

Gravitational waves from asymmetric-mass binaries with spin and orbital precession

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Extreme-mass ratio inspirals (EMRIs)

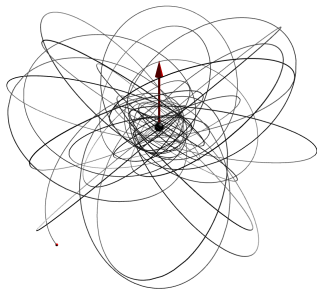
Primary mass M : $10^{5.5} - 10^7 M_\odot$ Secondary mass μ : $1 - 100 M_\odot$

$\epsilon = \mu/M \sim 10^{-4} - 10^{-7} \Rightarrow$ expand Einstein equations in ϵ

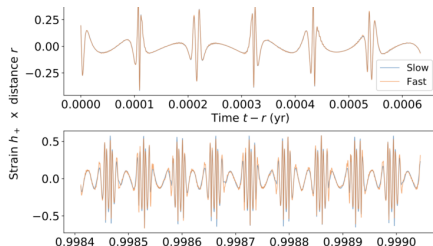
Some features:

mHz GWs $\Rightarrow$ targets for LISA

$\sim 1/\epsilon$ orbits in 1 year before inspiral in strong gravity regime

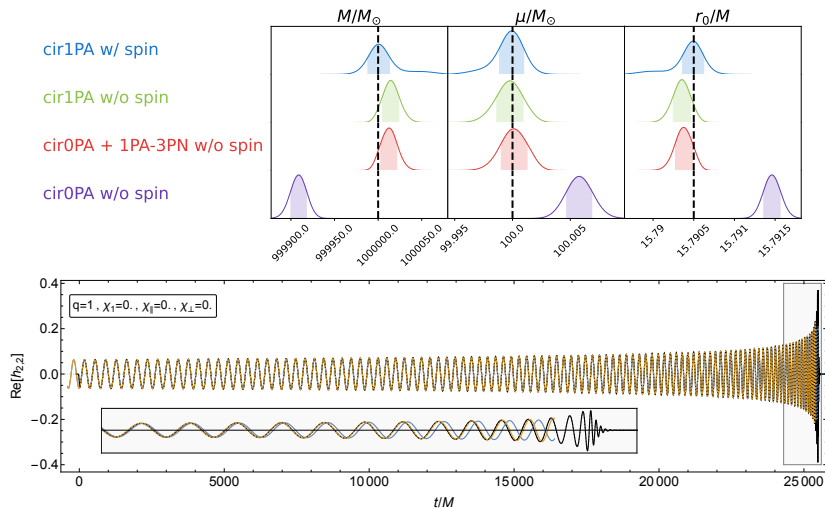


Credit: Maarten van de Meent



Credit: Niels Warburton

Why do we want to include the small body spin?



Top: Burke, Piovano+ (2023) Bottom: Mathews+, (2025)

But how big is the small body spin?

Spin magnitude $S = \frac{1}{2} S^{\rho\sigma} S_{\rho\sigma}$

In units μM

$$\frac{S}{\mu M} = \frac{S}{\mu^2} \epsilon = \chi \epsilon \quad \text{with } \epsilon \ll 1$$

Earth: 740 Sun: 0.21 fastest white dwarf: 10
fastest pulsar 0.3 neutron star $|\chi| \leq 0.6$ Kerr BHs $|\chi| \leq 1$

only need linear terms $\epsilon\chi$ for EMRIs (and maybe most IMRIs)

Multi-Scale Expansion

Radiation reaction time $T_{RR} \gg T_{\text{orb}}$

$\Rightarrow$ expand GW phase Φ_{GW} in two **two-times** scale expansion

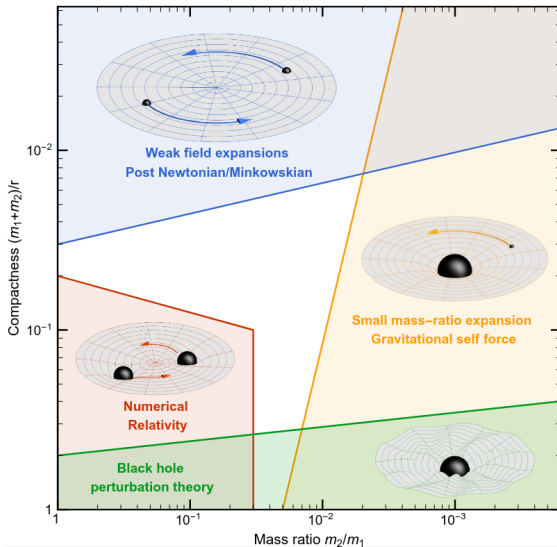
$$\Phi_{\text{GW}} = \underbrace{\epsilon^{-1} \mathcal{C}^{(0)}}_{\text{adiabatic}} + \underbrace{\epsilon^{-1/2} \mathcal{C}^{(1/2)}}_{\text{resonances}} + \underbrace{\epsilon^0 \mathcal{C}^{(1)}}_{\text{post-1-adiabatic}} + \mathcal{O}(q)$$

- $\mathcal{C}^0$: dissipative 1SF
- $\mathcal{C}^1$: conservative 1SF , dissipative 2SF , secondary spin

$\Rightarrow$ need first and second order metric perturbation

Hinderer&Flanagan (2008). See also the review by Pound&Wardell, (2021), Mathews&Pound (2025)

Approximation schemes to solve the Einstein equations



Credit: Maarten van de Meent.

Outline of the presentation

- 1 Chapter I
Orbital Motion*
(*radiation-reaction not included)
- 2 Chapter II
Waveform From Extreme Asymmetrical-Mass Binaries
- 3 Chapter III
Extreme ϵ Waveforms For Not-So-Extreme ϵ Binaries
- 4 End Credits

Chapter I

Orbital Motion*

(*radiation-reaction not included)

(linearized) MPD equations of motion - 2nd order form

EoM at order $\mathcal{O}(\epsilon\chi)$ in Kerr background

$$S^{\mu\nu}v_\nu^g = 0 \quad \text{Tulczyjew-Dixon condition}$$

$$\chi = S/\mu^2 = \sqrt{\chi_\parallel^2 + \chi_\perp^2}$$
$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \frac{D_g v_g^\mu}{d\tau} = 0 \quad \text{geodesic equations} \\ \frac{D_g v_s^\mu}{d\tau} = -\frac{1}{2} R^\mu{}_{\nu\rho\sigma} v_g^\nu s^{\rho\sigma} \\ \frac{D_g S^{\mu\rho}}{d\tau} = 0 \end{array} \right.$$

$$\text{Spin vector: } s^\mu = \chi_\perp (\tilde{e}_{(1)}^\mu \cos \psi_p + \tilde{e}_{(2)}^\mu \sin \psi_p) + \chi_\parallel e_{(3)}^\mu$$

Precession angle: ψ_p

s^μ and ψ_p known in analytic form (Marck, 1983 ; van de Meent, 2020)

Symmetries to the rescue

Conserved quantities in Kerr background

- energy $E = E_g + \epsilon\chi\delta E$
- angular momentum $L_z = L_{zg} + \epsilon\chi\delta L_z$
- secondary spin χ
- Rüdinger constants (only at order $O(\epsilon\chi)$)
 - $Q = Q_g + \epsilon\chi\delta Q$
 - $\chi_{||}$

$\implies$ **integrability up to $\mathcal{O}(\epsilon\chi)$**

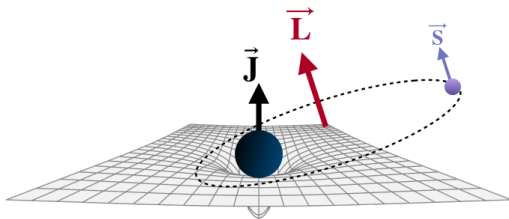
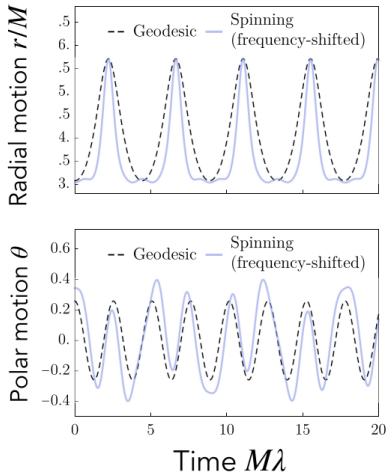
when the secondary is a BH, integrability up to $\mathcal{O}(\epsilon^2\chi^2)$

But how do I fix $\delta E, \delta L_z, \delta Q$? Different possible choices (or “spin gauges”)

Rüdinger (1981,1983), Semeráček (1999,2007), Witznay (2019), Compère (2023), Ramond+ (2026) For spin gauges, see Piovano+ (2024) , Mathews&Pound (2025)

Solving the MPD equations - 2nd order form

$$a = 0.9M, e = 0.3, p = 4$$



Solving 2nd order MPD equations

$$\frac{D_g v_s^\mu}{d\tau} = -\frac{1}{2} R^\mu_{\nu\rho\sigma} v_g^\nu s^{\rho\sigma}$$

via Fourier series expansion.

Fixed turning points spin gauge

Drummond&Hughes (2022), Viktor+ (2023). Credit picture: Lisa Drummond

Solving the MPD equations - 1st order form

$$z = \cos \theta$$

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{d\delta r}{d\lambda} &= \pm \frac{\delta R(r_g, z_g, \psi_p)}{2\sqrt{R_g(r_g)}} & \frac{d\delta z}{d\lambda} &= \pm \frac{\delta Z(r_g, z_g, \psi_p)}{2\sqrt{Z_g(z_g)}} \\ \frac{d\delta t}{d\lambda} &= \delta T(r_g, z_g, \psi_p) & \frac{d\delta \phi}{d\lambda} &= \delta \Phi(r_g, z_g, \psi_p)\end{aligned}$$

EoM non-separable

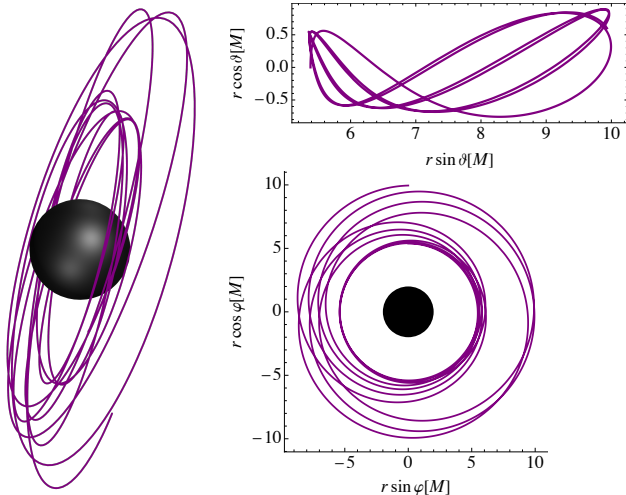
$\implies$ shifts turning points NON constants

Two approaches to solve 1st order EoM

- ① Fourier series expansions (numerical). Piovano+ (2024)
Matches results Drummond&Hughes, (2022)
- ② Virtual geodesics (analytical). Skuopy&Witzany (2nd paper 2024)
Not known how to map virtual geodesic solutions to other methods

$$x^\mu = \tilde{x}^\mu(\tilde{C}) + q\chi\delta x^\mu(x_g^\mu) \quad x = t, r, z, \phi$$

Solutions in Schwarzschild spacetime



Analytic solutions in Schwarzschild spacetime.

Solutions by quadrature for static, spherical symmetric spacetime
Witzany & Piovano (2023)

Solutions almost equatorial orbits

$z \simeq 0 + \delta z \implies$ radial and polar motion decoupled.

Orbital plane precession due to spin precession (Drummond&Hughes, 2022)

$$r = r_g + \epsilon \chi_{\parallel} \delta r(r_g) \quad t = t_g(r_g) + \epsilon \chi_{\parallel} \delta t(r_g) \quad \phi = \phi_g(r_g) + \epsilon \chi_{\parallel} \delta \phi(r_g)$$

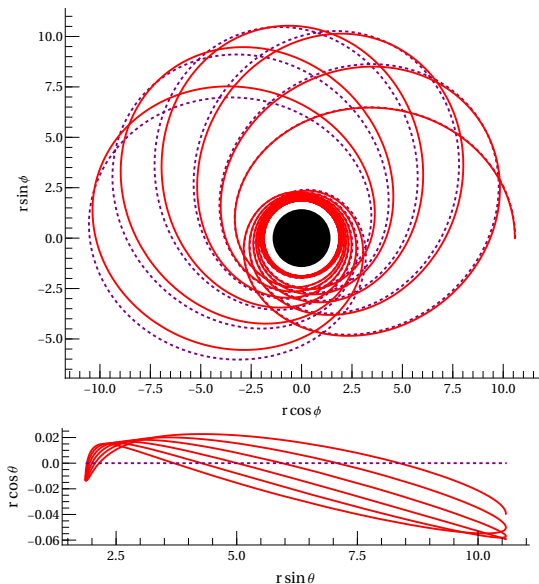
$$\delta z(r_g) = -\chi_{\perp} \frac{\cos \psi_p \sqrt{r_g^2 + (L_{zg} - aE_g)^2}}{r_g(L_{zg} - aE_g)}$$

$\delta r(r_g), \delta t(r_g), \delta \phi(r_g)$ given as elliptic integrals or elementary functions
(Piovano, 2025; work in progress)

Problem:

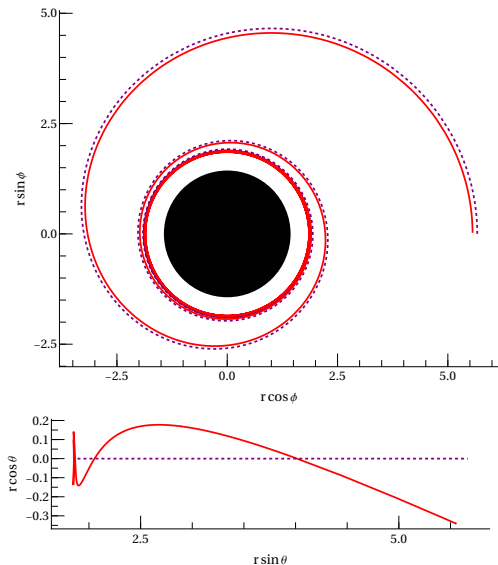
$\delta r, \delta t, \delta \phi$ diverges at the geodesic separatrix in all spin gauges...
...except one: fixed eccentricity spin gauge

Nearly equatorial zoom-whirl orbit



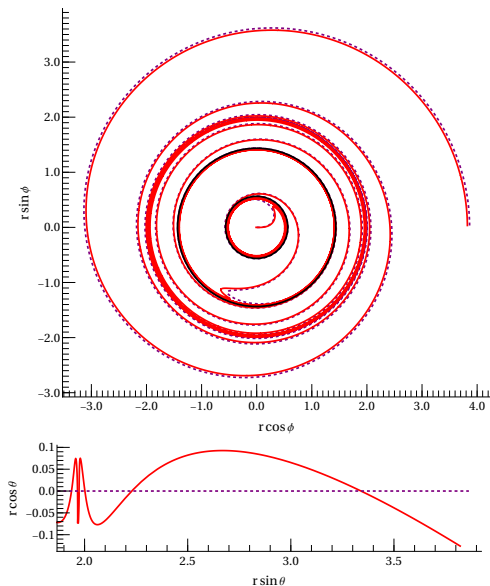
Spinning particle (red-line) and fiducial geodesic (purple, dashed line). Piovano, (2025)

Nearly equatorial homoclinic orbit



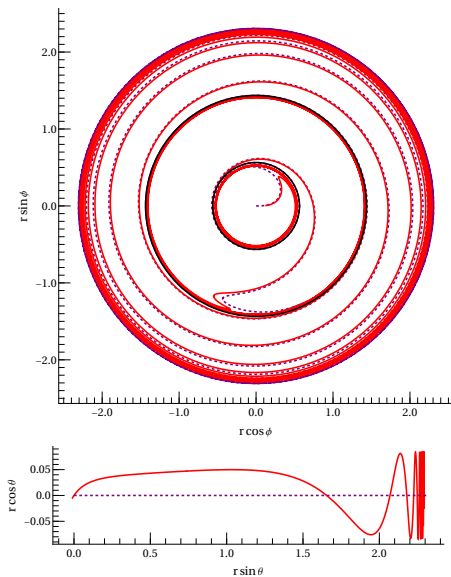
Spinning particle (red-line) and fiducial geodesic (purple, dashed line). Piovano, (2025)

Nearly equatorial homoclinic+critical plunge



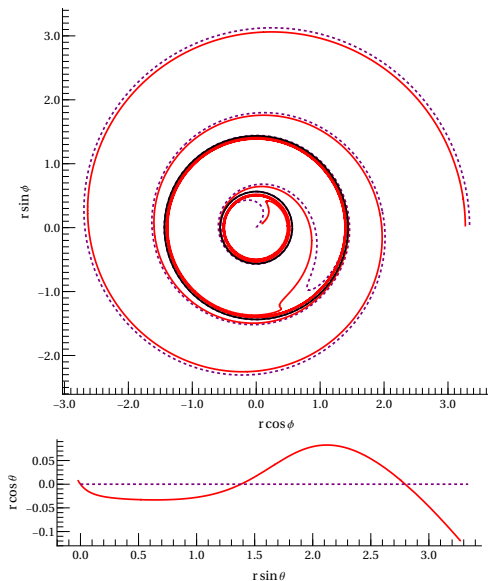
Spinning particle (red-line) and fiducial geodesic (purple, dashed line). Piovano, (soon)

Nearly equatorial ISCO plunge



Spinning particle (red-line) and fiducial geodesic (purple, dashed line). Piovano, (soon)

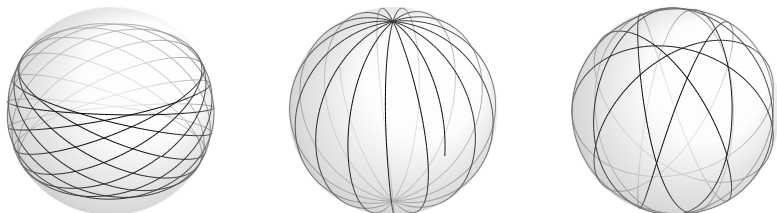
Nearly equatorial generic plunge



Spinning particle (red-line) and fiducial geodesic (purple, dashed line). Piovano, (soon)

Quasi-spherical inspirals in Kerr spacetime

- Boyer Linquist radius $r = \text{const}$ and inclination $x \neq \pm 1$.
Precession orbital plane (Teo, 2021)
- “spherical evolves into spherical” (Kennefick&Ori, 1996)
- Adiabatic inspiral (Hughes, 2001), adiabatic+1SF (Lynch+, 2024)



Examples of spherical geodesic orbits (Credit: Teo, 2021)

Semi-analytic solutions for the orbits

$\delta r(\lambda)$ and frequency shifts known analytically
 $\delta t(\lambda), \delta \phi(\lambda), \delta z(\lambda)$ known as Fourier series

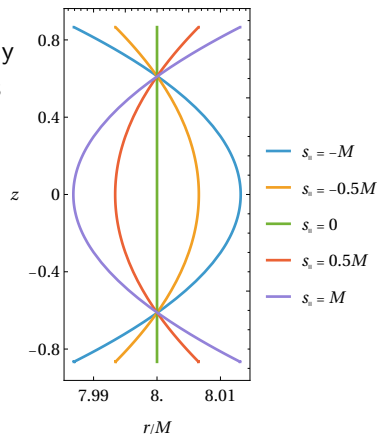
Problem:

$$\frac{d\delta r}{d\lambda} \neq 0 \text{ and } \langle \delta r \rangle \neq 0$$

for generic spin gauge.

We use Drummond - Hughes (DH) spin gauge:

$$\langle \delta r \rangle = \langle \delta z \rangle = 0$$

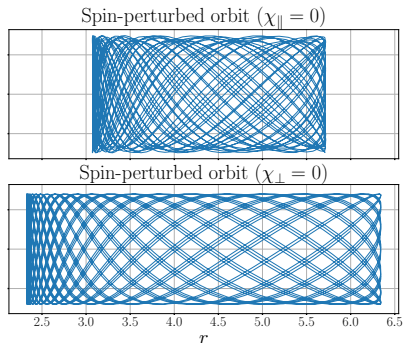
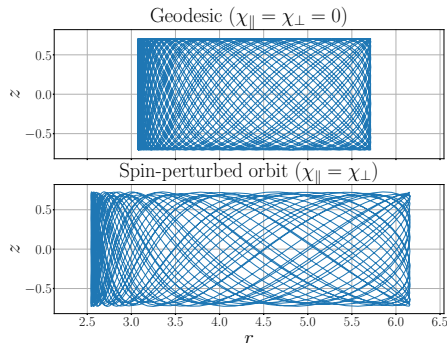


$$a = 0.95, p_g = 8, x_g = 0.5$$
$$r = r_g + q\chi_{\parallel} \delta r$$

Skuopy, Piovano, Witznay (2025)

Spin flags! - fixed constants of motion

Solutions 1st order MPD equation generic orbits.

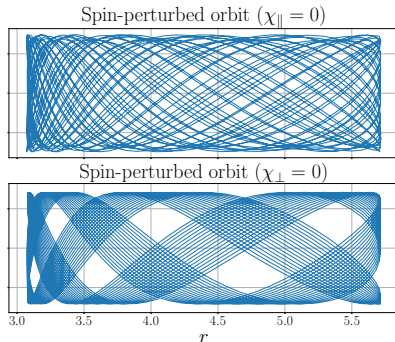
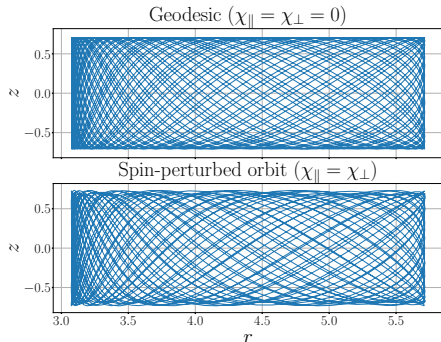


r vs z plots, $\epsilon = 1/20$
 $\delta E = \delta L_z = \delta Q = 0$

Piovan+ (2024)

Spin flags! - fixed turning points (on average)

Solutions 1st order MPD equation generic orbits.



r vs z plots, $\epsilon = 1/20$
 $\langle \delta(\text{turning points}) \rangle = 0$

Piovano+ (2024)

Chapter II

Waveform From Extreme Asymmetrical-Mass Binaries

Two-timescale expansion

- constants of motion $C_A = (M, a, E, L_z, Q, \chi, \chi_{\parallel})$
- phases $\varphi_A = (\varphi_r, \varphi_{\theta}, \varphi_{\phi}, \varphi_{\psi})$

$$\frac{d\tilde{\varphi}_A}{dt} = \Omega_A(C_B) + \epsilon\chi_{\parallel}\delta\Omega_A^{\text{spin}}(C_B) + \epsilon\delta\Omega_A^{1\text{SF}}(C_B)$$

$$\frac{dC_A}{dt} = \epsilon\left[\mathcal{F}_{A(0)}(C_B) + \epsilon\chi_{\parallel}\delta\mathcal{F}_{A(1)}^{\text{spin}}(C_B) + \epsilon\delta\mathcal{F}_{A(1)}^{2\text{SF}}(C_B)\right]$$

$$\frac{d\chi}{dt} = \frac{d\chi_{\parallel}}{dt} = 0 \quad \text{at 1PA}$$

$\chi_{\perp}$ effects purely oscillatory $\implies \langle \chi_{\perp} \text{ effects} \rangle = 0$

$\mathcal{F}_{A(0)}(C_B)$ dissipative 1SF

$\delta\Omega_A^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$ conservative spin effects

$\delta\Omega_A^{1\text{SF}}(C_B)$ conservative 1SF

$\delta\mathcal{F}_{A(1)}^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$ dissipative spin effects

$\delta\mathcal{F}_{A(1)}^{2\text{SF}}(C_B)$ dissipative 2SF

How do we compute waveforms in practice?

Grid of $a, E, L_z, Q, \dots$

Adiabatic regime $T_{RR} \gg T_{\text{orb}} \implies$ we use balance laws

$$\frac{dE}{dt} = -I_{\text{GW flux}}^E(J_A) \quad \frac{dL_z}{dt} = -I_{\text{GW flux}}^{L_z}(J_A)$$

- $\mathcal{F}_{A(0)}(C_B)$, $\delta\Omega_A^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$, $\delta\mathcal{F}_{A(1)}^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$ asymptotic info is sufficient
- $\delta\Omega_A^{1\text{SF}}(C_B)$, $\delta\mathcal{F}_{A(1)}^{2\text{SF}}(C_B)$ require local info (self-force)

$$h = -\frac{2\mu}{r} \sum_{\ell m \vec{k}} \left(\mathcal{A}_{\ell m \vec{k}}^g + \epsilon \delta \mathcal{A}_{\ell m \vec{k}}^{2\text{SF}} + \epsilon \chi_{\parallel} \delta \mathcal{A}_{\ell m \vec{k}}^{\chi_{\parallel}} + \epsilon \chi_{\perp} \delta \mathcal{A}_{\ell m \vec{k}}^{\chi_{\perp}} \right) e^{im\varphi} e^{-i(\omega_{m\vec{k}}^g + \epsilon \chi_{\parallel} \delta \omega_{m\vec{k}})}$$

with $\vec{k} = (n, k, j)$. $n, k \in \mathbb{Z}$, $j = -1, 0, 1$. $\omega_{m\vec{k}} = m\Omega_{\phi} + k\Omega_z + r\Omega_r + j\Omega_p$.

Pound&Wardell (2021), Mathews&Pound (2025), “Waveform Modeling for the Laser Interferometer Space Antenna” (2023)

Methods to compute spin shifts to asymptotic fluxes

Modified version of Teukolsky formalism.

Spin effects

- corrections orbits $\delta t, \delta r, \delta z, \delta \phi$
- precession frequency Ω_p
- shift frequencies $\Omega_i = \Omega_{ig} + \chi_{\parallel} \delta \Omega_i \quad i = r, z, \phi$
- stress energy tensor dipole particle: $T^{\mu\nu} = T^{\mu\nu \text{p.p.}} + T^{\mu\nu \text{dipole}}$

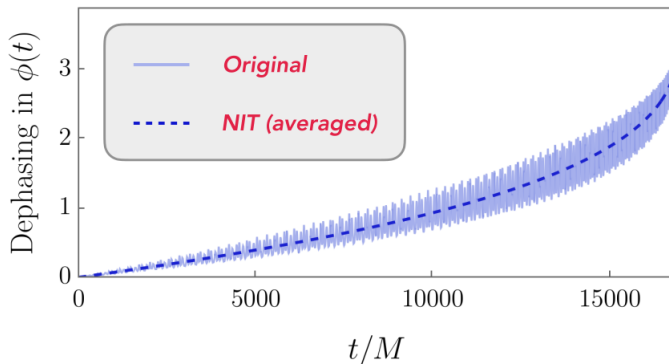
Codes to compute $\delta \mathcal{F}_{E(1)}^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$, $\delta \mathcal{F}_{L_z(1)}^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$

- 2nd order MPD (Viktor+,2023)
- 1st order MPD (Piovano+,2024)
<https://github.com/gabriel-andres-piovano/Spinning-Body-Hamilton-Jacobi>
- shifted geodesic formalism (to appear soon).
See Skuopy&Witzany (2nd paper 2024)

No code to compute $\delta \mathcal{F}_{Q(1)}^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$ (yet)

Recipe for $\delta \mathcal{F}_{Q(1)}^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$ now available. Grant (2024), Witznay+ (2024), Mathews&Pound (2025)

Osculating geodesic+NIT for inspiral spinning particle

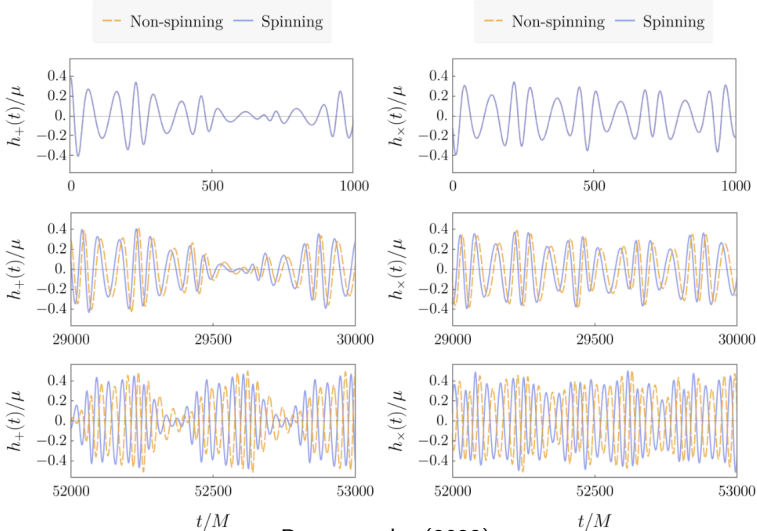


Drummond+ (2023)

Inspiral approximated via osculating geodesics method

Lynch+(2021), Lynch+(2023), Drummond+ (2023)

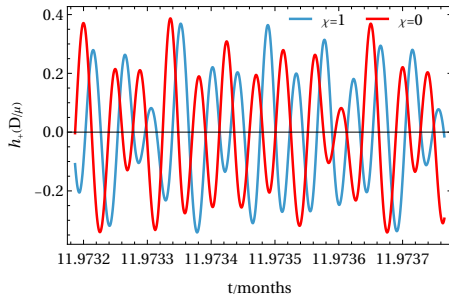
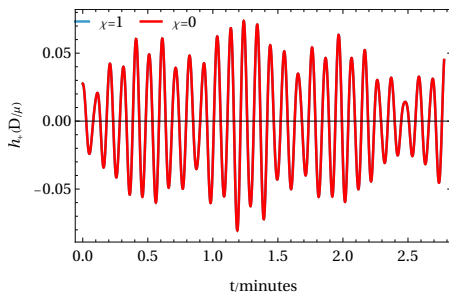
0PA+conservative spin effects waveform



Drummond+ (2023)

Spins (anti-) aligned, generic inspiral with $\mathcal{F}_{A(0)}(C_B)$, $\delta\Omega_A^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$

Quasi-spherical inspiral



$(D/\mu)h_+(t)$ for spinning and non spinning body. $a = 0.95$, $x_f = 0.66$

Waveform model include $\mathcal{F}_{A(0)}(C_B)$, $\delta\Omega_A^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$, $\delta\mathcal{F}_{A(1)}^{\text{spin}}(C_B)$

We use Drummond - Hughes (DH) spin gauge: $\langle\delta r\rangle = \langle\delta z\rangle = 0$

Skuopy, Piovano, Witznay (2025)

Does “spherical still evolve into spherical”?

Gold Observation (Quasi-spherical adiabatic inspiral spinning particle)

$$\dot{e} \sim e \quad \text{for } e \ll 1$$

1st argument. Evolution radial action J_r

In the DH gauge, spin correction radial action $\delta J_r \sim \mathcal{O}(e^2)$. Then $J_r = J_{rg} + q\chi\delta J_r$

$$\frac{dJ_r}{dt} \sim e \implies \dot{e} \sim e$$

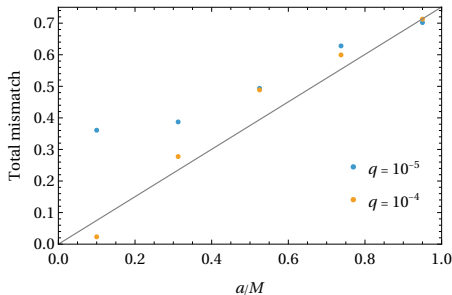
2nd argument. Virtual Geodesic formalism

$$x^\mu = \tilde{x}^\mu(\tilde{C}) + q\chi\delta x^\mu(x_g^\mu) \quad x = t, r, z, \phi$$

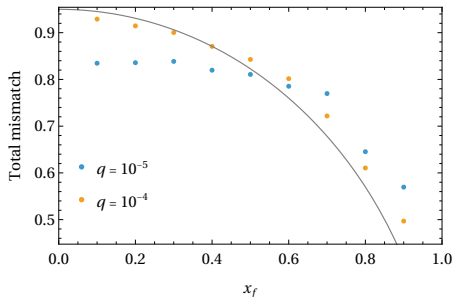
Virtual Geodesic $\tilde{x}^\mu(\tilde{C})$ stays spherical $\implies e \sim q\chi$ during inspiral

Is the small body spin detectable?

Mismatches waveforms for a spinning ($\chi_{\parallel} = 1$) and spinless secondary...



...vs primary spin. $x_f = 0.66$



...vs inclination. $a = 0.95$

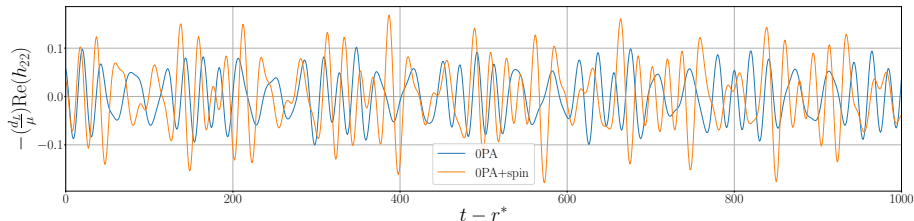
Gray line is $(a/M)\sqrt{1-x_f^2}$.

Lindlom criterion: two waveforms distinguishable if

$$\mathcal{M} > \frac{\# \text{ parameters}}{2\text{SNR}^2} \simeq 1.5 \times 10^{-2} \quad \text{for SNR} = 20$$

Skuopy, Piovano, Witznay (2025)

Waveform snapshots for spin precessing secondary



Piovano+ (2024)

0PA (blue curve) and 0PA+spin (orange curve). $\epsilon = 1/20$

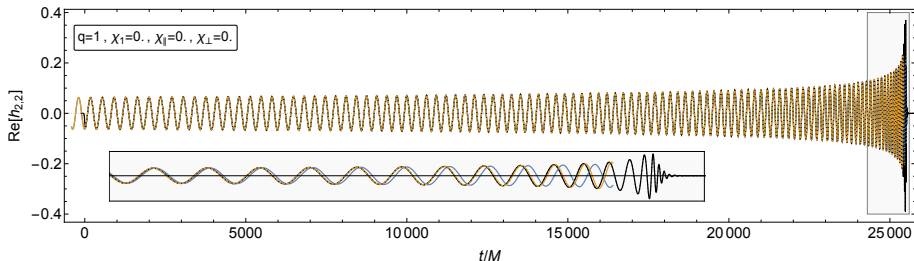
$$h = -\frac{2\mu}{r} \sum_{\ell m \vec{k}} (\mathcal{A}_{\ell m \vec{k}}^g + \epsilon \chi_{\parallel} \delta \mathcal{A}_{\ell m \vec{k}}^{\chi_{\parallel}} + \epsilon \chi_{\perp} \delta \mathcal{A}_{\ell m \vec{k}}^{\chi_{\perp}}) e^{im\varphi} e^{-i(\omega_{m\vec{k}}^g + \epsilon \chi_{\parallel} \delta \omega_{m\vec{k}})}$$

with $\vec{k} = (n, k, j)$. $n, k \in \mathbb{Z}$, $j = -1, 0, 1$. $\omega_{m\vec{k}} = m\Omega_{\phi} + k\Omega_z + r\Omega_r + j\Omega_p$

$$\mathcal{A}_{\ell m n k j}^g = \delta \mathcal{A}_{\ell m n k j}^{\chi_{\parallel}} = 0 \text{ for } j \neq 0$$

$$\text{Spin gauge } \delta E = \delta L_z = \delta Q = 0$$

1PA self-force vs NR waveform



Credit: Mathews+, (2025)

Complete 1PA waveform (orange) vs vs 0PA (blue) vs NR simulation (black).
Non-spinning binary

What we have

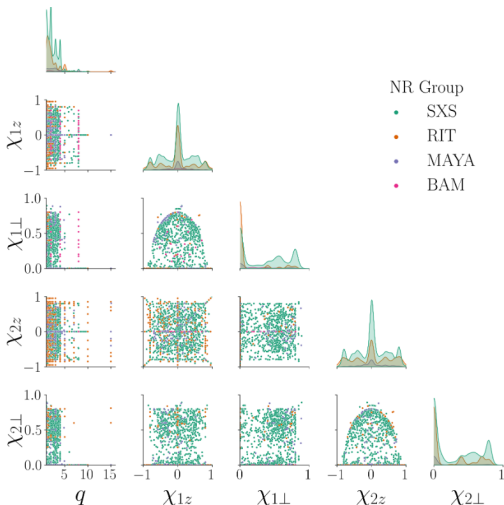
Waveform for circular orbits Schwarzschild spacetime (Soon in Kerr?!?)

$$\mathcal{F}_{A(0)}(C_B), \delta\Omega_A^{\text{spin}}(C_B), \delta\mathcal{F}_{A(1)}^{\text{spin}}(C_B), \delta\Omega_A^{1\text{SF}}(C_B), \delta\mathcal{F}_{A(1)}^{2\text{SF}}(C_B)$$

Chapter III

Extreme ϵ Waveforms For Not-So-Extreme ϵ Binaries

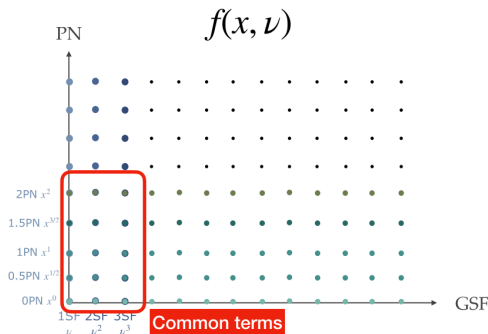
Motivation



- $q \lesssim 8$
(few up to $q = 128$)
- challenging regions are sparsely covered
- high resolution needed for small q or high spins
 - $\Rightarrow$ need longer signals
 - $\Rightarrow$ high resolutions
 - $\Rightarrow$ eccentricity?
 - $\Rightarrow$ spin precession?
- **SF waveforms may help cover parameters space efficiently**

Credit: LISA Waveform Working Group
Whitepaper

Hybrid waveforms: self-force+PN



Credit: L  ic Honnet

$$f(x, \nu) = \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} f_{k(n)} x^{k/2} \nu^n$$

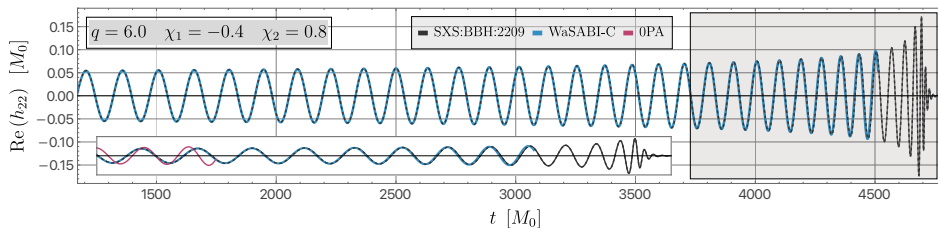
$$x = \omega^{2/3} \sim 1/r$$

$$\nu = m_1 m_2 / M_{\text{tot}}^2 \sim \epsilon$$

- resummed PN info $\rightarrow$ high ν order (2SF, 3SF,...)
- expansion in ω SF info $\rightarrow$ high PN order

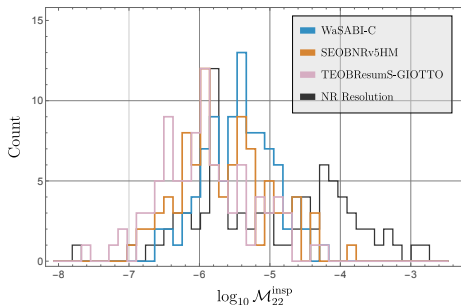
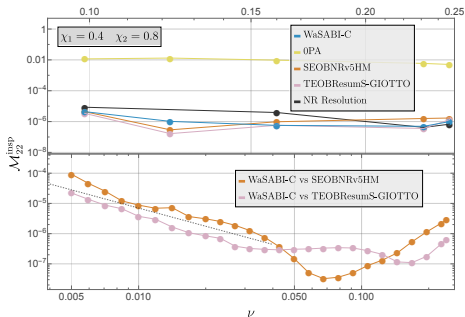
Evolution M_{tot} , ν , ω , a from first-law and flux balance equations

Hybrid vs NR waveforms



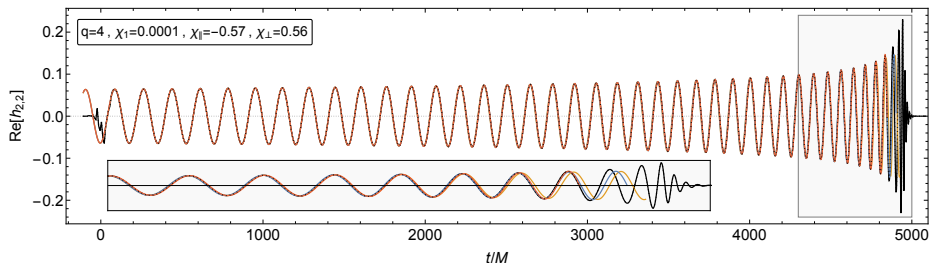
Honet, Mathews, Compère, Pound, Wardell, Piovano, van de Meent, Warburton (2025)
See also Mathews+, (2025); Honet+ (first paper, 2025)

Hybrid vs NR waveforms



Honet, Mathews, Compère, Pound, Wardell, Piovano, van de Meent, Warburton, 2025

1PA Precessing waveform vs NR



Mathews+, (2025)

1PA model vs NR. Blue: 1PAT1e-a Orange: 1PAT1e- χ . Dashed, red: 1PAT1R

- 1PAT1e- χ : expand in ν at fixed M_{tot})
- 1PAT1e-a: expand in ν , fixed primary spin $a_1 = S_1/(m_1 M_{\text{tot}})$
- 1PAT1R: expand in ν but in

$$\frac{d\Omega}{dt} = \frac{\mathcal{N}}{\mathcal{D}}$$

only $\mathcal{N}$ and $\mathcal{D}$ are expanded

End Credits

Final notes and acknowledgments

G.A.P. acknowledges the support of the Win4Project grant ETLOG of the Walloon Region for the Einstein Telescope

- fancy doing perturbation theory? Check the BHPToolkit! 
<https://bhptoolkit.org/>
- for your tensor needs, check the Mathematica package “xAct”:
www.xact.es
- need an EMRI waveform pronto? Use FEW!
<https://github.com/BlackHolePerturbationToolkit/FastEMRIWaveforms>
- wanna play with spin? Check
<https://github.com/gabriel-andres-piovano/Spinning-Body-Hamilton-Jacobi>
- Feel free to contact me at gabriel.andres.piovano@ulb.be

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Thank you for you attention!