Dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to present you the 263rd issue of the AGB Newsletter.

Don’t ignore the White Papers that are being prepared for the USA Decadal survey. They offer reviews and research directions – if anyone would like to comment on any of them then feel free to write to us and we’d be happy to address your responses in the newsletter editorial.

If you like lithium, there’s a conference for you (in Rome). If you like common envelopes, then there’s a meeting for you too (in London).

The next issue is planned to be distributed around the 1st of July.

Editorially Yours,
Jacco van Loon, Ambra Nanni and Albert Zijlstra

Food for Thought

This month’s thought-provoking statement is:

What is the most critical element for AGB evolution after hydrogen and helium?

Reactions to this statement or suggestions for next month’s statement can be e-mailed to astro.agbnews@keele.ac.uk (please state whether you wish to remain anonymous)
Colours of the flickering source of Mira

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We report photometric observations in Johnson UBV bands of the short term variability of Mira. The amplitude detected is 0.16 mag in B band. Adopting interstellar extinction $E(B-V) = 0$, we find for the flickering source colour $B-V = 1.3$ mag, temperature $T = 3400$ K, and radius $R = 0.77 R_\odot$. The colour of the flickering source of Mira B is considerably redder than the average B–V colour of cataclysmic variables and of the symbiotic Mira EF Aql.

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Confronting expansion distances of planetary nebulae with Gaia DR2

measurements

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Individual distances to planetary nebulae are of the utmost relevance for our understanding of post-asymptotic giant-branch evolution because they allow a precise determination of stellar and nebular properties. Also, objects with individual distances serve as calibrators for the so-called statistical distances based on secondary nebular properties. With independently known distances, it is possible to check empirically our understanding of the formation and evolution of planetary nebulae as suggested by existing hydrodynamical simulations.

We compared the expansion parallaxes that have recently been determined for a number of planetary nebulae with the trigonometric parallaxes provided by the Gaia Data Release 2. Except for two out of 11 nebulae, we found good agreement between the expansion and the Gaia trigonometric parallaxes without any systematic trend with distance. Therefore, the Gaia measurements also prove that the correction factors necessary to convert proper motions of shocks into Doppler velocities cannot be ignored. Rather, the size of these correction factors and their evolution with time as predicted by 1-D hydrodynamical models of planetary nebulae is basically validated. These correction factors are generally greater than unity and are different for the outer shell and the inner bright rim of a planetary nebula. The Gaia measurements also confirm earlier findings that spectroscopic methods often lead to an overestimation of the distance. They also show that even modeling of the entire system of star and nebula by means of sophisticated photo-ionization modeling may not always provide reliable results.

The Gaia measurements confirm the basic correctness of the present radiation-hydrodynamics models, which predict that both the shell and the rim of a planetary nebula are two independently expanding entities, created and driven by different physical processes, namely thermal pressure (shell) or wind interaction (rim), both of which vary differently with time.

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Observation of narrow polar jets in the nascent wind of oxygen-rich AGB star EP Aqr

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Using ALMA observations of $^{12}$CO(2–1), $^{28}$SiO(5–4) and $^{32}$SO$_2$(16$^{6,10}$–17$^{5,13}$) emissions of the circumstellar envelope of AGB star EP Aqr, we describe the morpho-kinematics governing the nascent wind. Main results are: 1) Two narrow polar structures, referred to as jets, launched from less than 25 au away from the star, build up between $\sim$ 20 au and $\sim$ 100 au to a velocity of $\sim$ 20 km s$^{-1}$. They fade away at larger distances and are barely visible in CO data. 2) SO$_2$, SiO and CO emissions explore radial ranges reaching respectively $\sim$ 30 au, 250 au and 1000 au from the star, preventing the jets to be detected in SO$_2$ data. 3) Close to the star photosphere, rotation (undetected in SiO and CO data) and isotropic radial expansion combine with probable turbulence to produce a broad SO$_2$ line profile ($\sim$ 7.5 km s$^{-1}$ FWHM). 4) A same axis serves as axis of rotation close to the star, as jet axis and as axi-symmetry axis at large distances. 5) A radial wind builds up at distances up to $\sim$ 300 au from the star, with larger velocity near polar than equatorial latitudes. 6) A sharp depletion of SiO and CO emissions, starting near the star, rapidly broadens to cover the whole blue-western quadrant, introducing important asymmetry in the CO and particularly SiO observations. 7) The $^{12}$C/$^{13}$C abundance ratio is measured as $9 \pm 2$. 8) Plausible interpretations are discussed, in particular assuming the presence of a companion.

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The type II-Plateau supernova 2017eaw in NGC 6946 and its red supergiant progenitor


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We present extensive optical photometric and spectroscopic observations, from 4 to 482 days after explosion, of the type II-Plateau (II-P) supernova (SN) 2017eaw in NGC 6946. SN 2017eaw is a normal SN II-P intermediate in properties between, for example, SN 1999em and SN 2012aw and the more luminous SN 2004et, also in NGC 6946. We have determined that the extinction to SN 2017eaw is primarily due to the Galactic foreground and that the SN site metallicity is likely subsolar. We have also independently confirmed a tip-of-the-red-giant-branch (TRGB) distance to NGC 6946 of $7.73 \pm 0.78$ Mpc. The distances to the SN that we have also estimated via both the standardized candle method and expanding photosphere method corroborate the TRGB distance. We confirm the SN progenitor identity in pre-explosion archival Hubble Space Telescope (HST) and Spitzer Space Telescope images, via imaging of the SN through our HST Target of Opportunity program. Detailed modeling of the progenitor’s spectral energy distribution indicates that the star was a dusty, luminous red supergiant consistent with an initial mass of $\sim 15$ M$_\odot$.

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and from https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.3847/1538-4357/ab1136/meta
Precise radial velocities of giant stars. XII. Evidence against the proposed planet Aldebaran b

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Context: Radial-velocity variations of the K giant star Aldebaran (α Tau) were first reported in the early 1990s. After subsequent analyses, the radial-velocity variability with a period of ∼ 629 d has recently been interpreted as caused by a planet of several Jovian masses.

Aims: We want to further investigate the hypothesis of an extrasolar planet around Aldebaran.

Methods: We combine 165 new radial-velocity measurements from Lick Observatory with seven already published data sets comprising 373 radial-velocity measurements. We perform statistical analyses and investigate whether a Keplerian model properly fits the radial velocities. We also perform a dynamical stability analysis for a possible two-planet solution. Furthermore, the possibility of oscillatory convective modes as cause for the observed radial-velocity variability is discussed.

Results: As best Keplerian fit to the combined radial-velocity data we obtain an orbit for the hypothetical planet with a smaller period (P = 607 d) and a larger eccentricity (e = 0.33 ± 0.04) than the previously proposed one. However, the residual scatter around that fit is still large, with a standard deviation of 117 m s−1. In 2006/2007, the statistical power of the ∼ 620 d period showed a temporary but significant decrease. Plotting the growth of power in reverse chronological order reveals that a period around 620 d is clearly present in the newest data but not in the data taken before ~ 2006. Furthermore, an apparent phase shift between radial-velocity data and orbital solution is observable at certain times. A two-planet Keplerian fit matches the data considerably better than a single-planet solution, but poses severe dynamical stability issues.

Conclusions: The radial-velocity data from Lick Observatory do not further support but in fact weaken the hypothesis of a substellar companion around Aldebaran. Oscillatory convective modes might be a plausible alternative explanation of the observed radial-velocity variations.

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The post-common-envelope binary nucleus of the planetary nebula IC 4776: Neither an anomalously long orbital period nor a Wolf–Rayet binary

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The orbital period distribution of close binary stars consisting of a white dwarf and a main-sequence star (WDMS) is a powerful observational constraint on population synthesis models of the poorly understood common-envelope (CE) interaction. Models have often struggled to reproduce the small number of post-CE WDMS binaries with anomalously long orbital periods greater than ~ 4 d, though recent studies suggest that in longer period systems recombination energy may help contribute to the efficient ejection of the CE. Planetary nebulæ (PNe) are an emerging source of rare long period post-CE binaries which can act as powerful complementary constraints on population synthesis models to more traditional post-CE binary populations. A tentative 9.0 d orbital period was recently proposed for the central star of the PN IC 4776, potentially one of the longest periods observed in post-CE WDMS binaries. Here we present SALT HRS observations of IC 4776 that rule out a 9.0 d orbital period, as well as the previously suggested Wolf–Rayet classification of the primary. The SALT HRS data establish a 3.11 d orbital period and rule out Of and Wolf–Rayet
primary spectral types. Assuming a mass of 0.6 $M_\odot$ for the primary and an orbital inclination matching the nebula orientation, we find a companion mass of 0.22 $\pm$ 0.03 $M_\odot$, most likely corresponding to an M4 V companion. The orbital period of IC 4776 is still consistent with findings of abundance discrepancy factor (ADF) studies of post-CE PNe, but any trends in the ADF distribution derived from the sample remain significantly biased by selection effects.

First astrophysical detection of the helium hydride ion (HeH$^+$)

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During the dawn of chemistry when the temperature of the young Universe had fallen below $\sim$ 4000 K, the ions of the light elements produced in Big Bang nucleosynthesis recombined in reverse order of their ionization potential. With its higher ionization potentials, He$^{++}$ (54.5 eV) and He$^+$ (24.6 eV) combined first with free electrons to form the first neutral atom, prior to the recombination of hydrogen (13.6 eV). At that time, in this metal-free and low-density environment, neutral helium atoms formed the Universe’s first molecular bond in the helium hydride ion HeH$^+$, by radiative association with protons (He + H$^+$ → HeH$^+$ + h\nu). As recombination progressed, the destruction of HeH$^+$ (HeH$^+$ + H → He + H$_2$) created a first path to the formation of molecular hydrogen, marking the beginning of the Molecular Age. Despite its unquestioned importance for the evolution of the early Universe, the HeH$^+$ molecule has so far escaped unequivocal detection in interstellar space. In the laboratory, the ion was discovered as long ago as 1925, but only in the late seventies was the possibility that HeH$^+$ might exist in local astrophysical plasmas discussed. In particular, the conditions in planetary nebulae were shown to be suitable for the production of potentially detectable HeH$^+$ column densities: the hard radiation field from the central hot white dwarf creates overlapping Strömgren spheres, where HeH$^+$ is predicted to form, primarily by radiative association of He$^+$ and H. With the GREAT spectrometer onboard SOFIA, the HeH$^+$ rotational ground-state transition at $\lambda$149.1 $\mu$m is now accessible. We report here its detection towards the planetary nebula NGC 7027.

Intermediate Luminosity Optical Transients (ILOTs) from merging giants

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We study the formation of intermediate luminosity optical transients (ILOTs) from the merger of two cool giant stars. For the two stars to merge when both are in their giant phases the stars must have close masses at their zero age main sequence, and the orbital separation must be in the right range. After the two giants merge, the two cores spiral-in toward each other within a common envelope. This process ejects mass that powers radiation by recombination and by collision with previously ejected mass. Using the stellar evolution numerical code MESA for two binary systems with stellar masses of (15,15.75 $M_\odot$) and (31,31.5 $M_\odot$), we find that the merger of the two cores releases gravitational energy that marginally ejects the entire common envelope. This implies that in many cases the two cores merge, i.e.,
a fatal common envelope evolution, leading to a somewhat more luminous ILOT. Overall, we estimate that a typical ILOT from merger of two cool giant stars lasts for several months to several years and has a typical average luminosity of $L(\text{ILOT}) = 10^6 (M(\text{CE})/10M_\odot) L_\odot$, where $M(\text{CE})$ is the common envelope mass. Due to the merger-driven massive outflow, we expect dust formation and a very red ILOT, possibly even an infrared luminous and undetectable in the visible. As the giants cannot launch jets, we expect the descendant nebula formed by the merger process to have an elliptical morphology but with no bipolar lobes.

Submitted to AAS Journals

### Atmospheres and UV environments of Earth-like planets throughout post-main-sequence evolution

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During the post-main-sequence (post-MS) phase of stellar evolution, the orbital distance of the habitable zone (HZ), which allows for liquid surface water on terrestrial planets, moves out past the system’s original frost line, providing an opportunity for outer planetary system surface habitability. We use a 1D coupled climate/photochemistry code to study the impact of the stellar environment on the planetary atmospheres of Earth-like planets/moons throughout its time in the post-MS HZ. We also explore the ground UV environments of such planets/moons and compare them to Earth’s. We model the evolution of star–planet systems with host stars ranging from 1.0 to 3.5 $M_\odot$ throughout the post-MS, calculating stellar mass loss and its effects on planetary orbital evolution and atmospheric erosion. The maximum amount of time a rocky planet is expected to spend in the evolving post-MS HZ ranges between 56 and 257 Myr for our grid stars. Thus, during the post-MS evolution of their host star, subsurface life on cold planets and moons could become remotely detectable once the initially frozen surface melts. Frozen planets or moons, like Europa in our solar system, experience a relatively stable environment on the horizontal branch of their host star’s evolution for millions of years.

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### Using the tip of the red giant branch as a distance indicator in the near infrared

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The tip of the red giant branch (TRGB) is a well-established standard candle used to measure distances to nearby galaxies. The TRGB luminosity is typically measured in the I-band, where the luminosity has little dependency on stellar age or stellar metallicity. As the TRGB is brighter at wavelengths redder than the I-band, observational gains can be made if the TRGB luminosity can be robustly calibrated at longer wavelengths. This is of particular interest given the tight calibrations that will be available with the *James Webb* Space Telescope and an important calibration consideration for using TRGB distances as part of an independent measurement of the Hubble constant. Here, we use simulated photometry to investigate the dependency of the TRGB luminosity on stellar age, metallicity, and effective temperature as a function of wavelength ($\lambda_{755}$ nm – 4.5 $\mu$m). We find intrinsic variations in the TRGB magnitude to increase from a few hundredths of a magnitude at $\lambda$800–900 nm to $\sim$ 0.6 mag by $\lambda$1.5 $\mu$m. We show that variations at the longer infrared wavelengths can be reduced to 0.02–0.05 mag (1–2% accuracy in distance) with careful calibrations that account for changes in age and metal content. These represent the minimum uncertainties; observational uncertainties will be higher. Such calibration efforts may also provide independent constraints of the age and metallicity of stellar halos.
where TRGB distances are best measured. At 3.6 and 4.5 $\mu$m, the TRGB magnitude is predicted to vary by $\sim 0.15$ mag even after corrections, making these wavelengths less suitable for precision distances.

Submitted to ApJ

Resolving the extended stellar atmospheres of asymptotic giant branch stars at (sub)millimetre wavelengths

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**Context:** The initial conditions for mass loss during the asymptotic giant branch (AGB) phase are set in their extended atmospheres, where, among others, convection and pulsation driven shocks determine the physical conditions.

**Aims:** High resolution observations of AGB stars at (sub)millimetre wavelengths can now directly determine the morphology, activity, density, and temperature close to the stellar photosphere.

**Methods:** We used Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) high angular resolution observations to resolve the extended atmospheres of four of the nearest AGB stars: W Hya, Mira A, R Dor, and R Leo. We interpreted the observations using a parameterised atmosphere model.

**Results:** We resolve all four AGB stars and determine the brightness temperature structure between 1 and 2 stellar radii. For W Hya and R Dor we confirm the existence of hotspots with brightness temperatures $> 3000$ to $10000$ K. All four stars show deviations from spherical symmetry. We find variations on a timescale of days to weeks, and for R Leo we directly measure an outward motion of the millimetre wavelength surface with a velocity of at least $10.6 \pm 1.4$ km s$^{-1}$. For all objects but W Hya we find that the temperature-radius and size-frequency relations require the existence of a (likely inhomogeneous) layer of enhanced opacity.

**Conclusions:** The ALMA observations provide a unique probe of the structure of the extended AGB atmosphere. We find highly variable structures of hotspots and likely convective cells. In the future, these observations can be directly compared to multi-dimensional chromosphere and atmosphere models that determine the temperature, density, velocity, and ionisation structure between the stellar photosphere and the dust formation region. However, our results show that for the best interpretation, both very accurate flux calibration and near-simultaneous observations are essential.

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Barium and related stars, and their white-dwarf companions. II. Main-sequence and subgiant stars

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Barium (Ba) dwarfs and CH subgiants are the less evolved analogues of Ba and CH giants. They are F- to G-type main-sequence stars polluted with heavy elements by their binary companions when the companion was on the asymptotic
This companion is now a white dwarf that in most cases cannot be directly detected. We present a large systematic study of 60 objects classified as Ba dwarfs or CH subgiants. Combining radial-velocity measurements from HERMES and SALT high-resolution spectra with radial-velocity data from CORAVEL and CORALIE, we determine the orbital parameters of 27 systems. We also derive their masses by comparing their location in the Hertzsprung–Russell diagram with evolutionary models. We confirm that Ba dwarfs and CH subgiants are not at different evolutionary stages, and that they have similar metallicities, despite their different names. Additionally, Ba giants appear significantly more massive than their main-sequence analogues. This is likely due to observational biases against the detection of hotter main-sequence post-mass-transfer objects. Combining our spectroscopic orbits with the Hipparcos astrometric data, we derive the orbital inclination and the mass of the WD companion for four systems. Since this cannot be done for all systems in our sample yet (but should be possible with upcoming Gaia data releases), we also analyse the mass-function distribution of our binaries. We can model this distribution with very narrow mass distributions for the two components and random orbital orientations on the sky. Finally, based on binstar evolutionary models, we suggest that the orbital evolution of low-mass Ba systems can be affected by a second phase of interactions along the red giant branch of the Ba star, which impact the eccentricities and periods of the giants.

Photometry of symbiotic stars – XIV

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We present new multicolour UBVRcIC photometric observations of symbiotic stars, EG And, Z And, BF Cyg, CH Cyg, CI Cyg, V1016 Cyg, V1329 Cyg, AG Dra, RS Oph, AG Peg, AX Per, and the newly discovered (August 2018) symbiotic star HBHA 1704−05, we carried out during the period from 2011.9 to 2018.75. Historical photographic and visual/V data were collected for HBHA 1704−05, FG Ser and AE Ara, AR Pav, respectively. The main aim of this paper is to present our original observations of symbiotic stars and to describe the most interesting features of their light curves. For example, periodic variations, rapid variability, minima, eclipses, outbursts, apparent changes of the orbital period, etc. Our measurements were obtained by the classical photoelectric photometry (till 2016.1) and the CCD photometry. Main results of our monitoring program are summarized and some specific characteristics are pointed out for future investigation.

Maser flare simulations from oblate and prolate clouds

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We investigated, through numerical models, the flaring variability that may arise from the rotation of maser clouds of approximately spheroidal geometry, ranging from strongly oblate to strongly prolate examples. Inversion solutions
were obtained for each of these examples over a range of saturation levels from unsaturated to highly saturated. Formal solutions were computed for rotating clouds with many randomly chosen rotation axes, and corresponding averaged maser light curves plotted with statistical information. The dependence of results on the level of saturation and on the degree of deformation from the spherical case were investigated in terms of a variability index and duty cycle. It may be possible to distinguish observationally between flares from oblate and prolate objects. Maser flares from rotation are limited to long timescales (at least a few years) and modest values of the variability index ($\leq 100$), and can be aperiodic or quasi-periodic. Rotation is therefore not a good model for $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ variability on timescales of weeks to months, or of truly periodic flares.

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A new radio molecular line survey of planetary nebulae: HNC/HCN as a diagnostic of ultraviolet irradiation

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Certain planetary nebulae contain shells, filaments, or globules of cold gas and dust whose heating and chemistry are likely driven by UV and X-ray emission from their central stars and from wind-collision-generated shocks. We present the results of a survey of molecular line emission in the 88–236 GHz range from nine nearby ($< 1.5$ kpc) planetary nebulae spanning a range of UV and X-ray luminosities, using the 30 m telescope of the Institut de Radioastronomie Millimétrique. Rotational transitions of thirteen molecules, including CO isotopologues and chemically important trace species, were observed and the results compared with and augmented by previous studies of molecular gas in PNe. Lines of the molecules $\text{HCO}^+$, HNC, HCN, and CN, which were detected in most objects, represent new detections for four planetary nebulae in our study. Specifically, we present the first detections of $^{13}\text{CO}(1–0, 2–1)$, $\text{HCO}^+$, CN, HCN, and HNC in NGC 6445; $\text{HCO}^+$ in BD +30$^\circ$3639; $^{13}\text{CO}(2–1)$, CN, HCN, and HNC in NGC 6853; and $^{13}\text{CO}(2–1)$ and CN in NGC 6772. Flux ratios were analyzed to identify correlations between the central star and/or nebular UV and X-ray luminosities and the molecular chemistries of the nebula. This analysis reveals a surprisingly robust dependence of the HNC/HCN line ratio on PN central star UV luminosity. There exists no such clear correlation between PN X-rays and various diagnostics of PN molecular chemistry. The correlation between HNC/HCN ratio and central star UV luminosity demonstrates the potential of molecular emission line studies of PNe for improving our understanding of the role that high-energy radiation plays in the heating and chemistry of photodissociation regions.

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Planetary nebulae and how to find them: color identification in big broadband surveys

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Planetary nebulae (PNe) provide tests of stellar evolution, can serve as tracers of chemical evolution in the Milky
Way and other galaxies, and are also used as a calibrator of the cosmological distance ladder. Current and upcoming large scale photometric surveys have the potential to complete the census of PNe in our galaxy and beyond, but it is a challenge to disambiguate partially or fully unresolved PNe from the myriad other sources observed in these surveys. Here we carry out synthetic observations of nebular models to determine ugrizy color–color spaces that can successfully identify PNe among billions of other sources. As a primary result we present a grid of synthetic absolute magnitudes for PNe at various stages of their evolution, and we make comparisons with real PNe colors from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. We find that the $r - i$ versus $g - r$, and the $r - i$ versus $u - g$, color–color diagrams show the greatest promise for cleanly separating PNe from stars, background galaxies, and quasars. Finally, we consider the potential harvest of PNe from upcoming large surveys. For example, for typical progenitor host star masses of $\sim 3 M_\odot$, we find that the Large Synoptic Survey Telescope (LSST) should be sensitive to virtually all PNe in the Magellanic Clouds with extinction up to $A_V$ of $\sim 5$ mag; out to the distance of Andromeda, LSST would be sensitive to the youngest PNe (age less than $\sim 6800$ yr) and with $A_V$ up to 1 mag.

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The s-process enriched star HD 55496: origin from a globular cluster or from the tidal disruption of a dwarf galaxy?

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We present a new abundance analysis of HD 55496, previously known as a metal-poor barium star. We found that HD 55496 has a metallicity $[\text{Fe}/\text{H}] = -1.55$ and is s-process enriched. We find that HD 55496 presents four chemical peculiarities: (i) a Na–O abundance anti-correlation; (ii) it is aluminum rich; (iii) it is carbon poor for a s-process enriched star and (iv) the heavy 2nd s-process peak elements, such as Ba, La, Ce, and Nd, present smaller abundances than the lighter s-process elements, such as Sr, Y and Zr, which is not usually observed among the chemically-peculiar binary stars at this metallicity. The heavy-element abundance pattern suggests that the main source of the neutrons is the $^{22}_{1} \text{Ne}(\alpha, n)^{25}_{1} \text{Mg}$ reaction. Taken all these abundance evidence together into consideration, this strongly suggests that HD 55496 is a “second generation of globular cluster star” formed from gas already strongly enriched in s-process elements and now is a field halo object. Our dynamical analysis, however, indicates that the past encounter probabilities with the known globular clusters is very small ($\leq 6\%$). This evidence, together with the fact of having a retrograde motion, points to a halo intruder possibly originated from the tidal disruption of a dwarf galaxy.

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Barium and related stars, and their white-dwarf companions I. Giant stars

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Barium and S stars without technetium are red giants suspected of being all members of binary systems. This paper
provides both long-term and revised, more accurate orbits for barium and S stars adding to previously published ones. The sample of barium stars with strong anomalies comprise all such stars present in the Lü et al. catalogue. Orbital elements are derived from radial velocities collected from a long-term radial-velocity monitoring performed with the HERMES spectrograph mounted on the Mercator 1.2-m telescope. These new measurements were combined with older CORAVEL measurements. With the aim of investigating possible correlations between orbital properties and abundances, we also collected a set of abundances as homogeneous as possible for barium stars with orbital elements. We find orbital motion for all barium and extrinsic S stars monitored. We obtain the longest period known so far for a spectroscopic binary involving an S star, namely 57 Peg with a period of the order of 100–500 yr. We present the mass distribution for the barium stars, which ranges from 1 to 3 \( M_\odot \), with a tail extending up to 5 \( M_\odot \) in the case of mild barium stars. This high-mass tail comprises mostly high-metallicity objects ([Fe/H] \( \geq -0.1 \)). Mass functions are compatible with WD companions whose masses range from 0.5 to 1 \( M_\odot \). Strong barium stars have a tendency to be found in systems with shorter periods than mild barium stars, although this correlation is rather loose, metallicity and WD mass playing a role as well. Using the initial–final mass relationship established for field WDs, we derived the distribution of the mass ratio \( q' = M_{\text{AGB,ini}}/M_{\text{Ba}} \) (where \( M_{\text{AGB,ini}} \) is the WD progenitor initial mass, i.e., the mass of the system former primary component) which is a proxy for the initial mass ratio (the more so, the less mass the barium star has accreted). It appears that the distribution of \( q' \) is highly non uniform, and significantly different for mild and strong barium stars, the latter being characterized by values mostly in excess of 1.4, whereas mild barium stars occupy the range 1–1.4. The orbital properties presented in this paper pave the way for a comparison with binary-evolution models.

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Carbon stars with increased oxygen and nitrogen abundances: hydrostatic dust-free model atmospheres

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We have computed a grid of hydrostatic spherical COMARCS models for C stars covering metallicities from [Z/H] = 0 to \(-2\) and values of the carbon excess [C–O] from 6.41 to 9.15, plus some temperature sequences, where the amount of oxygen and nitrogen is increased relative to a scaled solar element mixture. Such abundance variations may appear during the late stages of stellar evolution. Our study covers changes of [O/Z] and [N/Z] going up to +0.5. Based on the atmospheric structures we have calculated synthetic spectra and photometry for all of the models in a consistent way. The sequences with changed [O/Z] and [N/Z] can be used to derive correction terms, which are applied to the colours predicted for a certain combination of effective temperature, surface gravity, metallicity and carbon excess. If one neglects these shifts in case of a variable oxygen amount, taking [C–O] instead of C/O gives much better results, since the first quantity dominates the formation of many important molecular species. For the warmer C giants with weaker pulsation it is in principle possible to determine [C–O], [O/Z] or [N/Z] from high resolution spectra, when the opacities in the radiative transfer calculations for the models and observable properties are treated consistently. The corresponding changes due to the abundances often become significantly larger than the deviations caused by uncertainties of the stellar parameters or by an optically thin dust shell. Photometric data and low or medium resolution spectra are not sufficient to derive the mentioned quantities.

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On massive dust clumps in the envelope of the red supergiant VY Canis Majoris

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The envelope of the red supergiant VY CMa has long been considered an extreme example of episodic mass loss that is possibly taking place in other cool and massive evolved stars. Recent (sub-)millimeter observations of the envelope revealed the presence of massive dusty clumps within 800 mas from the star which reinforce the picture of drastic mass-loss phenomena in VY CMa. We present new ALMA observations at an angular resolution of 0.″1 and at an unprecedented sensitivity that reveal further details about the dusty clumps. We resolve more discrete features and identify a submillimeter counterpart of a more distant Clump SW known from visual observations. The brightest clump, named C, is marginally resolved in the observations. Gas seen against the resolved continuum emission of clump C produces a molecular spectrum in absorption, in lines of mainly sulfur-bearing species. Except for SW Clump, no molecular emission is found to be associated with the dusty clumps and we propose that the dusty structures have an atypically low gas content. We attempt to reproduce the properties of the dusty clumps through three-dimensional radiative-transfer modeling. Although a clump configuration explaining the observations is found, it is not unique. A very high optical depth of all clumps to the stellar radiation make the modeling very challenging and requires unrealistically high dust masses for one of them. It is suggested that the dusty features have substructures, e.g., porosity, that allows deeper penetration of stellar photons within the clumps than in a homogeneous configuration. A comparison of the estimated clumps ages to variations in the stellar visual flux for over a century suggests that the mechanism responsible for their formation is not uniquely manifested by enhanced or strongly diminished visual light. The study demonstrates that the dusty mass-loss episodes of VY CMa are indeed unparalleled among all known non-explosive stars. The origin of these episodes remains an unsolved problem.

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The mass-loss, expansion velocities and dust production rates of carbon stars in the Magellanic Clouds

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The properties of carbon stars in the Magellanic Clouds (MCs) and their total dust production rates are predicted by fitting their spectral energy distributions (SED) over pre-computed grids of spectra reprocessed by dust. The grids are calculated as a function of the stellar parameters by consistently following the growth for several dust species in their circumstellar envelopes, coupled with a stationary wind. Dust radiative transfer is computed taking as input the results of the dust growth calculations. The optical constants for amorphous carbon are selected in order to reproduce different observations in the infrared and optical bands of Gaia Data Release 2. We find a tail of extreme mass-losing carbon stars in the Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC) with low gas-to-dust ratios that is not present in the Small Magellanic Cloud (SMC). Typical gas-to-dust ratios are around 700 for the extreme stars, but they can be down to ~160–200 and ~100 for a few sources in the SMC and in the LMC, respectively. The total dust production rate for the carbon star population is ~1.77 ± 0.45 × 10−5 M⊙ yr−1, for the LMC, and ~2.52 ± 0.96 × 10−6 M⊙ yr−1, for the SMC. The extreme carbon stars observed with the Atacama Large Millimeter Array and their wind speed are studied in detail. For the most dust-obscured star in this sample the estimated mass-loss rate is ~6.3×10−5 M⊙ yr−1.
Characterizing maser polarization: effects of saturation, anisotropic pumping and hyperfine structure

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The polarization of masers contains information on the magnetic field strength and direction of the regions they occur in. Many maser polarization observations have been performed over the last 30 years. However, versatile maser polarization models that can aide in the interpretation of these observations are not available. We developed a program suite that can compute the polarization by a magnetic field of any non-paramagnetic maser species at arbitrarily high maser saturation. Furthermore, we investigated the polarization of masers by non-Zeeman polarizing effects. We present a general interpretive structure for maser polarization observations. We expanded existing maser polarization theories of non-paramagnetic molecules and incorporated them in a numerical modeling program suite. We present a modeling program called CHAracterizes Maser Polarization (champ) that can examine the polarization of masers of arbitrarily high maser saturation and high angular momentum. Hyperfine multiplicity of the maser-transition can also be incorporated. The user is able to investigate non-Zeeman polarizing mechanisms such as anisotropic pumping and polarized incident seed radiation. We present an analysis of the polarization of ν = 1 SiO masers and the 22-GHz water maser. We comment on the underlying polarization mechanisms, and also investigate non-Zeeman effects. We identify the regimes where different polarizing mechanisms will be dominant and present the polarization characteristics of the SiO and water masers. From the results of our calculations, we identify markers to recognize alternative polarization mechanisms. We show that comparing randomly generated linear versus circular polarization (p_L–p_V) scatter-plots at fixed magnetic field strength to the observationally obtained p_L–p_V scatter can be a promising method of ascertaining the average magnetic field strength of a large number of masers.

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Spectrum of the yellow symbiotic star LT Delphini before, during, and after the 2017 outburst

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LT Del is a yellow symbiotic system that consists of a bright K3-type giant and a hot subdwarf with a temperature of ∼ 10⁵ K. We present the results of our spectroscopic observations of LT Del over the period 2010–2018. In 2017 the star experienced a second low-amplitude (∆V ≈ 0.3 m) outburst in the history of its studies. The emission spectrum of the star represented in the optical range by hydrogen, neutral and ionized helium lines underwent significant changes in the outburst. The fluxes in the Hα and HeI emission lines increased by a factor of 5–6, the HeII λ4686 line grew by a factor of 10. According to our estimates, in the 2017 outburst, the temperature of the exciting star rose to T_hot ∼ 130 000 K, while during the first 1994 outburst the change in temperature was insignificant. This suggests cool and hot outbursts of LT Del by analogy with similar events of another yellow symbiotic star, AG Dra.

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Missing red supergiants and carbon burning

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Recent studies on direct imaging of Type II core-collapse supernova progenitors indicate a possible threshold around $M_{\text{ZAMS}} \sim 16–20$ M\textsubscript{$\odot$}, where red supergiants with larger birth masses do not appear to result in supernova explosions and instead implode directly into a black hole. In this study we argue that it is not a coincidence that this threshold closely matches the critical transition of central carbon burning in massive stars from the convective to radiative regime. In lighter stars, Carbon burns convectively in the center and result in compact final pre-supernova cores that are likely to result in explosions, while in heavier stars after the transition, it burns as a radiative flame and the stellar cores become significantly harder to explode. Using the \textsc{kepler} code we demonstrate the sensitivity of this transition to the rate of $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha,\gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ reaction and the overshoot mixing efficiency, and we argue that the upper mass limit of exploding red supergiants could be employed to constrain uncertain input physics of massive stellar evolution calculations. The initial mass corresponding to the central carbon burning transition range from 14 to 26 M\textsubscript{$\odot$} in recently published models from various groups and codes, and only a few are in agreement with the estimates inferred from direct imaging studies.

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Period analysis of All-Sky Automated Survey for Supernovæ (ASAS-SN) data on pulsating red giants

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The All-Sky Automated Survey for Supernovæ (ASAS-SN) has recently used over 2000 days of data to identify more than 50,000 variable stars, automatically classify these, determine periods and amplitudes for those which are periodic – part of a remarkable project to classify 412,000 known variable stars, and determine their basic properties. This information about the newly-discovered variables, along with the photometric data is freely available on-line. In this paper, we analyze ASAS-SN data on two small random samples of pulsating red giants (PRGs) in detail, and compare our results with those found by ASAS-SN. For the majority of a sample of 29 mostly semi-regular (SR) PRGs, the ASAS-SN results are incorrect or incomplete: either the ASAS-SN periods are 2, 3, or 4 times the actual period, or the ASAS-SN period is a "long secondary period" with a shorter pulsation period present, or the star is multi-periodic or otherwise complex, or the star’s data are contaminated by instrumental effects. For almost all of a sample of the longest-period Mira stars (periods 640 days or more), the ASAS-SN period is actually 2 or more times the actual period. Our results are not surprising, given the very complex behaviour of PRGs.

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The age and metallicity dependence of the near-infrared magnitudes of red clump stars

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Red clump (RC) stars are widely used as an excellent standard candle. To make them even better, it is important
to know the dependence of their absolute magnitudes on age and metallicity. We observed star clusters in the Large Magellanic Cloud to fill age and metallicity parameter space, which previous work has not observationally studied. We obtained the empirical relations of the age and metallicity dependence of absolute magnitudes $M_J$, $M_H$, and $M_K_s$, and colours $J - H$, $J - K_s$, and $H - K_s$ of RC stars, although the coefficients have large errors. Mean near-infrared magnitudes of the RC stars in the clusters show relatively strong dependence on age for young RC stars. The $J - K_s$ and $H - K_s$ colours show the nearly constant values of $0.528 \pm 0.015$ and $0.047 \pm 0.011$ mag, respectively, at least within the ages of 1.1–3.2 Gyr and [Fe/H] of $-0.90$ to $-0.40$ dex. We also confirmed that the population effects of observational data are in good agreement with the model prediction.

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A variationally computed IR line list for the methyl radical CH$_3$

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We present the first variational calculation of a hot temperature $ab$ initio line list for the CH$_3$ radical. It is based on a high level $ab$ initio potential energy surface and dipole moment surface of CH$_3$ in the ground electronic state. The ro-vibrational energy levels and Einstein A coefficients were calculated using the general-molecule variational approach implemented in the computer program TROVE. Vibrational energies and vibrational intensities are found to be in very good agreement with the available experimental data. The line list comprises 9,127,123 ro-vibrational states and 72,833,173 transitions with angular momenta, $J \leq 320$ and $\mu > 0.3$ m. The line lists are suitable for temperatures up to about 5000 K.

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ExoMol line lists XXXII: The rovibronic spectrum of MgO

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Line lists for magnesium oxide are computed and extensive comparisons are made with existing experimental spectra. The LiTY line lists cover all ro-vibration transitions within the five lowest-lying electronic states ($X^1\Sigma^+$, $a^3\Pi$, $A^1\Pi$, $B^1\Sigma^+$ and $b^3\Sigma^+$) and five isotopologues: $^{24}\text{Mg}^{16}\text{O}$, $^{25}\text{Mg}^{16}\text{O}$, $^{26}\text{Mg}^{16}\text{O}$, $^{24}\text{Mg}^{17}\text{O}$, $^{24}\text{Mg}^{18}\text{O}$ and $^{24}\text{Mg}^{19}\text{O}$. The calculation use potential energy curves, spin-orbit and electronic angular momentum couplings curves determined by fitting to empirical energy levels; these levels are reproduced to within 0.01 cm$^{-1}$ in most cases. Computed nuclear-motion wavefunctions are combined with $ab$ initio dipole moment curves to give transition intensities and excited state radiative lifetimes which are compared with laboratory measurements. The $^{24}\text{Mg}^{16}\text{O}$ line list comprises 186,842 ($J \leq 320$) ro-vibronic states and 72,833,173 transitions with angular momenta, $J$, up to 300 and covering wavenumbers up to 33,000 cm$^{-1}$ ($\lambda > 0.3$ µm). The line lists are suitable for temperatures up to about 5000 K. They are relevant to astrophysical studies of exoplanet atmospheres, cool stars and brown dwarfs, and are made available in electronic form at the CDS and ExoMol databases.

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Accurate line lists are crucial for correctly modelling a variety of astrophysical phenomena, including stellar photospheres and the atmospheres of extra-solar planets. This paper presents a new line database for the main isotopologues of titanium oxide (TiO): $^{46}$Ti$^{16}$O, $^{47}$Ti$^{16}$O, $^{48}$Ti$^{16}$O, $^{49}$Ti$^{16}$O and $^{50}$Ti$^{16}$O. The TOTO line list includes all dipole-allowed transitions between 13 low-lying electronic states (X$^3\Delta$, A$^3\Phi$, B$^3\Pi$, E$^3\Pi$, a$^1\Delta$, b$^1\Pi$, c$^1\Phi$, d$^1\Sigma^+$, e$^1\Sigma^+$, f$^1\Delta$). Ab initio potential energy curves (PECs) are computed at the icMRCI level and combined with spin-orbit and other coupling curves. These PECs and couplings are iteratively refined to match known empirical energy levels. Accurate line intensities are generated using ab initio dipole moment curves. The TOTO line lists are appropriate for temperatures below 5000 K and contain 30 million transitions for $^{48}$Ti$^{16}$O; it is made available in electronic form via the CDS data centre and via www.exomol.com. Tests of the line lists show greatly improved agreement with observed spectra for objects such as M-dwarfs GJ 876 and GL 581.
Ionization correction factors for ionized nebulæ

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In this paper we discuss the calculation of chemical abundances in planetary nebulæ and H ii regions through ionization correction factors (ICFs). We review the first ICFs proposed in the literature based on ionization potential similarities and we present the most recent ICFs derived from large sample of photo-ionization models. We also discuss some of the considerations that have to be kept in mind when using ICFs to compute the chemical composition of ionized nebulæ.

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The peculiar outburst activity of the symbiotic binary AG Draconis

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AG Draconis is a strongly interacting binary system which manifests characteristic symbiotic activity of alternating quiescent and active stages. The latter ones consist of the series of individual outbursts repeating at about a one-year interval. After seven years of flat quiescence following the 2006–2008 major outbursts, in the late spring of 2015, the symbiotic system AG Dra started to become brighter again toward what appeared to be a new minor outburst. The current outburst activity of AG Dra was confirmed by the following three outbursts in April 2016, May 2017 and April 2018. The photometric and spectroscopic observations suggest that all these outbursts are of the hot type. Such behaviour is considerably peculiar in almost 130-year history of observing of this object, because the major outbursts at the beginning of active stages are typically cool ones. In the present work, the current peculiar activity of the symbiotic binary AG Dra is described in detail.

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The activity of the symbiotic binary Z Andromedæ and its latest outburst

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Z Andromedæ is a prototype of classical symbiotic variable stars. It is characterized by alternating of quiescent and
active stages, the later ones are accompanied by changes in both photometry and spectral characteristics of this object. The current activity of Z And began in 2000, and the last outburst was recorded at the turn of the years 2017 and 2018. An important source of information about the behaviour of this symbiotic binary during the ongoing active stage is photometric and spectroscopic observations obtained with small telescopes by amateur astronomers. In this paper, we present the results of analysis of these observations, with an emphasis on the significant similarity of the last outburst of Z And with the previous ones, during which jets from this symbiotic system were observed. The presented results point to the importance of long-term monitoring of symbiotic binaries.

Oral contribution, published in the "50th Conference on Variable Stars Research", Brno, Czech Republic

Review Papers

Astro2020 White Paper: Unlocking the secrets of late-stage stellar evolution through radio wavelength imaging

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During the late phases of evolution, low-to-intermediate mass stars like our Sun undergo periods of extensive mass loss, returning up to 80% of their initial mass to the interstellar medium. This mass loss profoundly affects the stellar evolutionary history, and the resulting circumstellar ejecta are a primary source of dust and heavy element enrichment in the Galaxy. However, many details concerning the physics of late-stage stellar mass loss remain poorly understood, including the wind launching mechanism(s), the mass loss geometry and timescales, and the mass loss histories of stars of various initial masses. These uncertainties have implications not only for stellar astrophysics, but for fields ranging from star formation to extragalactic astronomy and cosmology. Observations at centimeter, millimeter, and submillimeter wavelengths that resolve the radio surfaces and extended atmospheres of evolved stars in space, time, and frequency are poised to provide groundbreaking new insights into these questions in the coming decade.

Published in Astro2020 Decadal Survey White Paper
Available from https://arxiv.org/abs/1903.05592

Molecular masers as probes of the dynamic atmospheres of dying stars

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More than half of the dust and heavy element enrichment in galaxies originates from the winds and outflows of evolved, low-to-intermediate mass stars on the asymptotic giant branch (AGB). However, numerous details of the physics of late-stage stellar mass loss remain poorly understood, ranging from the wind launching mechanism(s) to the geometry and timescales of the mass loss. One of the major challenges to understanding AGB winds is that the AGB evolutionary phase is characterized by the interplay between highly complex and dynamic processes,
including radial pulsations, shocks, magnetic fields, opacity changes due to dust and molecule formation, and large-

scale convective flows. Collectively, these phenomena lead to changes in the observed stellar properties on timescales of
days to years. Probing the complex atmospheric physics of AGB stars therefore demands exquisite spatial resolution,
coupled with temporal monitoring over both short and long timescales. Observations of the molecular maser lines
that arise in the winds and outflows of AGB stars using very long baseline interferometry (VLBI) offer one of the
most powerful tools available to measure the atmospheric dynamics, physical conditions, and magnetic fields with
ultra-high spatial resolution (i.e., tens of μarcsec, corresponding to ∼ 0.002R∗ at d ≈ 150 pc), coupled with the
ability to track features and phenomena on timescales of days to years. Observational advances in the coming decade
will enable contemporaneous observations of an unprecedented number of maser transitions spanning centimeter to
submillimeter wavelengths. In evolved stars, observations of masers within the winds and outflows are poised to
provide groundbreaking new insights into the atmospheric physics and mass-loss process.

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Announcements

Lithium in the Universe: to Be to not to Be

This is the second announcement of the conference "Lithium in the Universe: to Be or not to Be", that will be held
at the Observatory of Rome (Italy), from November 18 to 22, 2019.

The meeting will bring together experts from various fields to discuss the role played by lithium in several astrophys-
ical contexts and to highlight the extraordinary character of this chemical species, as a tracer of the structure and
evolution of stars, galaxies and the Universe.

The main topics of the meeting will be:

- Big Bang nucleosynthesis
- Nuclear reaction rates involving lithium and beryllium
- Physical processes in stellar interiors as traced by Li, Be, and B
- Hot bottom burning in massive AGB stars
- Lithium depletion in pre-MS stars and brown dwarfs
- Lithium and Beryllium in novae
- Lithium in stellar clusters
- Galaxy evolution
- Lithium as tracer of the evolution of extra-galactic systems
- Lithium and the First stars
- Evolution in the disc and the bulge of the Milky Way
- Li abundance modelling
If interested, we kindly ask you to pre-register as soon as possible via the webpage of the conference, because the number of participants, owing to the limited capability of the conference room, will be restricted to 120. We won’t be able to accept any registration once the afore-mentioned limit is reached.

Confirmed speakers:

- Jerome Bouvier (Observatoire de Grenoble, France)
- Sergio Cristallo (INAF – Osservatorio d’Abruzzo, Italy)
- Franca D’Antona (INAF – Osservatorio Astronomico di Roma, Italy)
- Barry Davids (Simon Fraser University, Canada)
- Brian Fields (University of Illinois, USA)
- Anibal García-Hernández (IAC Tenerife, Spain)
- Jordi José (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Spain)
- Nadège Lagarde (France National centre for scientific research, France)
- Karin Lind (Max Planck Institute for Astronomy, Germany)
- Francesca Matteucci (Università di Trieste, Italy)
- Jorge Melendez (Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil)
- Paolo Molaro (INAF – Osservatorio di Trieste, Italy)
- Cyril Pitrou (IAP Paris, France)
- Rafael Rebolo (IAC Tenerife, Spain)
- Matthias Steffen (AIP Potsdam, Germany)
- Rodolfo Smiljanic (Nicolaus Copernicus Astronomical Centre, Poland)
- Aaron Steinhauer (State University of New York at Geneseo, USA)
- Bruce Twarog (University of Kansas, USA)

Important deadlines:

- Abstract submission: 25 June 2019
- Notification of speakers: 26 July 2019
- Payment of early registration fee: 15 September 2019
- Start of meeting: 18 November 2019

The venue will be the prestigious site of the Observatory of Rome, located in the town of Monte Porzio Catone. A daily bus service to reach and return from the Observatory will be available for the participants.

We will be able to offer support to a limited number of students. The students interested in this opportunity are kindly asked to apply within May 24, by sending a message to the email address of the conference, given below, with the object “request of support”. The current position of the applier (i.e. 2nd year PhD student), the affiliation and the supervisor of the research project must be indicated.

Contacts: e-mail: lithiumintheuniverse@gmail.com
Phone: +39-06/94286427

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RAS Specialist Discussion Meeting:
Common envelope evolution and post-common-envelope systems

Registration is open for the RAS Specialist Discussion meeting "Common envelope evolution and post-common-envelope systems" to be held October 11th 2019 at the RAS headquarters in London (UK). The deadline for abstract submission is 31 August 2019 with further details available on the conference webpage [https://commonenvelopes.space/]

Description:

More than half of all solar-type stars exist in binary systems and a significant fraction of these are close enough to interact. In particular, the closest are expected to experience a common-envelope evolution whereby runaway, dynamically unstable, mass transfer leads to the entire system being engulfed by material lost from the envelope of one of the stars as it ascends the giant branch. The two stars then spiral in towards one another, shrinking the orbit and ejecting the envelope in the process.

The common envelope phase is critical for the formation of a wide variety of astrophysical phenomena, in particular transient phenomena like type Ia supernovæ and stellar mass gravitational wave sources, yet the exact physics of the process remains a mystery. Additionally, in the last few years, it has been shown that the common envelope phase may play an important role in explaining a long-standing problem of nebular astrophysics: the so-called abundance discrepancy problem.

This meeting aims to bring together the various communities, both theoretical and observational, working on different (post-)common-envelope phenomena in order to further our understanding of the process as a whole. This is particularly timely given that with the recent or impending arrival of various new observing facilities like Gaia, LSST and LIGO–VIRGO – heralded by some as the golden age of time-domain and transient astronomy.

See also [https://commonenvelopes.space/]