$\log n$ - Space, $n^{3/2}$ Time Quantum Sort.

David Ponarovsky

April 24, 2025

It has been proven that any quantum algorithm in the quantum circuits which sorts at time T and storage space S has to satisfy the restriction $TS = \Omega(n^{3/2})$ [**klauck2003quantum**]. In the regime of $S \geq \log^3(n)$, it has been shown that the bound is tight up to logarithmic factors. However, in the regime where S is strictly $\Theta(\log(n))$, not much advancement has been reached beyond $T = \Theta(n^{1\frac{1}{2}} \log n)$. Here, we present a quantum algorithm that sorts with $\log(n)$ storage memory and $\Theta(n^{3/2})$ time. We achieved this by quantifying the sorting algorithm invented by Stanley P. Y. Fung [**Simplesort**], who coined its name - "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" - due to the surprise of having such a simple sorting algorithm.

The insight that allows getting rid of the logarithmic factor is the fact that in any iteration of the "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" algorithm, it looks for the first position $k < i$ such that $A_k > A_i$, assuming $A_1 \leq A_2 \leq A_3 \leq ..A_{i-1}$. Under this assumption, this task can be done using Grover in time $\sqrt{i}$, while in the previous attempts, the subroutines that were being used to be quantified were extracting the maximum, which requires $\Omega(\sqrt{n} \log n)$ when done accurately.

The paper is organized as follows: first, we introduce "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" presented in Algorithm 1 and prove its correctness. The correctness proof will imply the equivalence of Algorithm 2. Then, we present the quantum space bound version, Algorithm 3, and analyze its complexity.

1 Classical Starting Point - "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort".

We are starting by presenting and proving the correctness of Stanley P. Y. Fung's algorithm [**Simplesort**], as given in Algorithm 1.

Result: Sorting $A_1, A_2, ..A_n$

```
1 for  i ∈ [n] do
2 |   for  j ∈ [n] do
3 |   |   if  A_i < A_j then
4 |   |   |   swap A_i ↔ A_j
5 |   |   end
6 |   end
7 end
```

Algorithm 1: "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" alg.

Claim 1.1. *After the ith iteration, $A_1 \leq A_2 \leq A_3.. \leq A_i$ and A_i is the maximum of the whole array.*

Proof. By induction on the iteration number i.

1. Base. For $i = 1$, it is clear that when j reaches the position of the maximum element, an exchange will occur and A_1 will be set to be the maximum element. Thus, the condition on line (3) will not be satisfied for the remaining j-iterations of the inner loop. Therefore, at the end of the first iteration, A_1 is indeed the maximum.

2. Assumption. Assume the correctness of the claim for any $i' < i$.

3. Step. Consider the ith iteration. And observe that if $A_i = A_{i-1}$ then A_i is also the maximal element in A, namely no exchange will be made in the ith iteration, yet $A_1 \leq A_2 \leq .. \leq A_{i-1}$ by the induction assumption, thus $A_1 \leq A_2 \leq .. \leq A_{i-1} \leq A_i$ and A_i is the maximal element, so the claim holds in the end of the iteration. If $A_i < A_{i-1}$ then there exists $k \in [1, i-1]$ such that $A_k > A_i$. Set k to be the minimal position for which the inequality holds. For convenience, denote by $A^{(j)}$ the array in the beginning of the jth iteration of the inner loop. And let's split into cases according to j value.

   (a) $j < k$ By definition of k, for any $j < k$, $A_j^{(1)} < A_i^{(1)}$, Hence in the first $k-1$ iterations no exchange will be made and we can conclude that $A_l^{(j)} = A_l^{(1)}$ for any $l \in [n]$ and $j \leq k$.

   (b) $j \geq k$ and $j \leq i$, We claim that for each such j an exchange will always occur. (The proof is given below.)

   Claim 1.2. *For any $j \in [k, i]$ we have that in the end of the jth iteration:*

   - $A_j^{(j+1)} = A_i^{(j)}$.
   - $A_i^{(j+1)} = A_j^{(j)} = A_j^{(1)}$.
   - *For any $l > j$ and $l \neq i$ we have $A_l^{(j+1)} = A_l^{(1)}$.*

   (c) $j > i$, so we know that $A_i^{(i+1)}$ is the maximal element in A. Therefore, for any j, it holds that $A_i^{(i+1)} \geq A_j^{(i)}$. It follows that no exchange would be made and $A_i^{(j)}$ will remain the maximum til the end of the inner loop. Thus for any $j > i$:

   $$A_i^{(j)} = A_i^{(j-1)} = .. = A_i^{(i+2)} = A_i^{(i+1)} = A_{i-1}^{(i)} = A_{i-1}^{(0)} = \max A$$

   And

   $$\begin{aligned} &A_1^{(j)}, A_2^{(j)}, ..A_{k-1}^{(j)}, A_k^{(j)}, A_{k+1}^{(j)}, ..A_{i-1}^{(j)}, A_i^{(j)}, A_{i+1}^{(j)}, A_{i+2}^{(j)}, A_{i+3}^{(j)}.. \\ =&A_1^{(0)}, A_2^{(0)}, ..A_{k-1}^{(0)}, A_i^{(0)}, A_k^{(0)}, ..A_{i-2}^{(0)}, A_{i-1}^{(0)}, A_{i+1}^{(0)}, A_{i+2}^{(0)}, A_{i+3}^{(0)}.. \end{aligned}$$

   In particular, for $j = n+1$ (Note that there is no $n+1$th iteration). Clearly, the inequalities are satisfied and we are done.

□

Proof of Claim 1.2. Observe that the third section holds trivially by the definition of the algorithm. It doesn't touch any position greater than j in the first j iterations (inner loop) except the ith position. So we have to prove only the first two bullets. Again, we are going to prove them by induction on j.

1. Base. $A_k^{(1)}$ is greater than A_i, and by the above case, we have that at the beginning of the kth iteration $A_k^{(k)} = A_k^{(1)}, A_i^{(k)} = A_k^{(1)}$. Therefore, the condition on line (3) is satisfied, an exchange is made, and $A_k^{(k+1)} = A_i^{(k)} = A_i^{(1)}$ and $A_i^{(k+1)} = A_k^{(k)}$.

2. Assumption. Assume the correctness of the claim for any $k \leq j' < j \leq i$.

3. Step. Consider the $j \in (k, i]$ iteration. By the induction assumption, we have that $A_{j-1}^{(j)} = A_i^{(j-1)}$ and $A_i^{(j)} = A_{j-1}^{(j-1)} = A_{j-1}^{(1)}$. On the other hand, by the induction assumption of Claim 1.1, $j-1 < i \Rightarrow A_{j-1}^{(1)} \leq A_j^{(1)}$. Combining the third bullet, we obtain that:

   $$A_j^{(j)} = A_j^{(1)} \geq A_{j-1}^{(1)} = A_i^{(j)}$$

   And therefore, either there is an inequality and an exchange is made or there is equality. In both cases, after the jth iteration, we have $A_j^{(j+1)} = A_i^{(j)}$ and $A_i^{(j+1)} = A_j^{(j)} = A_j^{(1)}$.

□

Result: Sorting $A_1, A_2, ..A_n$
swap $A_1 \leftrightarrow \max A$
for $i \in [n-1]$ **do**
  Find the first k such $A_k > A_i$
  Set $A \leftarrow A_1, A_2..A_{k-1}, A_i, A_k, A_{k+1}, .., A_{i-1}, A_{i+1}.., A_n$
end

Algorithm 2: "ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" alg.

2 Sorting Quantumly in Space-Bounded Storage.

Definition 2.1. *We will say that a quantum circuit is in the S-bounded storage model if it can perform one of the following operations:*

1. *Initialize S ancillae exactly once.*
2. *Compute any gate on those ancillae.*
3. *Read memory into the local storage for $R[|x\rangle, i] = |x \oplus M_i\rangle$.*
4. *Write classical state from local storage back to memory $W[x, i] = M_i \leftarrow x$.*

Result: Sorting $A_1, A_2, ..A_n$
swap $A_1 \leftrightarrow \max A$
for $i \in [n-1]$ **do**
  Set current $\leftarrow$ head.next
  k-pointer $\leftarrow$ Find the first '$k < i$' node such '$A_k > A_i$' using Grover querying the follow
   (node.color = red and node.value > current.value
    and node.back.value $\leq$ current.value)
  Set head.next $\leftarrow$ head.next.next
  Set head.next.back $\leftarrow$ head
  Set current.next $\leftarrow$ k-pointer
  Set current.back $\leftarrow$ k-pointer.back
  Set current.back.next $\leftarrow$ current
  Set current.color $\leftarrow$ red
end

Algorithm 3: "Quantum ICan'tBelieveItCanSort" alg.