

Foreword

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*Fast X-ray timing and spectroscopy at extreme count rates: Science with the HTRS on the International X-ray Observatory - HTRS2011,
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*Speaker.

When we decided to organize the "Fast X-ray timing and spectroscopy at extreme count rates" conference, our intention was to review the current knowledge in the field and discuss the science that would be achieved with the International X-ray Observatory (IXO) or any other future timing missions, with some emphasis on the High Time Resolution Spectrometer (HTRS). About one hundred timing experts gathered at Champéry and contributed to the three main sessions of the conference: one about measuring black hole spins, another one on constraining the equation of state of matter at supra-nuclear densities, and a final one on probing strong field general relativity with X-rays.

By chance the conference turned out to be timely, as it happened just after we had known that two X-ray timing missions (LOFT and GRAVITAS) had been pre-selected by ESA as potential M3 mission concepts for its Cosmic Vision program. Both missions were presented during the conference. There was a general consensus that if one of the two would be eventually selected, the timing community should gather behind the happy elected. A few days after the conference, LOFT was selected as an M3 mission candidate, and many scientists involved in non successful proposals brought their support to LOFT.

In addition, a few weeks after the conference, ESA announced a change of context for the large Cosmic Vision missions, taking into account the US budgetary prospective and the Decadal prioritisations. IXO was then terminated and a new European-led mission with an affordable budget for Europe is being defined, with a high count rate capability included in the baseline payload.

We would like to thank the science organizing committee for producing such a well balanced and scientifically attractive program: Ali Alpar, Marat Gilfanov, Michiel van der Klis, Chryssa Kouveliotou, Sandro Mereghetti, Jon Miller, Fritz Paerels, Ron Remillard, Luigi Stella, Tod Strohmayer, Michel Tagger, John Tomsick, Phil Uttley, Anna Watts, Joern Wilms, Shuang Nan Zhang. These proceedings shall reflect both the goals of the meeting and the high quality of the oral presentations and posters.

Finally, it is with great pleasure that we thank also the local organizing committee (LOC): Martine Logossou, Maurizio Falanga, and Maria Suveges. From talking to many of the participants, this was one of the best organized conference: all the credits should be given to the LOC. A special thank to Martine, who was tremendously active to place all the participants in the best possible conditions during their stay in the wonderful and sunny Champéry.