

BRST-BV treatment of Vasiliev's four-dimensional higher-spin gravity

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Based on
arXiv:1102.2219 with N. Boulanger
arXiv:1103.2360 with E. Sezgin
to-appear very soon with N. B. and N. Colombo.

ESI April 2012

Outline

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Abstract

We provide Vasiliev's 4D HSGR with a classical Batalin – Vilkovisky (BV) master action using an adaptation of the Alexandrov – Kontsevich – Schwarz – Zaboronsky (AKSZ) implementation of the (BV) field-anti-field formalism to the case of differential algebras on non-commutative manifolds.

- Vasiliev's equations follow via the variational principle from a Poisson sigma model (PSM) on a non-commutative manifold (see talk by Nicolas Boulanger which we shall also review below)
- AKSZ procedure: classical PSM on commutative manifold is turned into BV action for “minimal” set of fields and anti-fields by substituting each classical differential form by a “vectorial superfield” of fixed total degree given by form degree plus ghost number
- Apply to Vasiliev's HSGR by adapting the AKSZ procedure to PSMs on non-commutative manifolds — part of a more general story!

Many motivations for HSGR

Existence of gauge theories are non-trivial facts, mathematically as well as physically once the dynamics is interpreted properly.

In the case of HSGR, a benchmark is set by Vasiliev's equations:

- AdS/CFT correspondence:
 - ▶ weak/weak-coupling approaches
 - ▶ physically realistic AdS/CMT dualities
 - ▶ anti-holographic duals of as. free QFTs
- formal developments of QFT:
 - ▶ unfolding
 - ▶ generally covariant quantization
 - ▶ twistorization
- co-existence of HSGR and string theory:
 - ▶ interesting for stringy de Sitter physics and cosmology
 - ▶ new phenomenologically viable windows to quantum gravity
 - ▶ new perspectives on the cosmological constant problem and long-distance gravity (e.g. dark matter vs scalar hairs)

Why the PSM off shell formulation

- Thinking of Vasiliev's 4D equations as “toy” for quantum gravity:
 - ▶ Many symmetries may suppress UV divergencies ...
 - ▶ ... but also introduce higher time derivatives already at the classical level
 - ▶ Find suitable generalization of canonical quantization?
- Perturbative expansion around AdS4:
 - ▶ Linearized spectrum \sim square of free conformal scalar/fermion
 - ▶ ... suggests dual CFT3 \sim large-N free field theory
 - ▶ No loop corrections at all! Tree-level exact or perfect cancellations?

Why 4D and not 3D?

The situation in 4D is cleaner than in 3D where the PSM formulation essentially amounts to BF-models in the case of HSCS theory and BFCG-models in the case of Prokushkin – Vasiliev HSGR — we shall not discuss the latter models any further here but they are for sure very interesting and actually in a certain sense more complicated than those arising for 4D HSGR.

Fradkin – Vasiliev cubic action

- Intrinsically 4D action \sim free Fronsdal plus interactions:
 - ▶ Fradkin – Vasiliev cubic action \sim free first-order action for Fronsdal fields plus cubic interactions
 - ▶ ... but it requires extra auxiliary fields to be eliminated via subsidiary constraints on extra linearized higher spin curvatures
 - ▶ Non-abelian higher spin connection and curvature

$$A \equiv A_{\text{dyn}} + A_{\text{Extra}}$$

$$F \equiv F_{\text{Fronsdal EoM}} + F_{\text{Extra}} + F_{\text{Weyl}}$$

$$\delta S_{\text{FV}}^{(2)} \propto F_{\text{Fronsdal EoM}}^{(1)}, \quad F_{\text{Extra}}^{(1)} \propto A_{\text{Extra}} + \nabla^{(0)} \dots \nabla^{(0)} A_{\text{dyn}}$$

$$F_{\text{Weyl}} \propto J^{(1)}(e, e; \Phi)$$

- ▶ Beyond cubic order, non-abelian corrections mix equations of motion with subsidiary constraints
- ▶ Completion of Fradkin – Vasiliev action on shell as generating functional for tree diagrams?

Lagrange multipliers

- Introduce Weyl zero-form Φ and Lagrange multipliers V and U

$$S_{\text{tot}} = \int \mathcal{V}_{\text{FV}}[A, \Phi] + \int \text{Tr} [V \star (F + J(A, A; \Phi)) + U \star (D\Phi + P(A; \Phi))]$$

assuming that (note direction of \Rightarrow)

$$\delta \int \mathcal{V}_{\text{FV}} \approx 0 \quad \Leftarrow \quad F + J \approx 0, \quad D\Phi + P \approx 0$$

- Shortcomings:
 - ▶ Apparent “conflict of interest” between kinetic terms in \mathcal{V}_{FV} and in $\int \text{Tr} [V \star dA + U \star d\Phi]$ — resolved in negative fashion as FV term can be redefined away modulo total derivative!
 - ▶ The generation of quantum corrections to A and Φ becomes problematic

Higher dimensional “BF-like” models (first run)

Embed 4D spacetime into the boundary of higher dimensional “bulk” manifold \mathcal{M} :

- “duality extend” $(A, B; U, V)$ into all form degrees mod 2 and add bulk Hamiltonian $\mathcal{H}(B; U, V)$
- natural boundary conditions: $U|_{\partial\mathcal{M}} \approx 0$ and $V|_{\partial\mathcal{M}} \approx 0$
- original equations of motion are recuperated on $\partial\mathcal{M}$ without need to fix any gauges (*N.B.* interpolations between inequivalent 4D configurations on different boundaries — *c.f.* Hawking’s no-boundary proposal and transitions between complete 4D histories)
- perturb around free bulk theory \rightsquigarrow correlators on $\partial\mathcal{M}$ restricted by conservation of form degree
- add “topological vertex operators” $\int_{\partial\mathcal{M}} \mathcal{V}[A, B; dA, dB]$ such that $\delta \int \mathcal{V}$ vanishes on the bulk shell \rightsquigarrow more vertices \rightsquigarrow additional loop corrections on $\partial\mathcal{M}$
- $\Rightarrow \int \mathcal{V}_{\text{FV}}$ remains tree-level exact deformation

Poisson sigma models on commutative manifolds

- Topological models on manifolds \mathcal{M} , say of dimension $\hat{p} + 1$.
- The fundamental fields are locally defined differential forms X^α (α label internal indices) and their canonical momenta P_α (non-linear Lagrange multipliers) obeying

$$\deg(X^\alpha) + \deg(P_\alpha) = \hat{p}$$

- Physical degrees of freedom are captured by topological vertex operators $\oint_{\mathcal{M}_i} \mathcal{V}[X, dX]$
- In particular, local degrees of freedom enter via X^α of degree zero and topologically broken gauge functions of degree zero, captured by
 - ▶ zero-form invariants which are topological vertex operators that can be inserted at points
 - ▶ topological vertex operators depending on the topologically broken gauge fields (generalized vielbeins)

Target space and generalized Hamiltonian

- Target space: phase space $T[\hat{p}]\mathcal{N}$ of graded Poisson manifold \mathcal{N} equipped with:
 - ▶ a nilpotent vector field $Q \equiv \Pi_{(1)} = Q^\alpha(X)\partial_\alpha$ of degree 1
 - ▶ compatible multi-vector fields $\Pi_{(r)}$ of ranks r and degrees $1 + (1 - r)\hat{p}$
$$\{\Pi_{(r)}, \Pi_{(r')}\}_{\text{Schouten}} \equiv 0 .$$
- In canonical coordinates, the classical bulk Lagrangian is of the generalized Hamiltonian form

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{cl}} = P_\alpha \wedge dX^\alpha - \mathcal{H}(P, X)$$

where $\mathcal{H} = \sum_r P_{\alpha_1} \cdots P_{\alpha_r} \Pi^{\alpha_1 \cdots \alpha_r}(X)$ obeys the structure equation

$$0 \equiv \{\mathcal{H}, \mathcal{H}\}_{\text{P.B.}} \sim \partial_\alpha \mathcal{H} \wedge \partial^\alpha \mathcal{H} .$$

Gauge invariance, structure group and topological symmetry breaking

- Structure equation \Rightarrow under the gauge transformations

$$\delta_{\epsilon,\eta}(X^\alpha, P_\alpha) := d(\epsilon^\alpha, \eta_\alpha) + (\epsilon^\alpha \partial_\alpha + \eta_\alpha \partial^\alpha)(\partial^\alpha, \partial_\alpha)\mathcal{H} ,$$

the classical Lagrangian transforms into a total derivative, viz.

$$\delta_{\epsilon,\eta}\mathcal{L}_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{cl}} = d(\epsilon^\alpha \partial_\alpha(1 - P_\beta \partial^\beta)\mathcal{H} + \eta_\alpha(dX^\alpha - \partial^\alpha\mathcal{H}))$$

- Globally defined classical topological field theory with graded structure group generated by gauge parameters $(t^\alpha, 0)$ obeying

$$t^\alpha \partial_\alpha(1 - P_\beta \partial^\beta)\mathcal{H} = 0$$

- Remaining gauge parameters and corresponding fields are glued together across chart boundaries by means of transitions from the structure group (*c.f.* separate treatment of local translations and Lorentz rotations in Einstein – Cartan gravity)

Boundary data and Cartan integrability

The degrees of freedom reside in the boundary data:

- if $\mathcal{H}|_{P=0} = 0$ the variational principle holds with $P_\alpha|_{\partial\mathcal{M}} = 0$ so P_α can be taken to vanish on-shell in the case of a single boundary component
- integration constants C^α for the X^α of degree zero
- values of topologically broken gauge functions, λ^α say, on boundaries of the boundary $\partial\mathcal{M}$ (noncompact)
- windings in transitions, monodromies etc

N.B. Given C^α and λ^α , the local field configuration on $\partial\mathcal{M}$ given on shell by Cartan's integration formula:

$$X_{C,\lambda}^\alpha \approx \left[\exp((d\lambda^\beta + \lambda^\gamma \partial_\gamma Q^\alpha) \partial_\beta) X^\alpha \right] \Big|_{X=C}$$

where we recall that $\mathcal{H} = P_\alpha Q^\alpha(X) + O(P^2)$

Intrinsically defined observables on shell versus topological vertex operators off shell

- Classically, the physical information in initial/boundary data is captured by various classes of intrinsically defined observables $\mathcal{O}[X]$ obeying

$$\delta_{t'} \mathcal{O} \equiv 0, \quad \delta_\epsilon \mathcal{O} \approx 0$$

- t' parameters of chosen structure group (need not be same as t)
 - structure group not unique by any general means
 - larger/smaller structure group \leftrightarrow fewer/more observables
 - notions of unbroken phase and various broken phases
 - topologically broken symmetries (incl. diffeos) resurface on shell
- Certain $\mathcal{O} \approx \oint \mathcal{V}$ with $\mathcal{V}[X, dX]$ being topological vertex operator defined off shell such that

$$\delta_{t'} \mathcal{V} \equiv 0, \quad \delta \mathcal{V} \approx 0$$

N.B. On shell $\oint \mathcal{V}$ only depends on the homotopy class of its cycle.

Total action

- PSM characterized by the total action

$$S_{\text{tot}}^{\text{cl}} = \int_{\mathcal{M}} (P_{\alpha} dX^{\alpha} - \mathcal{H}(X, P)) + \sum_i g_i \oint_{\mathcal{M}_i} \mathcal{V}^i(X, dX)$$

- ▶ \mathcal{H} breaks Cartan gauge algebra down to maximal structure group
 - ▶ topological vertex operators \mathcal{V}^i (may) cause further breaking
 - ▶ all Cartan gauge symmetries restored on shell
 - ▶ the on shell values \mathcal{V}^i identified as semi-classical generating functions for amplitudes
- for a field theory with an “ordinary” action principle S_D in D dimensions, one may choose $\mathcal{V} = S_D$ — in general, the does *not* reproduce the standard S-matrix/holographic correlation functions
 - in the case of HSGR, we propose to take \mathcal{V} to be the yet-to-be found completion of S_{FV}

Gauge fixing and Batalin–Vilkovisky field-anti-field formalism

The first step of the gauge fixing procedure is to exhibit all gauge-for-gauge symmetries:

extend the classical fields $(X^\alpha, P_\alpha) \equiv (X_{[\rho_\alpha]}^{\alpha, \langle 0 \rangle}, P_{\alpha, [\hat{p} - \rho_\alpha]}^{\langle 0 \rangle}) \longrightarrow$ finite towers of ghosts $(X_{[\rho_\alpha - q]}^{\alpha, \langle q \rangle}, P_{\alpha, [\hat{p} - \rho_\alpha - q']}^{\langle q' \rangle})$ with ghost numbers $q = 1, \dots, \rho_\alpha$ and $q' = 1, \dots, \hat{p} - \rho_\alpha$

Fields and anti-fields

As the Cartan gauge symmetries do not in general close off-shell, the BRST operator needs to be constructed via a “minimal” master action

$$S^{\text{BV}}[\phi^i, \phi_i^*]$$

depending on

- “fields” ϕ^i comprising the classical fields and the ghost towers
- “anti-fields” ϕ_i^* obeying

$$\text{gh}\phi^i + \text{gh}\phi_i^* = -1, \quad \text{deg}\phi^i + \text{deg}\phi_i^* = \hat{p} + 1.$$

BV bracket

The space of fields and anti-fields is equipped by a natural symplectic structure corresponding to the BV bracket

$$(A, B) := \int_{p \in \mathcal{M}} \delta_i(p) A \delta_*^i(p) B, \quad \text{gh}(\cdot, \cdot) = 1,$$

where $\delta_i(p)$ denotes the functional derivative with respect to ϕ^i at the point p *idem* $\delta_*^i(p)$.

Classical and quantum master equation

- If the anti-fields are eliminated by means of a canonical transformation then the path-integral over the remaining Lagrangian submanifold does not depend on the \hbar . provided that

$$(S, S) + \frac{i}{2} \hbar \Delta S \equiv 0 ,$$

where the BV Laplacian Δ is the slightly singular operator defined by

$$\Delta := \int_{p \in \mathcal{M}} \delta_i(p) \delta_{\star}^i(p) , \quad \text{gh} \Delta = 1 .$$

- Δ is formally nilpotent but does not act as a differential; rather

$$\Delta(AB) - \Delta(A)B - A\Delta(B) \equiv (A, B) .$$

- The nilpotent BRST differential s is given by

$$sA := (S, A) .$$

- s is generated by a BRST current only if $\Delta S = 0$.

AKSZ vectorial superfields

AKSZ: Minimal quantum master action of the PSM obtained by extending the classical differential forms into unconstrained vectorial superfields of fixed total degree p given by the sum of form degrees and ghost numbers as follows:

$$\mathbf{X}^\alpha = \underbrace{X_{[0]}^{\alpha \langle p_\alpha \rangle} + X_{[1]}^{\alpha \langle p_\alpha - 1 \rangle} + \dots + X_{[p_\alpha]}^{\alpha \langle 0 \rangle}}_{\text{fields}} + \underbrace{X_{[p_\alpha + 1]}^{\alpha \langle -1 \rangle} + X_{[p_\alpha + 2]}^{\alpha \langle -2 \rangle} + \dots + X_{[\hat{p} + 1]}^{\alpha \langle p_\alpha - \hat{p} - 1 \rangle}}_{\text{antifields}}, \quad (1)$$

$$\mathbf{P}_\alpha = \underbrace{P_{\alpha [0]}^{\langle \hat{p} - p_\alpha \rangle} + P_{\alpha [1]}^{\langle \hat{p} - p_\alpha - 1 \rangle} + \dots + P_{\alpha [\hat{p} - p_\alpha]}^{\langle 0 \rangle}}_{\text{fields}} + \underbrace{P_{\alpha [\hat{p} - p_\alpha + 1]}^{\langle -1 \rangle} + P_{\alpha [\hat{p} - p_\alpha + 2]}^{\langle -2 \rangle} + \dots + P_{\alpha [\hat{p} + 1]}^{\langle -p_\alpha - 1 \rangle}}_{\text{antifields}}, \quad (2)$$

AKSZ quantum master action

Ultra-local functionals $F = F(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{P})$ and F' obey

$$\left(\int_{\mathcal{M}} \mathbf{P}_\alpha d\mathbf{X}^\alpha, F \right) = dF, \quad \left(\int_{\mathcal{M}} F, F' \right) = \{F, F'\}_{\text{P.B.}},$$

$$\Delta \int_{\mathcal{M}} F \equiv 0.$$

Thus, since $\{\mathcal{H}, \mathcal{H}\}_{\text{rmP.B.}} \equiv 0$, it follows that

$$S_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{AKSZ}} := \int_{\mathcal{M}} [\mathbf{P}_\alpha d\mathbf{X}^\alpha - \mathcal{H}(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{P})]$$

obeys

$$(S_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{AKSZ}}, S_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{AKSZ}}) = 0 = \Delta S_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{AKSZ}}$$

modulo boundary terms that vanish for suitable assignments of cross-chart transformation properties and boundary conditions (here the general theory involves sophisticated generalizations of bundle theory).

HSGR: non-commutative base and target spaces

- $\mathcal{M} \supset \partial\mathcal{M}$ (X and Z coordinates) and $T^*[\hat{p}]\mathcal{N}$ (spaces of functions of Y) non-commutative; denote the combined associative product by \star .
- The generalized Hamiltonian bulk action ($Z^i = (A, B, U, V)$)

$$S_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{cl}}[Z^i; J] = \int_{\mathcal{M}} \left[U \star DB + V \star \left(F + \mathcal{F}(B; J) + \tilde{\mathcal{F}}(U; J) \right) \right],$$

where $DB := dB + [A, B]_{\star}$, $F := dA + A \star A$ and J are d -closed central elements (of even form degrees).

- If $\hat{p} = 2n$, the fields decompose under form degree as follows:

$$A = A_{[1]} + A_{[3]} + \cdots + A_{[2n-1]}, \quad B = B_{[0]} + B_{[2]} + \cdots + B_{[2n-2]},$$
$$U = U_{[2]} + U_{[4]} + \cdots + U_{[2n]}, \quad V = V_{[1]} + V_{[3]} + \cdots + V_{[2n-1]}.$$

- Variational principle $\Rightarrow R^i := dZ^i + Q^i(Z^j) \approx 0$ and homogeneous boundary conditions on (U, V) such that on $\partial\mathcal{M}$

$$F + \mathcal{F} \approx 0, \quad DB \approx 0.$$

Adaptation of BV to non-commutative setting

- \star -functional differentiation defined naturally via

$$\delta F[X, P] \equiv F[X + \delta X, P + \delta P] =: \int_{\mathcal{M}} (\delta X^\alpha \star \delta_\alpha F + \delta P_\alpha \star \delta^\alpha F) .$$

N.B. The \star -functional derivatives act as differentials on ultra-local functionals and cyclic derivatives on local functionals. The former action induces a suitable non-commutative generalization of the Dirac delta function (which in a certain sense is less singular than the commuting ditto).

- Introduce fields and master fields; the gauge fixing procedure (independence of choice of Lagrangian submanifold) \rightsquigarrow BV Laplacian given by double \star -functional derivatives of the above types.

Adaptation of AKSZ to non-commutative setting

- Extend $Z^i \rightarrow \mathbf{Z}^i = (\mathbf{A}, \mathbf{B}, \mathbf{U}, \mathbf{V})$
- The AKSZ action

$$S_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{AKSZ}}[\mathbf{Z}^i; J] = \sum_{\xi} \int_{\mathcal{M}_{\xi}} \text{Tr} \left[\mathbf{U} \star D\mathbf{B} + \mathbf{V} \star \left(\mathbf{F} + \mathcal{F}(\mathbf{B}; J) + \tilde{\mathcal{F}}(\mathbf{U}; J) \right) \right]$$

generates BRST transformations

$$(S_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{AKSZ}}, \mathbf{Z}^i) = \mathbf{R}^i := d\mathbf{Z}^i + Q^i(\mathbf{Z}^j; J)$$

- It follows that the AKSZ action obeys the classical master equation

$$(S_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{AKSZ}}, S_{\text{bulk}}^{\text{AKSZ}}) = 0 ,$$

modulo boundary terms that vanish if $(\mathbf{U}, \mathbf{V}) = 0$ on $\partial\mathcal{M}$ and (\mathbf{U}, \mathbf{V}) form sections with bold-faced transition functions from the unbroken gauge algebra associated to (\mathbf{A}, \mathbf{B}) .

Quantum master action and deformations

- Whether the bulk action also obeys the quantum master equation is under investigation.
- As is well-known from ordinary topological field theories, gauge fixing actually requires “non-minimal” extensions of the AKSZ action \rightsquigarrow cancellation of all vacuum bubbles (modulo topological terms) \rightsquigarrow bulk partition function as sum over topologies.
- There exists various topological impurities $\mathcal{V}[\mathbf{X}, d\mathbf{X}; J]$ obeying $(S, \mathcal{V}) = 0 = (\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{V})$ and $\Delta\mathcal{V} = 0$.
- In particular, in certain broken phase there exist a topological two-form (surface operator) and four-form; the relation between the latter and the on shell FV action is under investigation.

Correspondence with free $O(N)$ vector model

- Integrate out Vasiliev's Z -variables \rightsquigarrow classical formulation on commutative \mathcal{M} times internal Y -space with perturbatively defined Q -structure
- Duality extend $B = B_{[0]} + B_{[2]}$; $A = A_{[1]} + A_{[3]}$; $U = U_{[2]} + U_{[4]}$ and $V = V_{[1]} + V_{[3]}$
- for any $\mathcal{H}(U, V; B)$ the boundary correlators $\langle B_{[0]}(p_1) \cdots B_{[p_n]} A_{[1]}(p_{n+1}) \cdots A_{[1]}(p_{n+m}) \rangle|_{p_i \in \partial \mathcal{M}}$ are given by their semi-classical limits (assume vacuum bubbles cancel)
- assume the existence of a perturbative completion $\int_{\partial \mathcal{M}} \mathcal{V}_{\text{FV}}(B_{[0]}, dB_{[0]}; A_{[1]}, dA_{[1]})$ of Fradkin – Vasiliev action; add it as deformation to be treated as vertices (including kinetic terms!)
- $\rightsquigarrow \langle \exp(g \int_{\partial \mathcal{M}} \mathcal{V}_{\text{FV}}) \rangle$ tree-level exact which matches the ultra-violet fixed point of the $O(N)$ -vector model
- Still miss correspondence at the level of the vacuum value of the on shell action (free energy)

1/N corrections from $\Delta = 2$ boundary conditions?

- Klebanov – Polyakov: infra-red fixed point of double-trace deformation \leftrightarrow bulk theory with $\Delta = 2$ boundary conditions
- add Gibbons-Hawking term $\int_{\partial^2 \mathcal{M}} \phi \partial_n \phi$ and treat as extra vertex:
 - ▶ Giombi – Yin: Modified scalar two-point functions

$$G_{\Delta=1}(p; r, r') + |p| K_{\Delta=1}(p; r) K_{\Delta=1}(p; r') \equiv G_{\Delta=2}(p; r, r')$$

- ▶ Sew together pairs of external scalar legs of $\Delta = 1$ tree diagrams \rightsquigarrow scalar loops touching the boundary
- ▶ HS completion of the GH term \rightsquigarrow HS fields starts running in loops touching the boundary?

Broken higher spin gauge symmetries and flat limit?

- Girardello – Porrati – Zaffaroni: spin-(s-1) Goldstone modes for $s = 4, 6, \dots$ identified as scalar-spin-(s-2) composite
- multi-particle states start behaving as “fundamentals” \rightsquigarrow stringy spectrum with many trajectories but problem with large- N normalization of higher-point functions (impose connectedness?)
- flat double-scaling limit: $\Lambda \rightarrow 0$ and N small but not really a limit as N quantized

Conclusions

- Quantize 4D HS fields via topological Poisson sigma models in higher dimensions
- 4D spacetime meant to arise as submanifold where on shell action a la Fradkin – Vasiliev can be added as a deformation.
- Assumptions of the structure of the FV action imply that holographic correlators with $\Delta = 1$ BC agree with free $O(N)$ vector model but free energy problematic still
- Assumptions on the Gibbons – Hawking terms imply qualitative fitting to the interacting $O(N)$ vector model

Thanks for your attention!

As far as Schrödinger's cat is concerned, I was thinking of something funny to say but then I thought that I better leave it to the audience :)