

## Many Variations of Mahler Measures

The Mahler measure is a fascinating notion and an exciting topic in contemporary mathematics, interconnecting with subjects as diverse as number theory, analysis, arithmetic geometry, special functions and random walks. This friendly and concise introduction to the Mahler measure is a valuable resource for both graduate courses and self-study. It provides the reader with the necessary background material, before presenting recent achievements and remaining challenges in the field.

The first part introduces the univariate Mahler measure and addresses Lehmer's problem, and then discusses techniques of reducing multivariate measures to hypergeometric functions. The second part touches on the novelties of the subject, especially the relation with elliptic curves, modular forms and special values of  $L$ -functions. Finally, the appendix presents the modern definition of motivic cohomology and regulator maps, as well as Deligne–Beilinson cohomology. The text includes many exercises to test comprehension and to challenge readers of all abilities.

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François Brunault , Wadim Zudilin  
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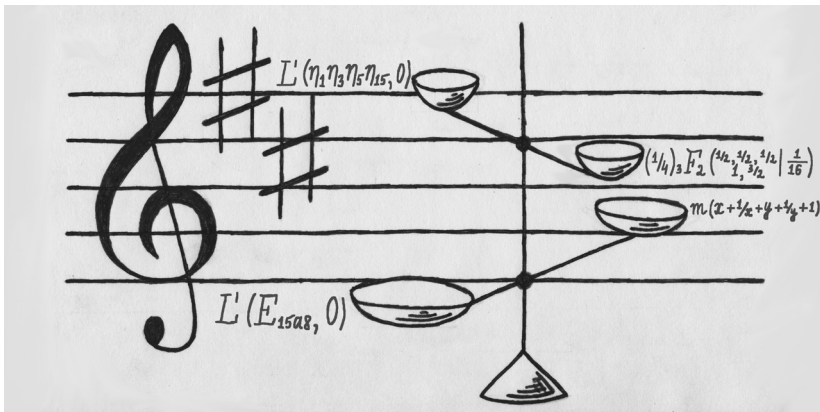
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## A Lasting Symphony

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*À mon père, qui a œuvré pour que  
chaque personne se réalise pleinement*

*To Our Long-awaited Great Achievements*

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## Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i>	xiii
<b>1 Some basics</b>		1
1.1 Kronecker's theorem		1
1.2 Factorisation of cyclotomic expressions		3
1.3 Jensen's formula		6
1.4 Families of Mahler measures		9
Chapter notes		11
Additional exercises		12
<b>2 Lehmer's problem</b>		14
2.1 Smyth's theorem		14
2.2 Dobrowolski's bound		19
2.3 A discriminated problem about discriminants		22
Chapter notes		27
Additional exercises		28
<b>3 Multivariate setting</b>		30
3.1 Mahler's invention		30
3.2 Newton polytopes		33
3.3 Special Mahler measures		36
3.4 Limits of multivariate Mahler measures		37
3.5 Reciprocal vs non-reciprocal polynomials		40
Chapter notes		44
Additional exercises		45
<b>4 The dilogarithm</b>		49
4.1 The $q$ -binomial theorem and pentagonal identity		49
4.2 The Rogers and Bloch–Wigner dilogarithms		53
4.3 Maillot's formula		56
Chapter notes		58
Additional exercises		58

x	<i>Contents</i>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Differential equations for families of Mahler measures</b>	62
5.1	A poly family	62
5.2	Boyd's list and other instances	66
5.3	Three-variate Mahler measures	67
	Chapter notes	68
	Additional exercises	69
<b>6</b>	<b>Random walk</b>	73
6.1	Density of a random walk	73
6.2	Linear Mahler measures	74
6.3	Random walk variations	77
	Chapter notes	80
	Additional exercises	81
<b>7</b>	<b>The regulator map for <math>K_2</math> of curves</b>	83
7.1	Algebraic curves and their $K_2$ groups	83
7.2	The regulator map	86
7.3	Relation to the Mahler measure	89
	Chapter notes	91
	Additional exercises	92
<b>8</b>	<b>Deninger's method for multivariate polynomials</b>	95
8.1	Deligne–Beilinson cohomology	95
8.2	Beilinson's conjectures	98
8.3	Deninger's method	101
8.4	Mahler measures and values of $L$ -functions	104
	Chapter notes	106
	Additional exercises	107
<b>9</b>	<b>The Rogers–Zudilin method</b>	109
9.1	Modular curves, modular units and modular forms	109
9.2	Deninger's method applied to $X_1(15)$	113
9.3	The Rogers–Zudilin trick	115
	Chapter notes	118
	Additional exercises	119
<b>10</b>	<b>Modular regulators</b>	124
10.1	Universal elliptic curves	124
10.2	Shokurov cycles	127
10.3	Eisenstein symbols	128
10.4	Regulator integrals	131
10.5	Applications	133
	Chapter notes	135
	Additional exercises	135

<i>Contents</i>		xi
<i>Appendix</i>	<b>Motivic cohomology and regulators</b>	137
A.1	Motivic cohomology	137
A.2	Regulator maps	141
A.3	Deligne–Beilinson cohomology	146
<i>References</i>		153
<i>Index</i>		165

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[More Information](#)

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## Preface

Kurt Mahler, Fellow of the Royal Society, is an illustrious part of Australia's mathematical heritage. His route to prominence, handicapped by tuberculosis in childhood, entailed completion of a PhD thesis under the great Carl Ludwig Siegel, shortly followed by his escape from Nazi Germany to England, and finally acceptance of a professorship at the newly opened Institute of Advanced Studies of the Australian National University in Canberra. At the beginning of the 1960s, at the very time of his move to Australia, Mahler [129–131] became interested in a particular height function of uni- and multivariate polynomials — a *measure*, its analytical representations and applications in number theory. In [130] a new version and a new proof of Gelfond's inequality relating the height of a product to the product of heights was given. This inequality is at the heart of one of the most successful methods in transcendental number theory, which led to the resolution of the seventh Hilbert problem independently by Gelfond and Schneider, and laid the groundwork for Alan Baker's method of linear forms in logarithms developed from the mid-1960s — Baker was awarded the Fields Medal in 1970 for this work. Years later, the original scope of the Mahler measure was expanded significantly after the discovery of its deep links to algebraic geometry and  $K$ -theory, in particular to Beilinson's conjectures. These interrelations generated a body of challenging problems, some recently resolved but many remaining open.

The set of notes and exercises below grew from numerous talks and lectures by the authors on Mahler measures, special values of  $L$ -functions, regulators and modular forms. This material was crystallised during the masterclass on the topic at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, during the last week of August 2018. The set-up of two courses there was based on what are now Chapters 1–6 (lectured by W.Z.) and Chapters 7–10 (lectured by F.B.) of this book, with the lectures alternated. We take this opportunity to thank heartily

Fabien Pazuki and Riccardo Pengo, the organisers of this conference, as well as the participants for the inspiring and lively discussions around the lectures.

The book can still be viewed as consisting of two parts. The first part (Chapters 1–6) mainly touches the essential basics for the univariate Mahler measure and things related to Lehmer’s problem (also known as Lehmer’s question), then accelerates to multivariate settings and discusses techniques of reducing the measure to hypergeometric functions. Some  $L$ -functions (or  $L$ -values) related to (hyper)elliptic curves and modular forms show up in the background along the way. Then the discussion smoothly transitions into the second part of the book (Chapters 7–10), where the details of recent novelties of multi-variable Mahler measures are given. Finally, the appendix presents the modern definition of motivic cohomology and regulator maps, as well as the example of Deligne–Beilinson cohomology.

The text is supplemented with many exercises of different complexity, and the chapters include additional ones that can help the reader to extend their horizon of understanding of the topic and its links to other mathematical gems. All this makes the book a unique and comprehensive introduction to a developing area, which has numerous links with practically any other part of mathematics and, at the same time, suffers from lack of systematic exposition. Apart from many references on the Mahler measure spread out in the literature (and cited in the bibliography list with care), we can point out the books [83, 176] and reviews [93, 198, 199] where certain aspects of the topic are covered.

This text is a friendly and concise introduction to the subject of Mahler measure, a potential source for a graduate course or self-study. There are definitely other aspects of Mahler measure to be discussed, but we have decided to stay realistic rather than encyclopaedic while going through a new — highly specialised! — subject. One reason behind the involvement of Mahler measure in so many areas of mathematics is that it bears the burden of a height function, the reason we reserve as an excuse for not covering all those numerous (and quite important) applications and links. The latter, for example, include applications to algebraic dynamics (well treated in [83]) and remarkable links to Szegő’s limit theorems and integrable systems of statistical mechanics [178, 211].

During the writing process we have received valuable support and feedback from our friends, colleagues and collaborators, whom we would like to thank: Marie José Bertin, Denis-Charles Cisinski, Frédéric Déglise, Antonin Guilloux, Matilde Lalin, Hang Liu, Boaz Moerman, Michael Neururer, Fabien Pazuki, Riccardo Pengo, Berend Ringeling, Jörg Wildeshaus. Special thanks go to Michael Neururer for providing us with a *sage* code for the Riemann surface pictures, to Ralf Hemmecke and Silviu Radu for supplying us with

*Preface*

xv

compact expressions for  $f_{21}$  and  $f_{45}$  in Chapter 6, as well as to Jörg Wildeshaus for allowing us to use the notes from his course at the summer school on special values of  $L$ -functions, organised at ÉNS Lyon in June 2014. We offer our heartfelt thanks to Roger Astley, Clare Dennison and Anna Scriven at Cambridge University Press, who provided expert support to bring the manuscript to publication. We are indebted to the copy-editor Alison Durham whose constructive feedback and professional work positively impacted the appearance of the book. The picture on the cover of this book was created by Victor Zudilin, whom we thank warmly for this creative and inspiring illustration of the topic of the book.

We hope that an allusion to the great composer Gustav Mahler in the subtitle of the book does not cause any confusion. Though the great mathematician Kurt Mahler seems to be not related to his famous namesake, his mathematics creature — the Mahler measure — is an artistic work comparable to a symphony in music. Enjoy its sounds!

François Brunault and Wadim Zudilin  
*Lyon, Nijmegen and Newcastle*

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