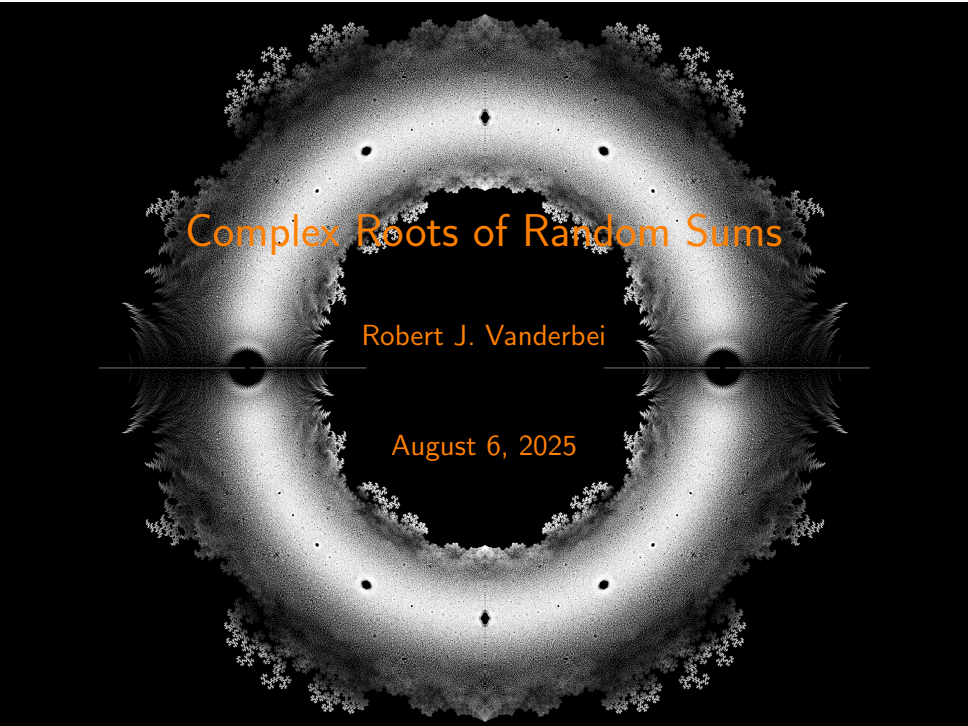




Complex Roots of Random Sums

Robert J. Vanderbei

August 6, 2025

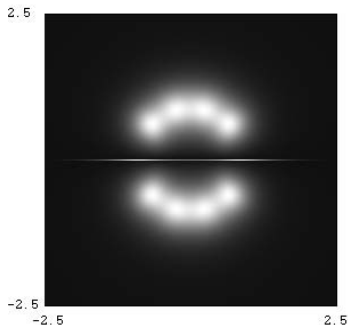
Zeros of Random Polynomials (work with Larry Shepp)

Consider a random polynomial:

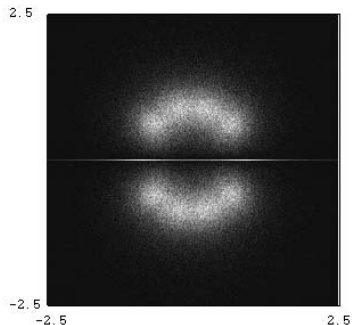
$$P_n(z) = \sum_{j=0}^n \eta_j z^j, \quad z \in \mathbb{C},$$

where $\eta_0, \dots, \eta_n$ are independent standard normal random variables.
The distribution of the zeros for, say, $n = 5$ looks like this...

Theoretical Density (Gaussian)



Empirical Density



Explicit Formula for any n :

Let $\nu_n(\Omega)$ denote the number of zeros in a set Ω in the complex plane.
For each measurable set $\Omega \subset \mathbb{C}$,

$$\mathbf{E}\nu_n(\Omega) = \int_{\Omega} h_n(x + iy) dx dy + \int_{\Omega \cap \mathbb{R}} g_n(x) dx,$$

where

$$h_n = \frac{B_2 D_0^2 - B_0(B_1^2 + |A_1|^2) + B_1(A_0 \overline{A_1} + \overline{A_0} A_1)}{\pi |z|^2 D_0^3},$$

and

$$g_n = \frac{(B_0 B_2 - B_1^2)^{1/2}}{\pi |z| B_0}$$

and where

$$B_k(z) = \sum_{j=0}^n j^k |z|^{2j}, \quad z \in \mathbb{C}, \quad k = 0, 1, 2,$$

$$A_k(z) = \sum_{j=0}^n j^k z^{2j}, \quad z \in \mathbb{C}, \quad k = 0, 1,$$

and

$$D_0(z) = \sqrt{B_0^2(z) - |A_0|^2(z)}.$$

Explicit Formula for Limiting Density

Limiting density in the complex plane:

$$h = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} h_n = \frac{|B|D}{\pi}.$$

Limiting density on the real axis:

$$g = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} g_n = \frac{1}{\pi}|B|.$$

Where

$$B(z) = \frac{1}{1 - |z|^2}, \quad z \in \mathbb{C},$$

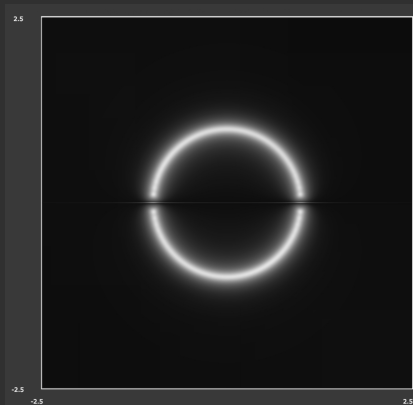
$$A(z) = \frac{1}{1 - z^2}, \quad z \in \mathbb{C},$$

and

$$D(z) = \sqrt{B^2(z) - |A|^2(z)}.$$

Large n and the Limit

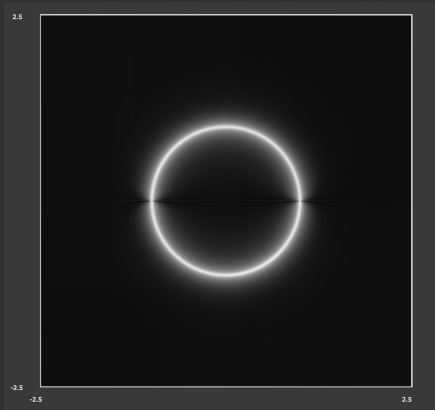
$$n = 36$$



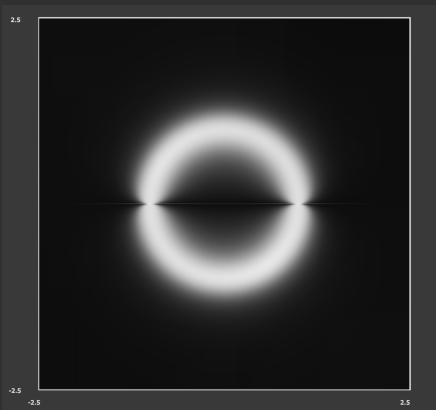
$$n = \infty$$



asinh



atan



New Work (10 Years Ago): Zeros of Random Sums

Consider a random sum of basis functions $f_j(z)$:

$$P_n(z) = \sum_{j=0}^n \eta_j f_j(z), \quad z \in \mathbb{C}$$

We assume that the basis functions are real on the real line.
Some interesting choices include:

Polynomials: $f_j(z) = z^j$ (okay, not so interesting)

Taylor Polynomials: $f_j(z) = \frac{z^j}{j!}$

Weyl Polynomials: $f_j(z) = \frac{z^j}{\sqrt{j!}}$

Kostlan Polynomials: $f_j(z) = \sqrt{\binom{n}{j}} z^j$

Fourier Cosine Series: $f_j(z) = \cos(jz)$

Fourier Sine/Cosine Series: $f_j(z) = \begin{cases} \cos(\frac{j}{2}z) & j \text{ even} \\ \sin(\frac{j+1}{2}z) & j \text{ odd} \end{cases}$

Theorem 1

For each measurable set $\Omega \subset \{z = x + iy \in \mathbb{C} \mid D_0(z) \neq 0\}$,

$$\mathbf{E}\nu_n(\Omega) = \int_{\Omega} h_n(x + iy) dx dy,$$

where

$$h_n = \frac{B_2 D_0^2 - B_0(|B_1|^2 + |A_1|^2) + (A_0 B_1 \overline{A_1} + \overline{A_0} \overline{B_1} A_1)}{\pi D_0^3},$$

and where

$$\begin{aligned} A_0(z) &= \sum_{j=0}^n f_j(z)^2, & B_0(z) &= \sum_{j=0}^n |f_j(z)|^2, \\ A_1(z) &= \sum_{j=0}^n f_j(z) f_j'(z), & B_1(z) &= \sum_{j=0}^n \overline{f_j(z)} f_j'(z), \\ A_2(z) &= \sum_{j=0}^n f_j'(z)^2, & B_2(z) &= \sum_{j=0}^n |f_j'(z)|^2, \end{aligned}$$

$$D_0(z) = \sqrt{B_0(z)^2 - |A_0(z)|^2}.$$

Comparison to Polynomial Result

For each measurable set $\Omega \subset \{z = x + iy \in \mathbb{C} \mid y \neq 0\}$,

$$\mathbf{E}\nu_n(\Omega) = \int_{\Omega} h_n(x + iy) dx dy,$$

where

$$h_n = \frac{B_2 D_0^2 - B_0 (B_1^2 + |A_1|^2) + (A_0 B_1 \overline{A_1} + \overline{A_0} B_1 A_1)}{\pi D_0^3},$$

and where

$$A_0(z) = \sum_{j=0}^n z^{2j},$$

$$B_0(z) = \sum_{j=0}^n |z|^{2j},$$

$$A_1(z) = \sum_{j=0}^n j z^{2j-1},$$

$$B_1(z) = \sum_{j=0}^n j |z|^{2j-1},$$

$$A_2(z) = \sum_{j=0}^n j^2 z^{2j-2},$$

$$B_2(z) = \sum_{j=0}^n j^2 |z|^{2j-2},$$

$$D_0(z) = \sqrt{B_0(z)^2 - |A_0(z)|^2}.$$

On the real line, the function D_0 vanishes. For each Borel measurable set $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}$,

$$\mathbf{E}\nu_n(\Omega) = \int_{\Omega} g_n(x) dx,$$

where

$$g_n(x) = \frac{\sqrt{A_2(x)A_0(x) - A_1(x)^2}}{\pi B_0(x)}.$$

Main Idea

From the *argument principle*, we get

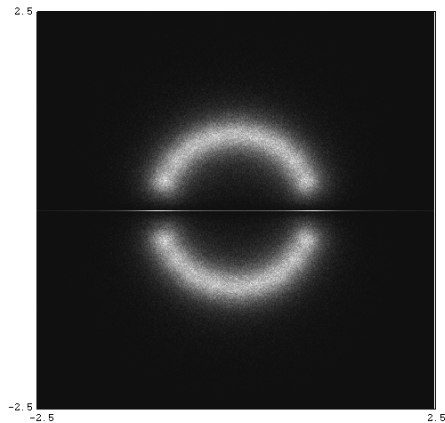
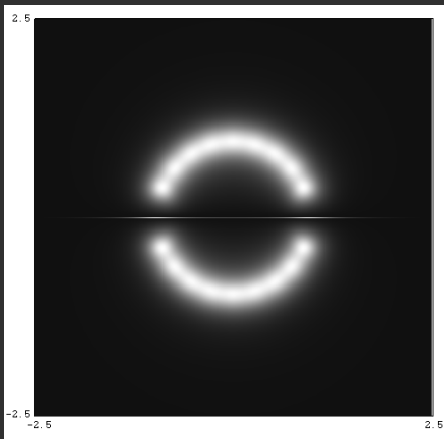
$$\nu_n(\Omega) = \frac{1}{2\pi i} \int_{\partial\Omega} \frac{P'_n(z)}{P_n(z)} dz.$$

Taking the expectation, interchanging expectation and integration and then applying *Stoke's Theorem*, we get

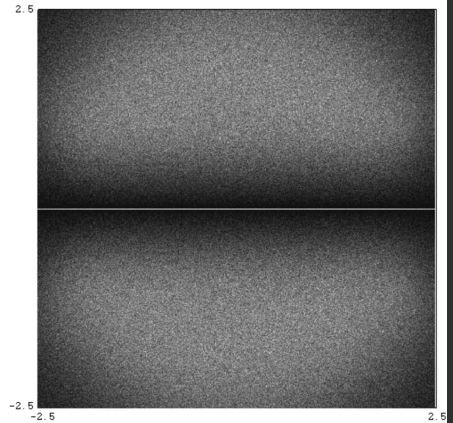
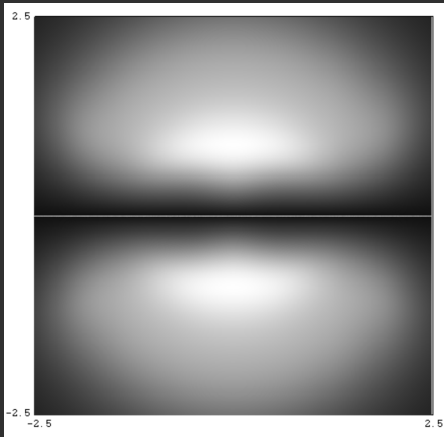
$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{E}\nu_n(\Omega) &= \frac{1}{2\pi i} \int_{\partial\Omega} \mathbf{E} \frac{P'_n(z)}{P_n(z)} dz \\ &= \frac{1}{\pi} \int_{\Omega} \frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{z}} \mathbf{E} \frac{P'_n(z)}{P_n(z)} dx dy \end{aligned}$$

The rest is tedious (and perhaps nontrivial) algebra/calculus.

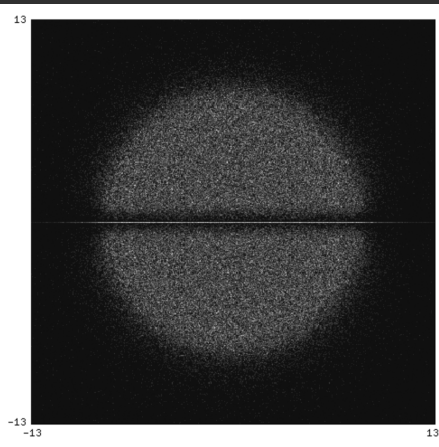
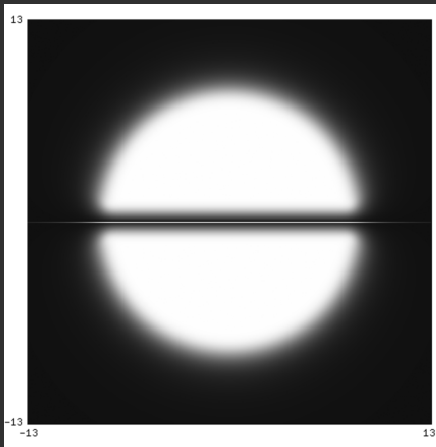
Polynomials: $f_j(z) = z^j$, $n = 10$



Weyl Polynomials: $f_j(z) = z^j / \sqrt{j!}$, $n = 10$



Weyl Polynomials: $f_j(z) = z^j / \sqrt{j!}$, $n = 80$



Limiting Case for $f_j(z) = z^j / \sqrt{j!}$ (Weyl Polynomials)

$$A_0(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} f_j(z)^2 = e^{z^2}$$

$$B_0(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} |f_j(z)|^2 = e^{|z|^2}$$

$$A_1(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} f_j(z) f_j'(z) = z e^{z^2}$$

$$B_1(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \overline{f_j(z)} f_j'(z) = \bar{z} e^{|z|^2}$$

$$A_2(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} f_j'(z)^2 = (z^2 + 1) e^{z^2}$$

$$B_2(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} |f_j'(z)|^2 = (|z|^2 + 1) e^{|z|^2}$$

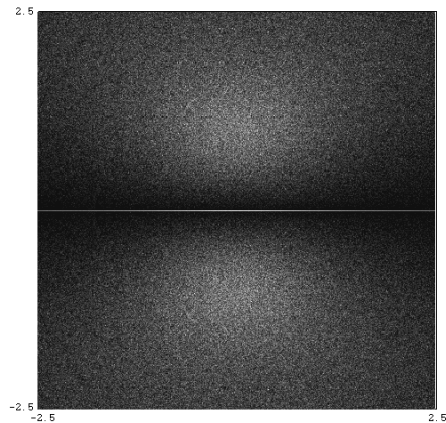
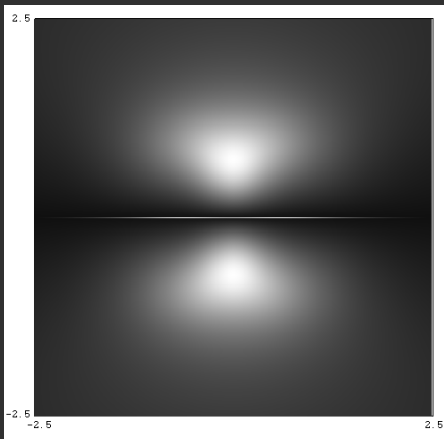
$$D_0(z) = \sqrt{B_0(z)^2 - |A_0(z)|^2} = \sqrt{e^{2|z|^2} - e^{z^2 + \bar{z}^2}}$$

$$h(z) = \frac{B_2 D_0^2 - B_0(|B_1|^2 + |A_1|^2) + (A_0 B_1 \overline{A_1} + \overline{A_0} B_1 A_1)}{\pi D_0^3} = \frac{\left(1 + ((z - \bar{z})^2 - 1) e^{(z - \bar{z})^2}\right)}{\pi (1 - e^{(z - \bar{z})^2})^{3/2}}$$

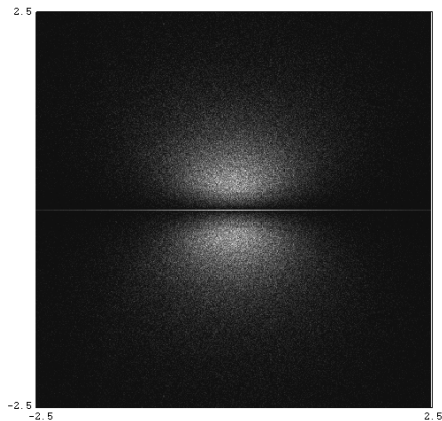
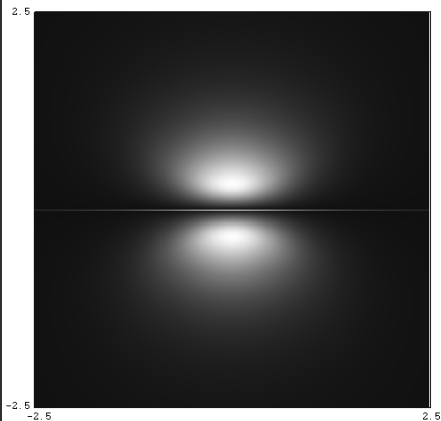
$$= \frac{\left(1 + (-4y^2 - 1) e^{-4y^2}\right)}{\pi (1 - e^{-4y^2})^{3/2}}$$

$$g(x) = \frac{\sqrt{A_2(x) A_0(x) - A_1(x)^2}}{\pi B_0(x)} = \frac{1}{\pi}$$

Taylor Polynomials: $f_j(z) = z^j/j!$, $n = 10$



Kostlan Polynomials: $f_j(z) = \sqrt{\binom{n}{j}} z^j$, $n = 10$



Kostlan Polynomials: $f_j(z) = \sqrt{\binom{n}{j}} z^j$

$$A_0(z) = (1 + z^2)^n$$

$$B_0(z) = (1 + |z|^2)^n$$

$$A_1(z) = nz(1 + z^2)^{n-1}$$

$$B_1(z) = n\bar{z}(1 + |z|^2)^{n-1}$$

$$A_2(z) = n(1 + nz^2)(1 + z^2)^{n-2}$$

$$B_2(z) = n(1 + n|z|^2)(1 + |z|^2)^{n-2}$$

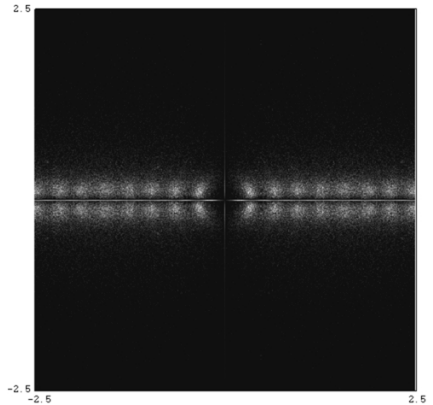
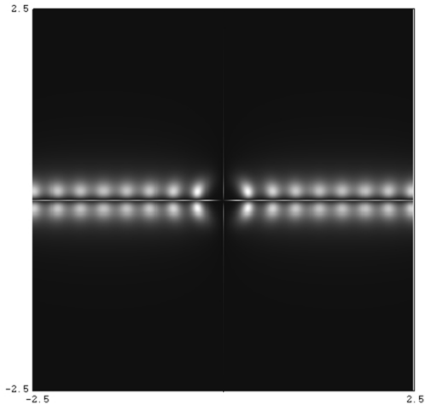
$$D_0(z) = \sqrt{B_0(z)^2 - |A_0(z)|^2} = \sqrt{(1 + |z|^2)^{2n} - |1 + z^2|^{2n}}$$

$$h_n = \frac{B_2 D_0^2 - B_0(|B_1|^2 + |A_1|^2) + (A_0 B_1 \bar{A}_1 + \bar{A}_0 \bar{B}_1 A_1)}{\pi D_0^3} = ???$$

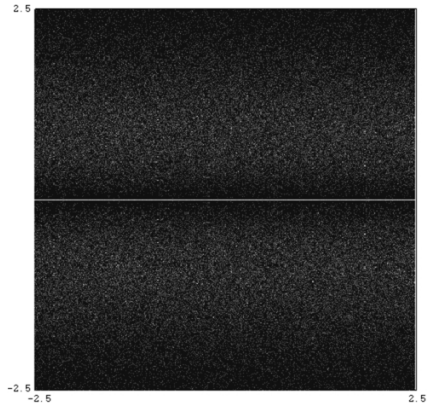
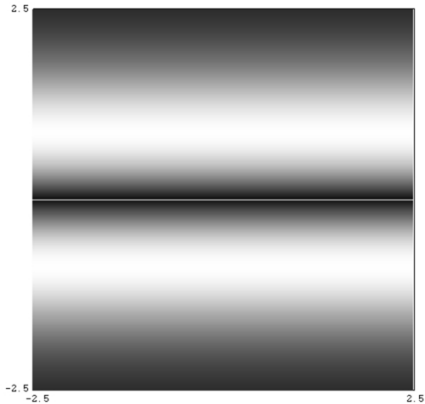
$$g_n(x) = \frac{\sqrt{A_2(x)A_0(x) - A_1(x)^2}}{\pi B_0(x)} = \frac{\sqrt{n}}{\pi} \frac{1}{1 + x^2} \quad \longleftarrow \quad \text{Cauchy distribution}$$

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} g_n(x) dx = \sqrt{n} \quad \longleftarrow \quad \text{Number of real roots}$$

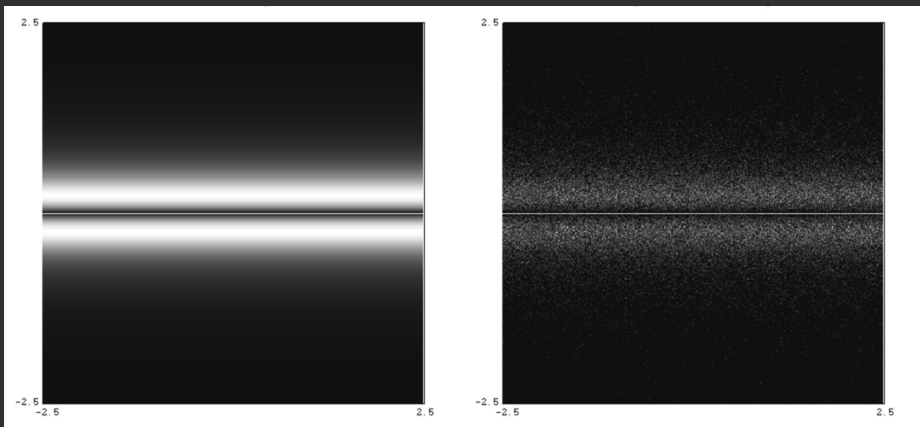
Fourier: $\alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \cos(z) + \alpha_2 \cos(2z) + \cdots + \alpha_9 \cos(9z) + \alpha_{10} \cos(10z)$



Sine/Cosine Fourier: $\alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \sin(z) + \alpha_2 \cos(z)$



$$\alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \sin(z) + \alpha_2 \cos(z) + \cdots + \alpha_9 \sin(5z) + \alpha_{10} \cos(5z)$$



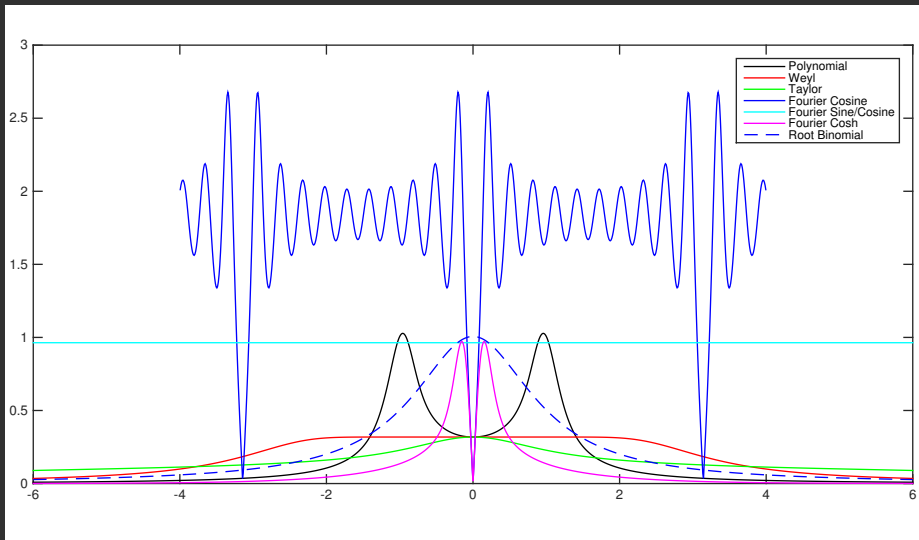
$$\begin{aligned}
 A_0(z) &= m+1 & B_0(z) &= m+1 + 2 \sum_{j=1}^m \sinh^2(jy) \\
 A_1(z) &= 0 & B_1(z) &= -i \sum_{j=1}^m j \cosh(jy) \sinh(jy) \\
 A_2(z) &= m(m+1)(2m+1)/6 & B_2(z) &= 2 \sum_{j=1}^m j^2 \sinh^2(jy)
 \end{aligned}$$

$$D_0(z) = \sqrt{B_0(z)^2 - |A_0(z)|^2}$$

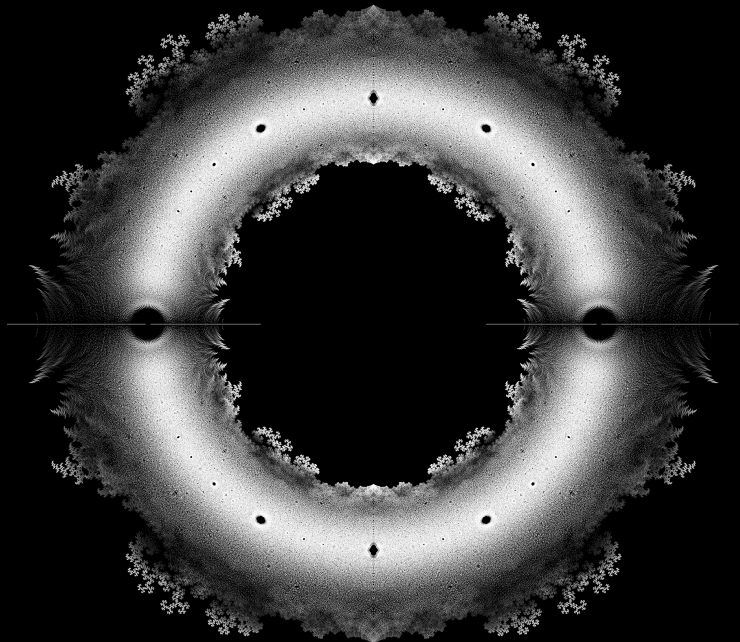
$$h_n = \frac{B_2 D_0^2 - B_0(|B_1|^2 + |A_1|^2) + (A_0 B_1 \overline{A_1} + \overline{A_0} \overline{B_1} A_1)}{\pi D_0^3} = \frac{B_2 D_0^2 - B_0 |B_1|^2}{\pi D_0^3}$$

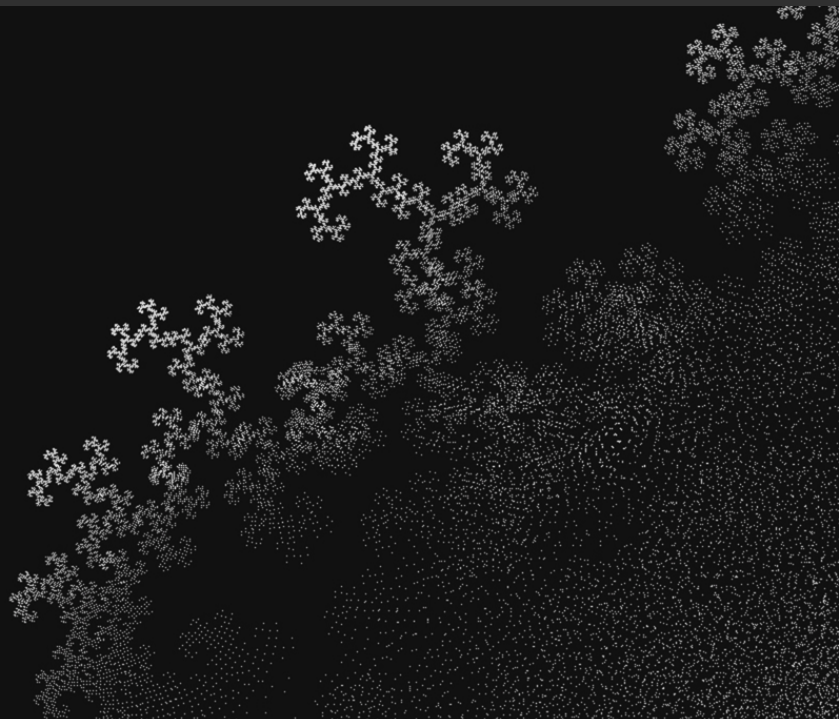
$$g_n(x) = \frac{\sqrt{A_2(x)A_0(x) - A_1(x)^2}}{\pi B_0(x)}$$

The function g_n for $n = 10$ for several choices of the f_j 's:



Let's Go Bernoulli!



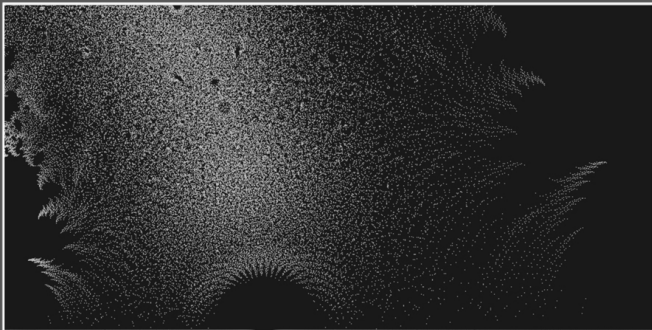


Close-Up View

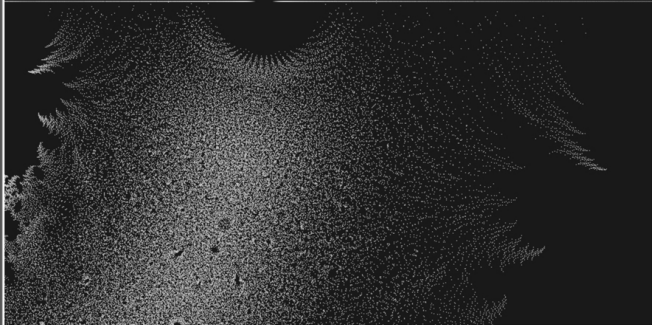
$$\eta_j = \pm 1$$

$$n = 16$$

0.50

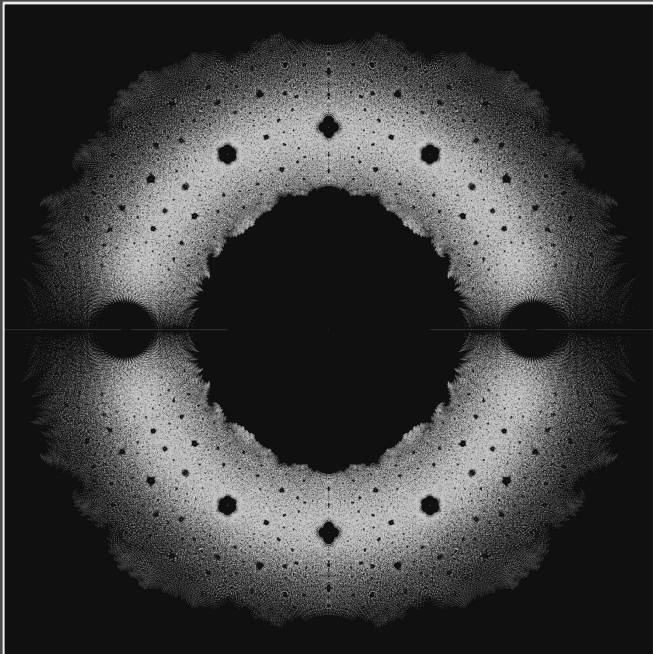


-0.50



$$\eta_j = -1, 0, +1 \quad n = 12$$

1.60



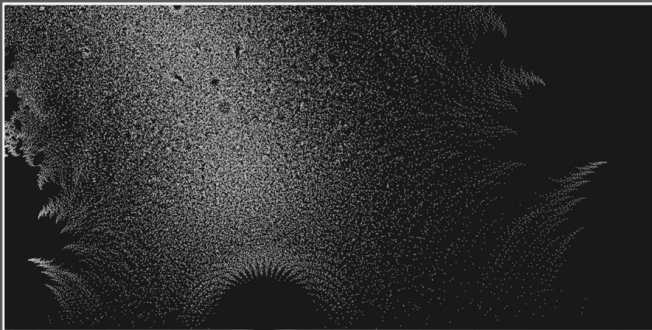
-1.60

Close-Up View

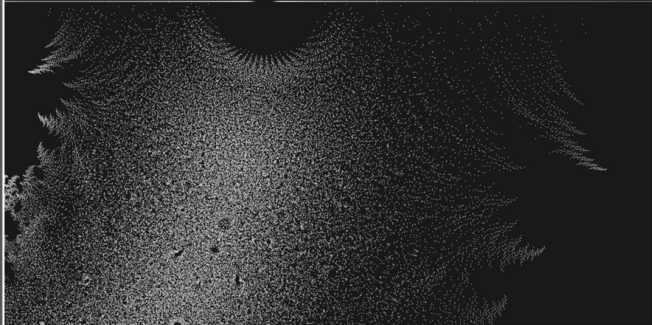
$\eta_j = -1, 0, +1$

$n = 12$

0.50

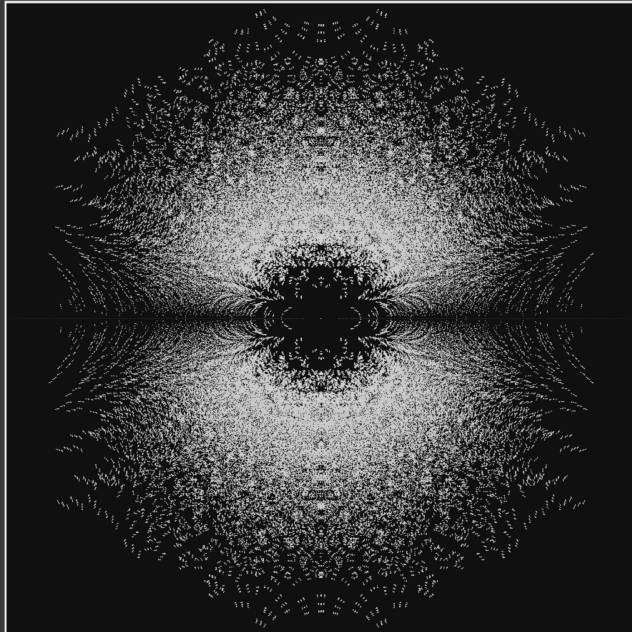


-0.50



10-degree Taylor polynomial case with +1,0,-1 coefficients

12.50



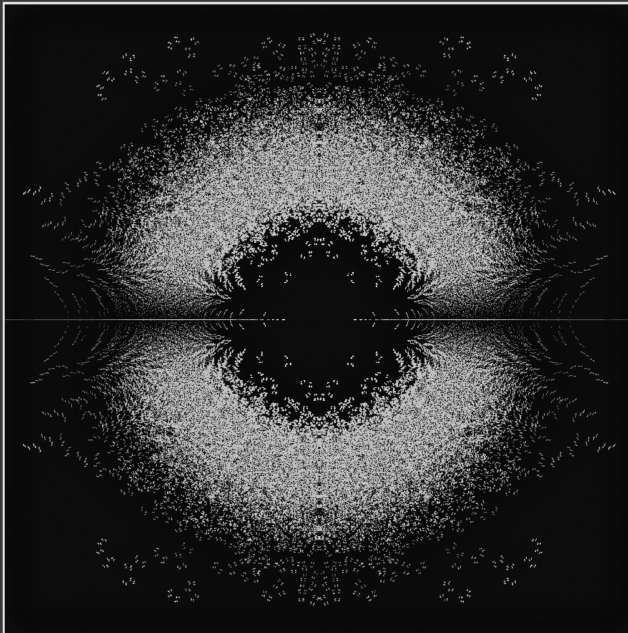
-12.50

-12.50

12.50

15-degree Sqrt-Taylor polynomial case with +1,0,-1 coefficients

5.50



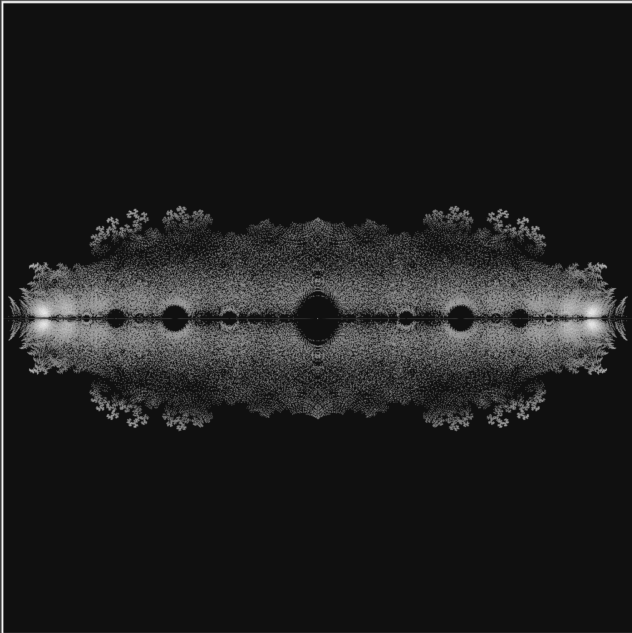
-5.50

-5.50

5.50

15-degree Chebyshev 2nd kind polynomial case with $\eta_j = \pm 1$ coefficients

1.10

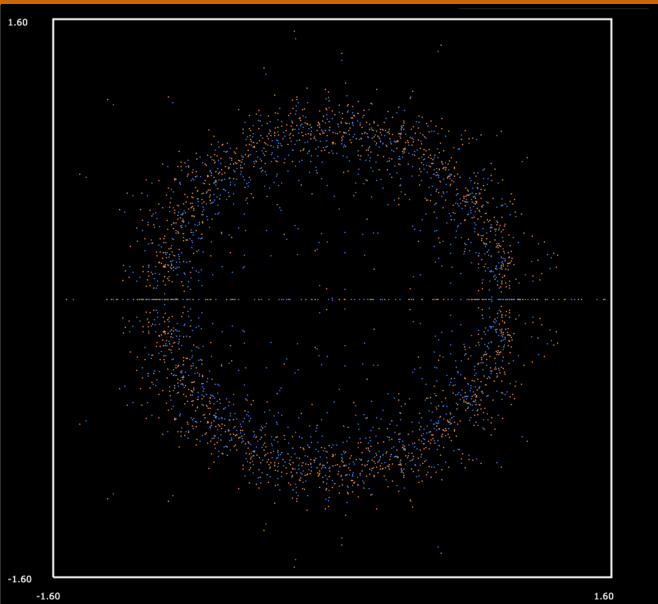


-1.10

-1.10

1.10

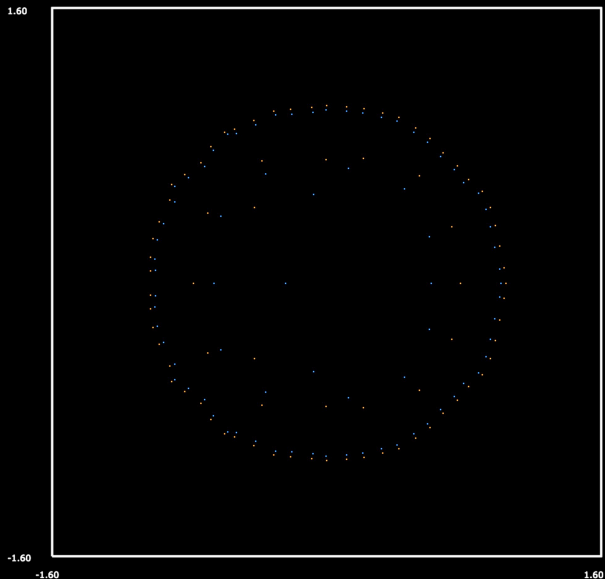
Zeros and Critical Points, $f(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{40} \alpha_j z^j$, 40 polynomials



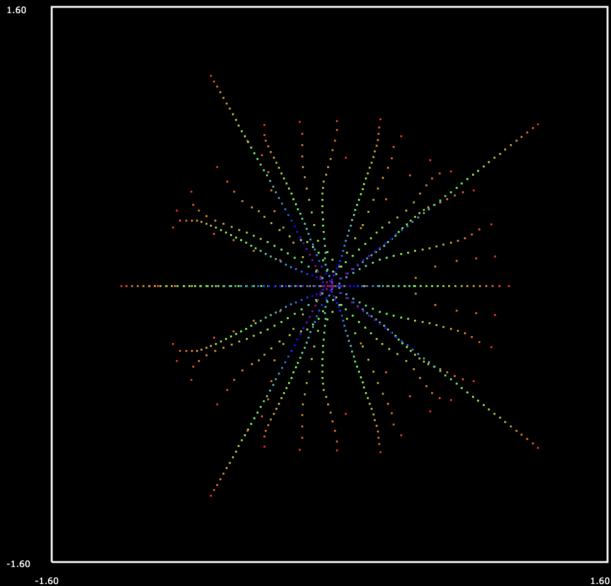
Zeros and Critical Points,

$$f(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{78} \alpha_j z^j$$

(ref. Boris Hanin)

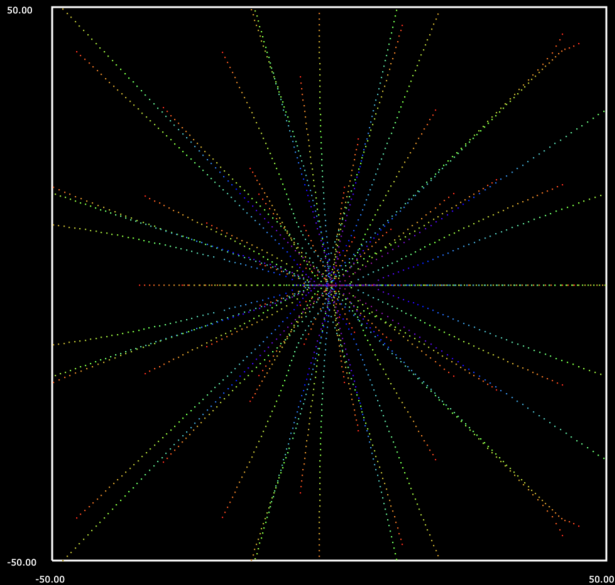


Zeros of all Derivatives, $f(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{40} \alpha_j z^j$



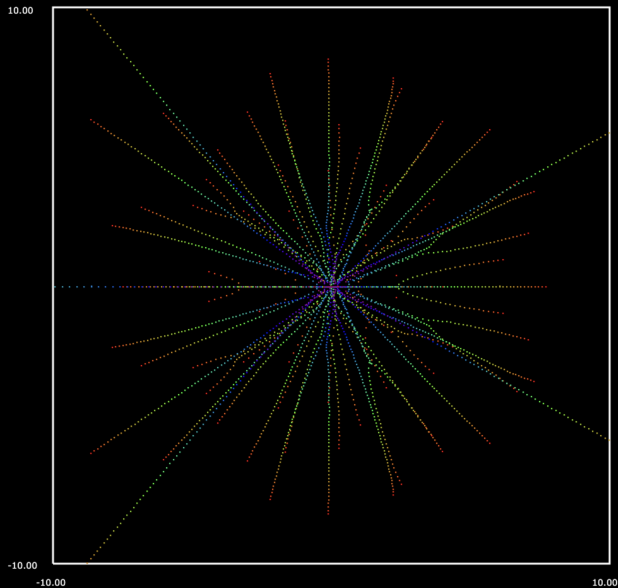
Zeros of all Derivatives,

$$f(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{j=80} \alpha_j \frac{z^j}{j!}$$



Zeros of all Derivatives,

$$f(z) = \sum_{j=0}^{j=80} \alpha_j \frac{z^j}{\sqrt{j!}}$$



- ▶ *The Complex Zeros of Random Polynomials*,
Shepp and Vanderbei
Transactions of the AMS, 347(11):4365-4384, 1995
- ▶ *The Complex Zeros of Random Sums*,
Vanderbei
Tech Report, 2015
- ▶ *Pairing of Zeros and Critical Points for Random Polynomials*,
Boris Hanin
Ann. Inst. H. Poincaré Probab. Statist. 53 (3) 1498 - 1511, August 2017

Thank You!