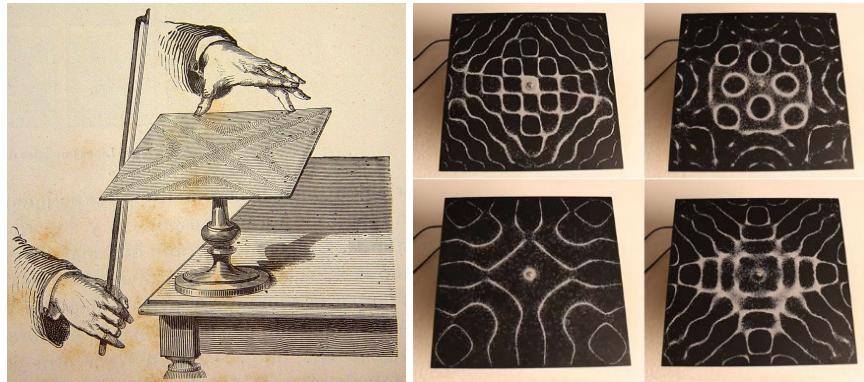


# SciComp Project 2

## Week 3

September 15, 2025  
To be handed in September 22 before 12:00 noon



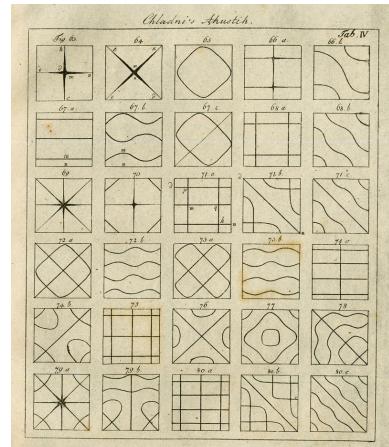
## 1 Background

Among the great pioneers of computational physics was Walther Ritz, who (half a century before the digital computer) invented a computational method for solving tough differential equations that is among the most used today: the *Ritz-Galerkin-method*. Whether solving quantum systems in Hilbert space or simulating whether a bridge will crash in a storm, his method usually lies underneath.

We will not look at that until later in the course. Instead, we will study the problem he invented it for: The mysterious harmonics of Chladni plates, one of the first and most visually striking experiments that let us *see* sound.

Ernst Chladni, a musician and physicist from 18<sup>th</sup> century Wittenberg, discovered that driving a metal plate at different frequencies with his violin bow sometimes caused dust to gather into beautiful patterns. At most frequencies, the dust was just shaken about, but through a systematic approach with sand sprinkled over the plate, he found that the magic happened at certain frequencies, which he carefully drew and collected.

Already at Chladni's time, it was well-understood why the figures appeared: The special frequencies were *resonances*, harmonics inherent to the plate geometry that lead to standing waves. In the *nodes* (the regions where the wave is zero) the sand settles; everywhere else it is pushed around until finding a nodal region to rest.<sup>1</sup> But it took over a hundred years before anyone could solve the equations and predict the patterns.



Chladni's drawing of resonance modes he discovered with iron plate, violin bow, and sand.

<sup>1</sup>The same principle is used today with 3-dimensional sound waves in air for *acoustic levitation*.

The thin plates are ruled by Kirchhoff's dynamics (1850), time-evolved by the *biharmonic operator*

$$\Delta^2 = \left( \frac{\partial^4}{\partial x^4} + \frac{\partial^4}{\partial y^4} + \frac{\partial^4}{\partial x^2 \partial y^2} \right) \quad (1)$$

similar, but not the same as the wave equation. The resonance modes are the eigenfunctions of the biharmonic operator, and the resonance frequencies correspond to the eigenvalues:

$$\Delta^2 u(x, y) = \lambda u(x, y) \quad (2)$$

under free boundary conditions, subject only to the plate being a solid, elastic object:

$$\begin{aligned} x\text{-boundary: } & \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \left( \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x^2} + (2 - \mu) \frac{\partial^2}{\partial y^2} \right) u(x, y) = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad \left( \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x^2} + \mu \frac{\partial^2}{\partial y^2} \right) u(x, y) = 0 \\ y\text{-boundary: } & \frac{\partial}{\partial y} \left( \frac{\partial^2}{\partial y^2} + (2 - \mu) \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x^2} \right) u(x, y) = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad \left( \frac{\partial^2}{\partial y^2} + \mu \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x^2} \right) u(x, y) = 0 \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

where  $\mu$  is an elasticity constant, a material property of the plate.

## 2 Data

The full calculation is beyond the scope of this week:<sup>2</sup> **You will only need to calculate the resonance eigenvectors and eigenvalues** from a matrix representation  $\mathbf{K}$  of the biharmonic operator, which you may download here: Chladni-Kmat.npy (Python) That is, you will simply be working with the eigenproblem:

$$\mathbf{K}\mathbf{x} = \lambda \mathbf{x} \quad (4)$$

The matrix representation  $\mathbf{K}$  incorporates also the boundary conditions, so that eigenvectors will be solutions to the full problem.

In Python you load the matrix as `Kmat = np.load("Chladni-Kmat.npy")`.

For testing your implementation, you can use the matrices given in Project2\_examplematrices.py. Simply report the results for the highest-numbered matrix that works.

## Visualization

To show your solutions, download chladni\_show.py and the data file chladni\_basis.npy for Python.

Running `chladni_show` defines the `basis_set`, a  $15 \times 500 \times 500$  array of 15 basis functions each defined on a  $500 \times 500$  grid, and the following three functions:

- `show_waves(x, basis_set)`: Shows the actual wavefunction corresponding to coefficient vector  $\mathbf{x}$
- `show_nodes(x, basis_set)`: Shows the wavefunction zeros, where the sand gathers.
- `show_all_wavefunction_nodes(T, lambdas, basis_set)`: Shows the zeros of all the eigenfunctions defined by the columns of  $\mathbf{T}$ .

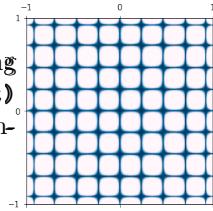
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<sup>2</sup>If you are interested in how it is done, Gander and Wanner's From Euler, Ritz, and Galerkin to Modern Computing has an excellent treatment of the problem. My matrix-representation of the problem,  $\mathbf{K}$ , is calculated by a similar method, with a slightly different and larger basis to yield more modes.

### 3 Questions for Week 3

- a. (1) Implement a function `centers, radii = gershgorin(A)` that locates the eigenvalues of a matrix using Gershgorin's theorem. (2) Localize the eigenvalues of  $\mathbf{K}$ , and report the disk centers and radii.
- b. (1) Implement a function `lambda = rayleigh_qt(A, x)`, which takes a matrix  $\mathbf{A}$  and approximate eigenvector  $\mathbf{x}$ , and returns the approximate eigenvalue  $\lambda$  given by the Rayleigh quotient.  
 (2) Implement a function `x, k = power_iterate(A, x0)` for power iteration, which takes a matrix  $\mathbf{A}$  and an initial vector  $\mathbf{x}_0$  as arguments, and returns an eigenvector  $\mathbf{x}$  together with the number  $k$  of iterations used. Don't forget to choose and implement a suitable convergence criterion.  
 (3) Test it by finding the largest eigenvalue of the example matrices. Report the eigenvalue found, the Rayleigh residual (the residual of the Raleigh quotient as a least-squares system), and the number  $k$  of iterations used.

- (4) What is the largest eigenvalue of  $\mathbf{K}$ ? Visualize your eigenfunction using `show_waves(x, basis_set)` to see the wave, and `show_nodes(x, basis_set)` to see where the sand will gather. The eigenfunction for the largest eigenvalue should have nodes along an  $8 \times 8$  grid.



- c. (1) Write a Rayleigh quotient iteration function `x, k = rayleigh_iterate(A, x0, shift0)`, which takes a matrix  $\mathbf{A}$ , an initial vector  $\mathbf{x}_0$ , and an approximate eigenvalue  $\text{shift}_0$  as arguments and returns an eigenvector  $\mathbf{x}$  together with the number  $k$  of iterations used.

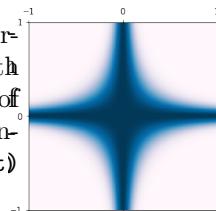
The multiplication by the inverse matrix should be implemented using either your own LU-factorization from as `x = lu_solve(A, y)` or QR-factorization from as `x = qr_solve(A, y)`.

**NB:** If you did not get either to work in previous weeks, you can use an in-built linear solver and make a small note that you do this.

- (2) Test it with the example matrices, and report the eigenvalues found, Rayleigh residual, and the number  $k$  of iterations used.

- d. An important feature of inverse iteration and Rayleigh-iteration is the ability to calculate *any* eigenvalue and its eigenvectors: given an approximate starting point, we obtain an eigenvector to the nearest eigenvalue.

- (1) Why can you not get all the eigenvalues and -vectors with pure power-iteration? (2) Use your Rayleigh quotient iteration function together with the Gershgorin centers to calculate as many eigenvectors and eigenvalues of  $\mathbf{K}$  as you can. Are you able to get all of them? Why? If not, find the remaining one(s) by any means necessary. Check using `show_nodes(x, basis_set)` that the eigenfunction with lowest eigenvalue looks like a cross:



- (3) Construct the transformation matrix  $\mathbf{T}$  whose columns are the eigenvectors in order of ascending eigenvalues, and check that  $\mathbf{K} = \mathbf{T}\Lambda\mathbf{T}^{-1}$  with diagonal  $\Lambda$ .<sup>3</sup> (4) Visualize your solutions using the provided function `show_all_wavefunction_nodes(T, lambdas, basis_set)`.

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<sup>3</sup>You may use the system library `inverse` for this.