



# Numerical Relativity in effective field theories of gravity

**Aaron Held**

Philippe Meyer Junior Research Chair  
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November 05 2024: Théorie, Univers et Gravitation – TUG,  
LAPTh – Annecy, November 05 – November 07 2024



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**Part I: Gravitational Effective Field Theories**

**Part II: Well-posedness** with Pau Figueras and Áron Kovács

**Part III: Nonlinear evolution (Quadratic Gravity)** with Hyun Lim

**Bonus: What about ghost instabilities?** with Cédric Deffayet, Shinji Mukhoyama, and Alexander Vikman

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# Part I: Gravitational Effective Field Theories

# The Effective Field Theory Framework ...

Assuming a given

(i) IR **field content**

**metric \***

(ii) IR **symmetries**

**Lorentz invariance**

(iii) **expansion** scale/scheme

**derivative / curvature**

we expand the effective action in all possible operators.

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**... introduces rules to modified gravity.**

# Joint derivative/curvature expansion ...

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{EFT}}^{(1)} = M_{\text{Pl}}^2 R$$

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After reduction via

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(ii) geometric identities

(iii) 4D-specific identities (e.g. Gauss-Bonnet)

see Fulling CQG 9 (1992); Martin-Garcia, Yllanes, Portugal, CPC 179 (2008)



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# Part II: Well-posedness

Noakes, JMP 24, 1846 (1983);  
Figueras, Held, Kovacs, 2407.08775



- **General Relativity (Leray weights)**
- **Quadratic Gravity**
- **Cubic Gravity, Quartic Gravity, and beyond ...**

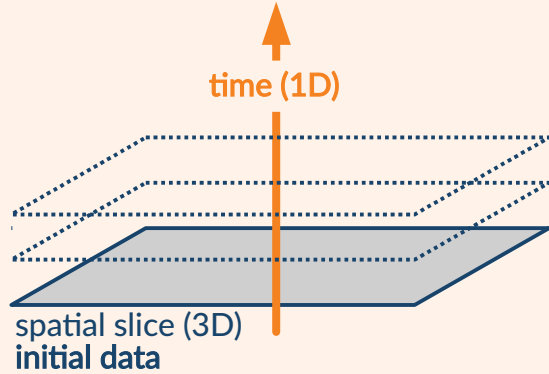
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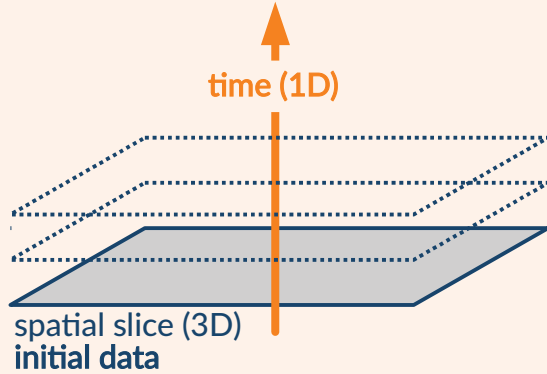
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- “ An initial value problem is well-posed if a solution “
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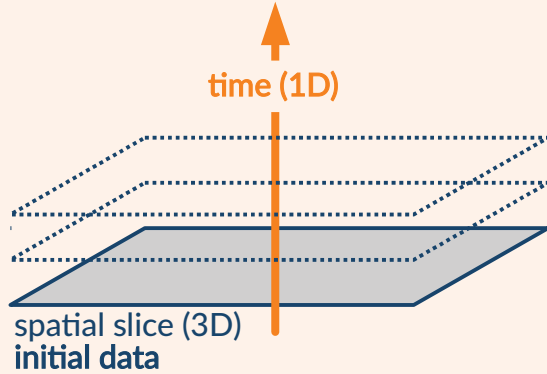
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Formal proof of existence and uniqueness  
Yvonne Choquet-Bruhat '52



(3+1) numerical evolution  
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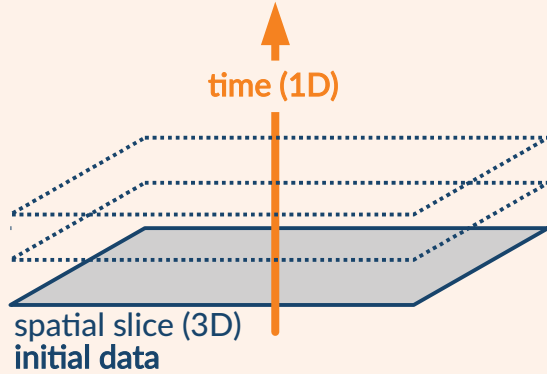
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## ... and for Quadratic Gravity

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Held, Lim '21, '23, '24; Cayuso '23;  
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## ... and for the EFT (at fixed order)

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# Leray weights ...

Choquet-Bruhat, DeWitt-Morette, 1982

Let  $i$  be an index labeling a system of second order equations  $E_i$  for the variables  $v_i$ .  
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**... give a prescription to diagonalise the principal part.**

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For constraint propagation see  
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... is already in wave-like form.

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Stelle, PRD 16 (1977) 953-969  
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2<sup>nd</sup>-  
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$$\square R = m_0^2 R$$

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$$\square S_{ab} \overset{3|1}{=} -\frac{1}{3} \left( \frac{m_2^2}{m_0^2} - 1 \right) (\nabla_a \nabla_b R) - 2 S^{cd} C_{acbd} + \mathcal{O}_{\text{lower order}}$$

**massive spin-2**  
(ghost)

- For equal masses, the 2<sup>nd</sup>-order field equations of Quadratic Gravity are of wave-like form.
- For unequal masses, one can still find suitable Leray weights.

# Quadratic Gravity ...

- recall  $\mathcal{L} = M_{\text{Pl}}^2 \left[ R + \frac{1}{12m_0^2} R^2 + \frac{1}{4m_2^2} C_{abcd} C^{abcd} \right]$

Stelle, PRD 16 (1977) 953-969  
Noakes, JMP 24, 1846 (1983)

2<sup>nd</sup>-  
order  
variables

$$\square g_{ab} \sim R_{ab} \equiv S_{ab} + \frac{1}{4} g_{ab} R$$

**massless spin-2**  
(graviton)

$$\square R = m_0^2 R$$

**massive spin-0**  
(scalar)

$$\square S_{ab} = -\frac{1}{3} \left( \frac{m_2^2}{m_0^2} - 1 \right) (\nabla_a \nabla_b R) - 2 S^{cd} C_{acbd} + \mathcal{O}_{\text{lower order}}$$

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- For equal masses, the 2<sup>nd</sup>-order field equations of Quadratic Gravity are of wave-like form.
- For unequal masses, one can still find suitable Leray weights.

... admits Leray weights for its 2<sup>nd</sup> order field equations.

# Cubic Gravity (after suitable field redefinitions) ...

- recall  $\mathcal{L}_{\text{EFT}}^{(3)} = \frac{1}{M_{\text{Pl}}^2} \left[ \alpha_1 R^{ab} \square R_{ab} - \beta_1 R \square R + \gamma_3 C_{ab}{}^{cd} C_{cd}{}^{ef} C_{ef}{}^{ab} \right]$



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order-  
reduced  
2<sup>nd</sup>-order  
field  
equations

$$\square g_{ab} \sim R_{ab} \equiv S_{ab} + \frac{1}{4} g_{ab} R$$

$$\square C_{abde} = \mathcal{O}_{abde}^C(\partial C, \partial \partial S, \partial \partial R)$$

$$\square R \equiv R^{(1)}$$

$$\square S_{ab} \equiv S_{ab}^{(1)}$$

$$\square R^{(1)} \equiv \mathcal{O}^R(\partial C, \partial \partial S, \partial \partial R)$$

$$\square S_{ab}^{(1)} \equiv \left( 1 - \frac{2\beta_1}{\alpha_1} \right) \left( \frac{1}{4} g_{ab} \square - \nabla_a \nabla_b \right) R^{(1)} + \mathcal{O}_{ab}^S(\partial C, \partial \partial S, \partial \partial R)$$

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# Higher order EFT (after suitable field redefinitions) ...

Figueras, Held, Kovacs, 2407.08775

- Inductively, this extends to  $\mathcal{L}_{\text{reg}}^{(n)} = \sum_{k=0}^n \left[ \alpha_k R^{ab} \square^k R_{ab} - \beta_k R \square^k R \right]$  with  $\alpha_n = 2\beta_n$

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# Well-posed initial value formulation ...

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{EFT}}^{(1)} = M_{\text{Pl}}^2 R$$



$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{EFT}}^{(2)} = \left[ \alpha_0 R_{ab} R^{ab} - \beta_0 R^2 \right]$$

order-by-order field redefinitions of the form

$$g_{ab} \rightarrow g_{ab} + c_1 g_{ab} X + c_2 X_{ab}$$

can remove any term containing Ricci variables

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{EFT}}^{(3)} = \frac{1}{M_{\text{Pl}}^2} \left[ \alpha_1 R^{ab} \square R_{ab} - \beta_1 R \square R + \gamma_3 C_{ab}{}^{cd} C_{cd}{}^{ef} C_{ef}{}^{ab} + \delta_{3,1} C_{abcd} C^{abcd} R + \delta_{3,2} C_{abcd} R^{ac} R^{bd} + \delta_{3,3} R_a^b R_b^c R_c^a + \delta_{3,4} R_{ab} R^{ab} R + \delta_{3,5} R^3 \right]$$

Goroff, Sagnotti, Nucl.Phys.B 266 (1986)  
 Bueno, Cano, PRD 94 (2016) 10  
 de Rham, Francfort, Zhang, PRD 102 (2020) 2

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{EFT}}^{(4)} = \frac{1}{M_{\text{Pl}}^4} \left[ \alpha_2 R^{ab} \square^2 R_{ab} - \beta_2 R \square^2 R + \gamma_{4,1} (C_{abcd} C^{abcd})^2 + \gamma_{4,2} (C_{abcd} * C^{abcd})^2 + \dots \right]$$

Endlich, Gorbenko, Huang, Senatore, JHEP 09, 122 (2017)

# Well-posed initial value formulation ...

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Bueno, Cano, PRD 94 (2016) 10

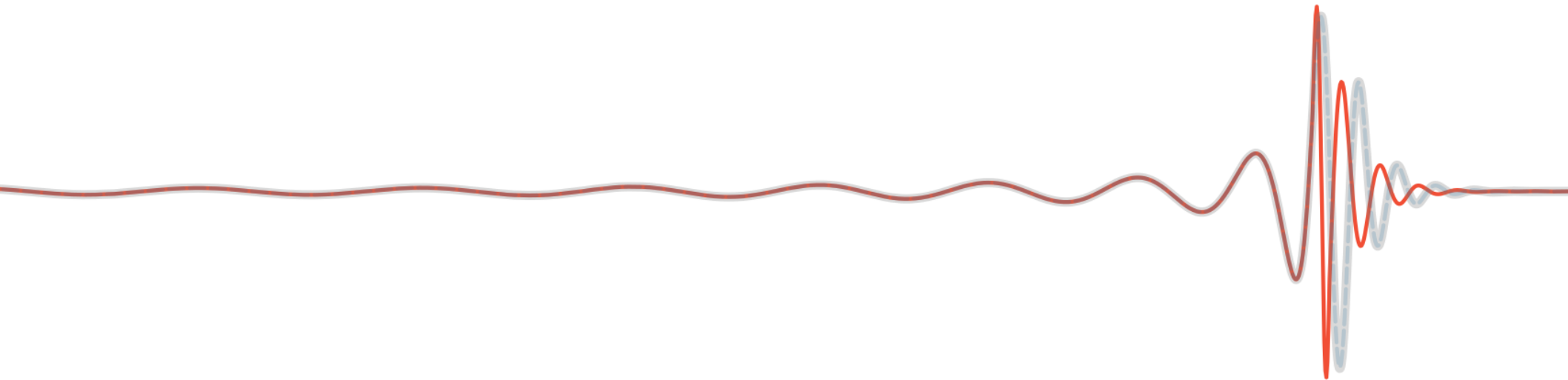
de Rham, Francfort, Zhang, PRD 102 (2020) 2

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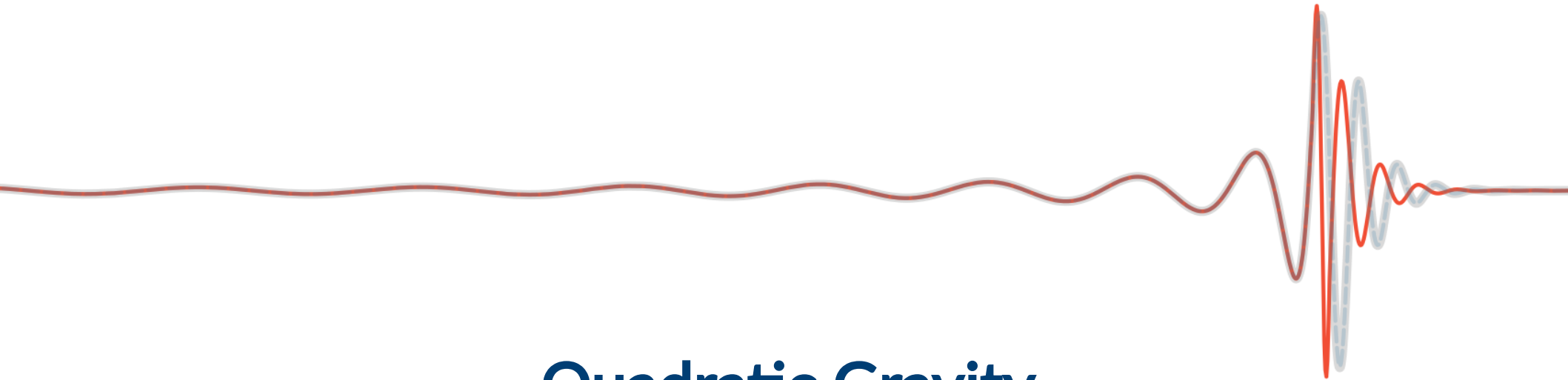
Figueras, Held, Kovacs, 2407.08775

... of general effective field theories of gravity.



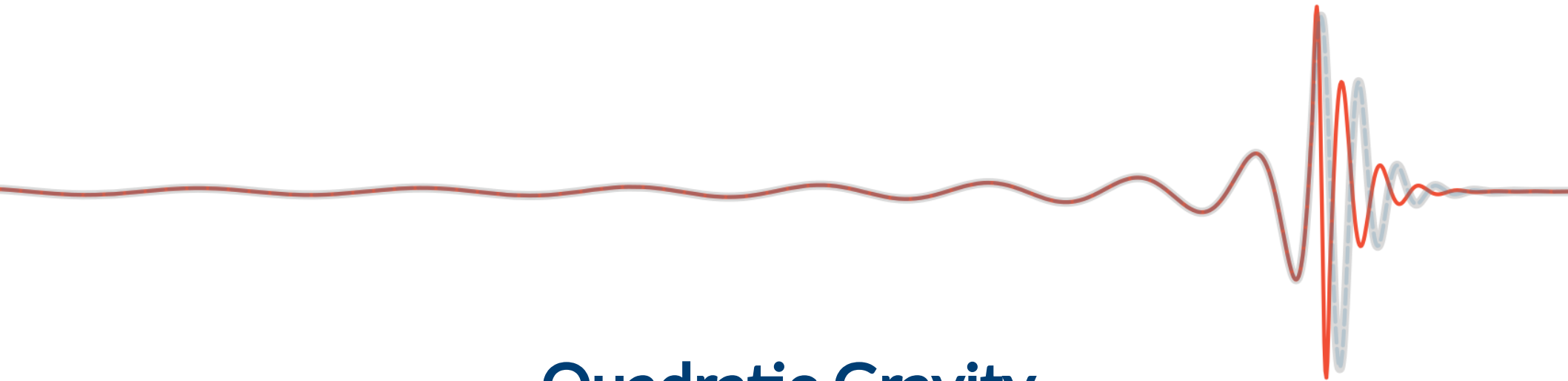
## Part III: Nonlinear evolution (Quadratic Gravity)

Held, Lim, PRD 104 (2021) 8  
Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10  
& to appear



## Quadratic Gravity

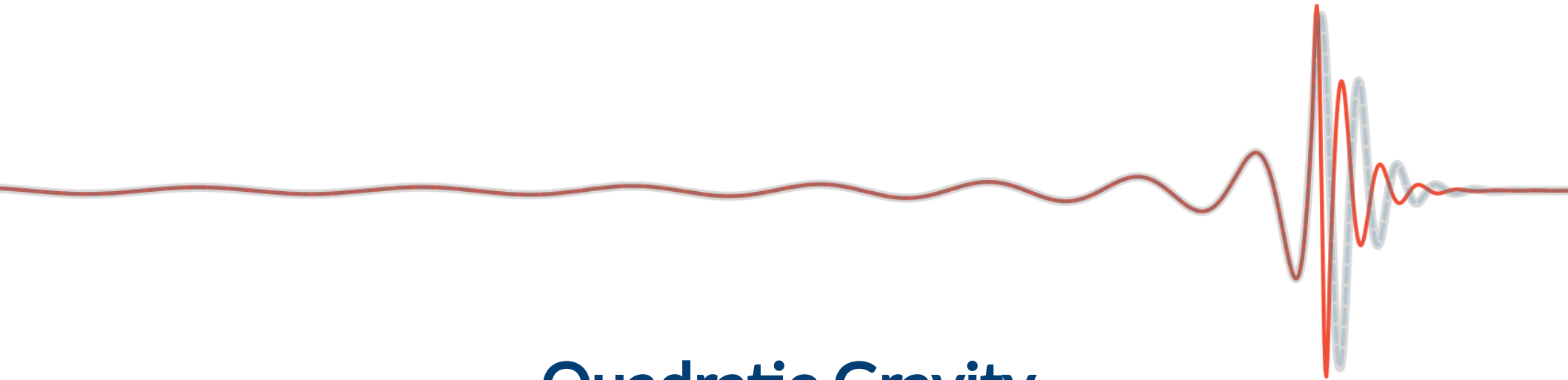
$$S = \int d^4x \sqrt{|g|} M_{\text{Planck}}^2 \left[ \underset{\text{massless spin-2}}{R} + \underset{\text{massive spin-0}}{\frac{1}{12m_0^2} R^2} + \underset{\text{massive spin-2}}{\frac{1}{4m_2^2} C_{abcd} C^{abcd}} \right]$$



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as a benchmark model to proceed to cubic/quartic terms

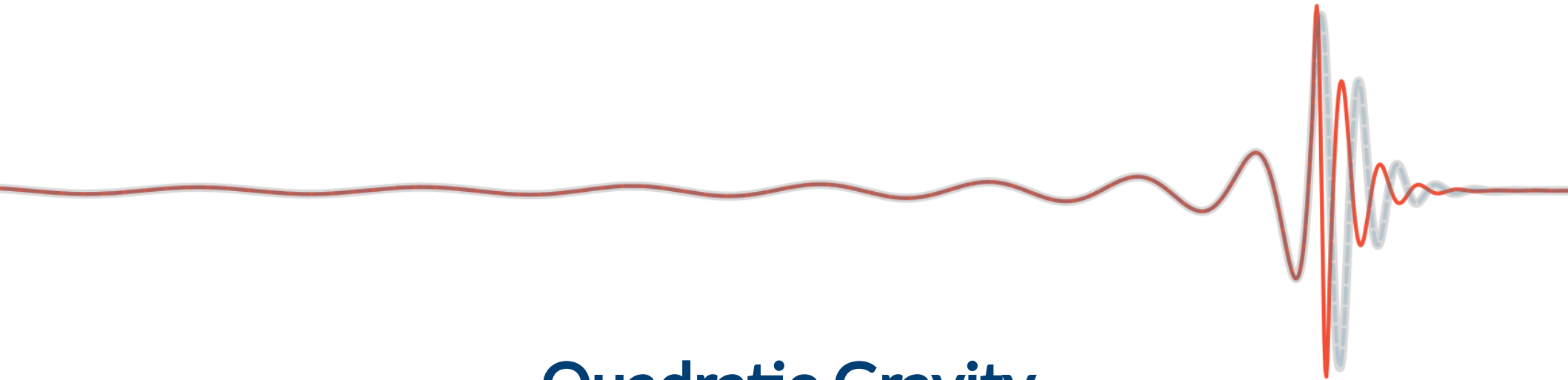


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as the leading-order terms before field redefinitions / in non-vacuum situations





## Quadratic Gravity

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as a fundamental theory of gravity

Stelle, PRD 16 (1977) 953-969  
Avramidi, Barvinsky, PLB 159 (1985) 269-274  
Donoghue, Menezes, PRD 104 (2021) 4

- numerically stable evolution
- isolated black holes: stability & transitions
- black-hole binaries & waveforms

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Held, Lim, PRD 104 (2021) 8  
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Held, Lim, PRD 104 (2021) 8  
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# Numerical Evolution of Quadratic Gravity ...

Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10

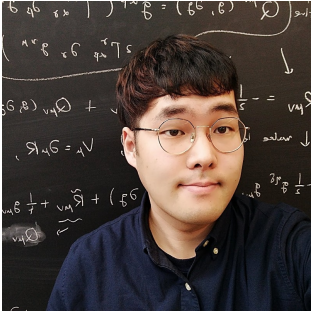
## Dendro-GR [adapted]

- parallelized adaptive mesh refinement
- wavelet adaptive multiresolution
- 4<sup>th</sup> order finite differencing
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Fernando et.Al. 2018

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Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10

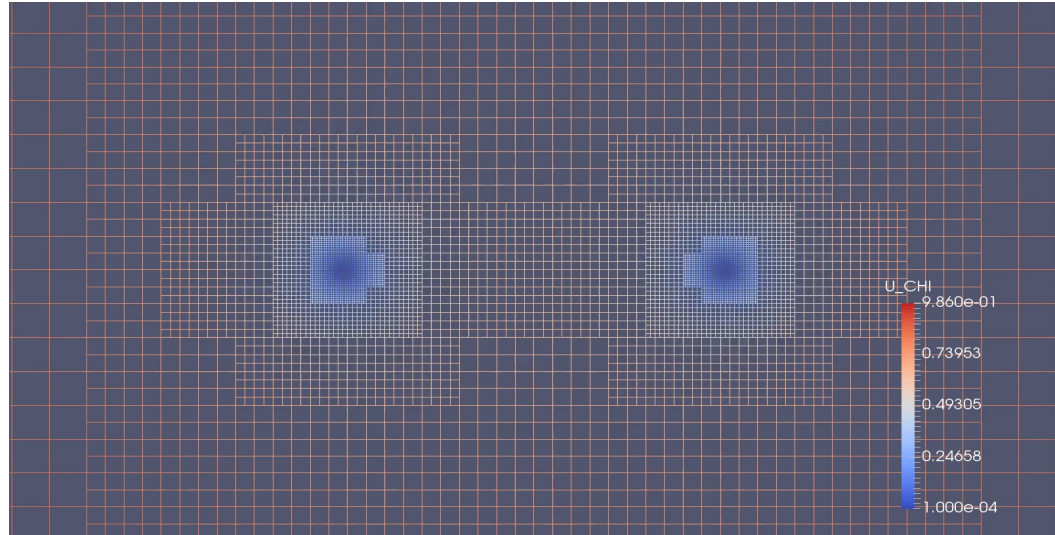


Hyun Lim  
Los Alamos

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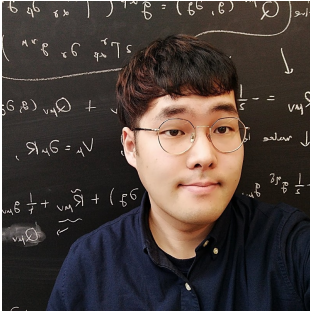
Fernando et.al. 2018



**Dendro-GR** (Fernando et.al. 2018),  
<https://github.com/paralab/Dendro-GR>

# Numerical Evolution of Quadratic Gravity ...

Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10

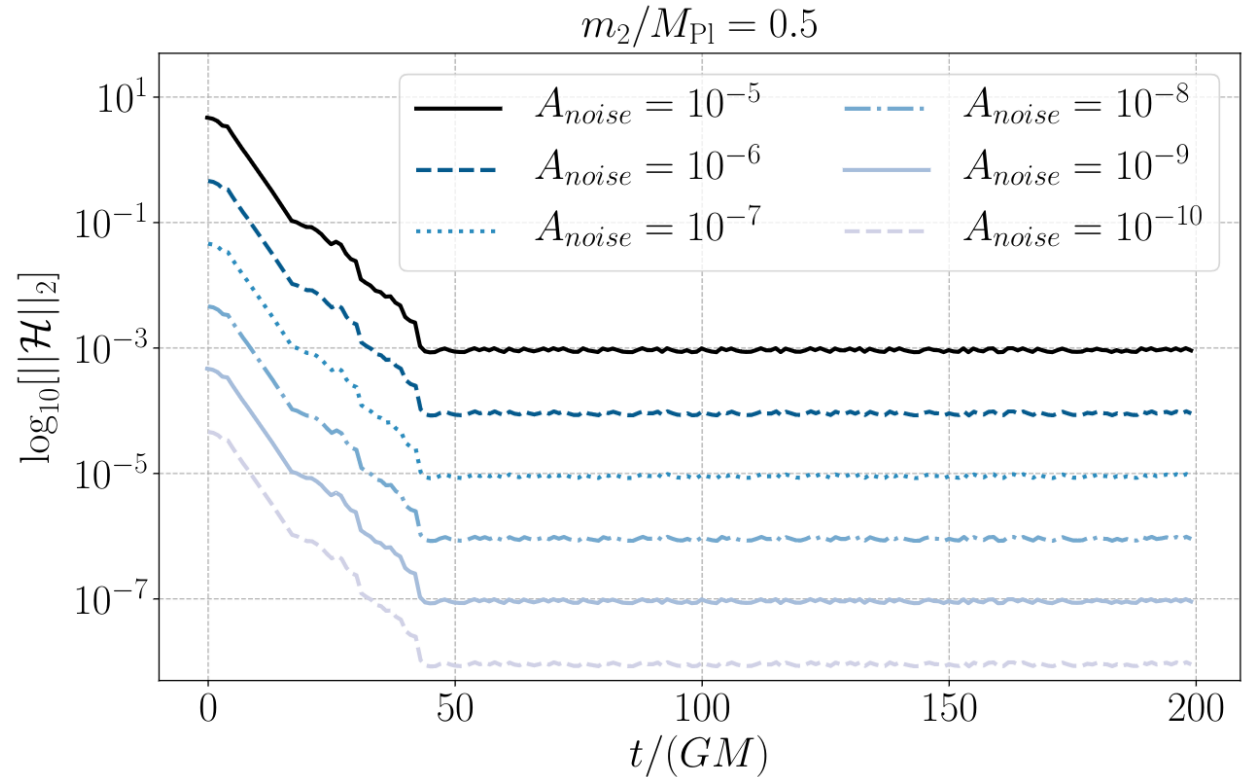


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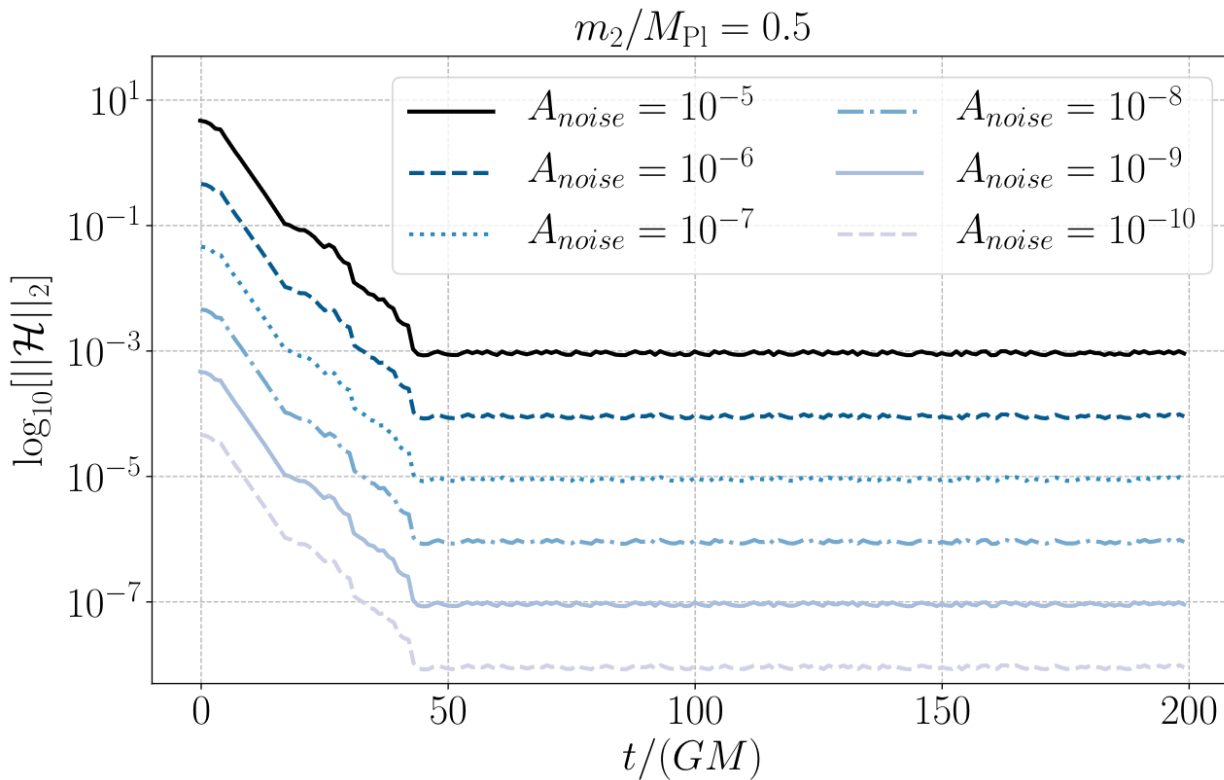
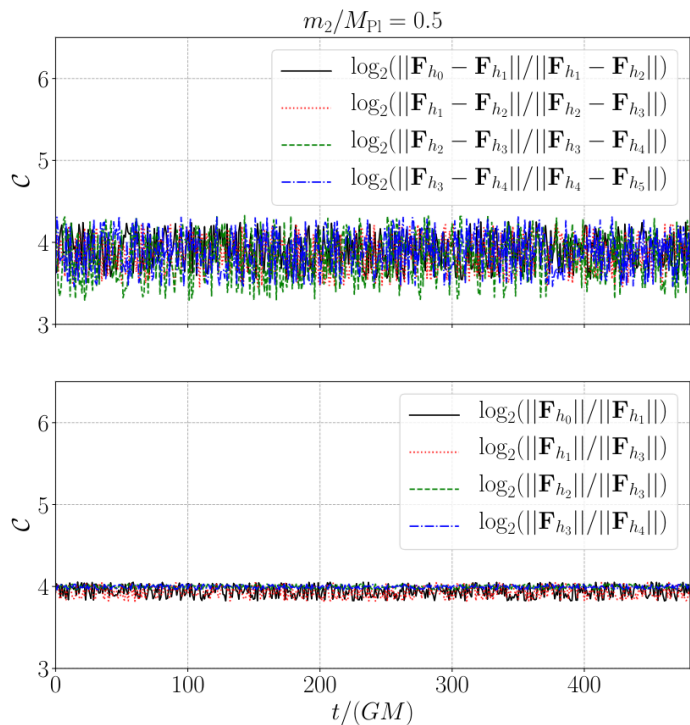
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Fernando et al. 2018



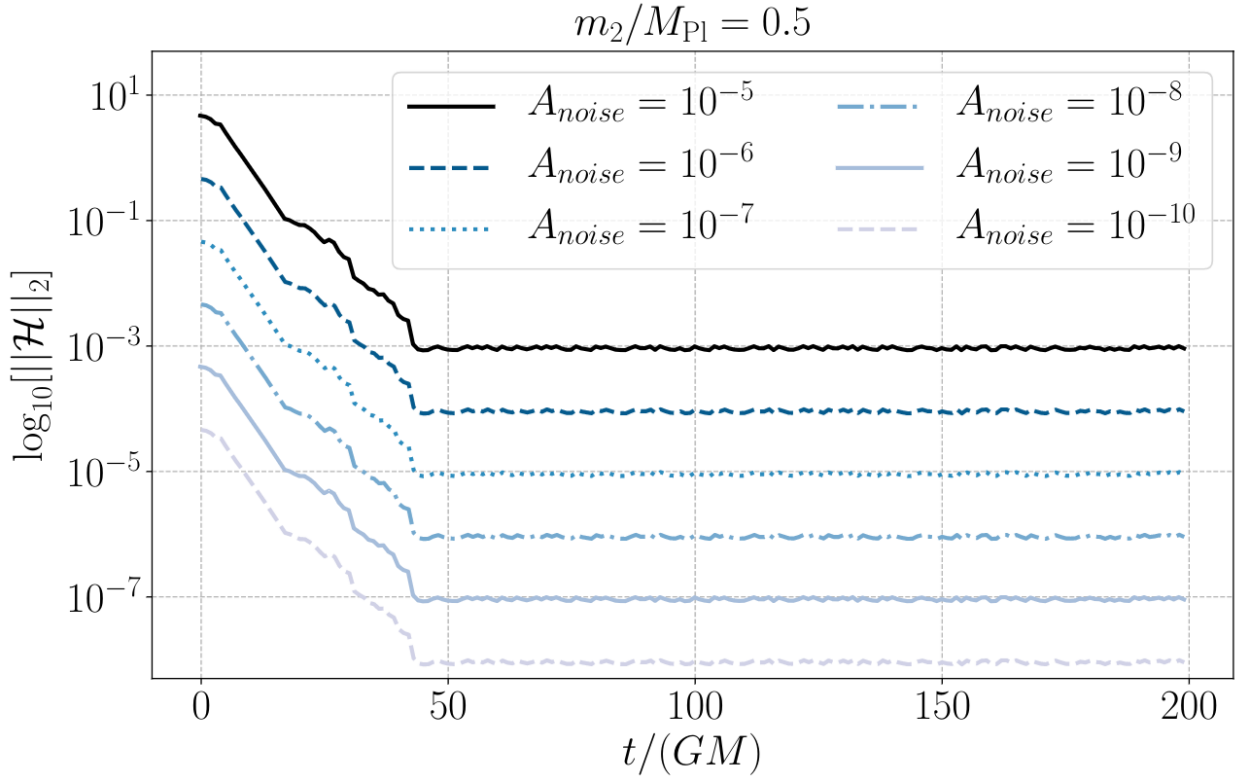
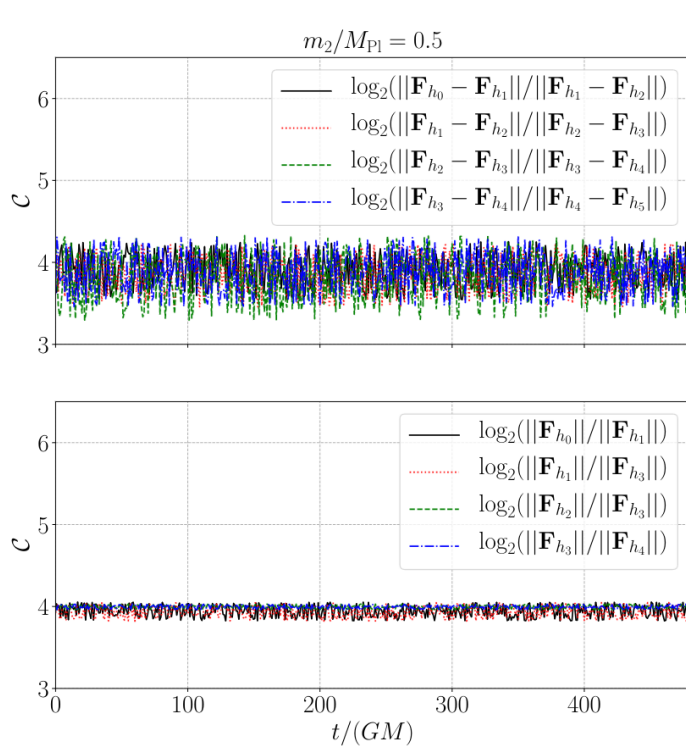
# Numerical Evolution of Quadratic Gravity ...

Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10



# Numerical Evolution of Quadratic Gravity ...

Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10



... is numerically stable.

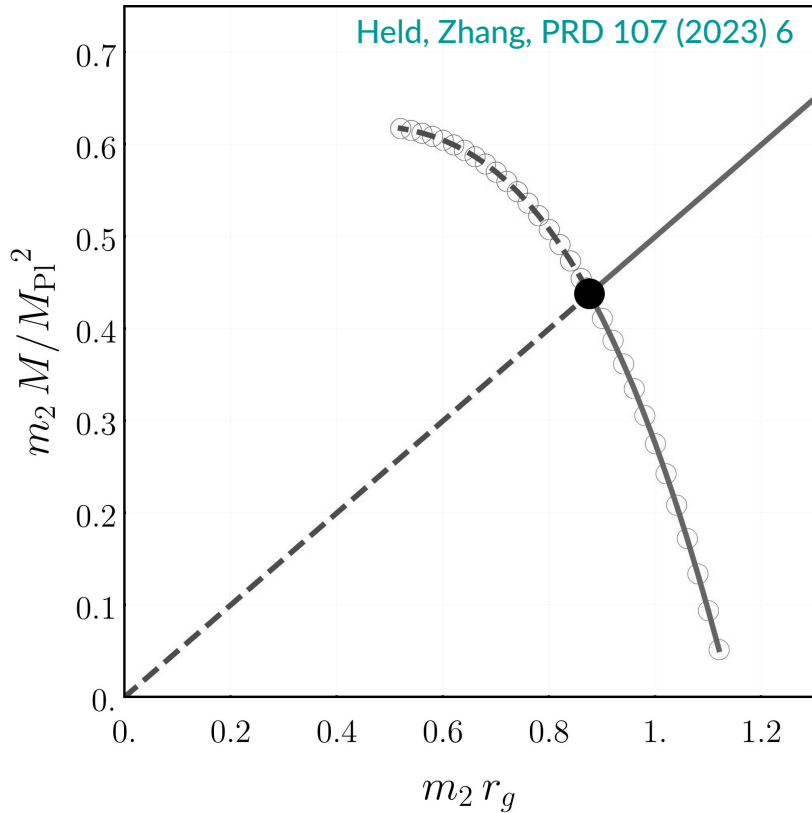


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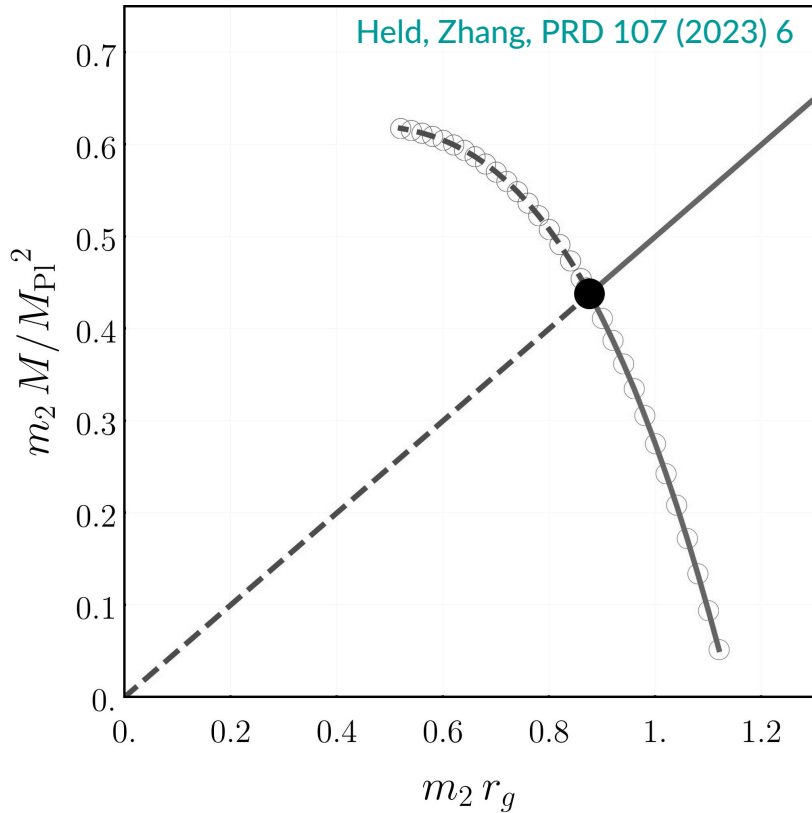
Held, Lim, PRD 104 (2021) 8  
Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10  
& upcoming

# Isolated black holes ...



see also  
Lu, Perkins, , Stelle, PRL 114 (2015) 17 & PRD 92 (2015) 12  
Svarc, Pravdova, Miskovsky, PRD 107 (2023) 2

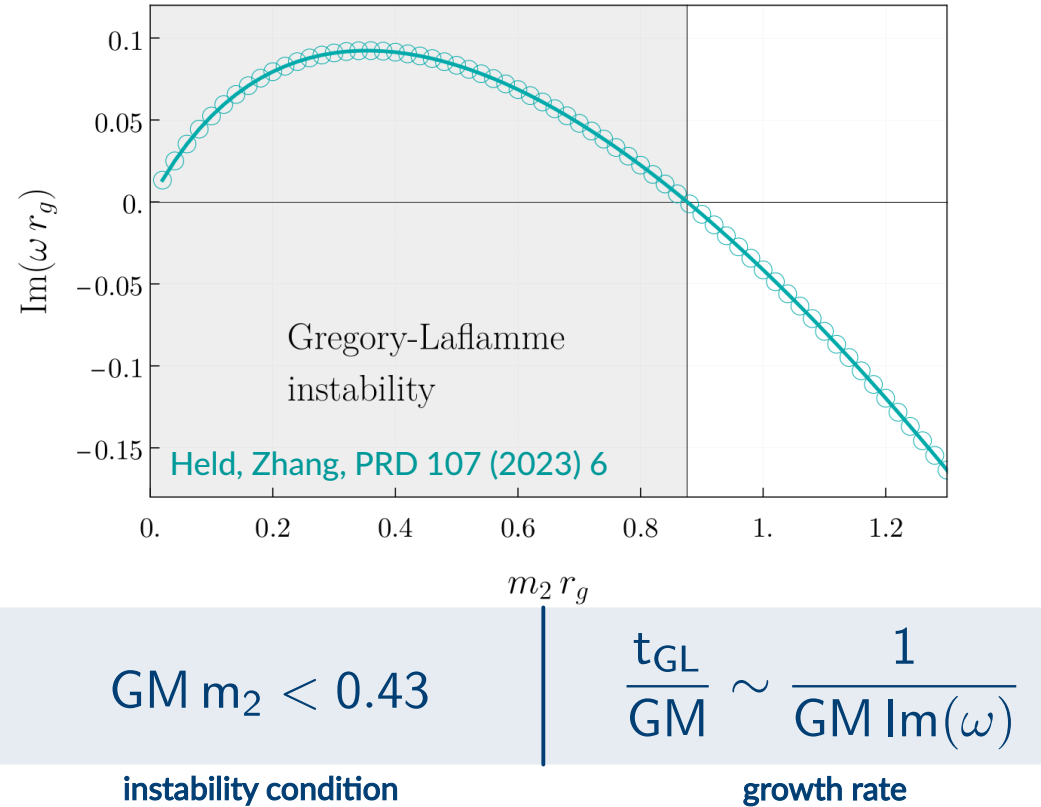
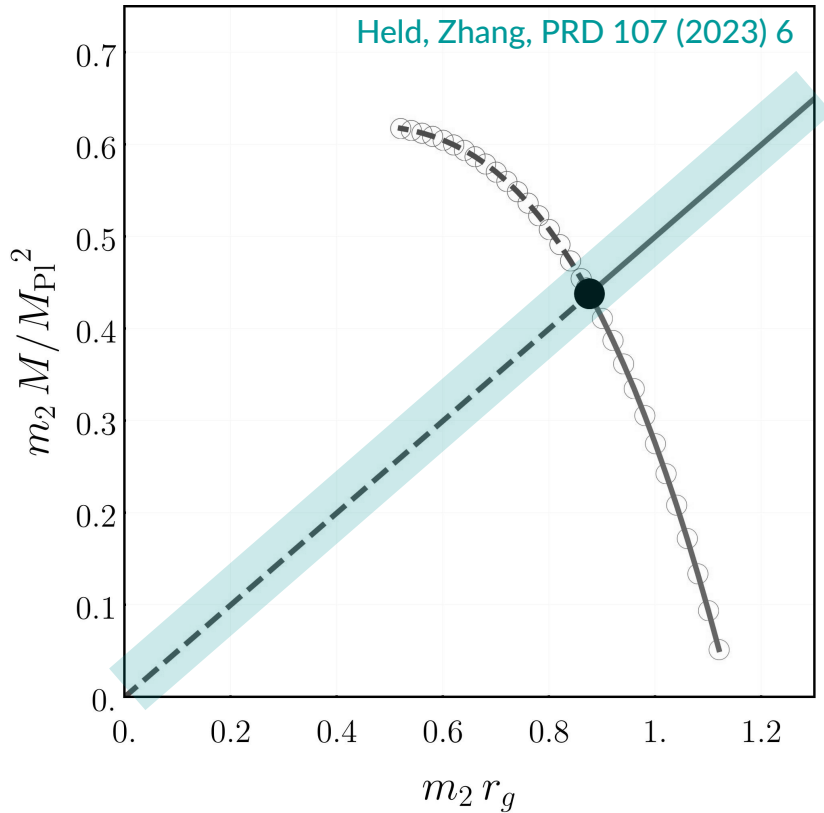
# Isolated black holes ...



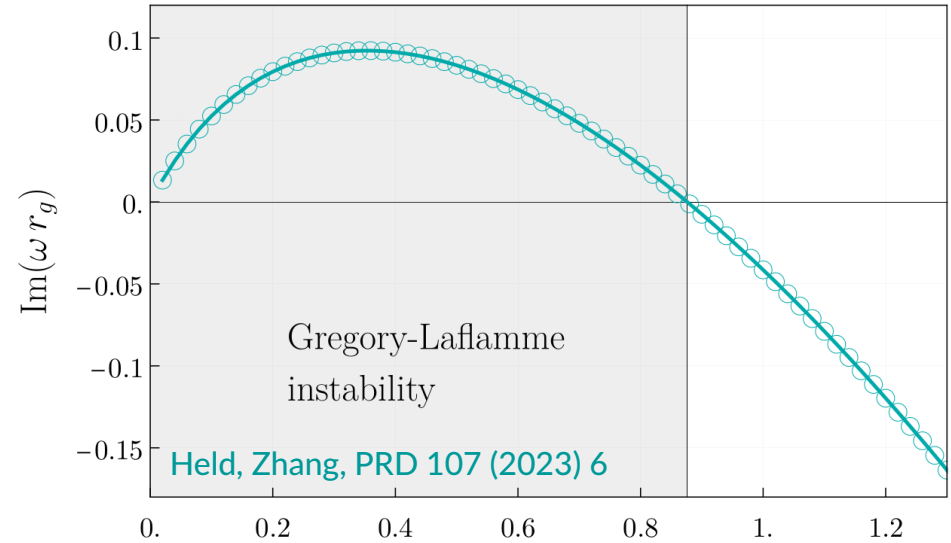
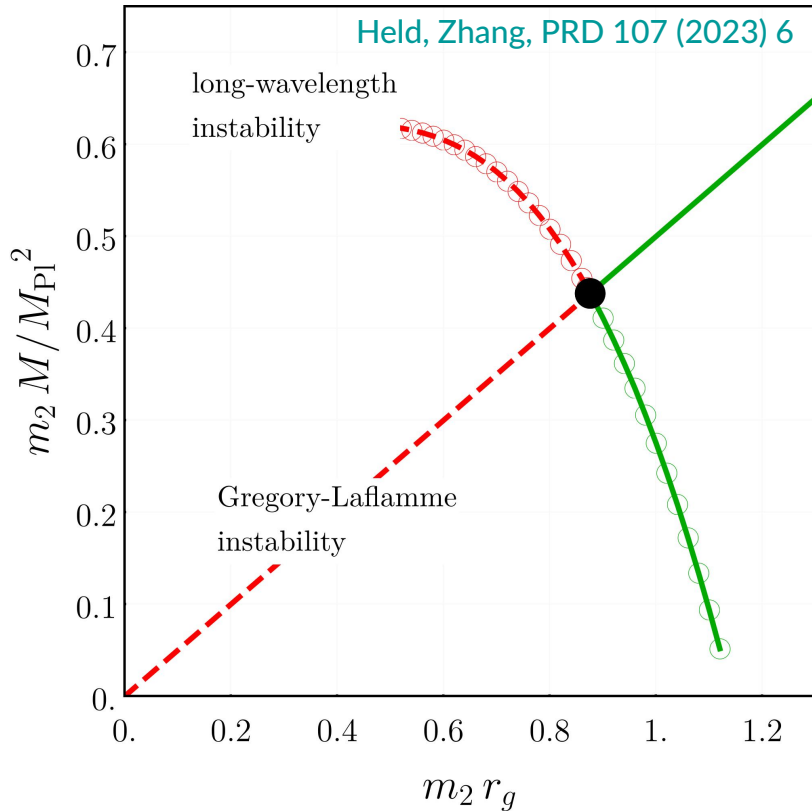
see also  
Lu, Perkins, , Stelle, PRL 114 (2015) 17 & PRD 92 (2015) 12  
Svarc, Pravdova, Miskovsky, PRD 107 (2023) 2

... occur in multiple branches.

# Isolated black holes ...



# Isolated black holes ...



$$\text{GM } m_2 < 0.43$$

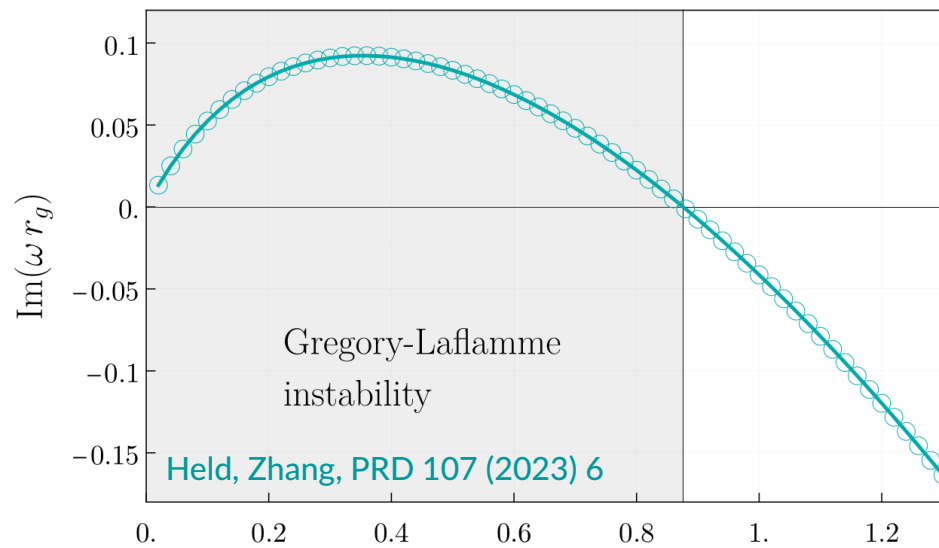
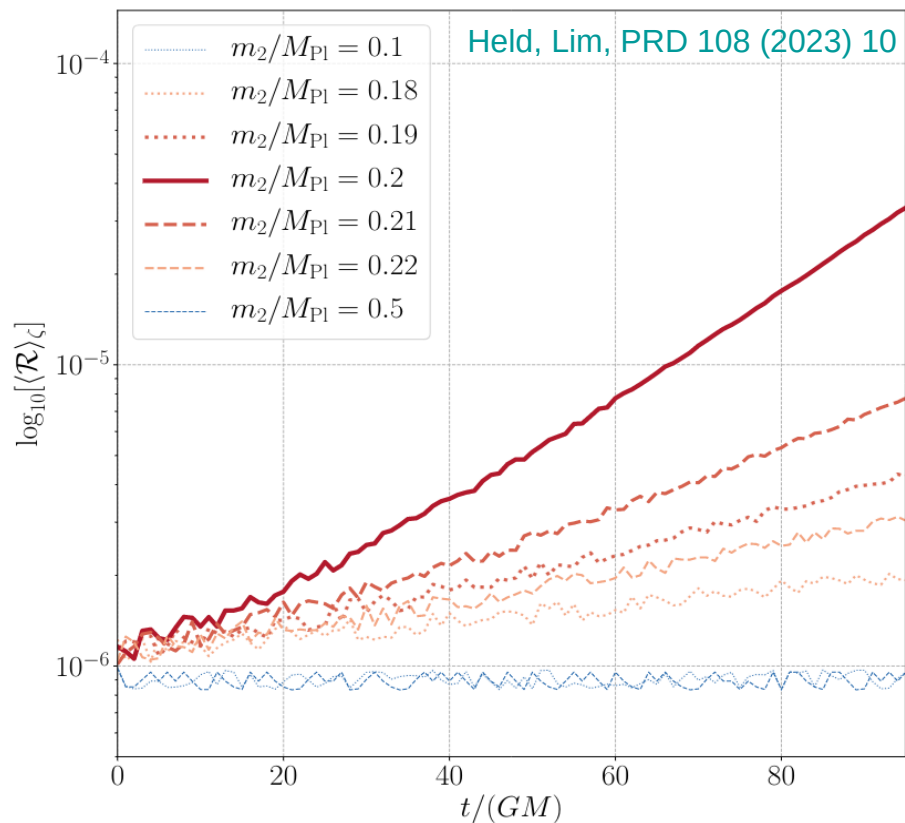
instability condition

$$\frac{t_{\text{GL}}}{\text{GM}} \sim \frac{1}{\text{GM } \text{Im}(\omega)}$$

growth rate

... are stable/unstable if sufficiently large/small.

# Isolated black holes ...



GM  $m_2 < 0.43$

instability condition

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... are stable/unstable if sufficiently large/small.

# Nonlinear evolution of the linear instability ...

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- **Nontrivial crosscheck available:** two completely independent setups and evolution codes  
Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10  
East, Siemonsen PRD 108 (2023) 12

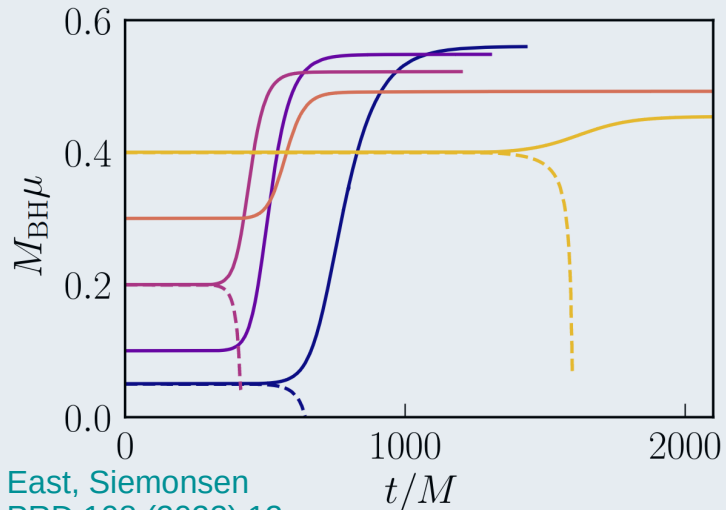


# Nonlinear evolution of the linear instability ...

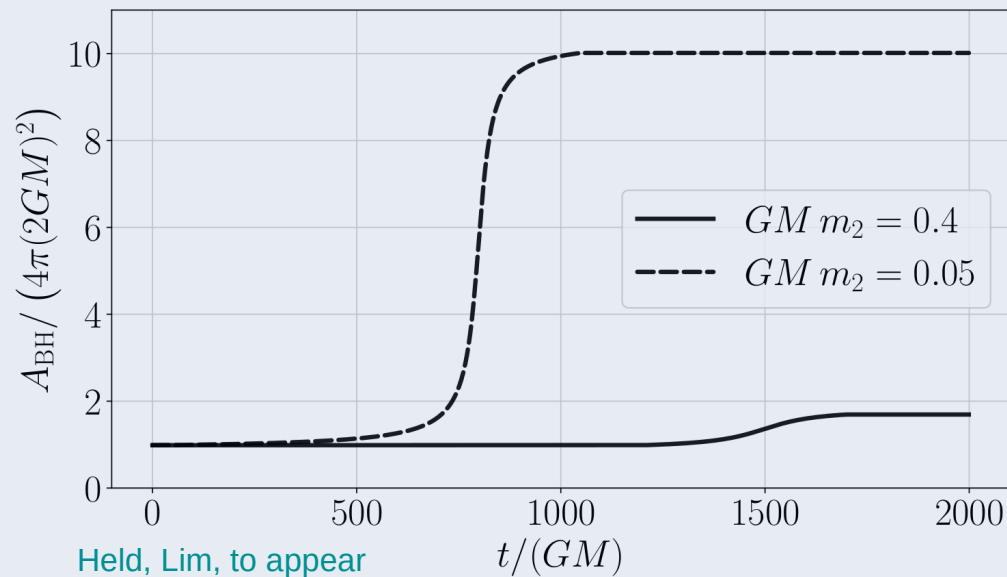
- **Nontrivial crosscheck available:** two completely independent setups and evolution codes

Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10

East, Siemonsen PRD 108 (2023) 12



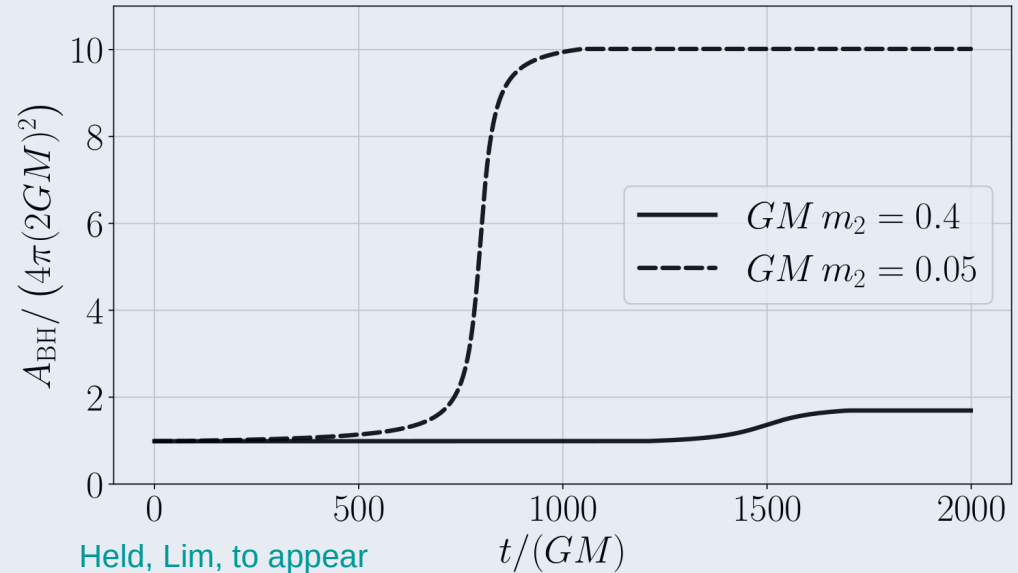
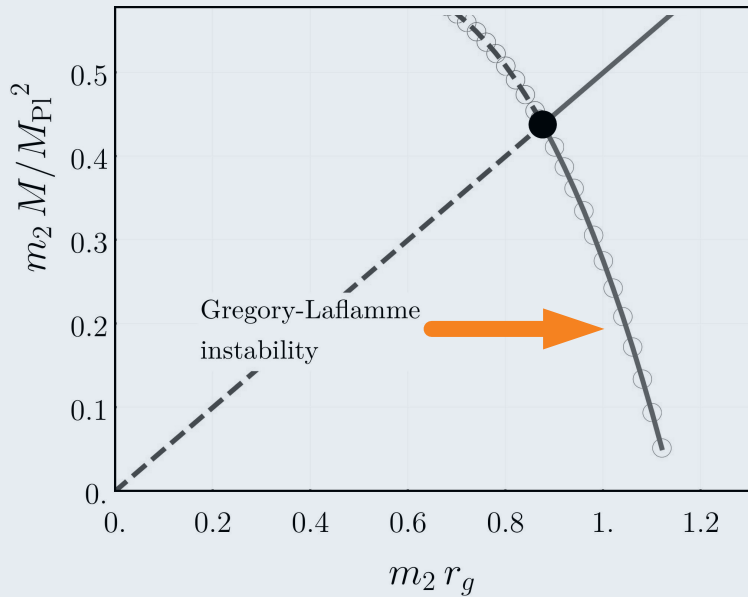
East, Siemonsen  
PRD 108 (2023) 12



Held, Lim, to appear

# Nonlinear evolution of the linear instability ...

- **Nontrivial crosscheck available:** two completely independent setups and evolution codes  
Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10  
East, Siemonsen PRD 108 (2023) 12



... can lead to the non-GR branch.

- numerically stable evolution
- isolated black holes: stability & transitions
- black-hole binaries & waveforms

## Part III: Nonlinear evolution (Quadratic Gravity)

Held, Lim, PRD 104 (2021) 8  
Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10  
& to appear

# Waveforms ...

GM  $m_2 \gg 1$

**no deviations**

GM  $m_2 \sim 1$

**quantitative deviations**

GM  $m_2 \lesssim 1$

**qualitative deviations**

# Waveforms ...

GM  $m_2 \gg 1$

GM  $m_2 \sim 1$

GM  $m_2 \lesssim 1$

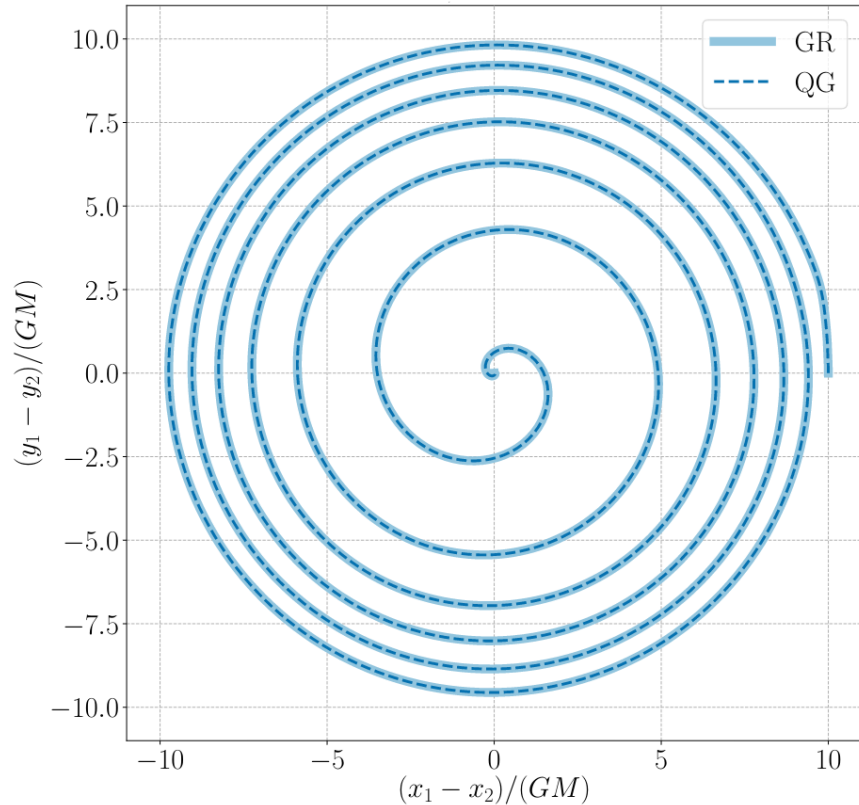
no deviations

quantitative deviations

qualitative deviations

EFT regime of validity

# Waveforms for GM $m_2 \gg 1$ ...



GW150914 initial data  
[EinsteinToolkit]

Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10

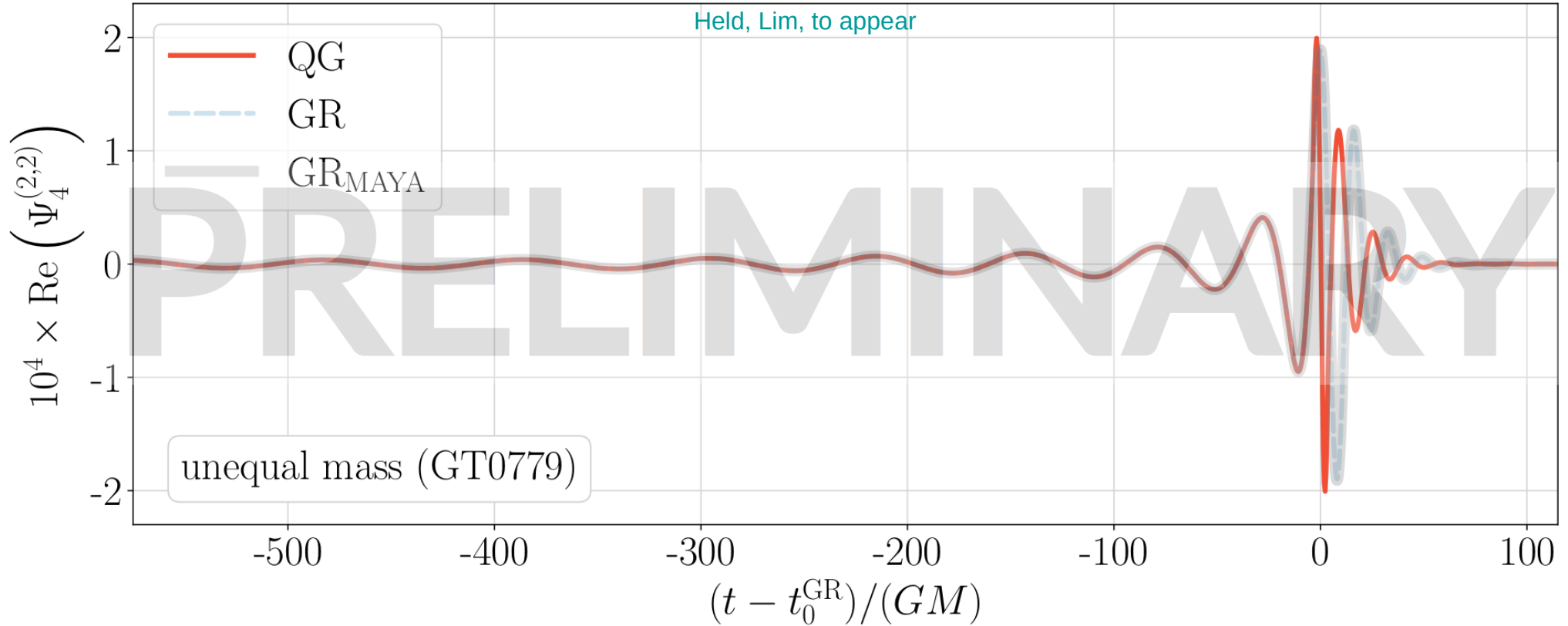
... perfectly mimic those of GR.

# Waveforms for GM $m_2 \sim 0.43 \dots$

QG masses		Binary parameters			
$G m_0 M_2$	$G m_2 M_2$	$\sqrt{G} M_1$	$q = \frac{M_1}{M_2}$	$a_{z,1}$	$a_{z,2}$
1	0.4	1	5	-0.696	0

# Waveforms for GM $m_2 \sim 0.43 \dots$

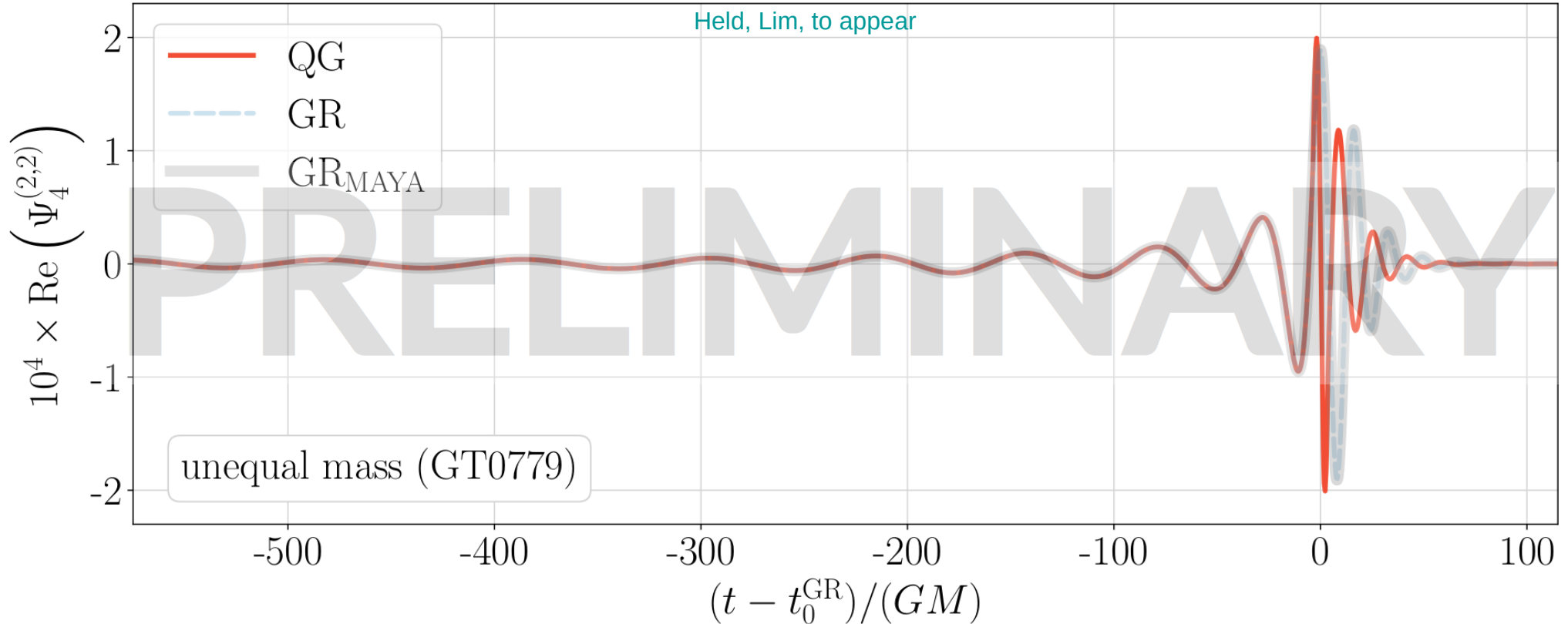
QG masses		Binary parameters			
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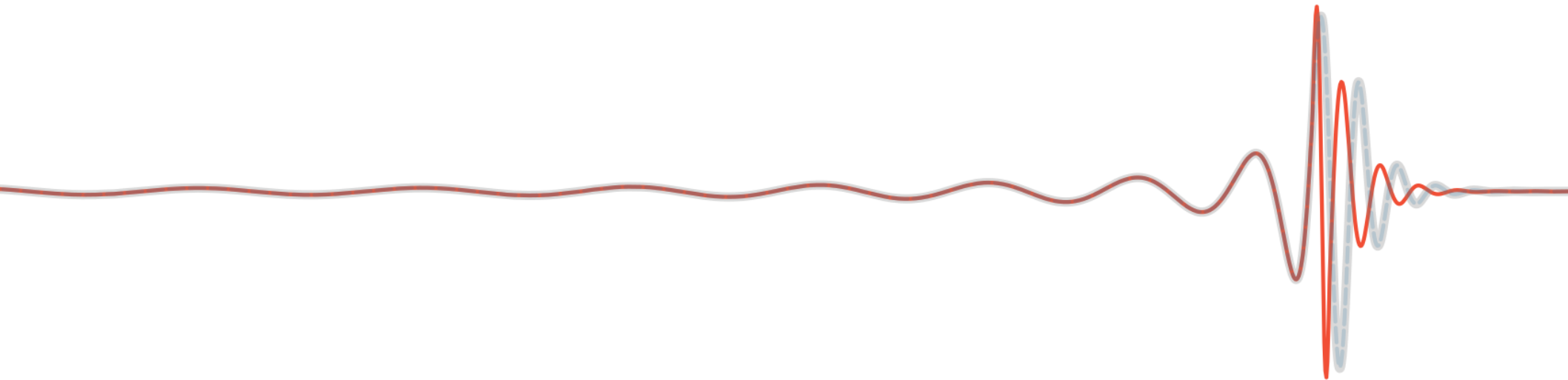


# Waveforms for GM $m_2 \sim 0.43 \dots$

QG masses		Binary parameters			
$G m_0 M_2$	$G m_2 M_2$	$\sqrt{G} M_1$	$q = \frac{M_1}{M_2}$	$a_{z,1}$	$a_{z,2}$
1	0.4	1	5	-0.696	0



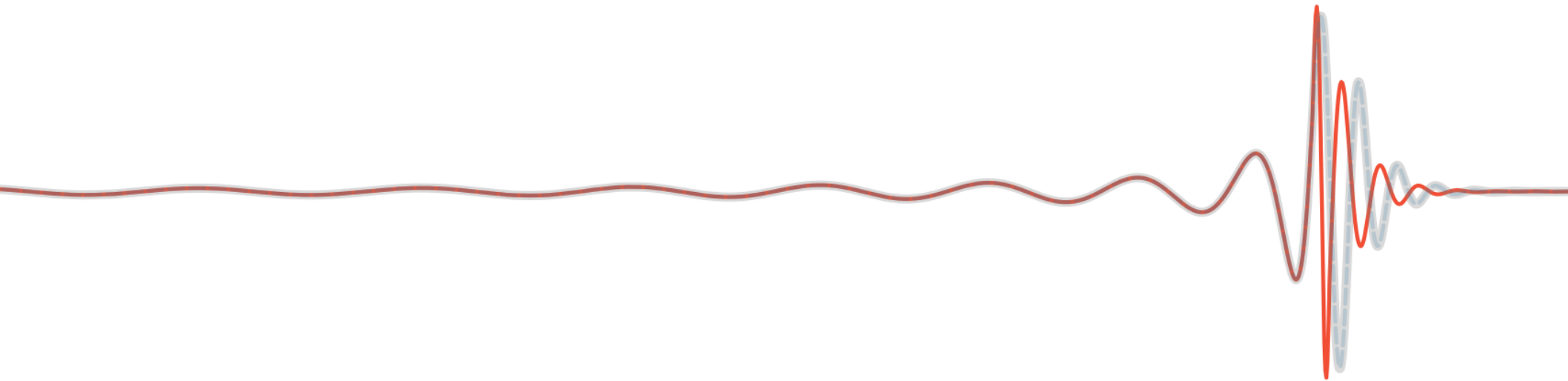
... deviate quantitatively.



**There is a feasible pathway to obtain strong-field predictions and waveforms in the effective field theory of gravity.**

Noakes, JMP 24, 1846 (1983);  
Figueras, Held, Kovacs, 2407.08775

Held, Lim, PRD 104 (2021) 8  
Held, Lim, PRD 108 (2023) 10  
& to appear



- thank you -