt{}$ cancellation regime)*

[Hartman,
Keller,
Stoica]

The derivative is bounded uniformly in λ_1 .

Proof

Again, the log derivative is

$$\sum_{\rho} \frac{1}{s - \rho} = -\log \lambda_1 + \frac{\hat{\zeta}'_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)}{\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)} + F(s)$$

First, the hatted zeta:

$$\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \left(\sum_{\hat{\lambda}=1}^{\varepsilon^{-1}} + \sum_{\hat{\lambda}=\varepsilon^{-1}}^{\infty} \right) \frac{a_{\lambda}}{\hat{\lambda}^{s-\frac{1}{2}}}, \quad \hat{\lambda} := \frac{\lambda}{\lambda_1}$$

Finite range

*HKS \Rightarrow Can evaluate semiclassically
($\sqrt{}$ cancellation regime)*

[Hartman,
Keller,
Stoica]

The derivative is bounded uniformly in λ_1 .

Therefore, *provided that s does not sit parametrically close to a zero*, the log derivative of $\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ is bounded uniformly. We say that s must lie in a **zero-free region**:

$$\mathcal{R}_{\infty} := \{s \mid \min_{\rho} |s - \rho| > \delta > 0\} \quad \text{as } \lambda_1 \rightarrow \infty$$

Proof

Again, the log derivative is

$$\sum_{\rho} \frac{1}{s - \rho} = -\log \lambda_1 + \frac{\hat{\zeta}'_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)}{\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)} + F(s)$$

First, the hatted zeta:

$$\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \left(\sum_{\hat{\lambda}=1}^{\varepsilon^{-1}} + \sum_{\hat{\lambda}=\varepsilon^{-1}}^{\infty} \right) \frac{a_{\lambda}}{\hat{\lambda}^{s-\frac{1}{2}}}, \quad \hat{\lambda} := \frac{\lambda}{\lambda_1}$$

Finite range

*HKS \Rightarrow Can evaluate semiclassically
($\sqrt{}$ cancellation regime)*

[Hartman,
Keller,
Stoica]

The derivative is bounded uniformly in λ_1 .

Therefore, *provided that s does not sit parametrically close to a zero*, the log derivative of $\hat{\zeta}_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$ is bounded uniformly. We say that s must lie in a **zero-free region**:

$$\mathcal{R}_{\infty} := \{s \mid \min_{\rho} |s - \rho| > \delta > 0\} \quad \text{as } \lambda_1 \rightarrow \infty$$

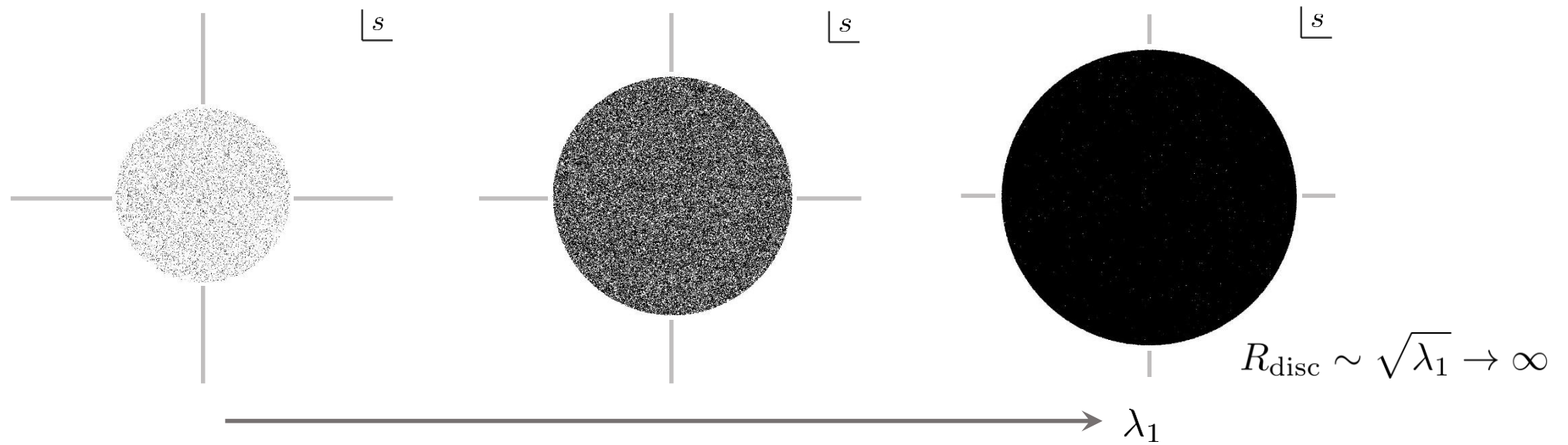
Next, in order to drop $F(s)$, s must not be “pushed out” too far: $F(s) \sim \log s^2$ as $|s| \rightarrow \infty$

Therefore,

$$\sum_{\rho} \frac{1}{s - \rho} \approx -\log \lambda_1 \quad \forall \quad s \in \mathcal{R}_{\infty}, \quad |s| \ll \sqrt{\lambda_1}$$

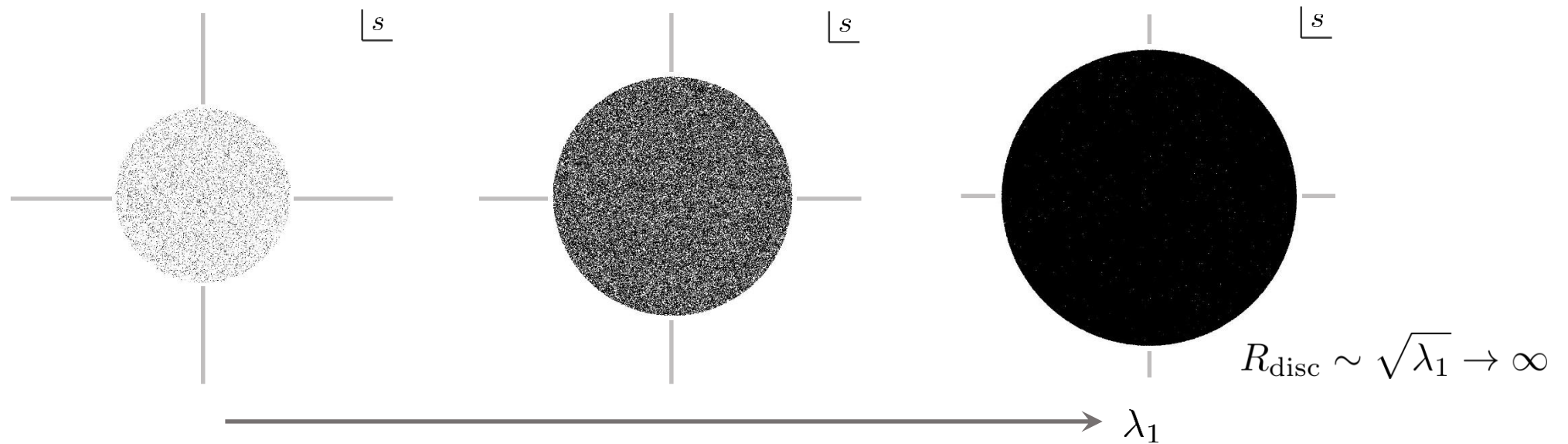
Proof

So, a bootstrap bound follows as long as the L-function isn't *dense with zeros* inside a large disc, like this:



Proof

So, a bootstrap bound follows as long as the L-function isn't *dense with zeros* inside a large disc, like this:



But the dense disc is impossible: Hadamard correlates the *number of NT zeros* with the *asymptotic falloff*,

$$\lambda_1 > \frac{1}{2} \Rightarrow N_{\text{NT}}(L_{\mathcal{Z}}) \ll N_{\text{NT}}(\zeta)$$

Famously, Riemann zeta zeros are logarithmically dense *on a line* – not in a disc.

Even without assuming RH, rigorous density estimates for $\zeta(s)$ zeros imply $\rho_{\text{disc}}(\zeta) \ll \lambda_1^{-\frac{11}{26} + \varepsilon}$. [Guth, Maynard '24]

Proof

In conclusion,

$$\Delta_1^{(0)} \leq \frac{c-1}{12} + o(c) \quad \text{as } c \rightarrow \infty$$

(modulo a single possible exceptional spectrum)

Our proof strategy passes a reassuring check:

CFTs with N generating currents host L-functions with frequencies $\lambda = \Delta^{(0)} - \frac{c-N}{12}$
In Narain CFT,
$$\Delta_1^{U(1)^N} \lesssim \frac{N}{2\pi e} \quad \text{as } N \rightarrow \infty$$

Since $c = N$, our proof should break down.
It does: the N -dependent gamma factor gives $F^{(N)}(s) \sim \log N$, cancelling the $-\log \lambda_1$!

Proof

In conclusion,

$$\Delta_1^{(0)} \leq \frac{c-1}{12} + o(c) \quad \text{as } c \rightarrow \infty$$

(modulo a single possible exceptional spectrum)

Our proof strategy passes a reassuring check:

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \text{CFTs with } N \text{ generating currents host L-functions with frequencies } \lambda = \Delta^{(0)} - \frac{c-N}{12} \\ \text{In Narain CFT,} \qquad \qquad \Delta_1^{U(1)^N} \lesssim \frac{N}{2\pi e} \quad \text{as } N \rightarrow \infty \\ \\ \text{Since } c = N, \text{ our proof should break down.} \\ \text{It does: the } N\text{-dependent gamma factor gives } F^{(N)}(s) \sim \log N, \text{ cancelling the } -\log \lambda_1 ! \end{array} \right]$$

(Speculation: Is $\Delta_1^{(0)} \leq \frac{c-1}{12} + \frac{1}{2}$ at finite c ?)

Hints of a lattice?

After a little massaging, one notices the following: $L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s/2)$ obeys precisely the same functional equation as L-functions attached to elliptic curves (the *Hasse-Weil L-function*).

In this relation, the sum over integers in Hasse-Weil maps to the sum over Liouville momenta.

Is this just a coincidence? Is there an “elliptic curve for irrational CFTs”?

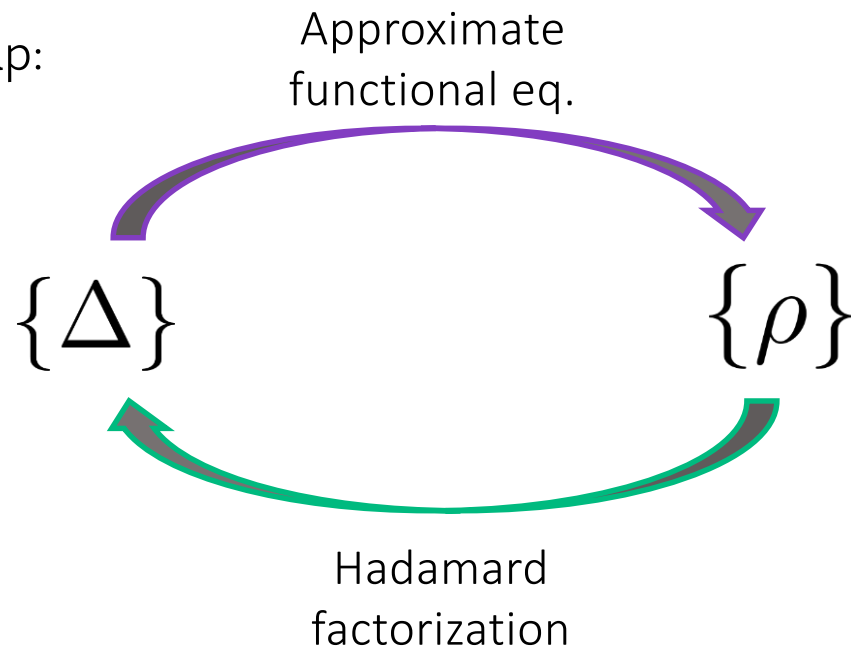
Irrational CFTs are chaotic at high energies. This breeds the familiar intuition that, upon properly accounting for symmetries, the high-energy spectrum of an irrational CFT is totally irregular: that is, structureless apart from the requirement of random matrix statistics.

We submit that this intuition is missing something.

Final thoughts

We have initiated a structural formulation of 2D CFT in the language of analytic number theory.

Imagine a new kind of bootstrap:



$$L_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \zeta(2s)\zeta_{\mathcal{Z}}(s)$$
$$\Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(s) = \Lambda_{\mathcal{Z}}(1-s)$$

It seems promising to think more about *black hole* zeros, and the L-functions of extremal CFTs.

What is the L-function of AdS_3 pure gravity?

Amazing backup slide

Explicit L-functions for Narain CFT:

$$L^{(c)}(s) = 2^{s_c} \zeta(2s) \sum_{(n,w) \in \mathbb{Z}^c \times \mathbb{Z}^c \setminus \{0\}} \frac{\delta_{n \cdot w, 0}}{(2\Delta_{n,w}(m))^s} \quad s_c = s + \frac{c-2}{2}$$