

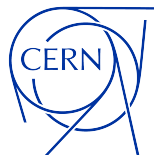
ALPHA-S@LHC: Towards the most precise determination of the strong coupling with LHC data

Letter of Intent

Patrick L.S. CONNOR

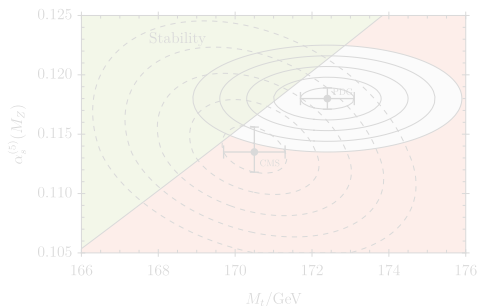
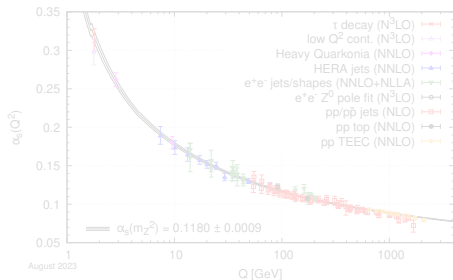
Organisation européenne pour la recherche nucléaire

2 July 2025





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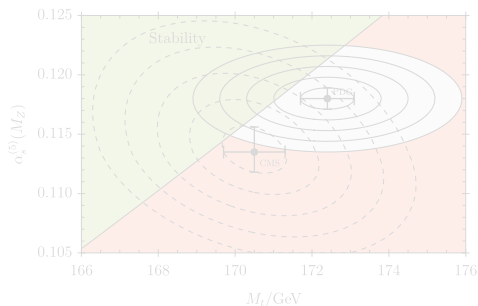
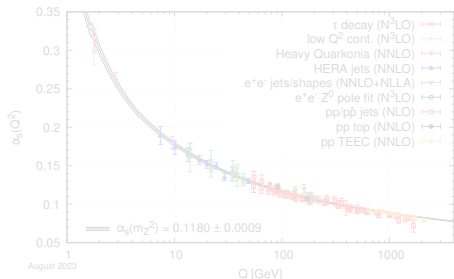


General motivation

- Beside the quark masses, $\alpha_s(m_Z)$ is the **single** free parameter of QCD.
- The α_s is the **least well-known interaction coupling** in the SM.
→ Its large uncertainty propagates to all calculations of observables at LHC [1].
- Its **running** is predicted by QCD.
→ Any deviation could provide a hint to new physics [2].
- "Improving the precision of α_s and m_t by a factor of two to three could be sufficient to **establish or refute SM vacuum stability** at the **5 σ** level" [3].
→ Is that reachable at LHC?



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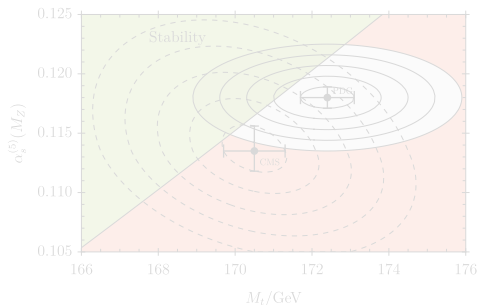
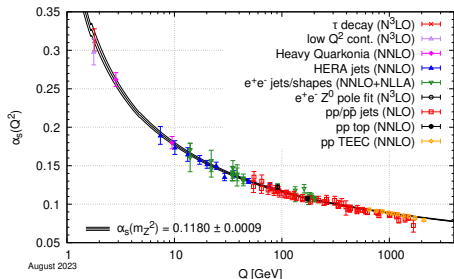


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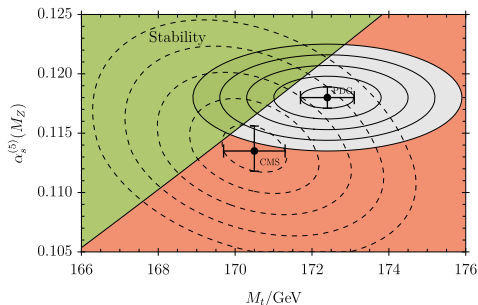
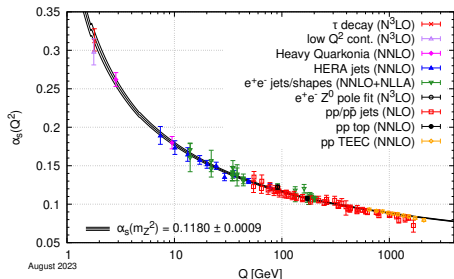


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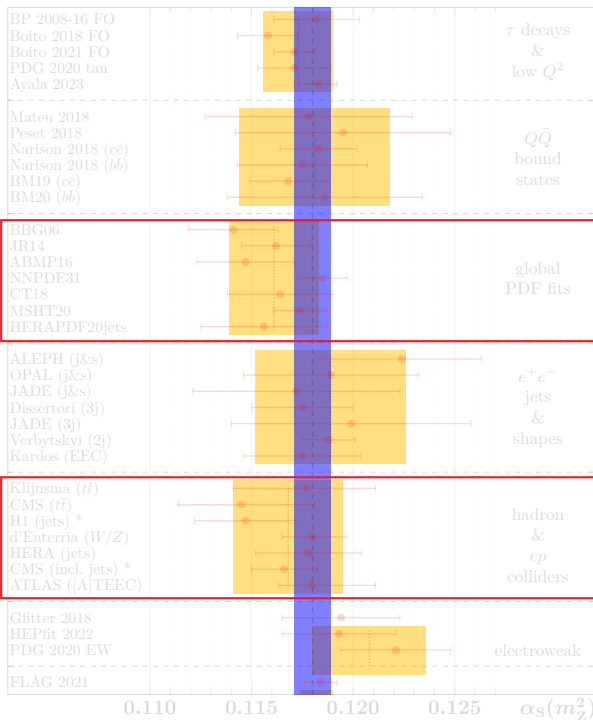


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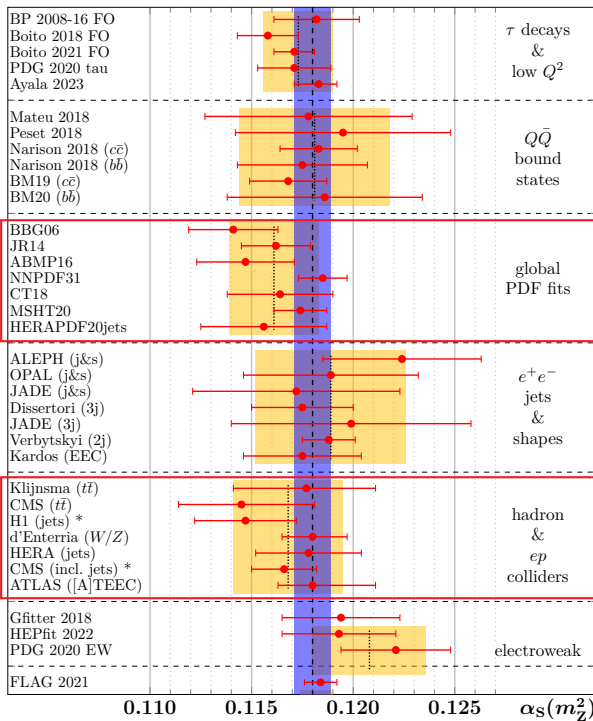
Research objectives

Goal

- **Measure consistently** a large number of observables at the LHC.
- **Determine $\alpha_s(m_Z)$** with the same precision as the current world average estimate ($< 1\%$).

Expected impact

- Not only reduce the uncertainty from *hadron & ep colliders*...
- ... but also revisit the way the world average is combined across categories.



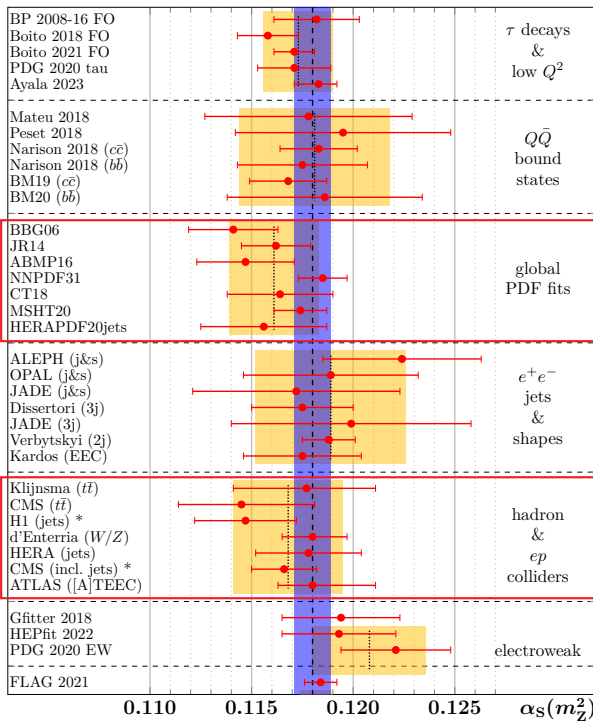
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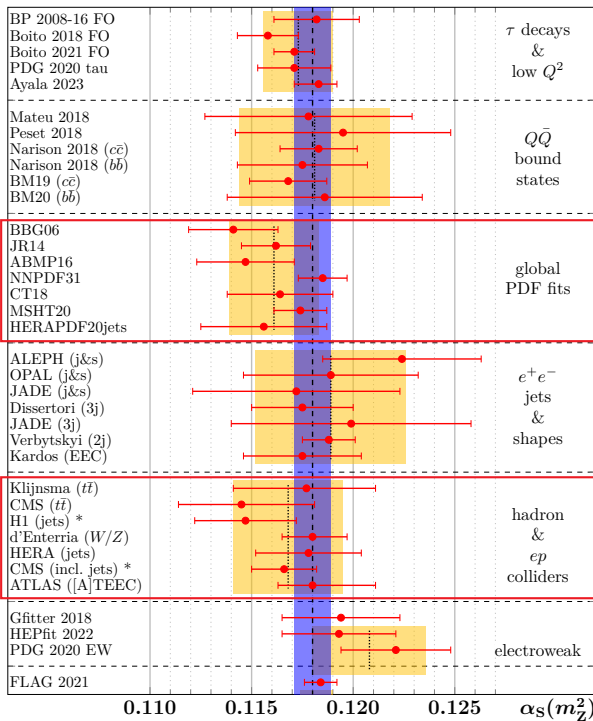
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Factorisation [4]

$$\underbrace{\sigma_{pp}}_{\text{exp. data}} = \sum_{ij \in gq\bar{q}} \underbrace{f_i(x_i, \mu_F^2, \alpha_s) \otimes f_j(x_j, \mu_F^2, \alpha_s)}_{\text{collinear PDFs}} \otimes \underbrace{\hat{\sigma}_{ij}\left(x_i, x_j, \frac{Q^2}{\mu_F^2}, \frac{Q^2}{\mu_R^2}, \alpha_s\right)}_{\text{FO predictions in pQCD}}$$

- α_s enters both collinear PDFs and the FO prediction.
- CMS has relied on NNLOJET+fastNLO+xFitter to extract $\alpha_s(m_Z)$ from jet data [5, 6, 7].
- Not shown in this formula: non-perturbative (NP) effects.

Inclusive jet at 13 TeV [8]

$$\begin{aligned}\alpha_s(m_Z) &= 0.1166 \pm 0.0014 \text{ (fit)} \pm 0.0007 \text{ (model)} \pm 0.0004 \text{ (scale)} \pm 0.0001 \text{ (param)} \\ &= 0.1166 \pm 0.0017 \text{ (total)}\end{aligned}$$

→ dominated by the fit (exp. + NP) uncertainty!



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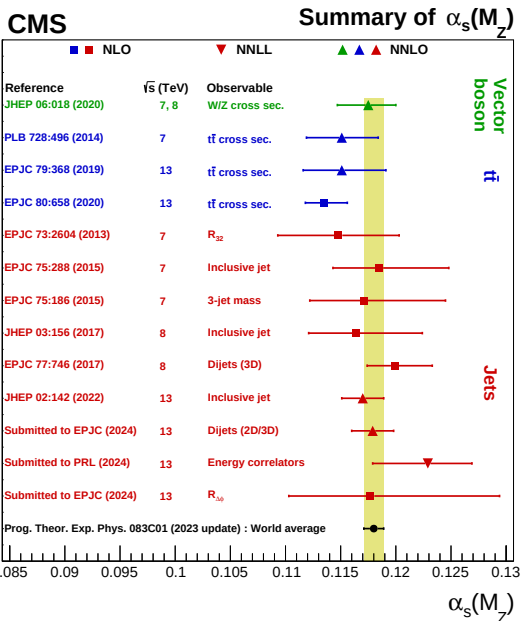
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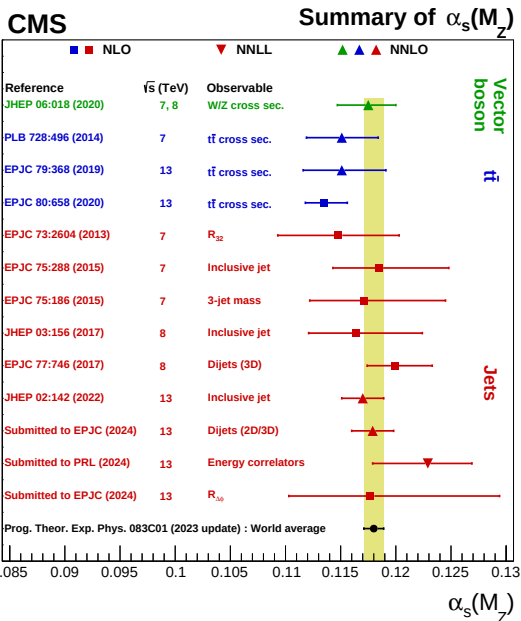
Combination? (Fig. from Ref. [9])

■ Inconsistent choices in analysis strategies may lead to tensions in the interpretation.

→ Different ways to mitigate the tensions have been applied, but all reduce the potential sensitivity.

■ Statistical correlations between observables obtained from the same data are missing.

→ e.g. between jet and dijet spectra.

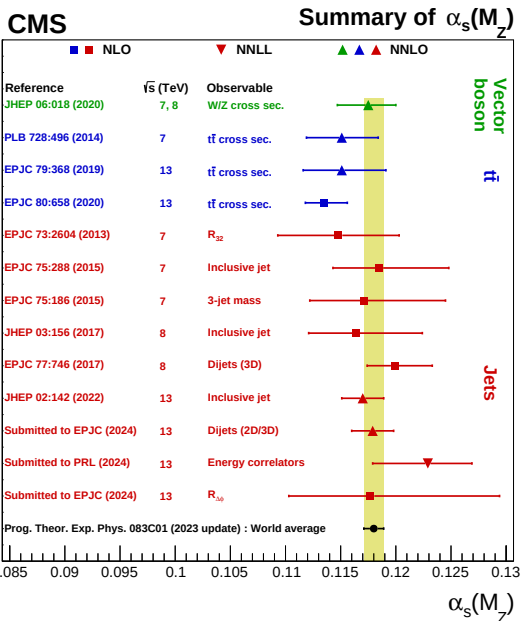


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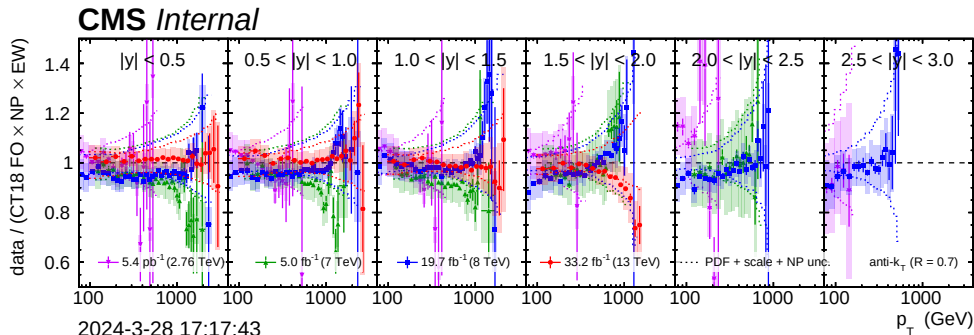
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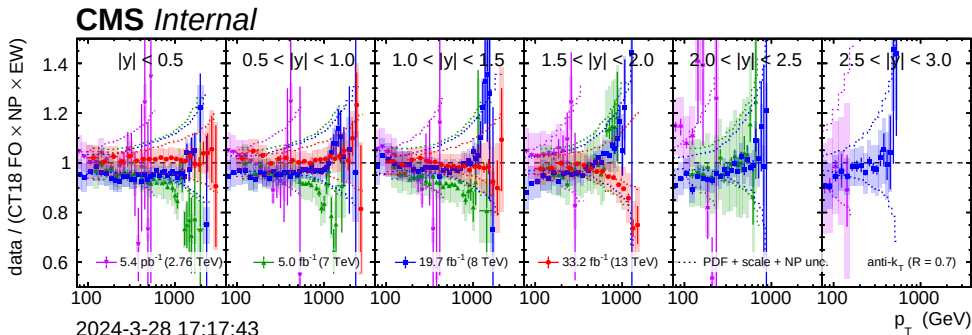
Combined inclusive jet [10]

$$\alpha_s(m_Z) = 0.11759 \pm 0.0009 \text{ (fit)}^{+0.0006}_{-0.0004} \text{ (model)}^{+0.0009}_{-0.0012} \text{ (scale)}^{+0.00000}_{-0.00004} \text{ (param)}$$

$$= 0.11759^{+0.0014}_{-0.0016} \text{ (total)}$$

→ the fit uncertainty was improved

(at the cost of the scale uncertainty & using an aggressive decorrelation scheme among various systematic uncertainties)



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objectives

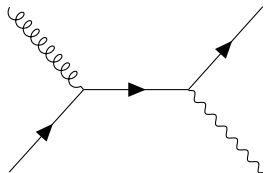
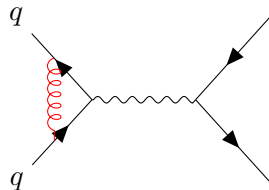
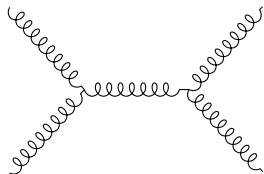
State of the art

Plan

Request

Summary &
Conclusions

Back-up



Work packages

- 1 Consistently measure a large number of observables sensitive to α_s [11, 12],
- 2 Improve the treatment of non-perturbative (NP) effects [13, 14, 15],
- 3 Implement “errors on errors” in the minimisation [16, 17].
- 4 Provide tools that allow extensions (additional final states & other LHC experiments) [18, 19].



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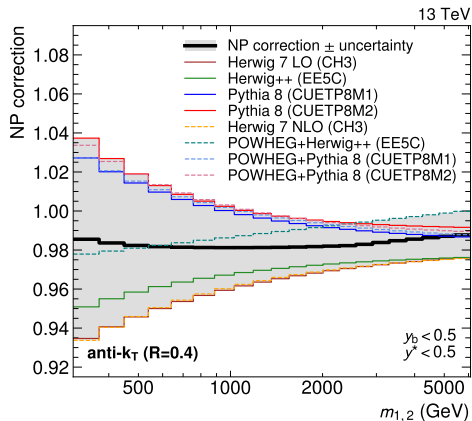
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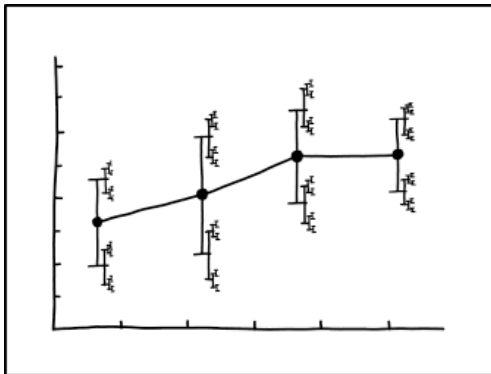
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ERROR CORRECTLY, SO I JUST PUT
ERROR BARS ON ALL MY ERROR BARS.

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CMS code



Generic code



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Connection to TA infrastructure and VA projects

TA infrastructure CERN as hosting institute, as host for the LHC and the CMS experiment.

VA projects Powerful computing clusters (CERN cluster), but also any VAs with pQCD-related computing resources (e.g. NLOAccess, TMDPortal).

Estimated budget request

Total: **330kEUR** (includes administrative overheads & CHF-EUR conversion)

Personnel **130kCHF** per year for two years to pay a postdoc at CERN

Others **50kCHF** to pay participant users per-diem at CERN, travels, and on-site organisation of dedicated workshops

Participating and partner institutions

CMS/ATLAS KIT, Ioannina, HIP, ULB-IIHE, Zhejiang; LPNHE, MPI Munich

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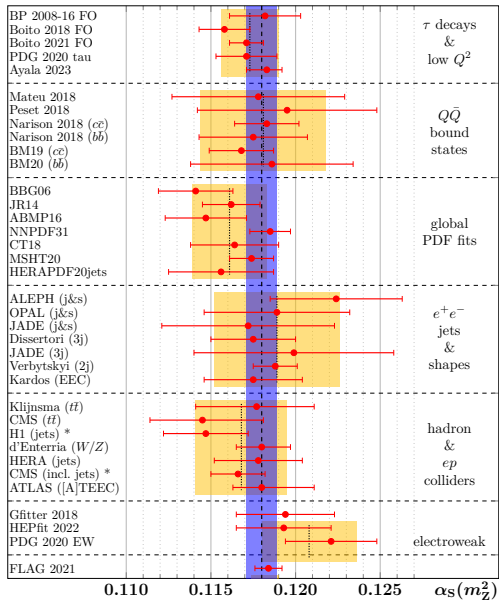
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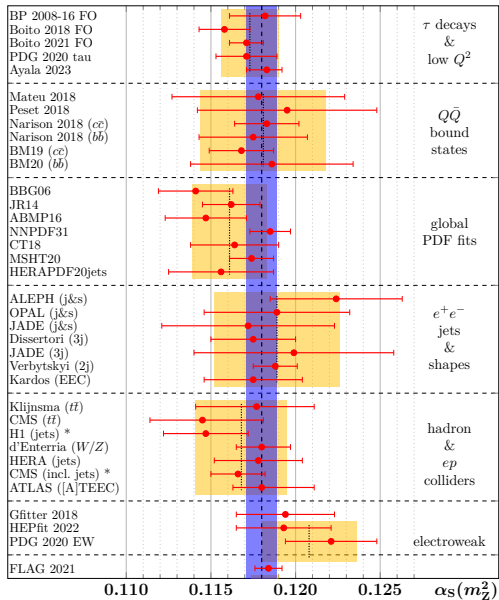


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- **Task:** Simultaneous $\alpha_s(m_Z)$ extraction, combining multiple LHC observables (CMS first, extendable to other exps.) with proper control of NP effects, improved experimental & theoretical uncertainties, etc.
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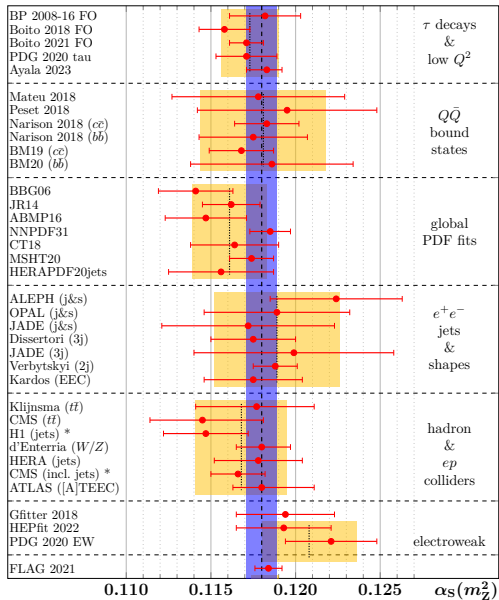
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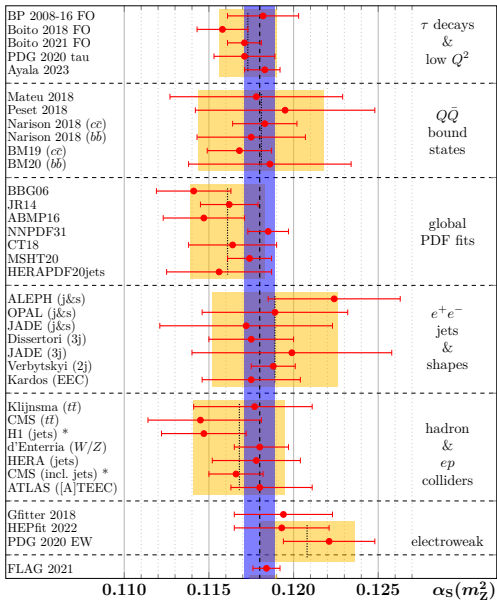


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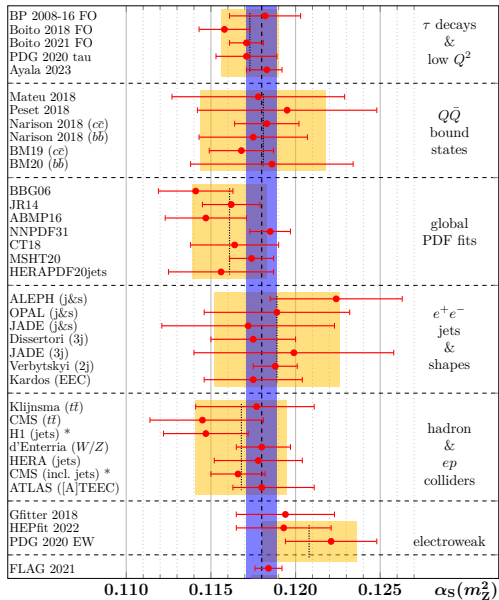
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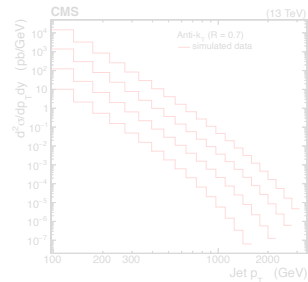
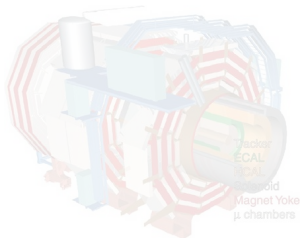
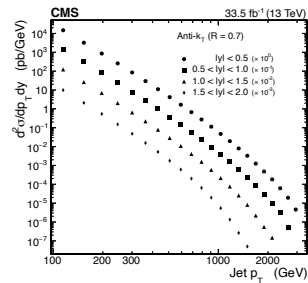
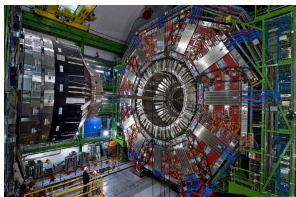
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Detailed plan
Measurement
Fitting tool
NP effects
Expected precision
Partners
Strong coupling
Unfolding
Acronyms
References
Visiting card



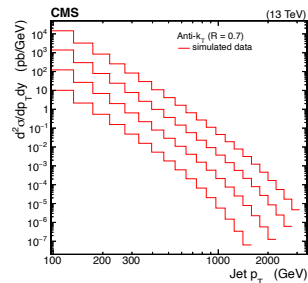
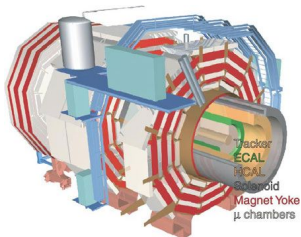
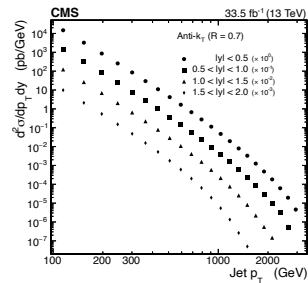
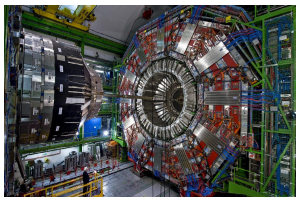
Detailed plan

Simultaneous measurement of many differential observables



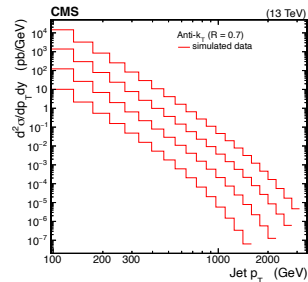
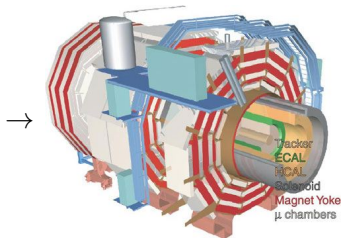
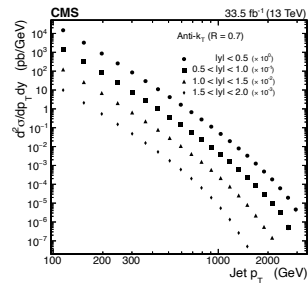
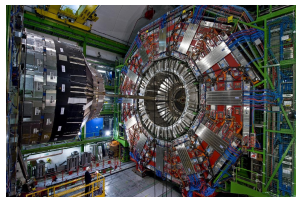
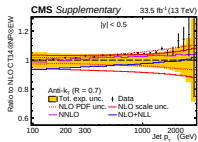
Detailed plan

Simultaneous measurement of many differential observables



Simultaneous measurement of many differential observables

Detailed plan
Measurement
Fitting tool
NP effects
Expected precision
Partners
Strong coupling
Unfolding
Acronyms
References
Visiting card



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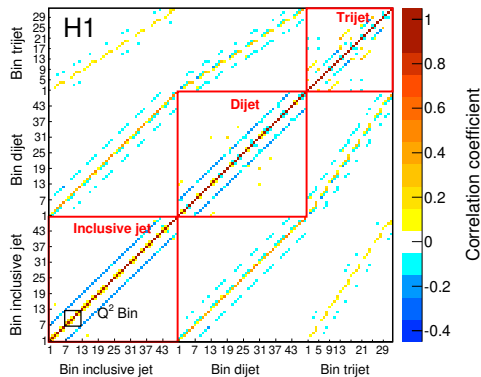
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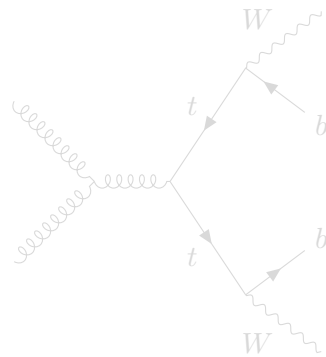
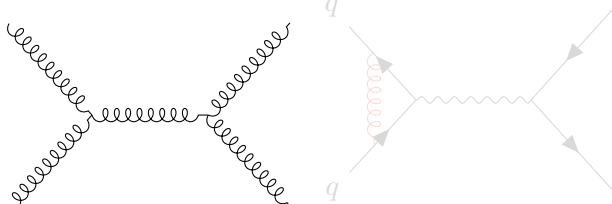
Visiting card

Statistical correlations



Simultaneous unfolding [12]

- ① Start with jet production (WIP), à la H1 [11] (see figure).
- ② Extend with V+jet production (LOI).
- ③ Extend to $t\bar{t}$ (beyond).



Simultaneous measurement of many differential observables

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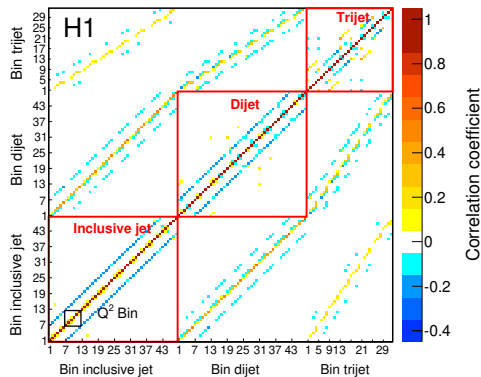
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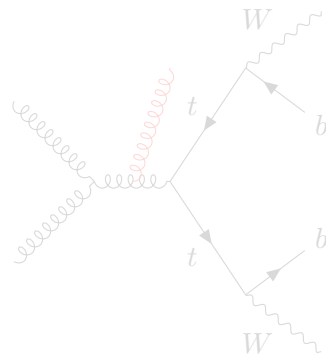
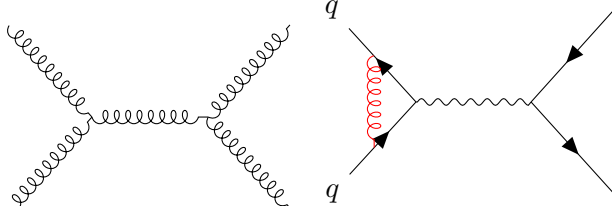
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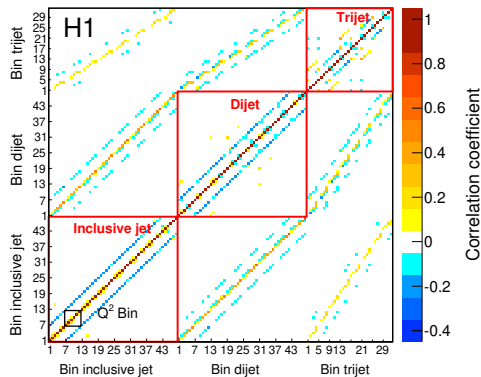
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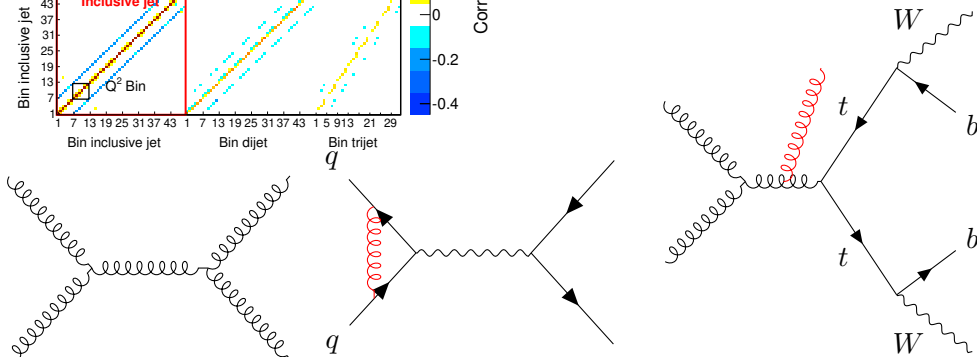
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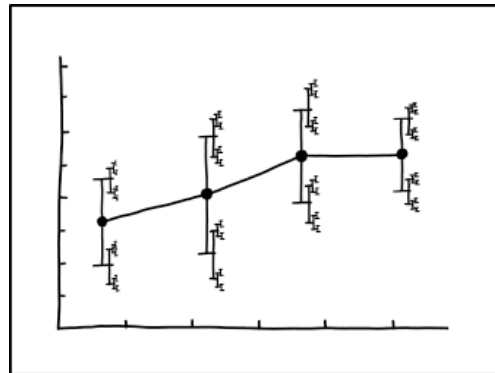


Detailed plan

Upgrade of the fitting tool

"Errors on errors"

- Not all systematic uncertainties are known to the same level of accuracy.
- Novel approach to allow for pulling parameters without preventing fit convergence.
- Need to implement in chosen software.



I DON'T KNOW HOW TO PROPAGATE
ERROR CORRECTLY, SO I JUST PUT
ERROR BARS ON ALL MY ERROR BARS.



Nature (figure from Ref. [13])

$$\text{NP} = \frac{\sigma_{\text{ME+PS+MPI+HAD}}}{\sigma_{\text{ME+PS}}}$$

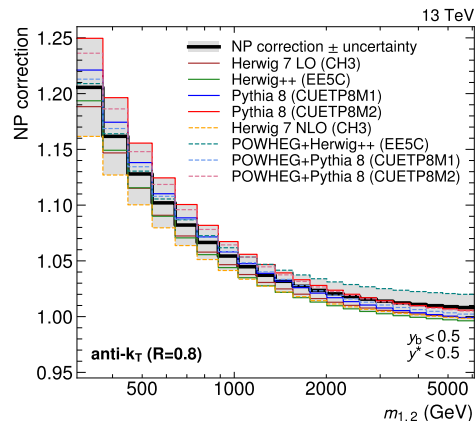
- Corrects for HAD and MPI.
- Usually obtained from the envelope of the results obtained with a(n arbitrary) set of MC generators and tunes.

Proposed improvements

- 1 Better identify the set of MC generators / tunes.
- 2 Treat effect as migrations rather than with a bin-by-bin correction.
- 3 Introduce a breakdown of uncertainties.

Detailed plan

Treatment of NP corrections





Nature (figure from Ref. [13])

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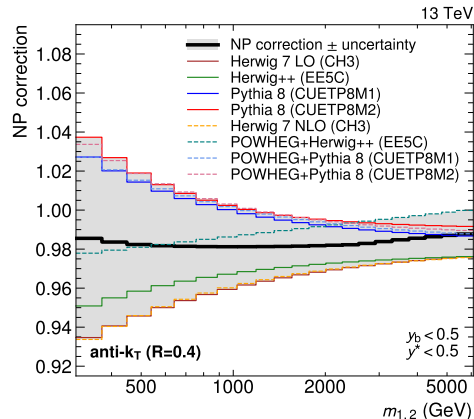
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Detailed plan

Treatment of NP corrections





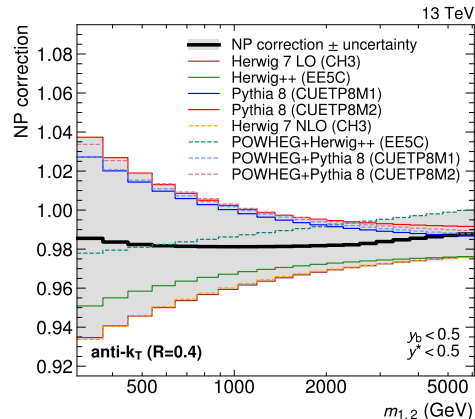
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Wild guess of expected precision

Taking the smallest value in the breakdown of uncertainties from recent published values:

$$\begin{aligned}\alpha_s(m_Z) &= 0.11?? \pm 0.00\mathbf{05} \text{ (fit)} \pm 0.00\mathbf{02} \text{ (model)} \\ &\quad \pm 0.00\mathbf{04} \text{ (scale)} \pm 0.00\mathbf{01} \text{ (param)} \\ &= 0.11?? \pm 0.00\mathbf{07} \text{ (total)}\end{aligned}$$

Caveat: theory uncertainty

- The theory uncertainty based on variations of the scale is known to be a poor approximation.
- In the recent years, theorists have progressed on getting theory nuisance parameters.

→ In this LOI, **we focus on the experimental aspects**, but plan to collaborate closely with theorists to apply the most recent developments.



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Participating and partner institutions

CMS Klaus Rabbertz et al. (KIT), Panagiotis Kokkas et al. (Ioannina), Mikko Voutilainen et al. (HIP), Laurent Favart et al. (ULB-IIHE, Belgium), Xiao Meng et al. (Zhejiang, China)

ATLAS Bogdan Malaescu et al. (LPNHE), Stefan Kluth (MPI)

theorists Pier Monni & Alex Huss (CERN), Frank Tackmann & Giulia Marinelli (DESY), Thomas Cridge (Antwerp), Felix Hekhorn (Jyvaskyla)

QCD PDG editors K. Rabbertz (KIT), G. Zanderighi (MPI Munich)

→ include **additional channels** (e.g. $t\bar{t}$ + jets), **combining** with ATLAS, **theory nuisance parameters**



Refs.	$\sqrt{s}$	value	fit unc.	PDF unc.	scale unc.	other unc.	PDF	order
R_{32} [20]	7 TeV	0.1148	± 0.0014	± 0.0018		± 0.0050	NNPDF2.1	NLO
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inclusive 3-jet mass [23]	7 TeV	0.1171	± 0.0013	± 0.0024	$+0.0069$ -0.0040	$\pm 0.0008(\text{NP})$	CT10	NLO
$t\bar{t}$ [24]	7 TeV	0.1151	$+0.0017$ -0.0018	$+0.0013$ -0.0011	$+0.0009$ -0.0008	$\underbrace{\pm 0.0013}_{m_t} \underbrace{\pm 0.0008}_{\sqrt{s}}$	NNPDF2.3	NNLO
2D inclusive jet [25]	8 TeV	0.1185	$+0.0019$ -0.0021	$\underbrace{+0.0002}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{+0.0000}_{\text{param}}$ $\underbrace{-0.0015}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{-0.0004}_{\text{param}}$	$+0.0022$ -0.0018		—	NLO
3D dijet mass [26]	8 TeV	0.1199	± 0.0015	$\underbrace{\pm 0.0002}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{+0.0002}_{\text{param}}$ $\underbrace{-0.0004}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{-0.0004}_{\text{param}}$	$+0.0026$ -0.0016		—	NLO
W/Z [27]	7–8 TeV	0.1163	± 0.0018	$+0.0016$ -0.0022	± 0.0009	$\underbrace{\pm 0.0006}_{\text{num}}$	CT14	NNLO
$t\bar{t}$ (dilepton) [28]	13 TeV	0.1151		± 0.0035	$+0.0020$ -0.0002		MMHT14	NNLO
normalised $t\bar{t}$ [29]	13 TeV	0.1135	± 0.0016	$\underbrace{+0.0002}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{+0.0008}_{\text{param}}$ $\underbrace{-0.0004}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{-0.0001}_{\text{param}}$	$+0.0011$ -0.0005		—	NLO
2D inclusive jet [8]	13 TeV	0.1166	± 0.0014	$\underbrace{\pm 0.0007}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{\pm 0.0001}_{\text{param}}$	± 0.0004		—	NNLO
2D & 3D dijet mass [13]	13 TeV	0.1181	± 0.0013	$\underbrace{\pm 0.0006}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{\pm 0.0002}_{\text{param}}$	± 0.0009		—	NNLO
$R_{\Delta\phi}$ [13]	13 TeV	0.1177	± 0.0013	$\underbrace{\pm 0.0010}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{\pm 0.0020}_{\text{param}}$ NNPDF3.1 choice	$+0.0114$ -0.0068	$\underbrace{\pm 0.0011}_{\text{NP}} \underbrace{\pm 0.0003}_{\text{EW}}$	NNPDF3.1	NLO
EEC in jets [30]	13 TeV	0.1229	$\underbrace{+0.0014}_{\text{stat}} \underbrace{+0.0023}_{\text{syst}}$ $\underbrace{-0.0012}_{\text{stat}} \underbrace{-0.0036}_{\text{syst}}$		$+0.0030$ -0.0033		—	aNNLL
comb. 2D inclusive jet [10]		0.1176	± 0.0009	$\underbrace{+0.0006}_{\text{(model)}} \underbrace{+0.0000}_{\text{(param)}}$ $\underbrace{-0.0004}_{\text{(model)}} \underbrace{-0.0000}_{\text{(param)}}$	$+0.0009$ -0.0012		—	NNLO

Refs.	$\sqrt{s}$	value	fit unc.	PDF unc.	scale unc.	other unc.	PDF	order
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3D dijet mass [26]	8 TeV	0.1199	± 0.0015	$\underbrace{\pm 0.0002}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{+0.0002}_{\text{param}}$ $\underbrace{-0.0004}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{-0.0004}_{\text{param}}$	$+0.0026$ -0.0016		—	NLO
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2D inclusive jet [8]	13 TeV	0.1166	± 0.0014	$\underbrace{\pm 0.0007}_{\text{model}} \underbrace{\pm 0.0001}_{\text{param}}$	± 0.0004		—	NNLO
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comb. 2D inclusive jet [10]		0.1176	± 0.0009	$\underbrace{+0.0006}_{\text{(model)}} \underbrace{+0.0000}_{\text{(param)}}$ $\underbrace{-0.0004}_{\text{(model)}} \underbrace{-0.0000}_{\text{(param)}}$	$+0.0009$ -0.0012		—	NNLO

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3D dijet mass [26]	8 TeV	0.1199	± 0.0015	± 0.0002 (model) $+0.0002$ (param) -0.0004	$+0.0026$ -0.0016		—	NLO
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				model param $\pm 0.0002 \pm 0.0002$ $-0.0004 -0.0004$	$+0.0026$ -0.0016		—	NLO
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				model param $\pm 0.0010 \pm 0.0020$				
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			stat syst					
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				(model) (param)				



Simultaneous unfolding

Typical analysis strategy

Data reduction in a nutshell

- 1 Apply a common selection to real and simulated samples.
- 2 Calibrate the samples.
- 3 Use simulated samples to construct a migration matrix.
- 4 Invert this migration matrix and apply to real data (unfolding).

Unfolding

$$\mathbf{Ax} = \mathbf{y}$$

$\mathbf{x}$ (unknown) unbiased measurement

$\mathbf{y}$ biased measurement

$\mathbf{A}$ migration matrix



Simultaneous unfolding

Typical analysis strategy

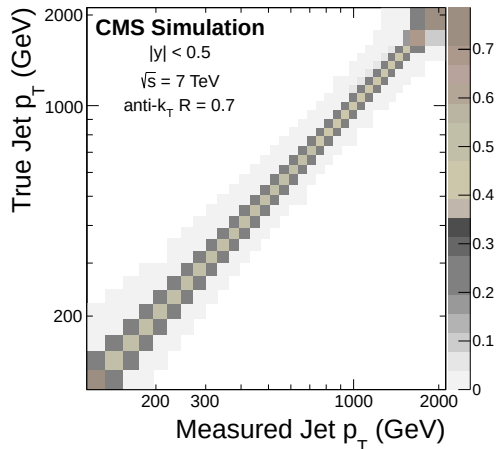
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Data reduction in a nutshell

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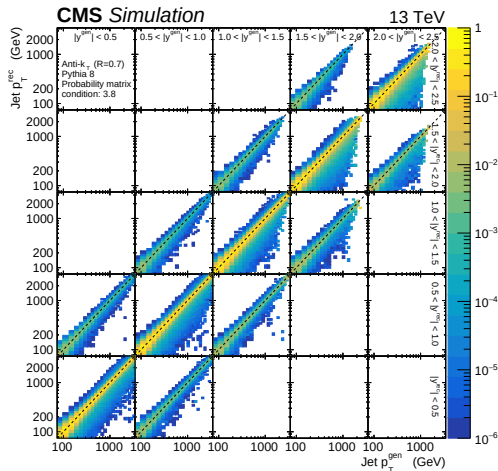
Unfolding

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 $\mathbf{y}$ biased measurement
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Simultaneous unfolding

Typical analysis strategy



$H_{T,2}$ spectra (3×3 block)

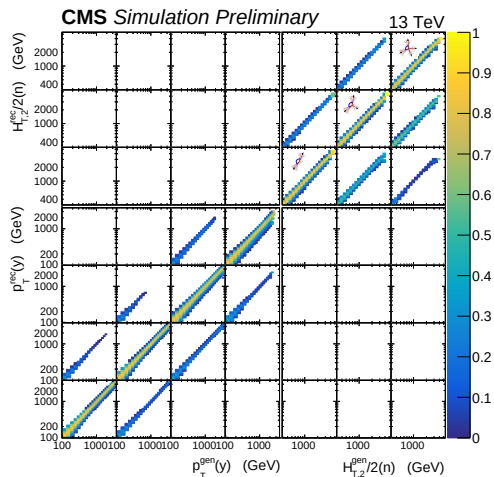
$$\frac{d\sigma}{dH_{T,2}/2}(n) = \frac{1}{\mathcal{L}} \frac{N_{n\text{-jets}}^{\text{eff}}}{\Delta H_{T,2}/2}$$

Inclusive jet (4×4 block)

$$\frac{d^2\sigma}{dp_T dy} = \frac{1}{\mathcal{L}} \frac{N_{\text{jets}}^{\text{eff}}}{\Delta p_T \Delta y}$$

Application

Migrations



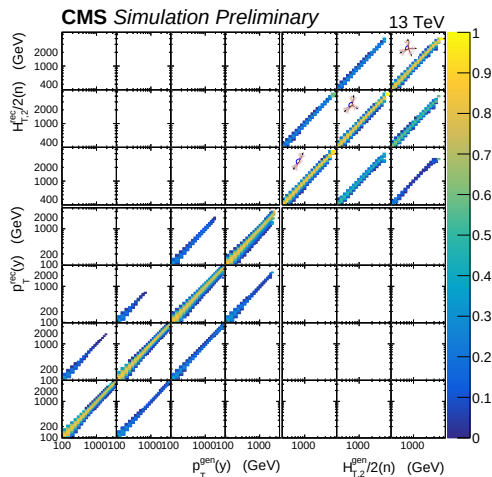


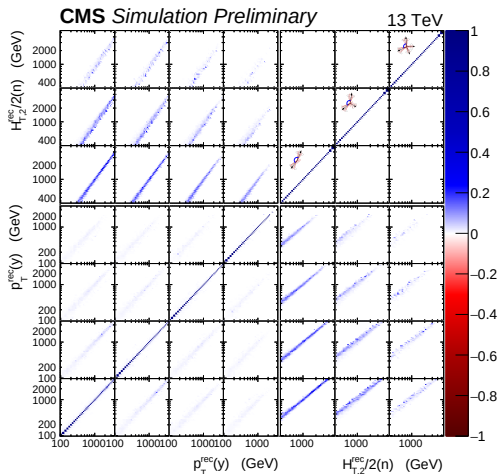
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Statistical correlations in real data

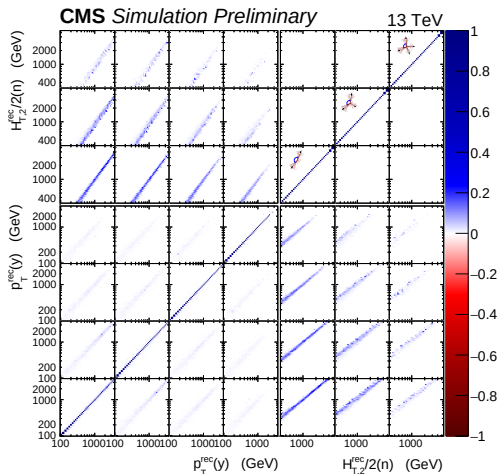
upper 3×3 block 1D inclusive jet in bins of multiplicity.

lower 4×4 block kinematic bins of 2D inclusive jet (multi-count observable).

off-diagonal blocks correlations among the bins of the respective observables.

For the present exercise: simple least-square minimisation

$$\chi^2 = \min_{\mathbf{x}} [(\mathbf{Ax} - \mathbf{y})^\top \mathbf{V}_y^{-1} (\mathbf{Ax} - \mathbf{y})] \quad \text{where } \mathbf{V}_y \text{ is the covariance matrix}$$



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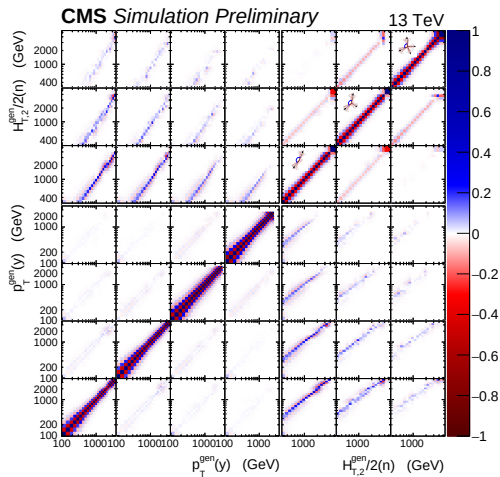
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Result (unless regularisation is needed)

$$\mathbf{x} = (\mathbf{A}^\top \mathbf{V}_y^{-1} \mathbf{A})^{-1} \mathbf{A}^\top \mathbf{V}_y^{-1} \mathbf{y}$$

$$\mathbf{V}_x = \mathbf{A}^{-1} \mathbf{V}_y \mathbf{A}^\top$$



Application

Post-unfolding correlations

From the simulated data

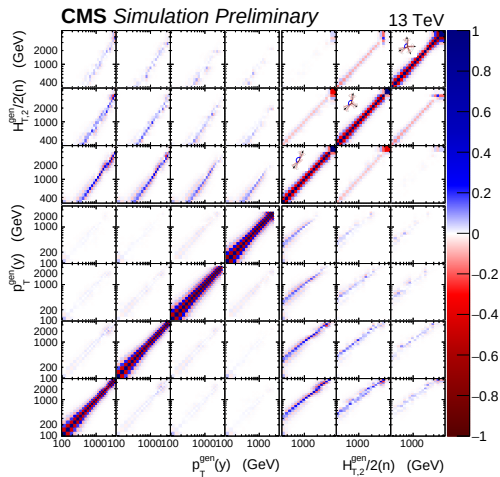
- With infinitely large statistics, one can use independent statistical samples to construct the different sectors of the migration matrix.
- Else repeat unfolding using alternative migration matrices with additional event weights $\sim \text{Pois}(1)$:

$$\mathbf{V}'_x = \left(\frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^N \mathbf{x}_n \cdot \mathbf{x}_n^\top \right) - \frac{1}{N^2} \left(\sum_{n=1}^N \mathbf{x}_n \right) \cdot \left(\sum_{n=1}^N \mathbf{x}_n \right)^\top$$

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From H_T spectra to R_{ij}

- Goal is to extract $\mathbf{z} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{x})$ and its correlations.
- Apply a rotation $\mathbf{R}$ to diagonalise $\mathbf{V}_{\mathbf{x}}$ and generate N events $\mathbf{z}_n$:

$$\delta'_{n,i} \sim \mathcal{N}\left(0, \sqrt{\max(0, k_i)}\right)$$

$$\mathbf{z}_n = \mathbf{f}\left(\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{R}^{-1}\delta'_n\right)$$

- Under the Gaussian hypothesis, the covariance may be obtained using the formula given on the last slices.

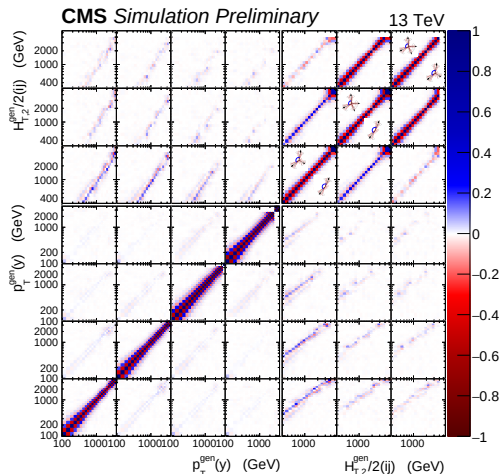
Gain

We now have two observables with distinct properties obtained from the same data.

→ R_{ij} offers additional control on α_s .

Application

Final correlations



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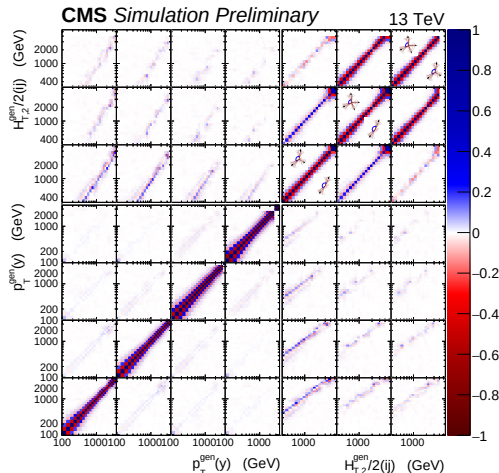
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Application

Final correlations



Detailed plan
Partners
Strong coupling
Unfolding
Acronyms
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Visiting card

ATLAS A Toroidal LHC ApparatuS. 21–23, 41

CERN European Organisation for Nuclear Research. 21–23

CMS Compact Muon Solenoid. 10, 11, 20–28, 41

EEC energy energy correlator. 42–46

FO fixed order. 10, 11

HAD hadronisation. 36–38

LHC Large Hadron Collider. 2–9, 17–28

LOI letter of intent. 32–34, 39, 40

MC Monte Carlo. 36–38

ME matrix element. 36–38

MPI multi-parton interaction. 36–38

NP non-perturbative. 10, 11, 17–20, 24–28, 36–38

PDF parton distribution function. 10, 11, 42–46

PDG Particle Data Group. 21–23, 41

pQCD perturbative QCD. 10, 11, 21–23

PS parton shower. 36–38

QCD quantum chromodynamics. 2–5, 21–28, 41

SM standard model. 2–5

TA transnational access. 21–23

VA virtual access. 21–23

WIP work in progress. 32–34



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