

Laser Shadows



Quantum Telescopes

Dr. Raphael Akel Abrahao

July 29 2025



Brookhaven
National Laboratory

Quantum Optics & Quantum Information

**Quantum Optics
&
Quantum Information**

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graph TD; A[Quantum Optics & Quantum Information] --> B[Quantum Telescopes]; A --> C[General QO, QI, and Photonics]; A --> D[X-ray Quantum Technology];
```

Quantum Telescopes

**General QO, QI, and
Photonics**

**X-ray Quantum
Technology**

Quantum Optics & Quantum Information

```
graph TD; A[Quantum Optics & Quantum Information] --> B[Quantum Telescopes]; A --> C[General QO, QI, and Photonics]; A --> D[X-ray Quantum Technology]; B --- E[Overview and recent papers]; C --- F[Laser Shadow Effect]; D --- G[Ask me later if you're interested];
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Quantum Telescopes

Overview and recent papers

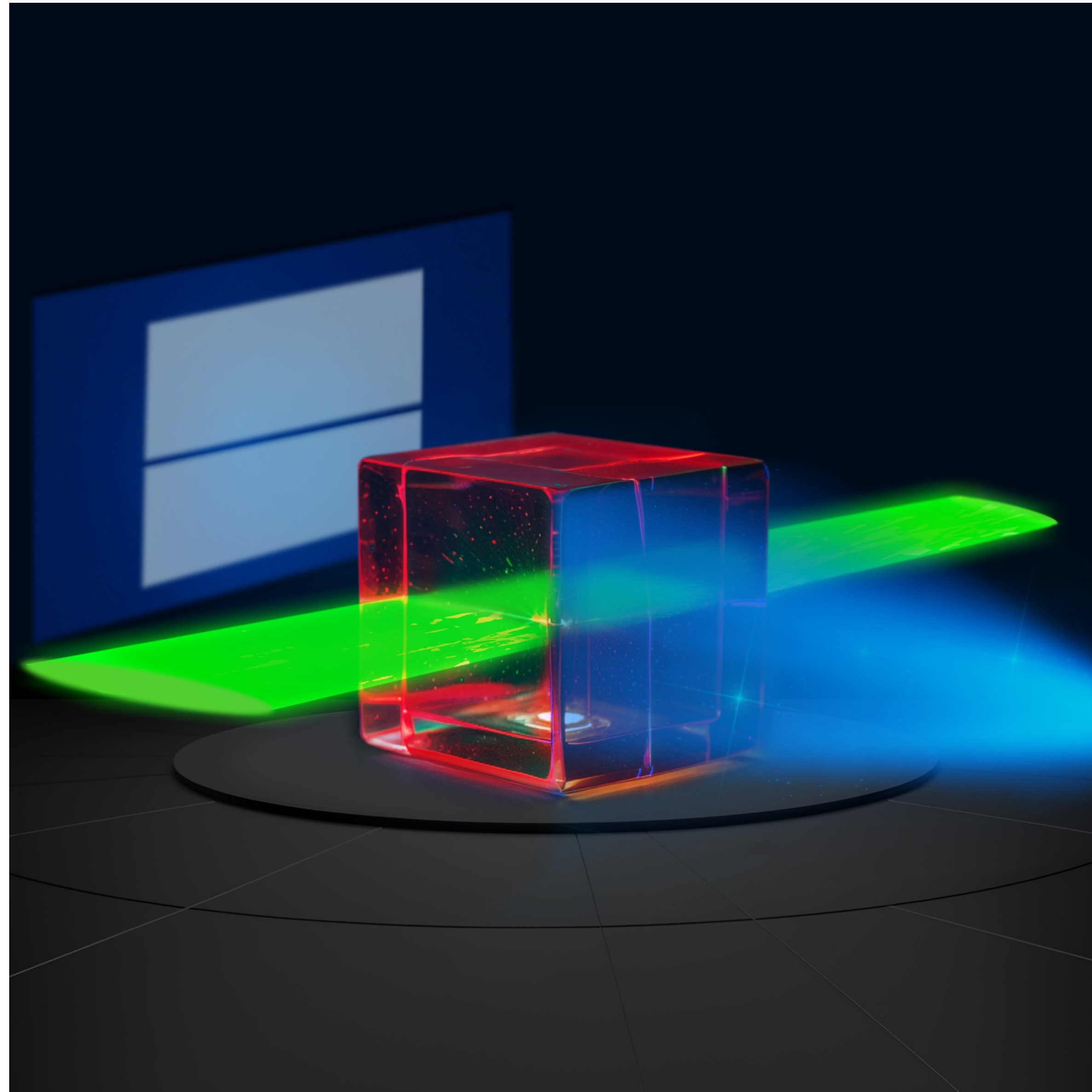
General QO, QI, and Photonics

Laser Shadow Effect

X-ray Quantum Technology

Ask me later if you're interested

Have you ever seen the shadow of a laser beam?



Inspiration

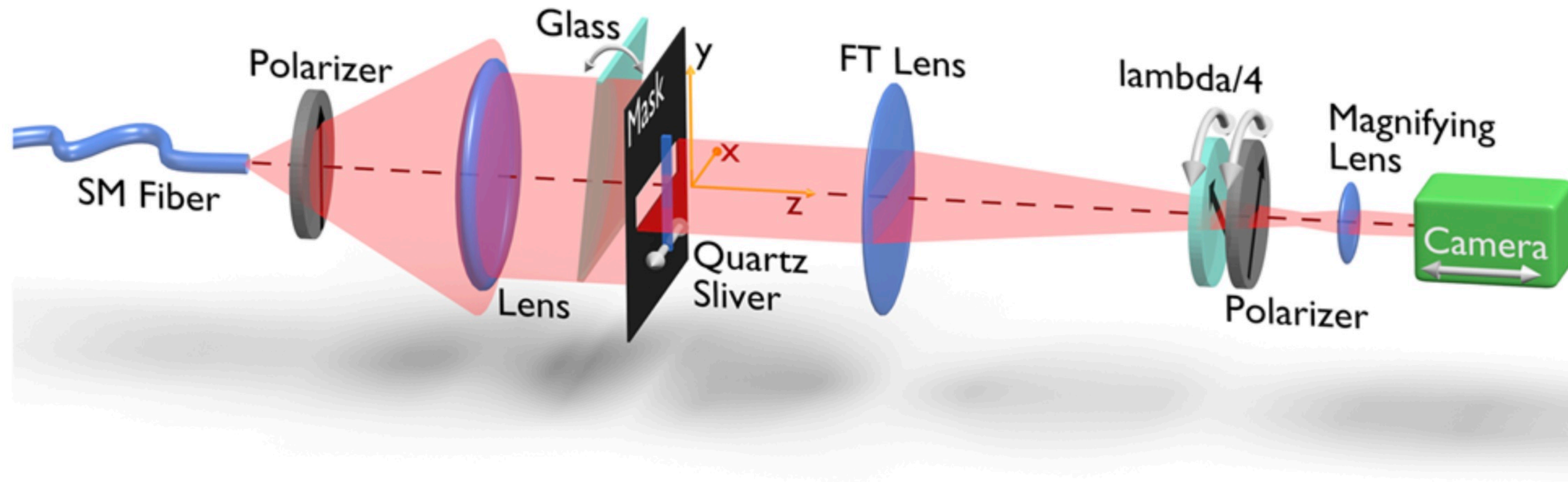
PRL **112**, 070405 (2014)

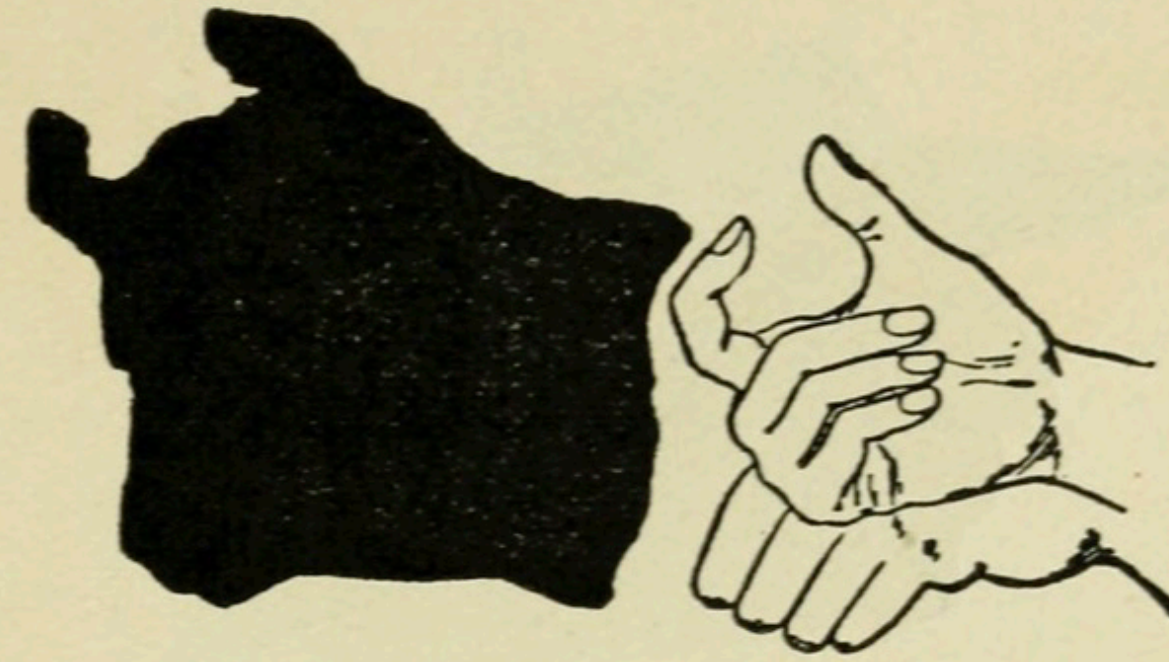
PHYSICAL REVIEW LETTERS

week ending
21 FEBRUARY 2014

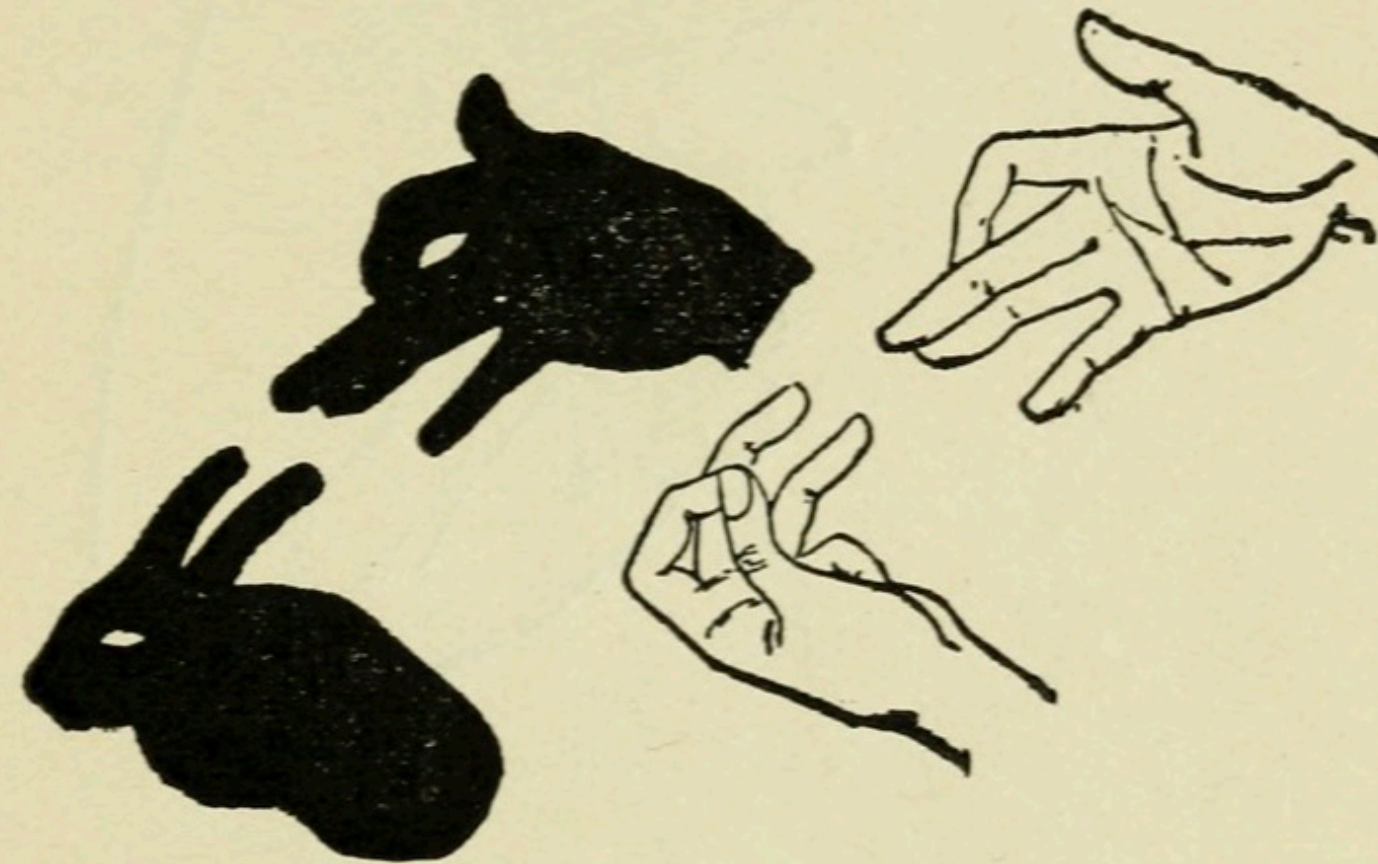
Observing Dirac's Classical Phase Space Analog to the Quantum State

Charles Bamber^{1,*} and Jeff S. Lundeen^{2,†}

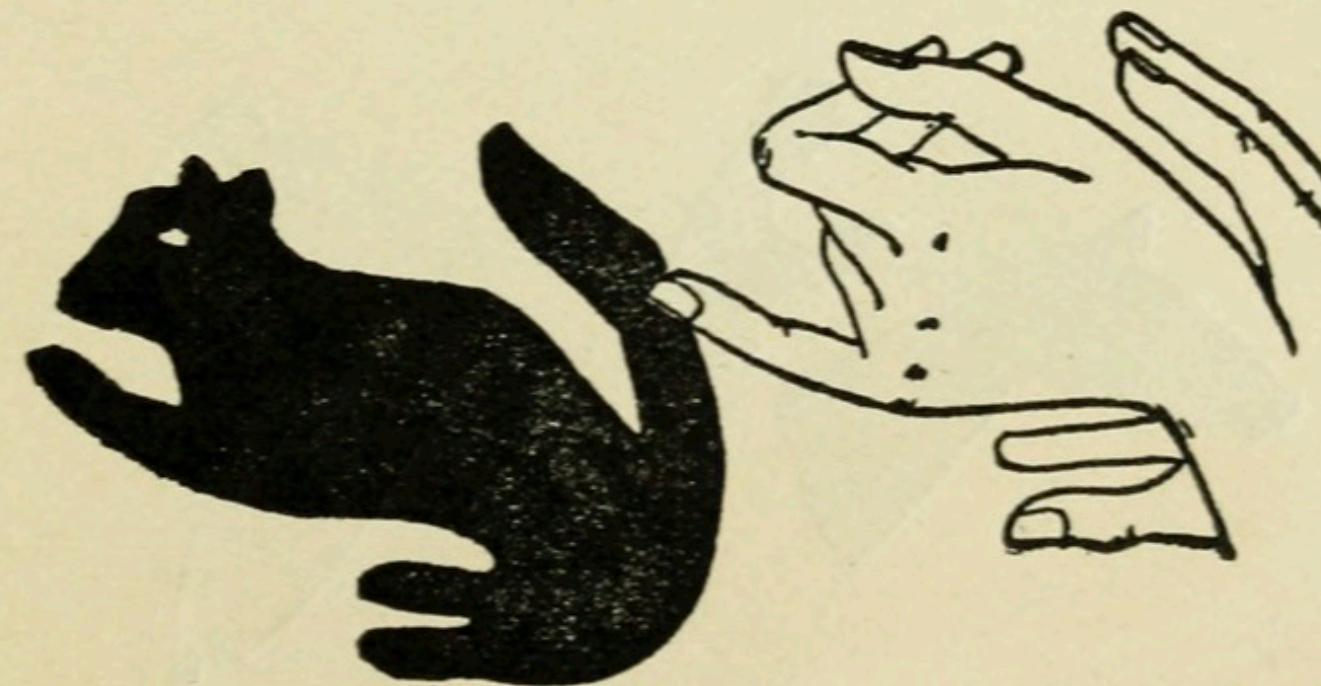




BULL

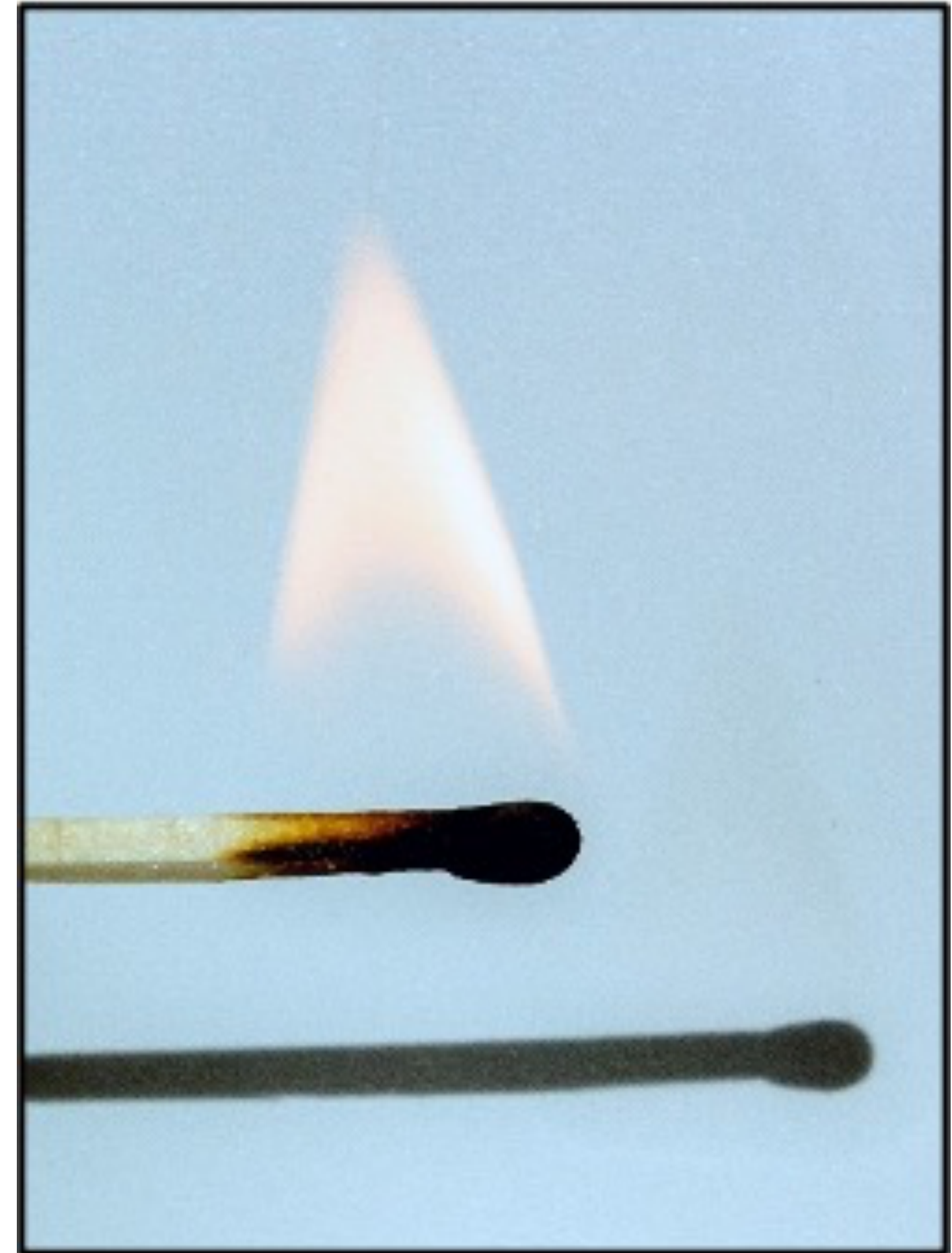
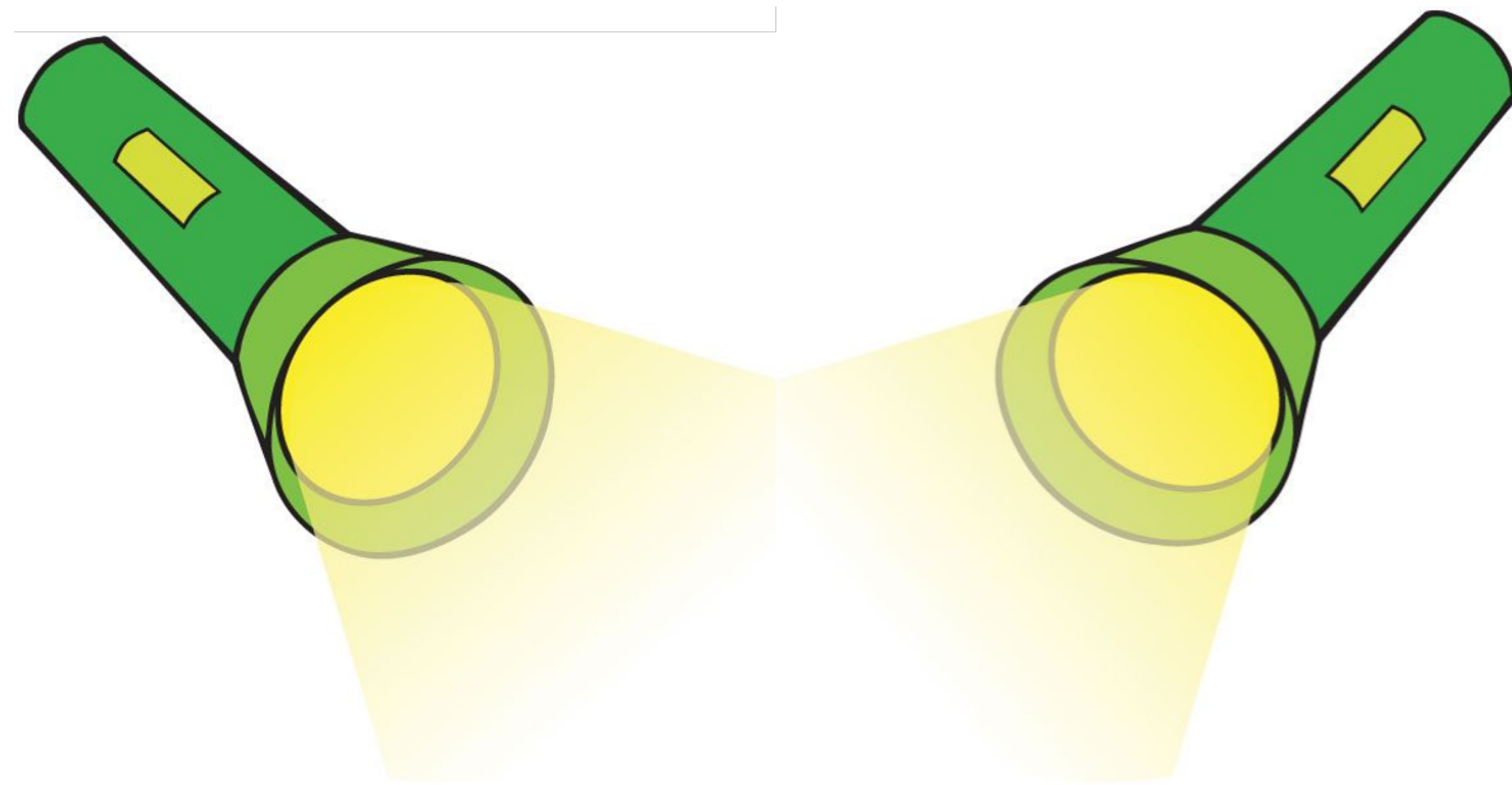


FOX EATING RABBIT



SQUIRREL

Light does not have a shadow



What is a shadow?

Shadow: a dark area on a surface where light has been blocked by an object.

What is a shadow?

Shadow: a dark area on a surface where light has been blocked by an object.

Criteria list:

- (i) it is a large-scale effect
- (ii) visible by eye on ordinary surfaces
- (iii) it is due to the object blocking the illumination light
- (iv) it takes the shape of the illuminated object
- (v) follows as the object changes position or shape
- (vi) the shadow follows the contour of the object it falls on



uOttawa



uOttawa

Most materials becomes more transparent in the presence of a strong laser field.

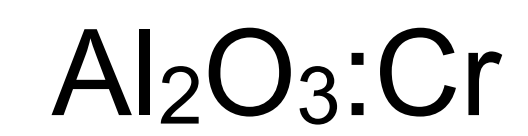
This would lead to an “anti-shadow” where the shadow location of the laser beam appears brighter than the background.

However, some materials can exhibit an increase in absorption at higher intensities under certain conditions. → reverse saturation of absorption

However, some materials can exhibit an increase in absorption at higher intensities under certain conditions. → reverse saturation of absorption

- More than two-level system.
- The excited state must have a larger absorption cross-section than the ground state.
- Neither the first nor the second excited states should decay to other levels that can trap the atomic population.
- The incident light should saturate the first transition only.

Ruby satisfies all these conditions



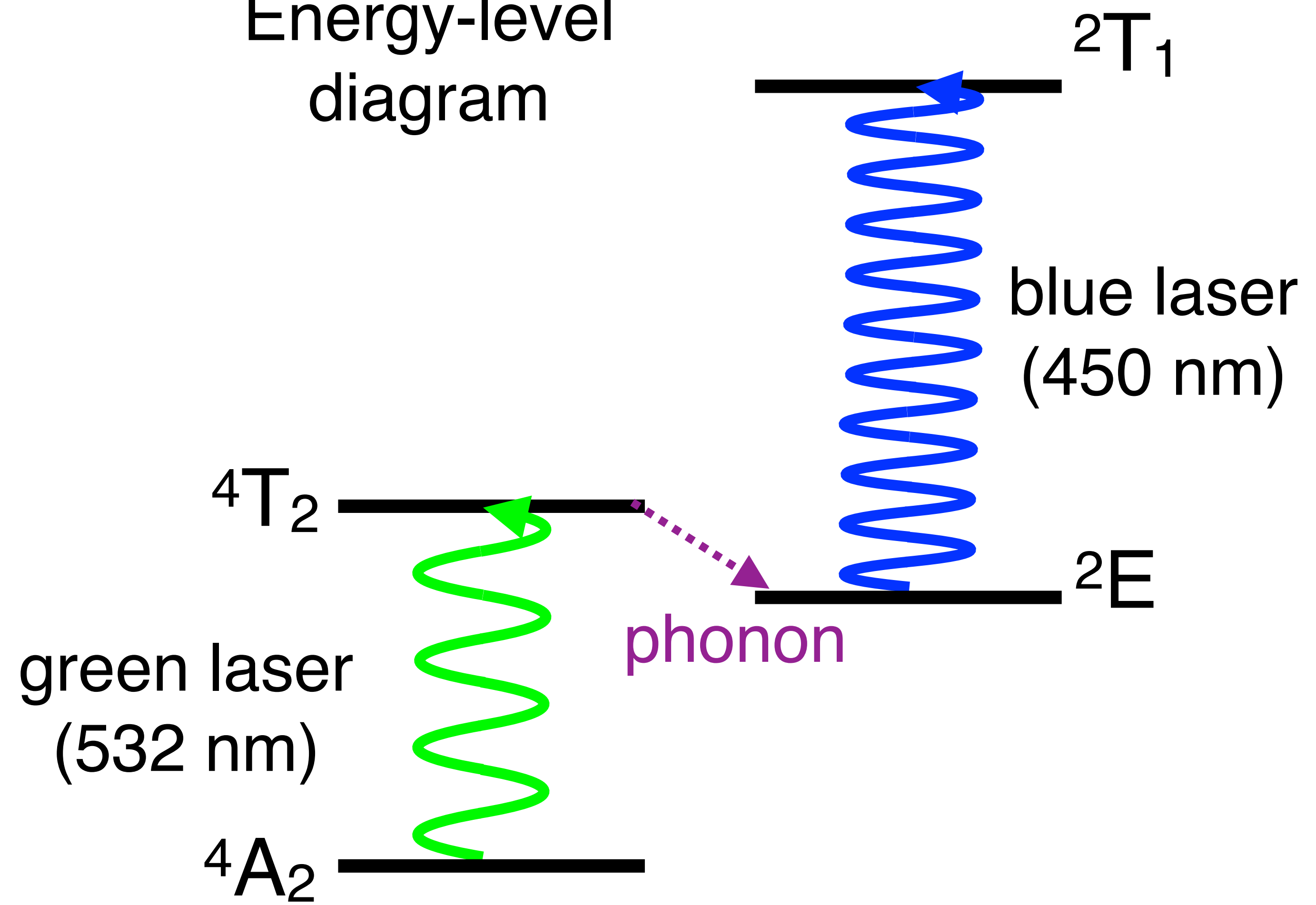


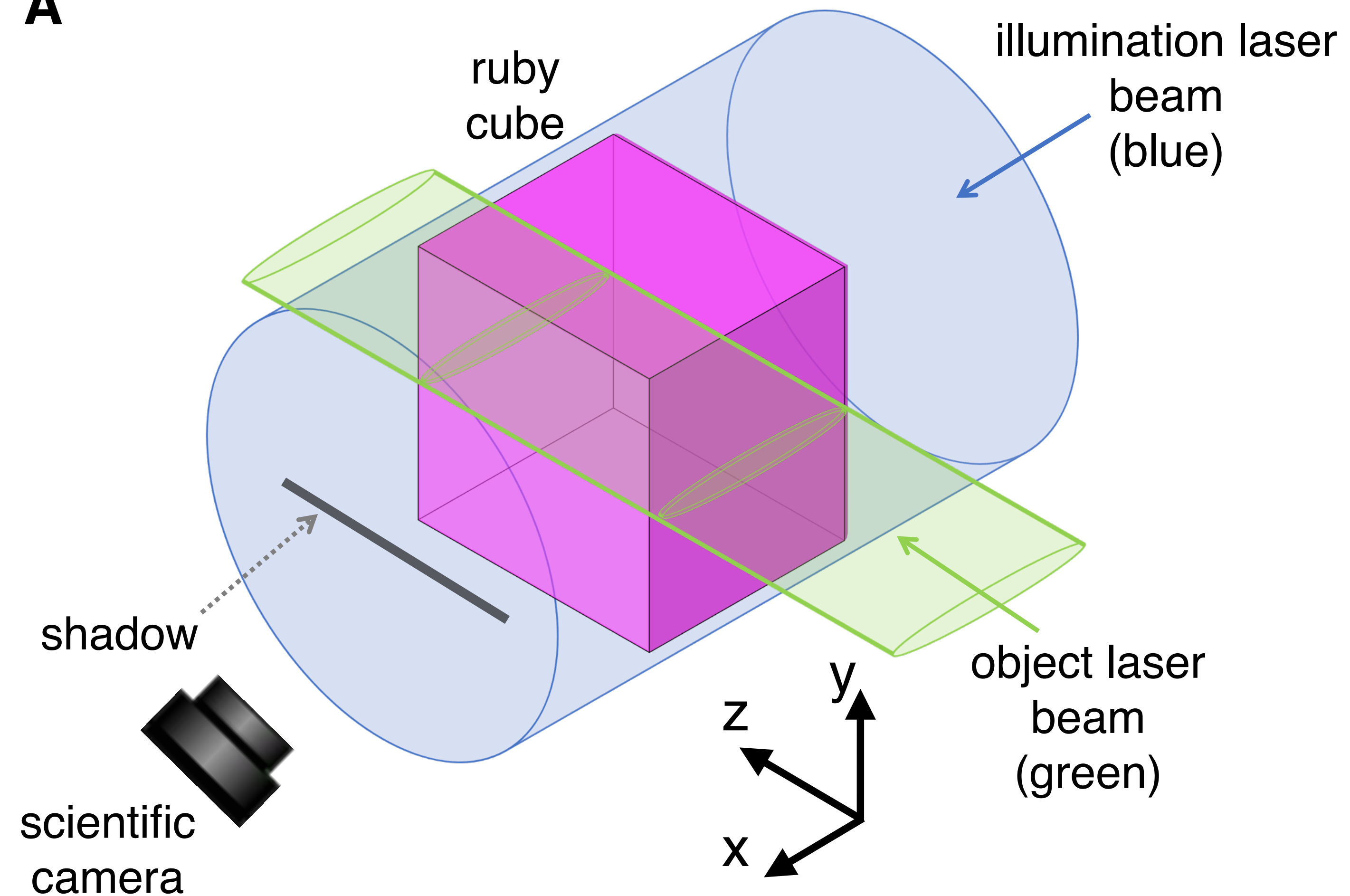
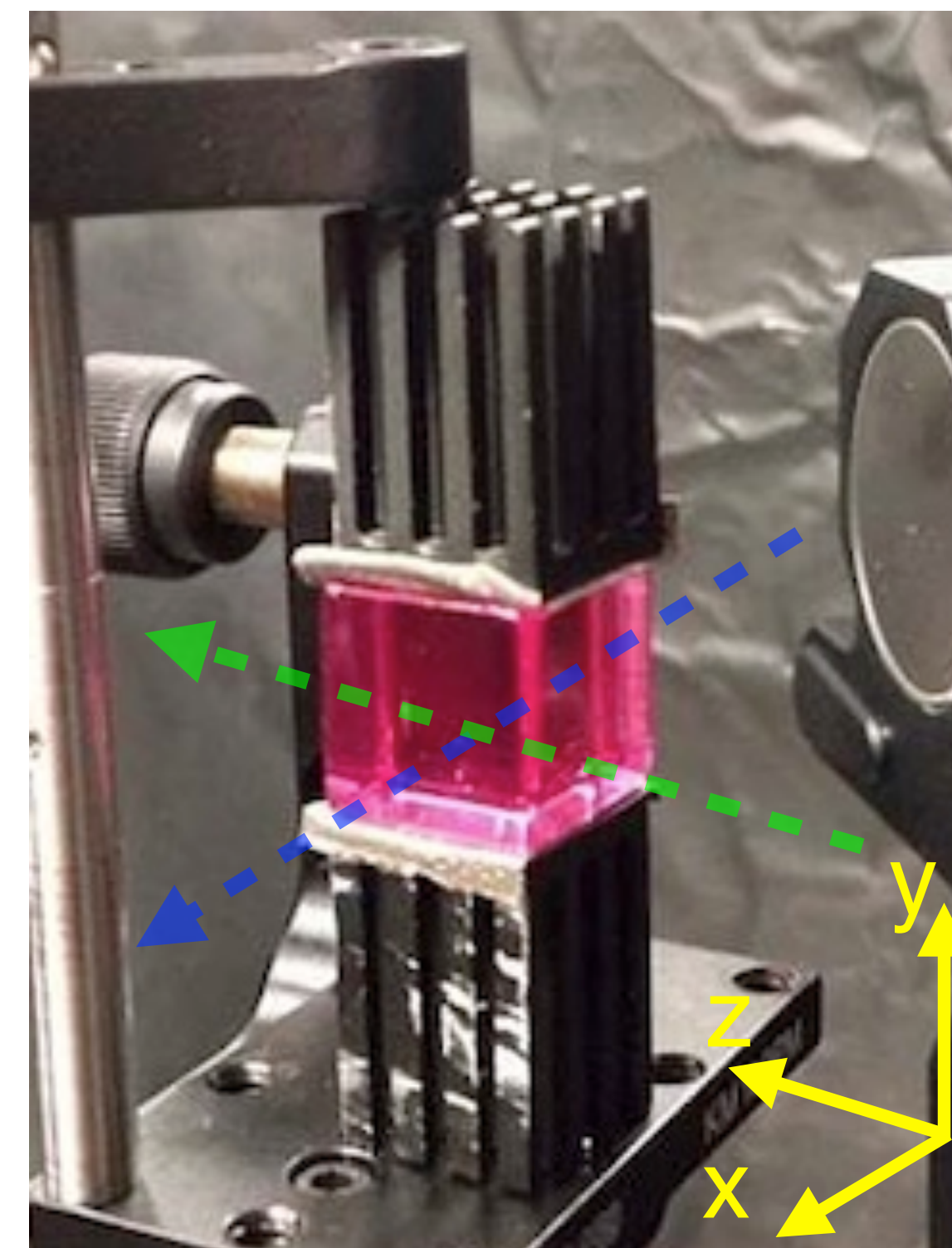
Side curiosity

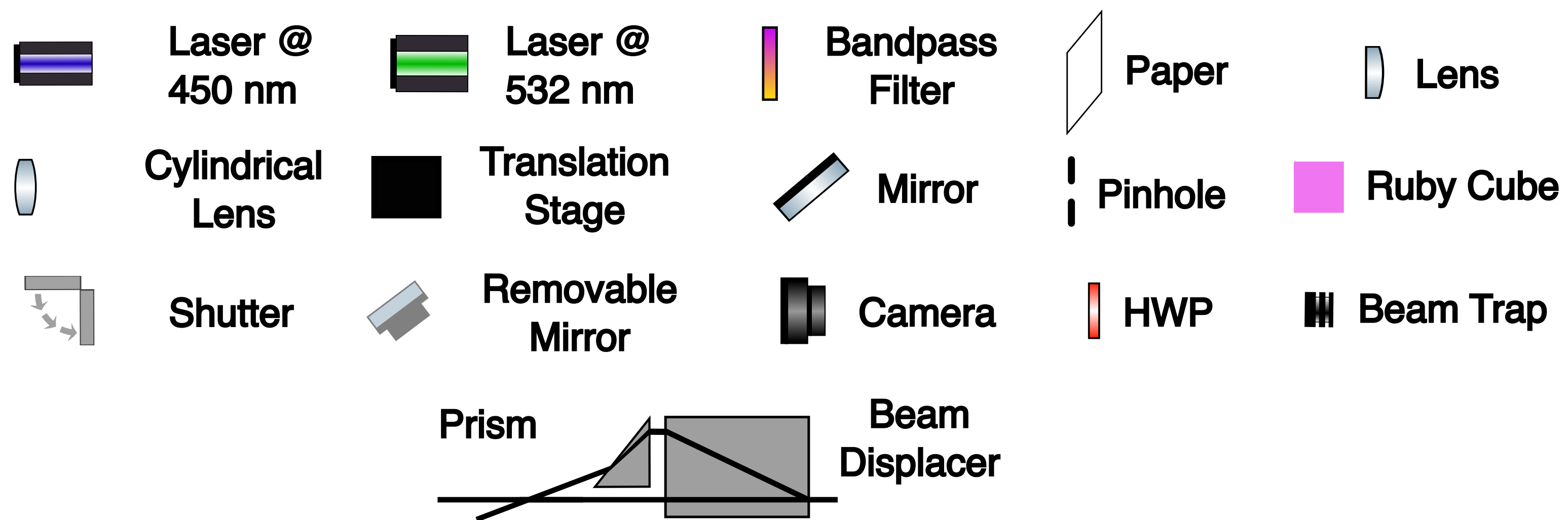
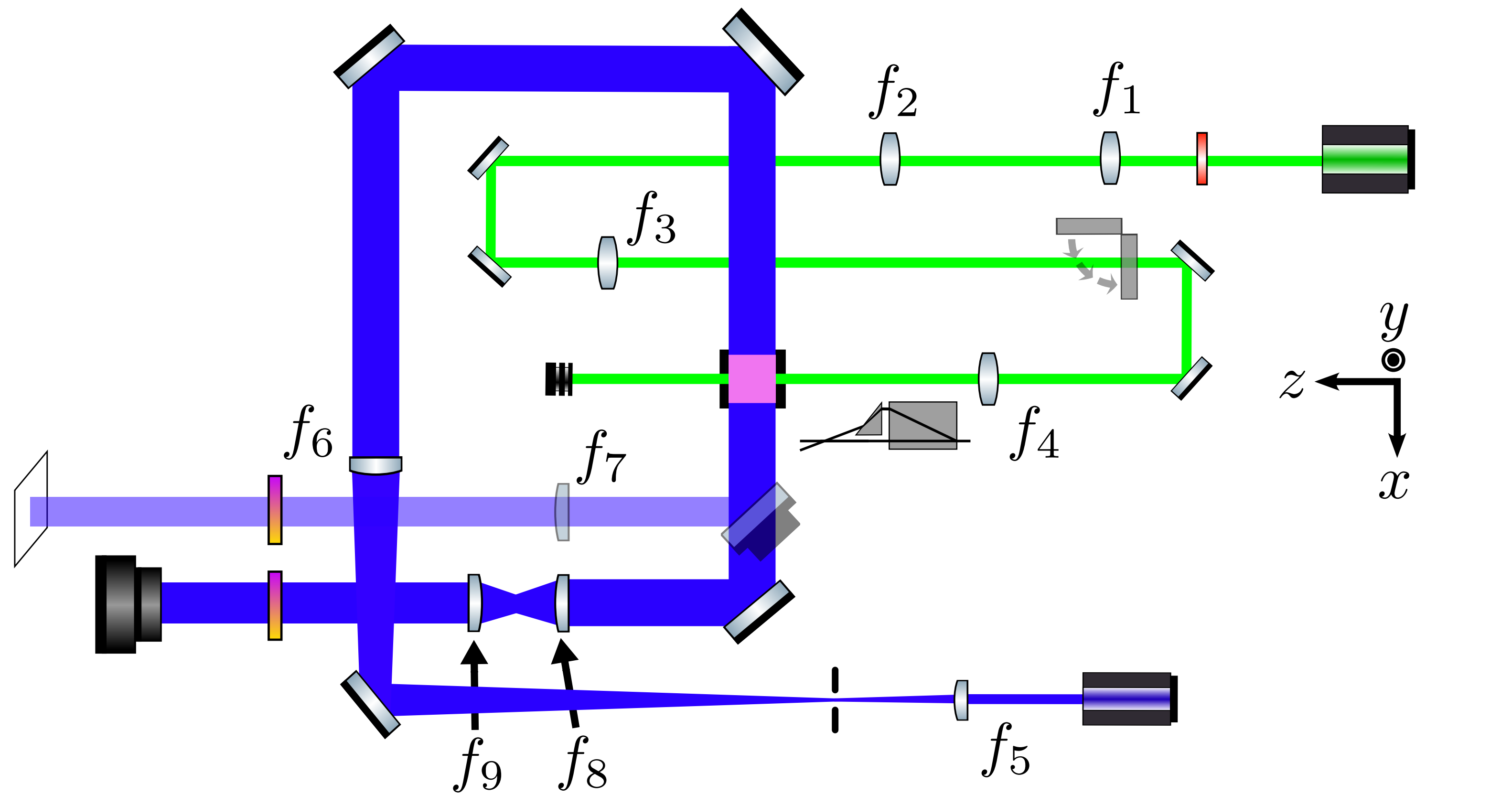
Theodore H. Maiman also used ruby in the first laser.

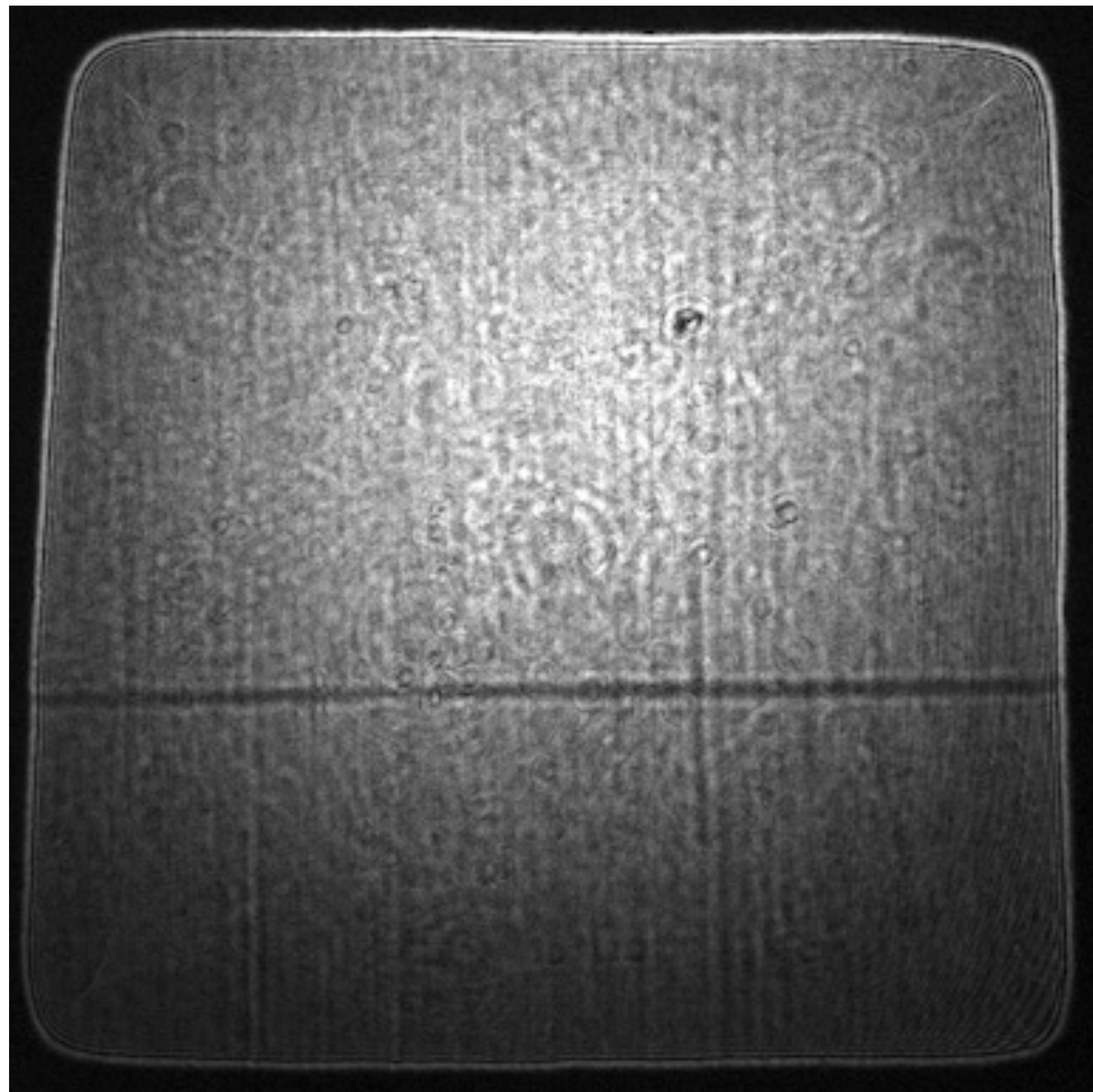


Energy-level
diagram



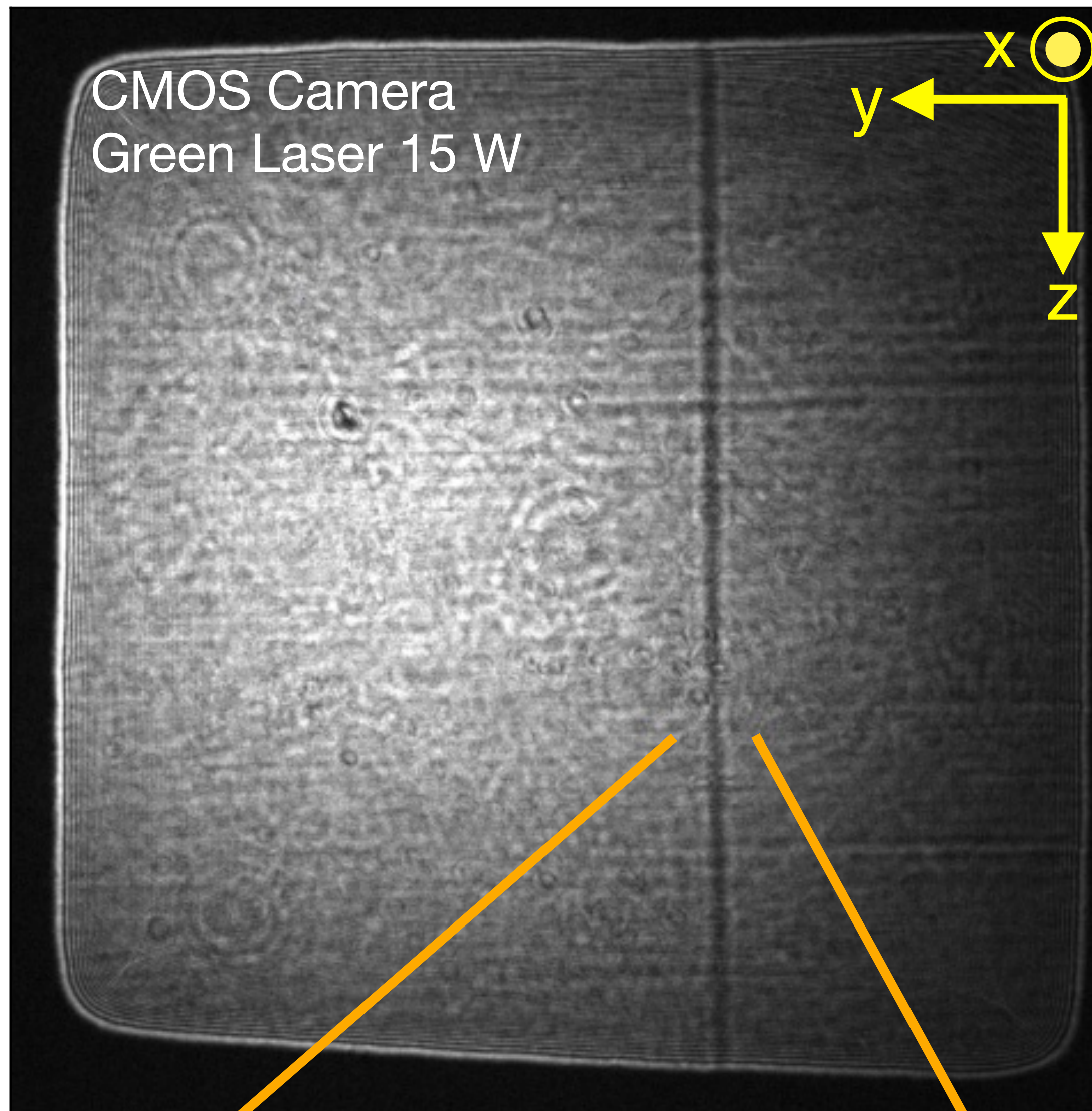
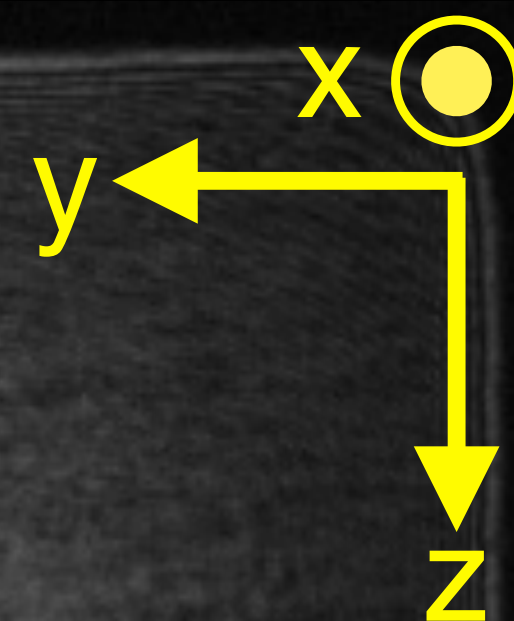
A**B**

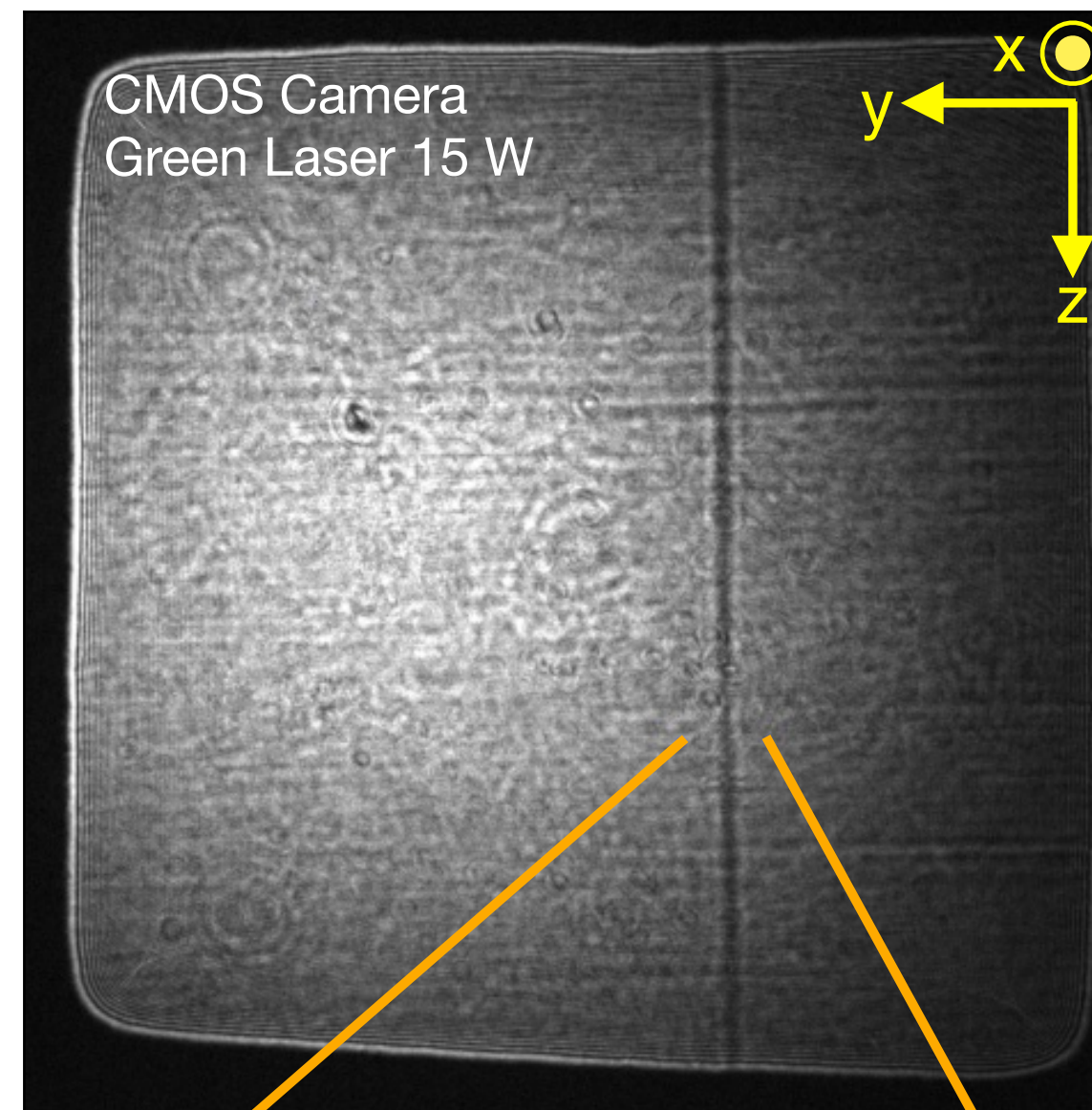
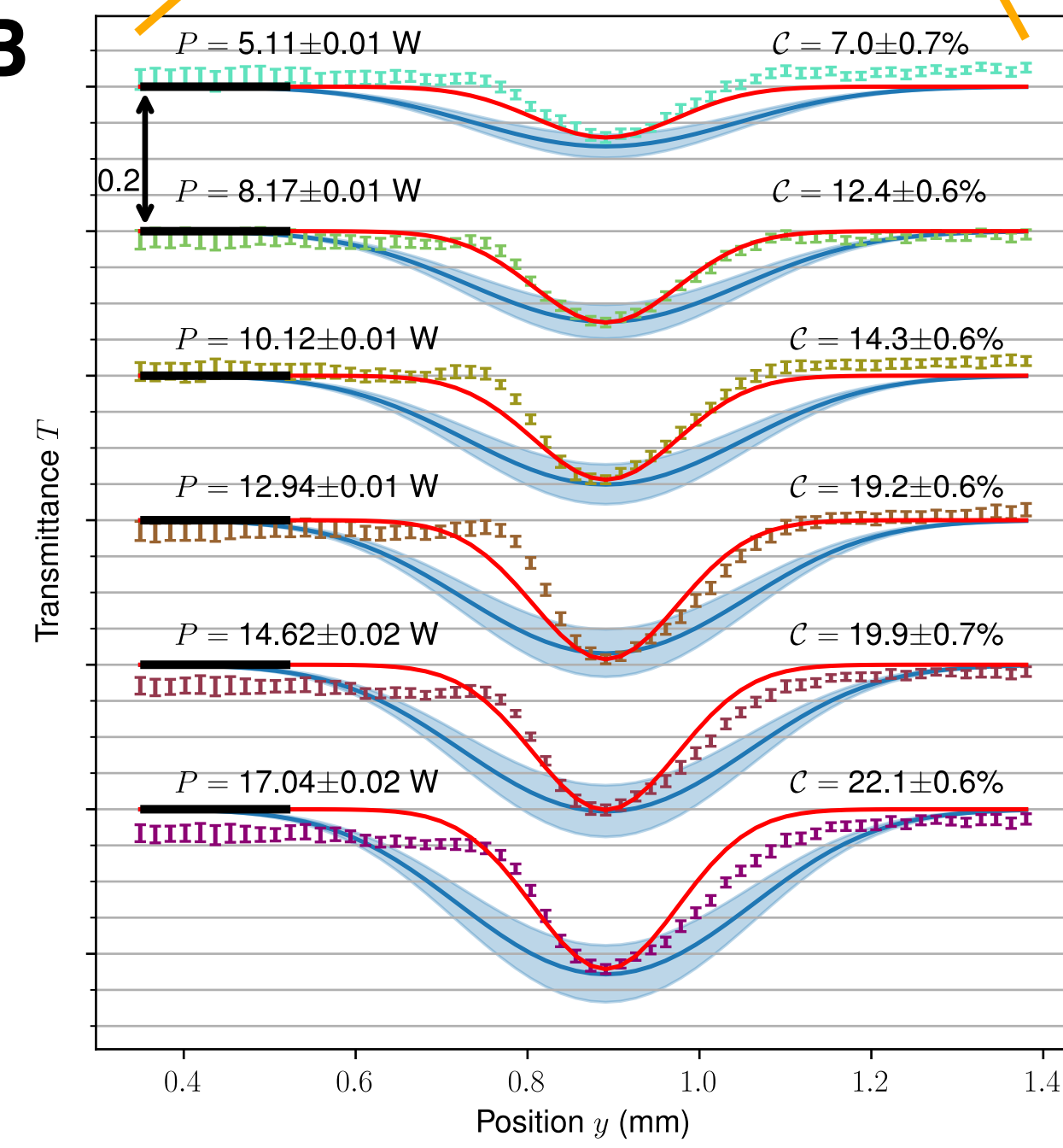




A

CMOS Camera
Green Laser 15 W



A**B**

B

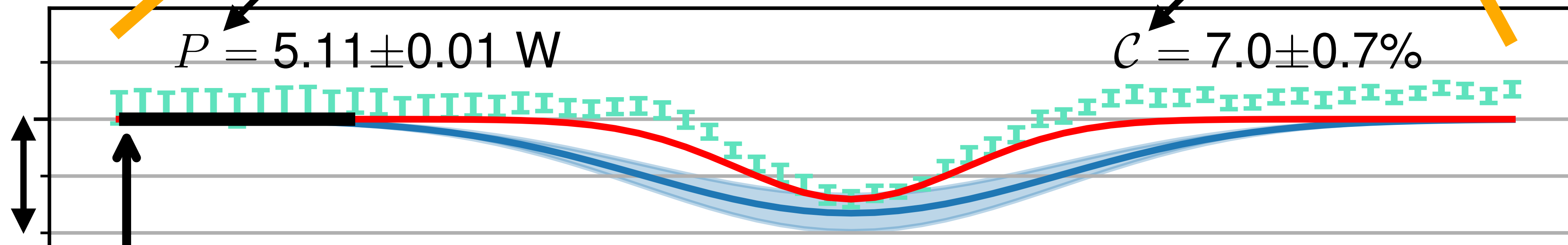
Power of Green Laser

Contrast of the shadow

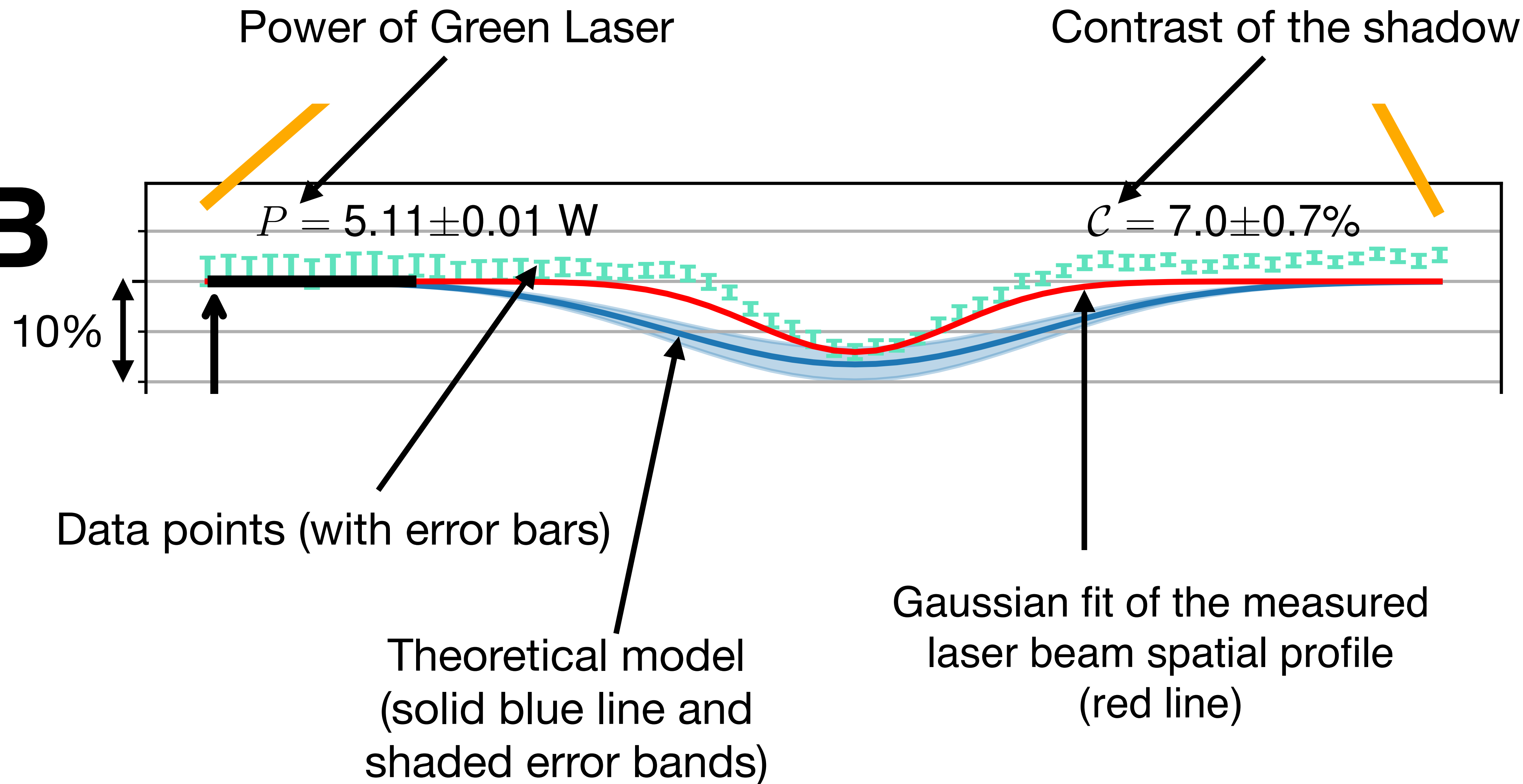
$P = 5.11 \pm 0.01 \text{ W}$

$C = 7.0 \pm 0.7\%$

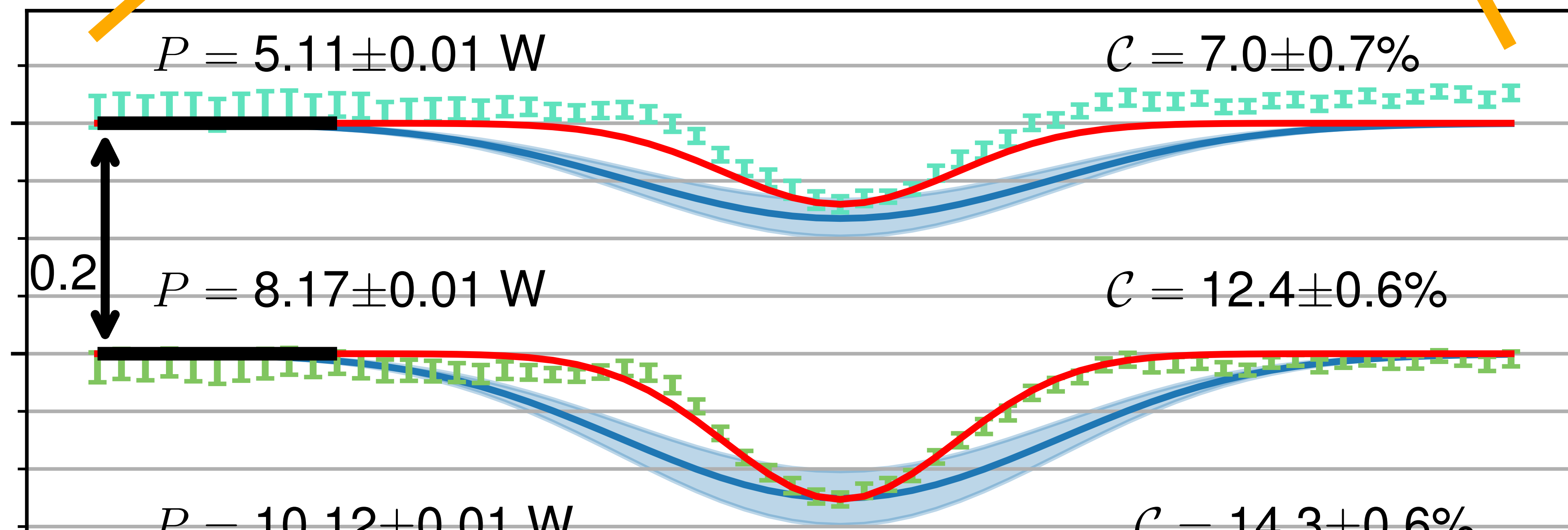
10%

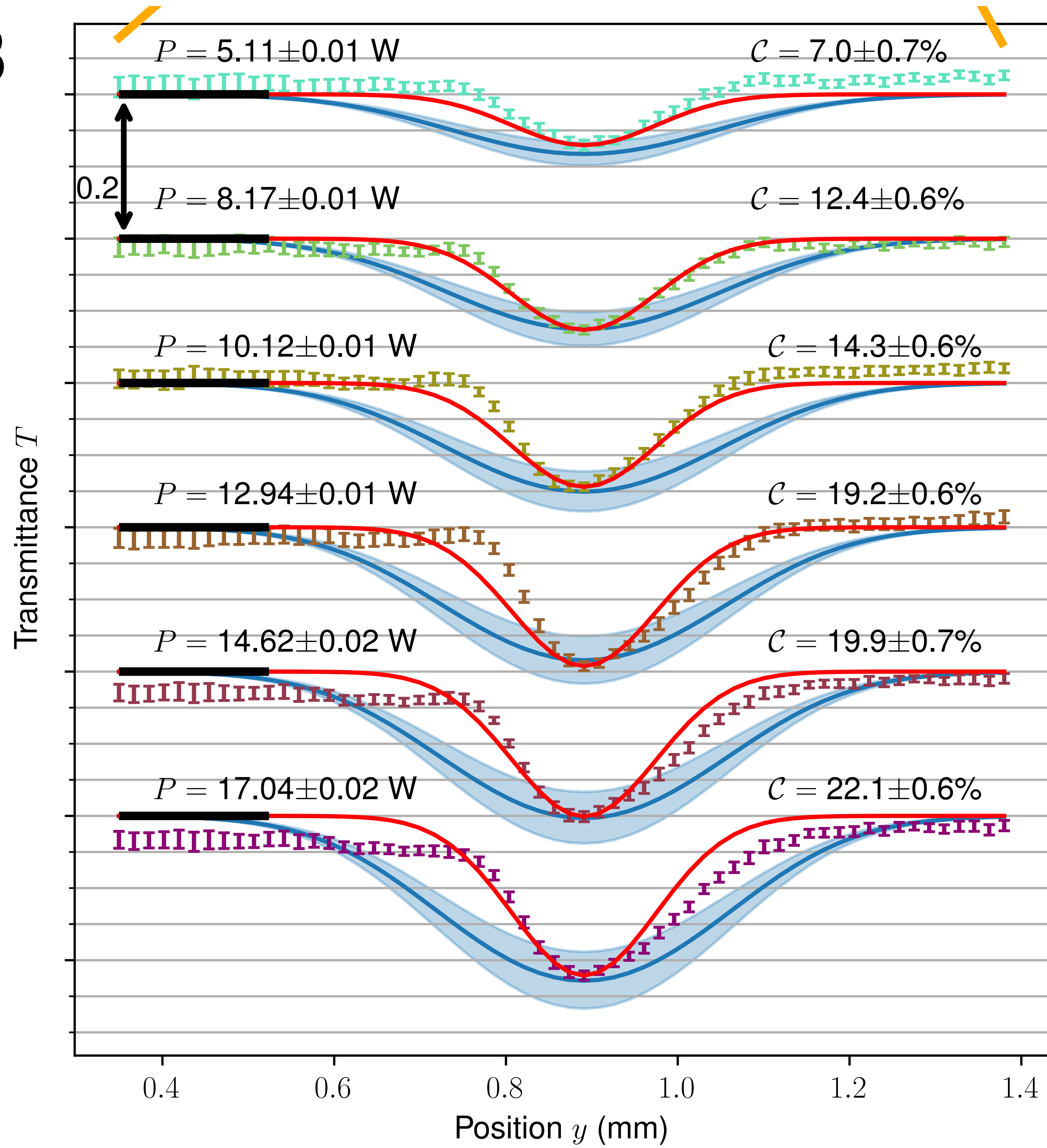


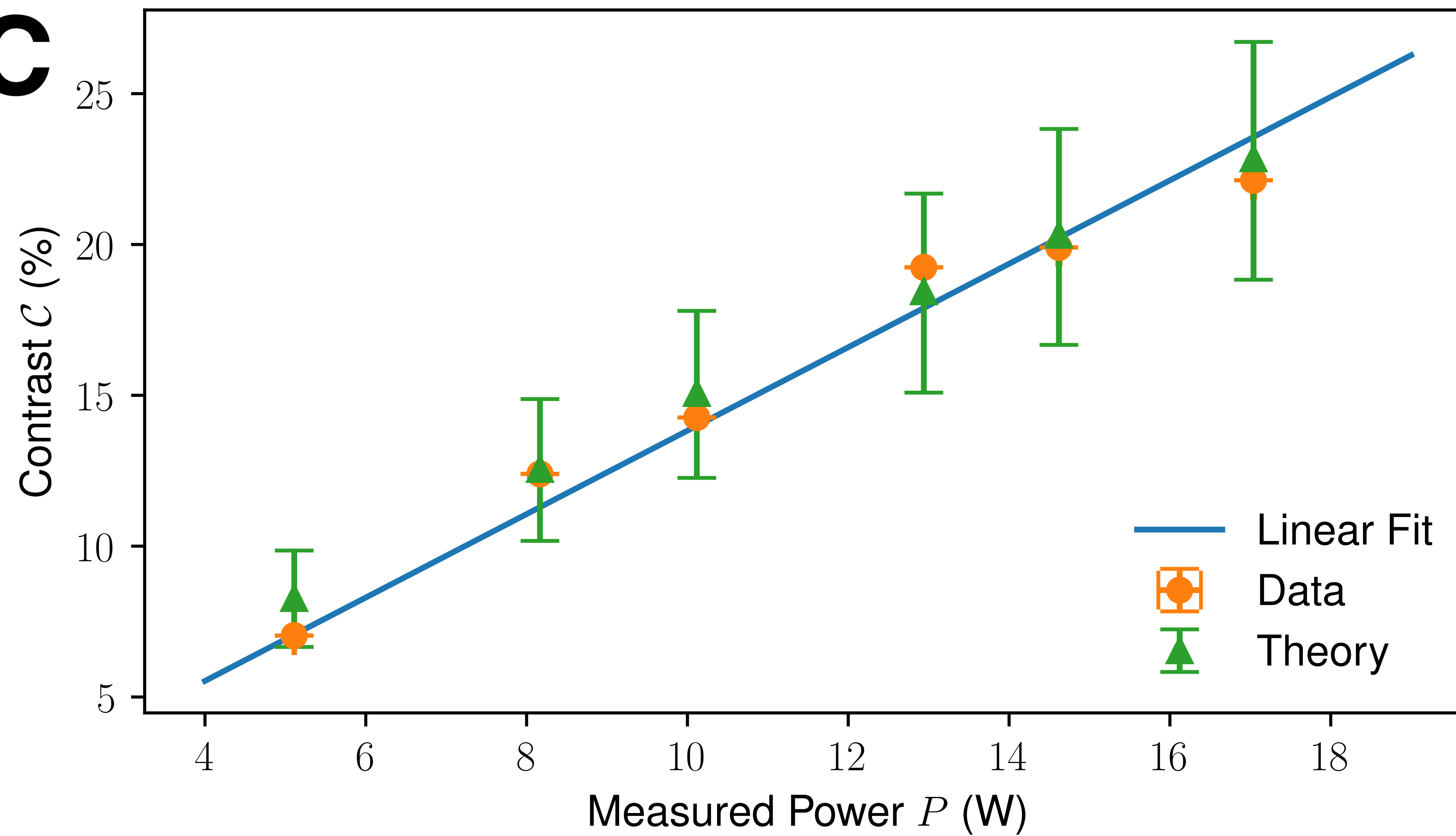
B

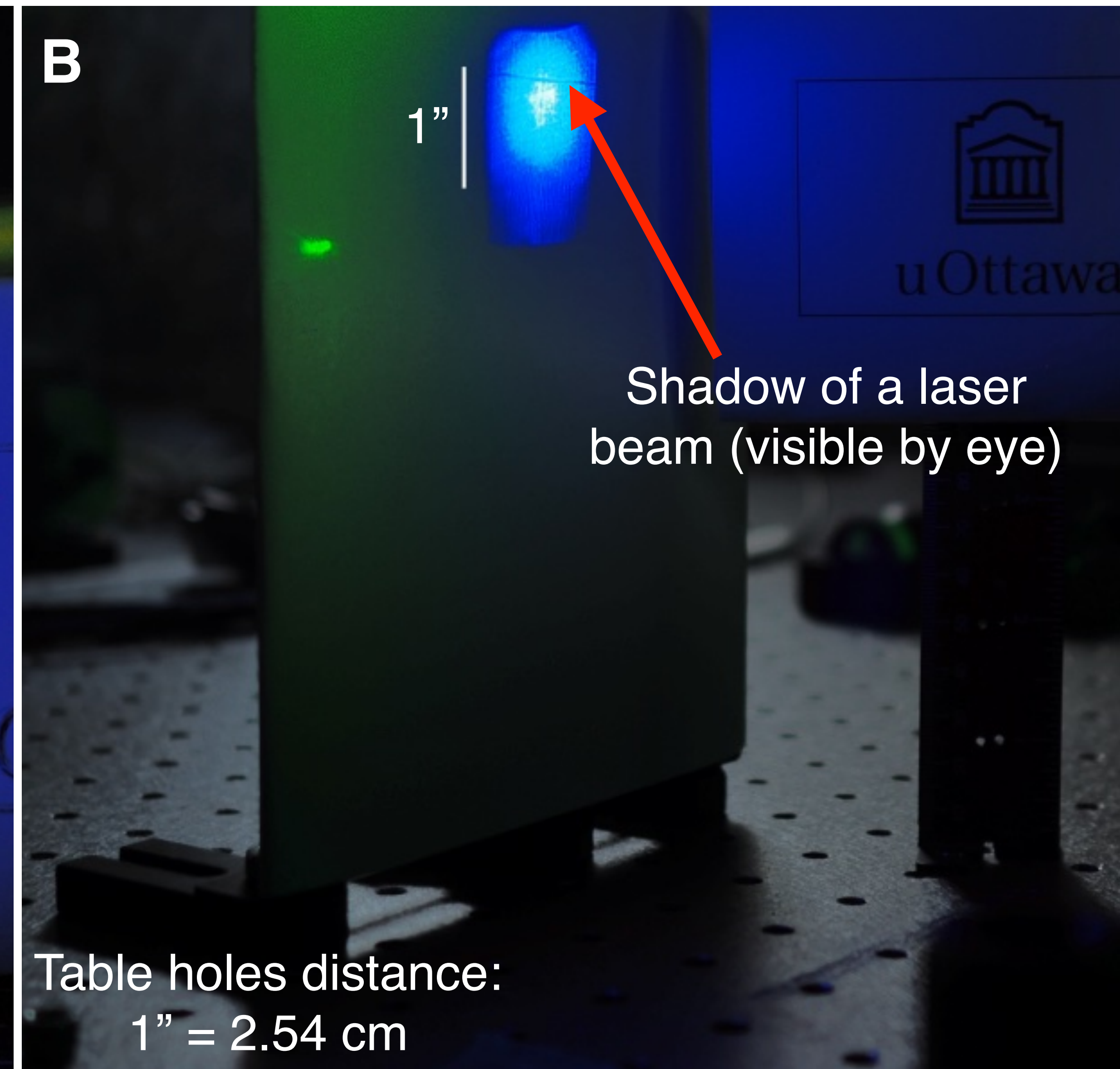
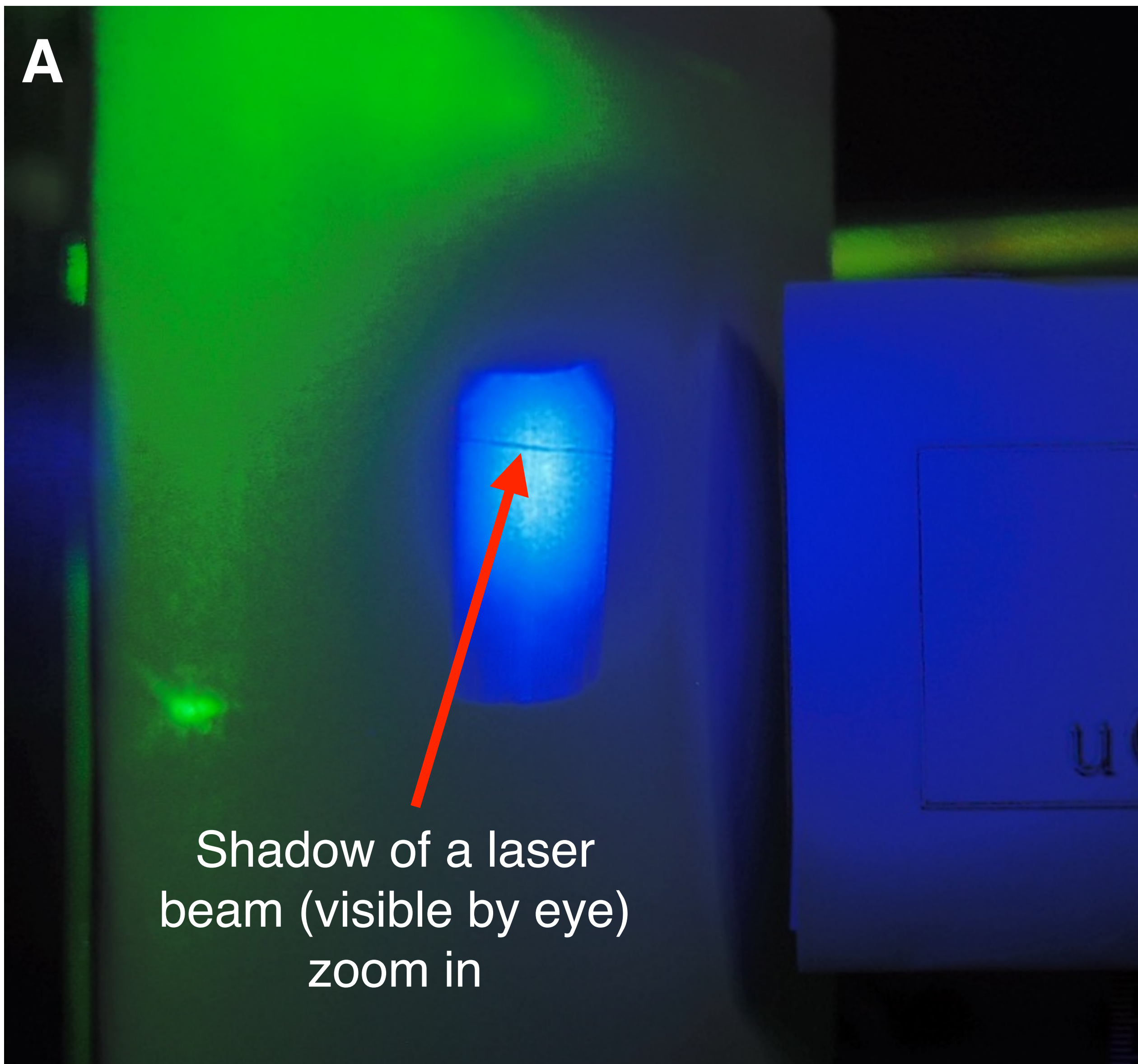


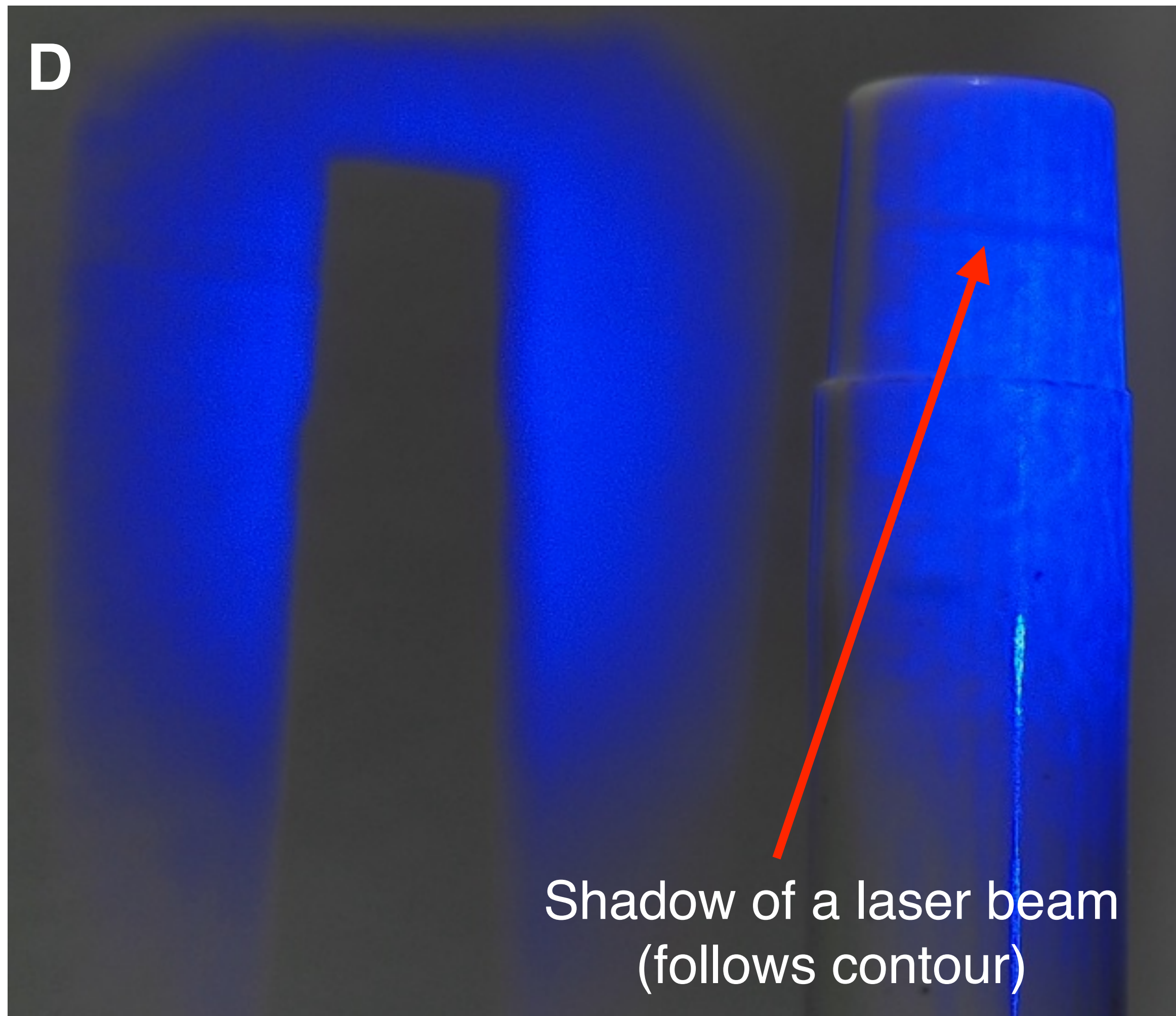
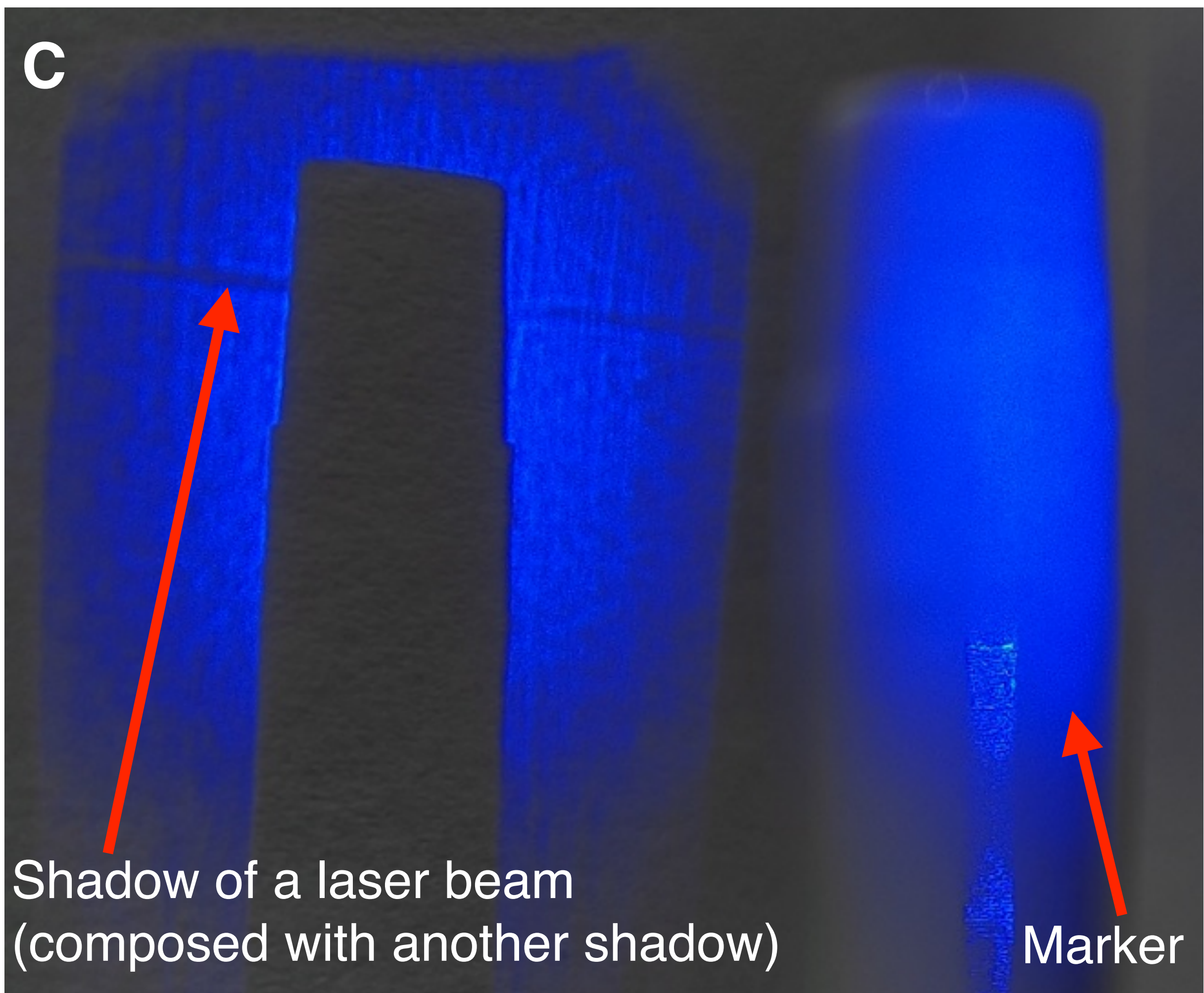
B

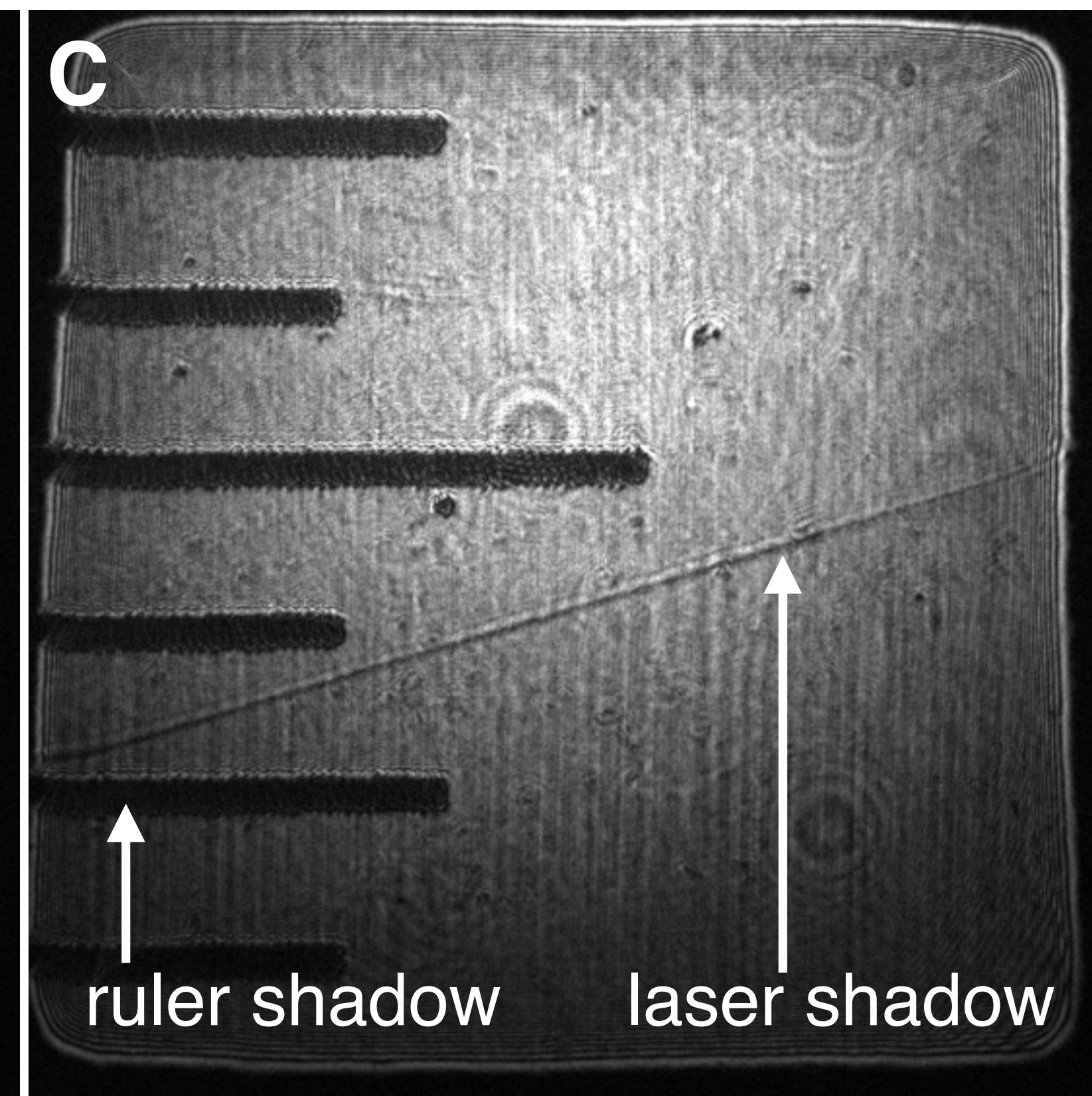
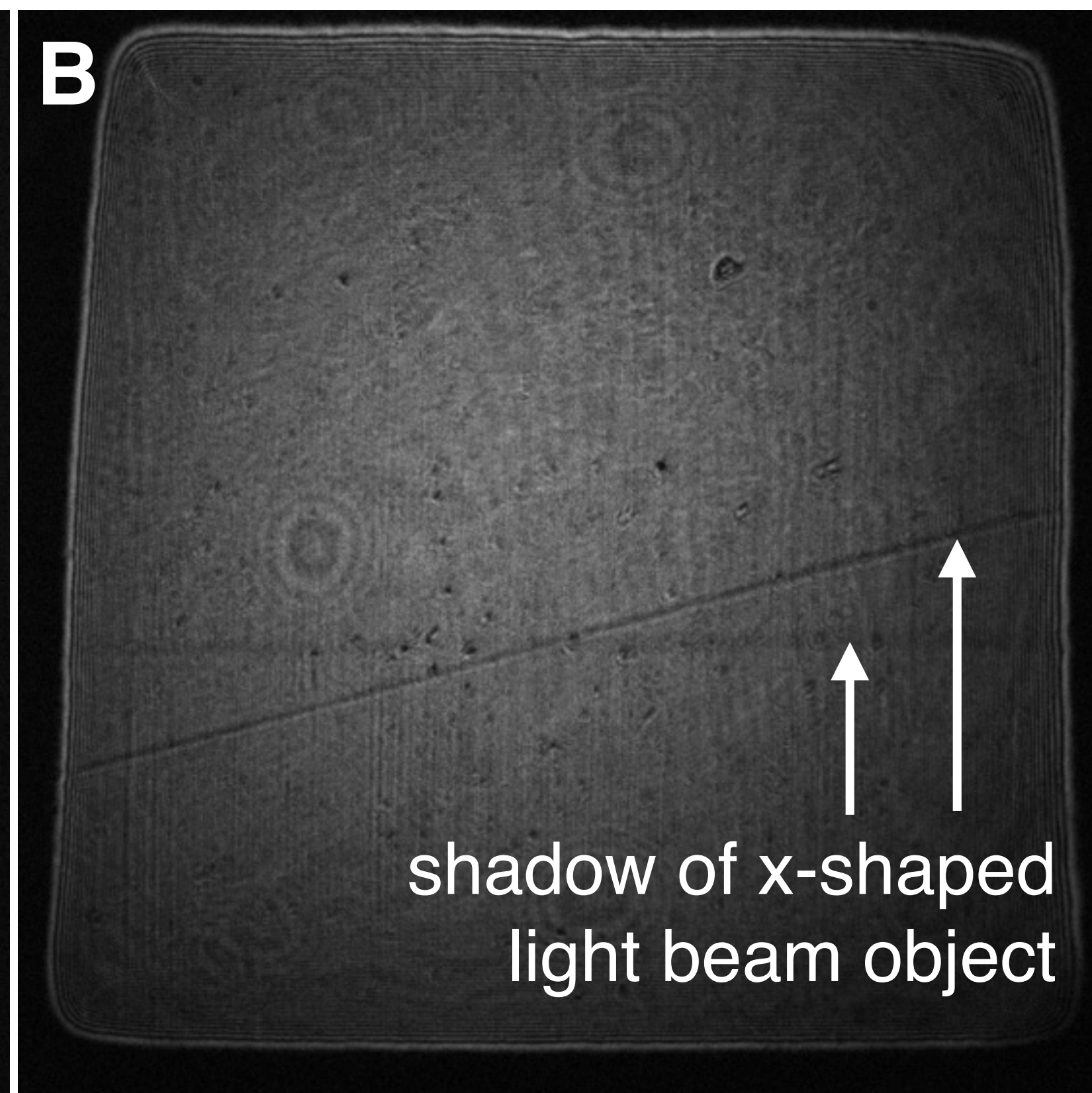
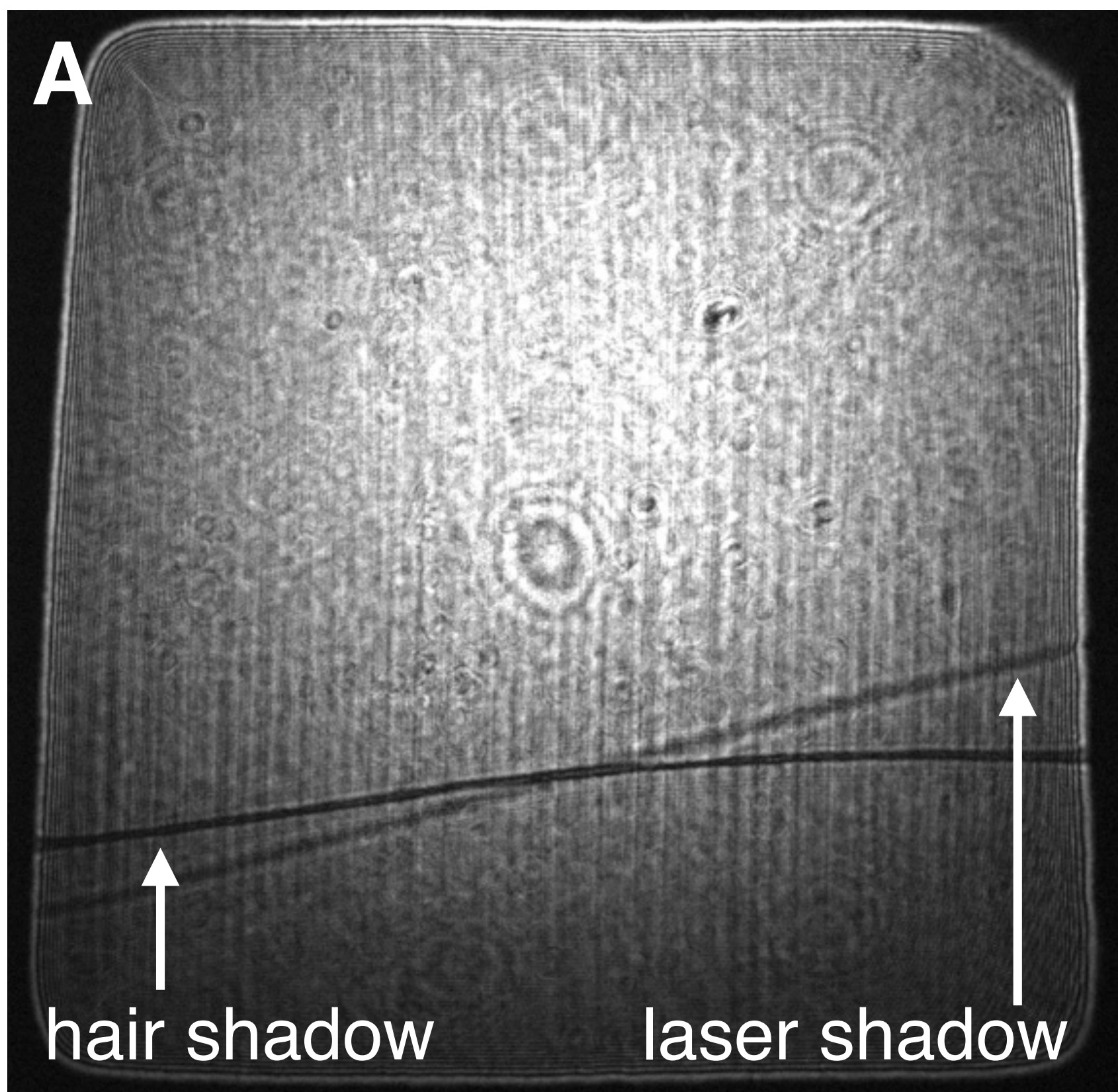


B

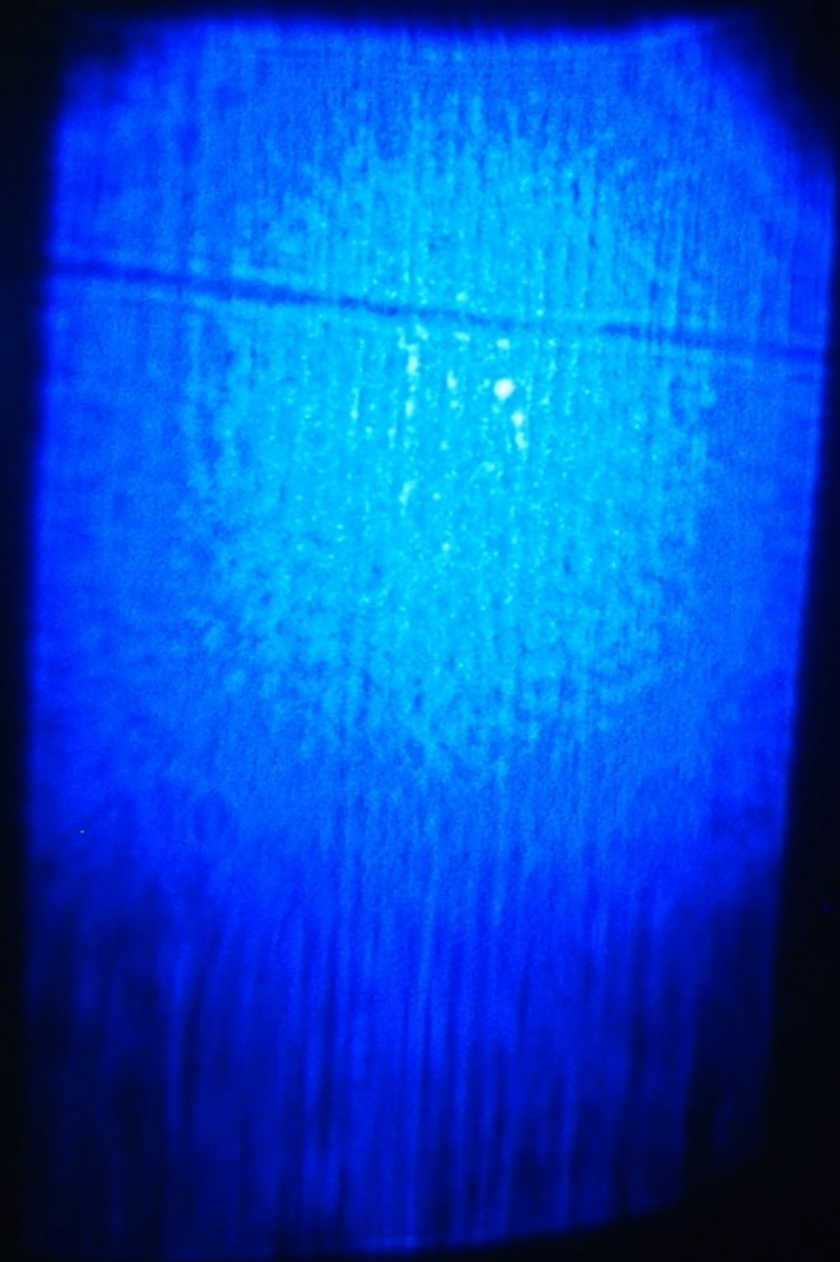
C



















Criteria list:

- (i) it is a large-scale effect 
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- (vi) the shadow follows the contour of the object it falls on 

So... what causes the shadow?

Are the photons in the object laser themselves blocking the illuminating light? Or are the atoms in the ruby?



Both! Actually, it is a polariton.

Polariton: a hybrid state between photons and matter.



Polaritons are interesting in their own right and a active area of research in condensed matter.

We intentionally highlighted that in the paper!

"We are in the presence of strong absorption (hence the shadow) and the polaritonic nature of the excitation in the medium, and both concepts are necessary to understand what is happening. Strictly speaking, it is not massless light that is creating the shadow, but it is the material counterpart of the polariton, which has mass, that is casting the shadow."



OPTICA

Shadow of a laser beam

RAPHAEL A. ABRAHAO,^{1,2,*}  **HENRI P. N. MORIN,^{1,3}**  **JORDAN T. R. PAGÉ,^{1,4}** **AKBAR SAFARI,^{1,5}** 
ROBERT W. BOYD,^{1,4,6}  **AND JEFF S. LUNDEEN^{1,7,8}** 



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Scientists discover laser light can cast a shadow

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14 November 2024

Scientists discover laser light can cast a shadow

Surprising finding could lead to new ways of controlling light

Outlook

Other materials

Other wavelengths

Potential new applications

Optical switcher

Control of the intensity of a transmitted
laser beam by applying another laser

Quantum telescopes

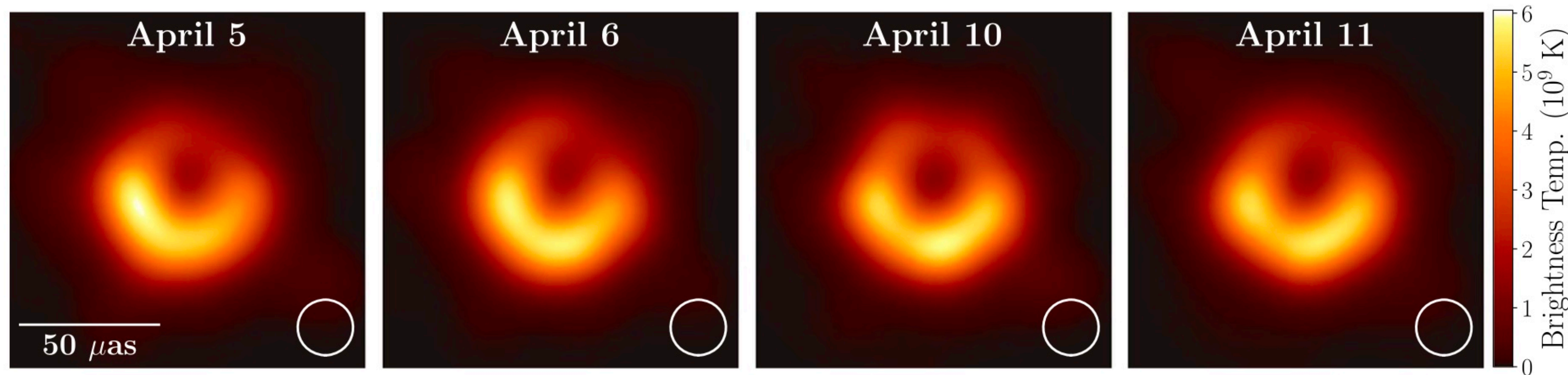




First M87 Event Horizon Telescope Results. IV. Imaging the Central Supermassive Black Hole

The Event Horizon Telescope Collaboration
(See the end matter for the full list of authors.)

Received 2019 February 11; revised 2019 March 5; accepted 2019 March 6; published 2019 April 10



sensitive to features
on angular scale

$$\Delta \theta \sim \frac{\lambda}{b}$$

Figure 15. Averages of the three fiducial images of M87 for each of the four observed days after restoring each to an equivalent resolution, as in Figure 14. The indicated beam is $20 \mu\text{as}$ (i.e., that of DIFMAP, which is always the largest of the three individual beams).

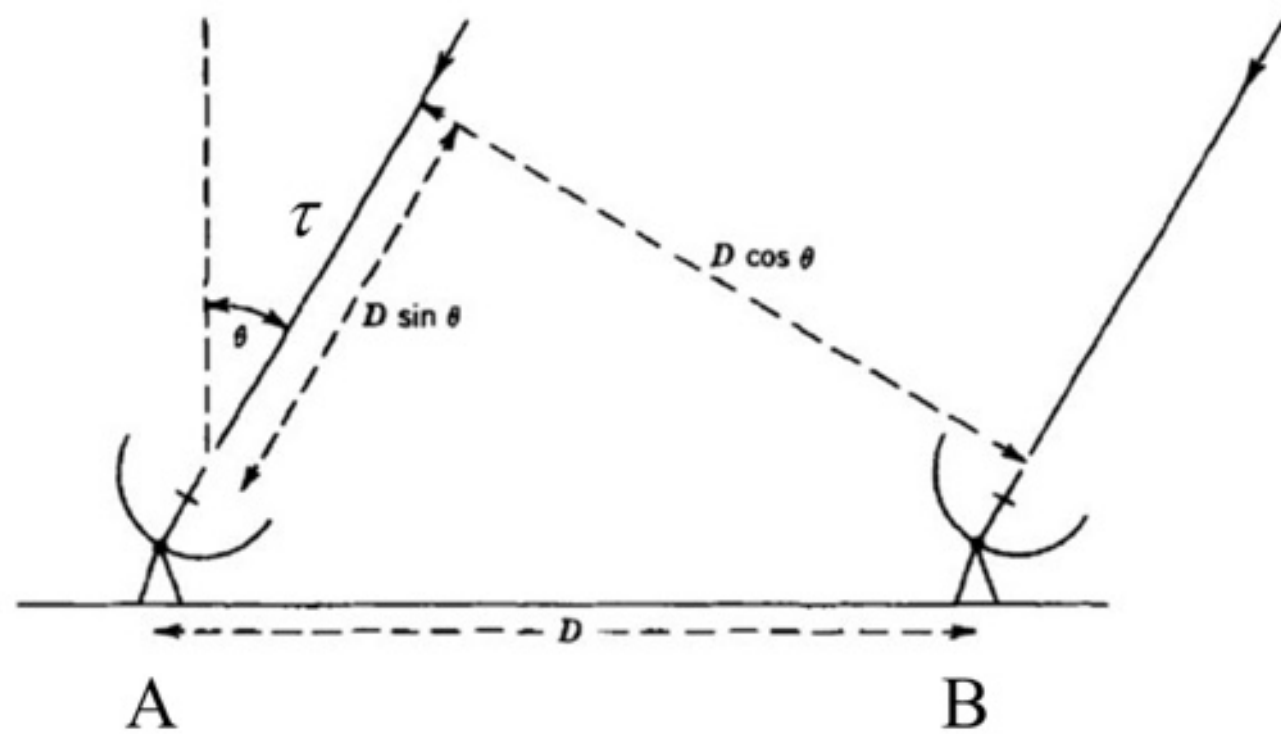
Achieved by radio interferometry



sensitive to features
on angular scale

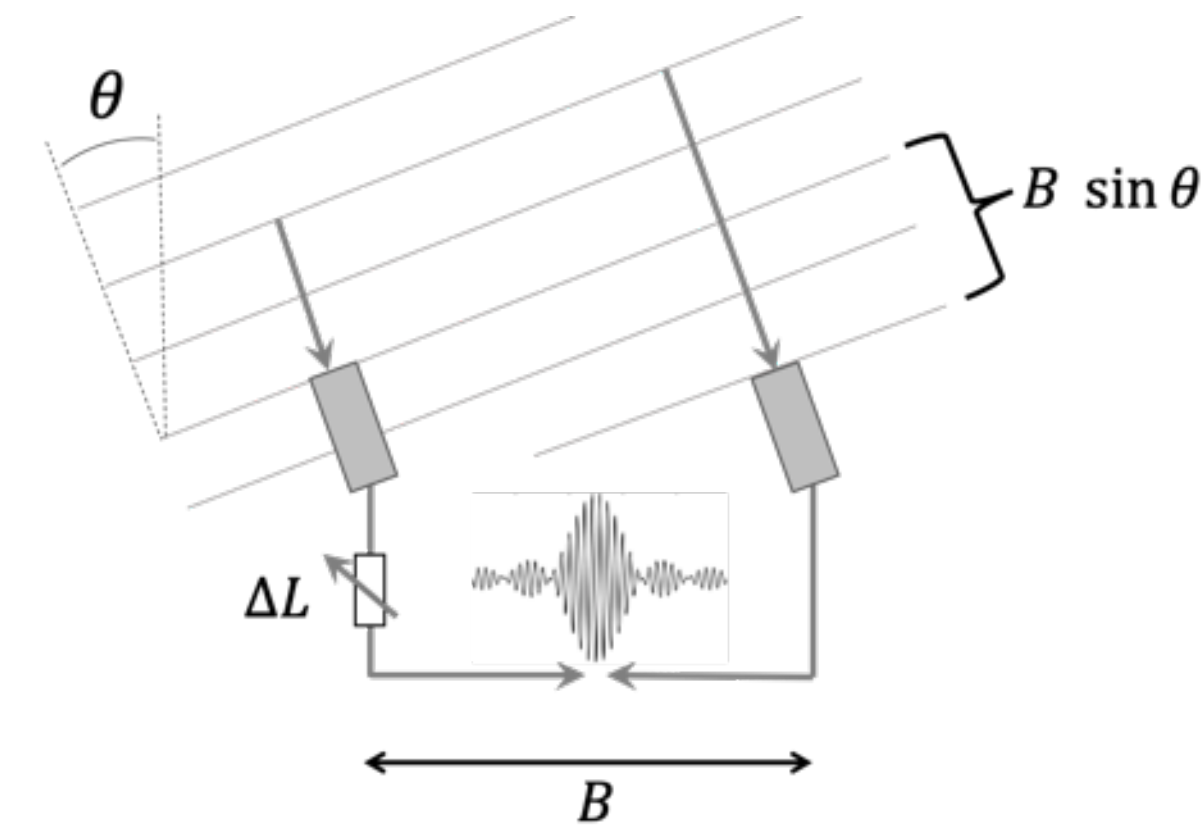
$$\Delta \theta \sim \frac{\lambda}{b}$$

Radio



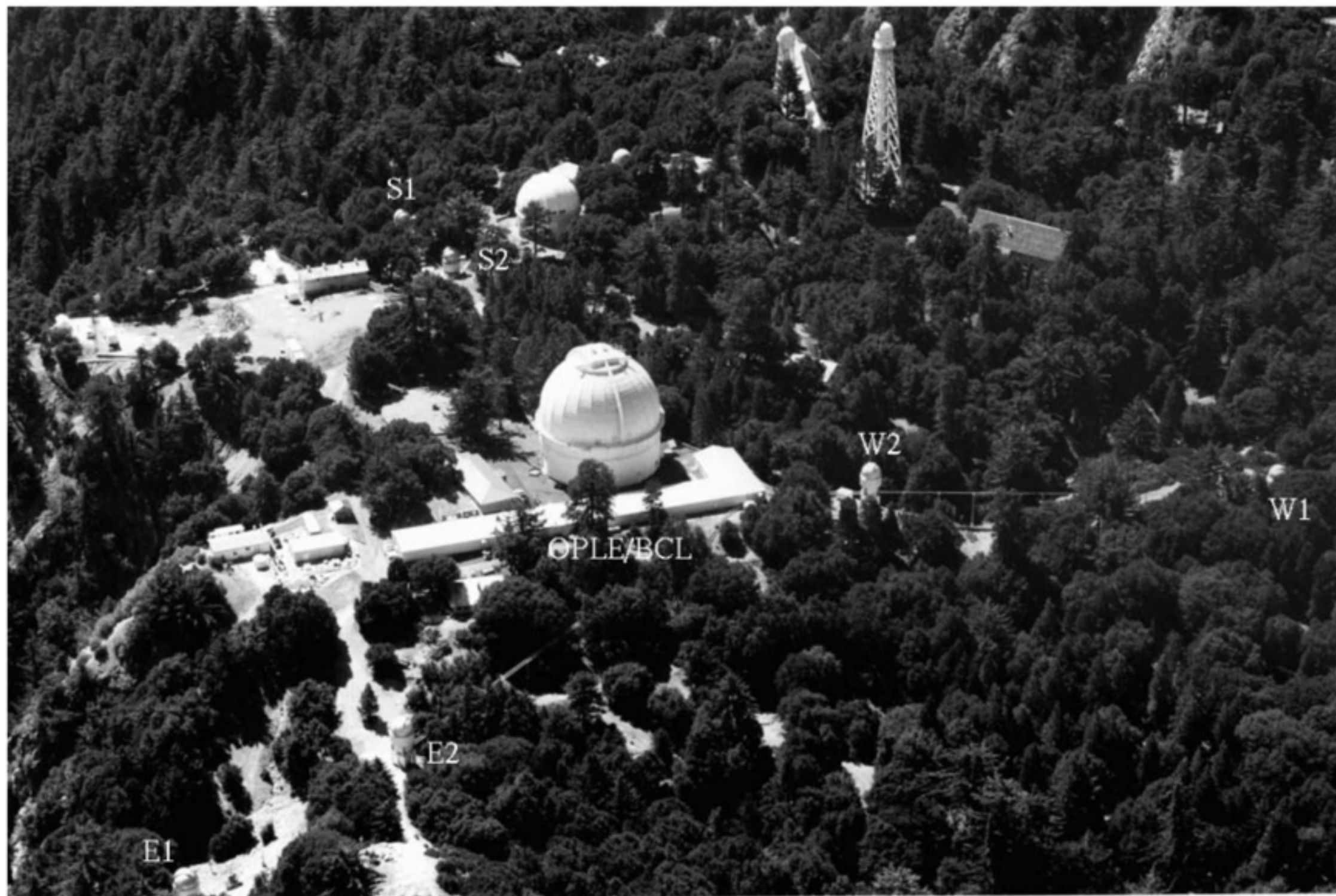
Can record entire waveform, over some band, separately at each receiver station and interfere later offline

Optical



Need to bring paths to common point in real time
Need path length compensated to better than $c/\text{bandwidth}$
Need path length stabilized to better than λ

CHARA (Center for High Angular Resolution Astronomy) Observatory baselines up to 330m



Beam line path length control at CHARA

Question: **How to get to longer baselines?**



Longer-Baseline Telescopes Using Quantum Repeaters

Daniel Gottesman^{*}

Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

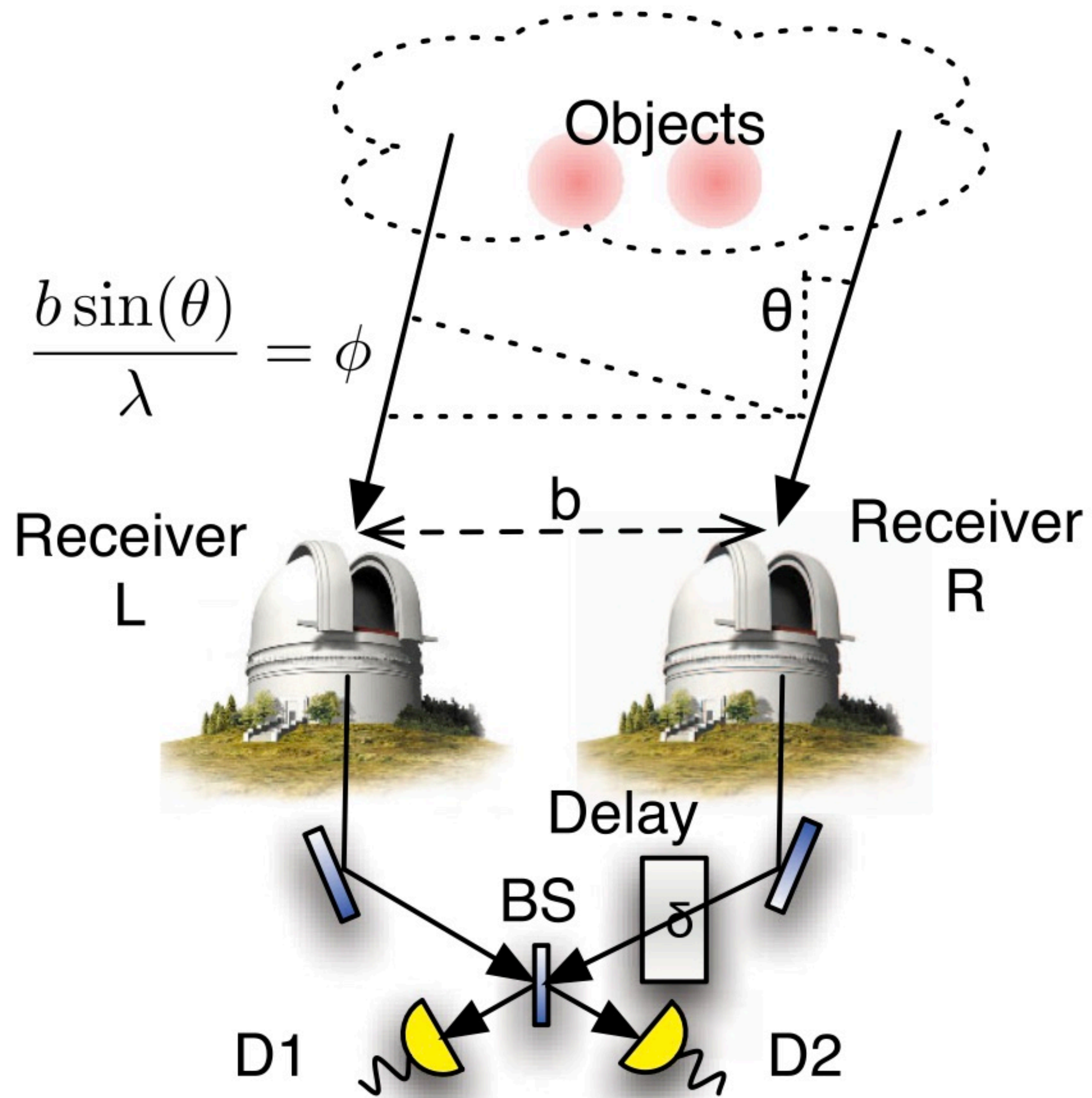
Thomas Jennewein[†]

Institute for Quantum Computing, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

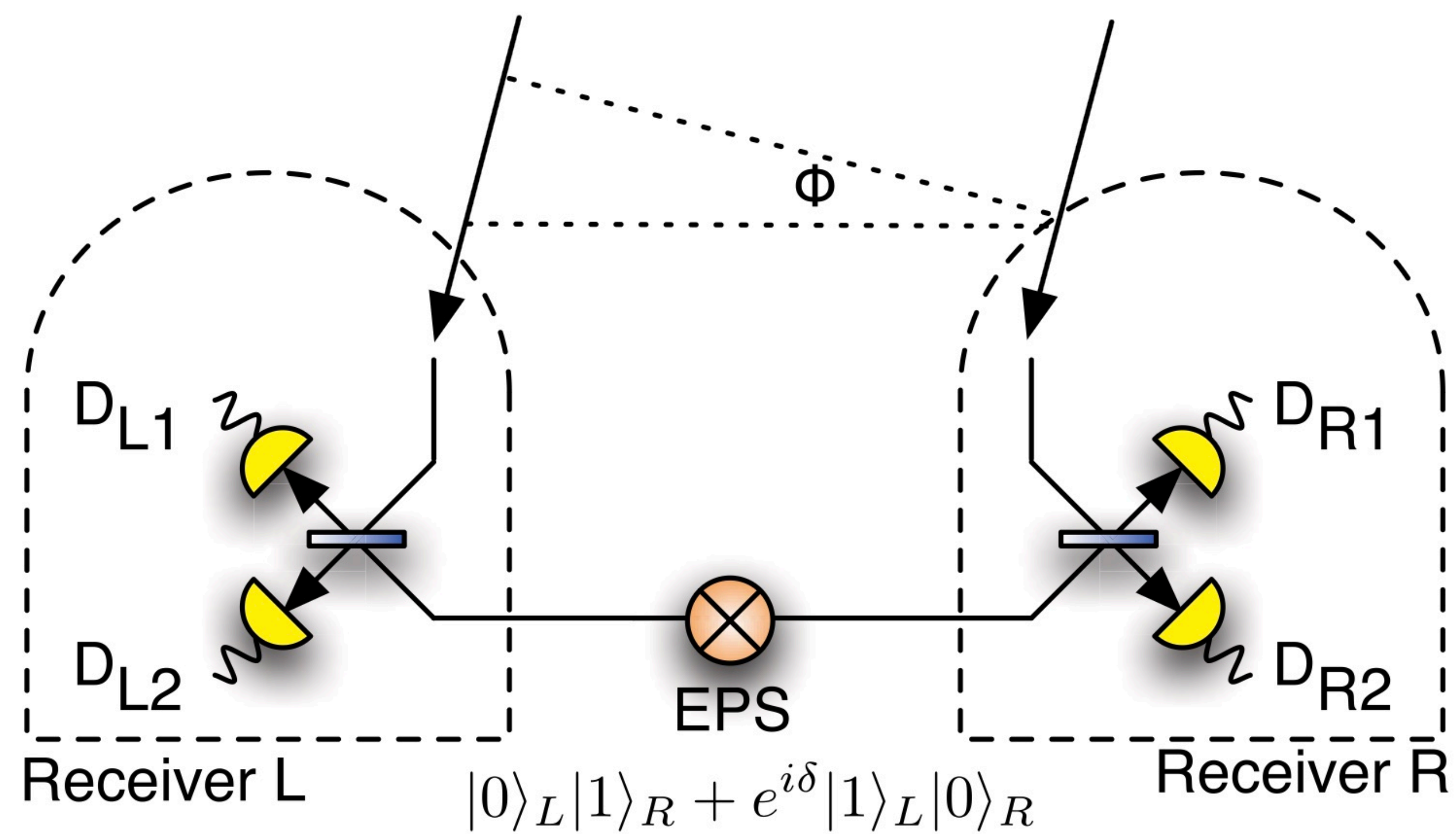
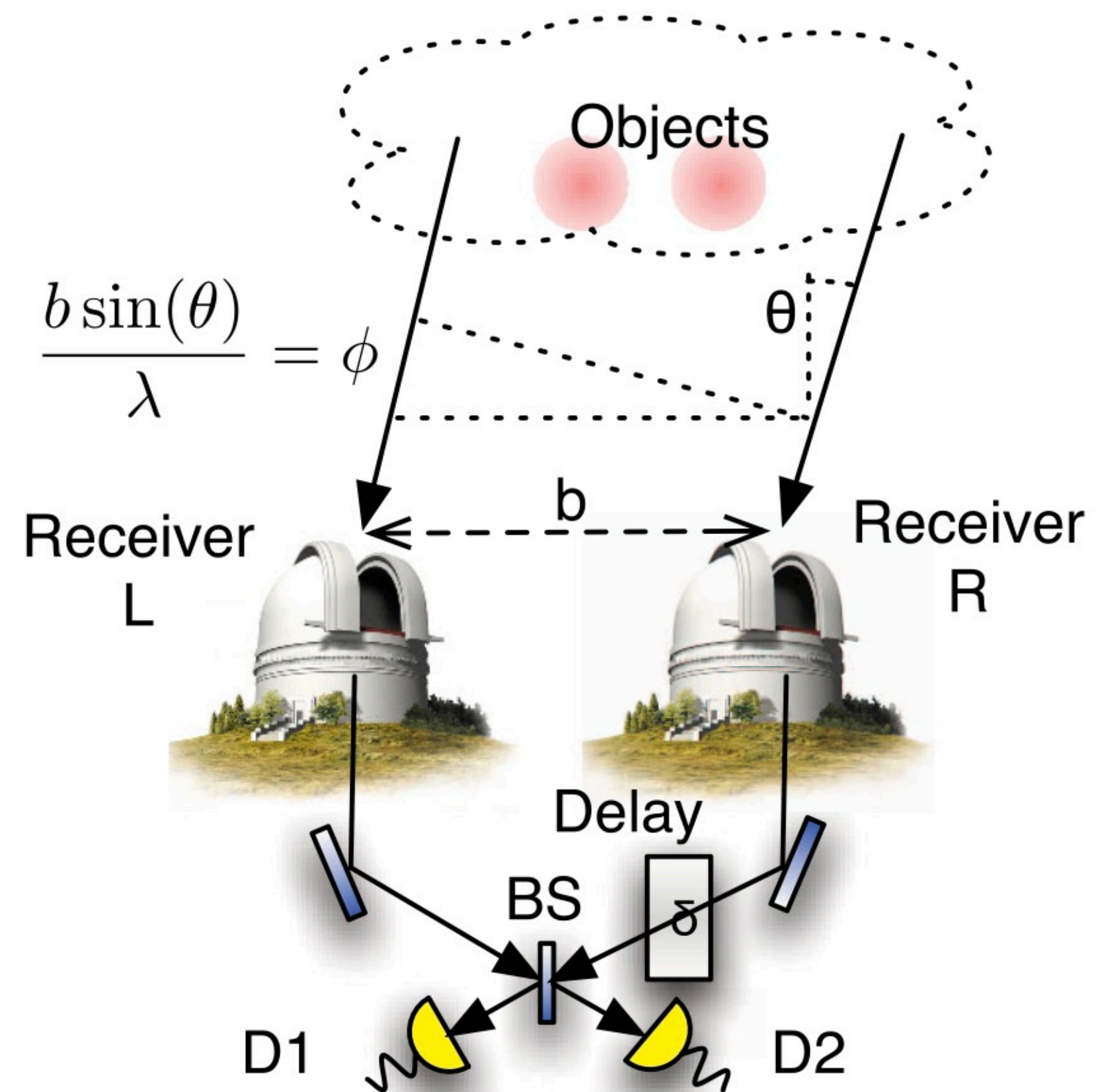
Sarah Croke[‡]

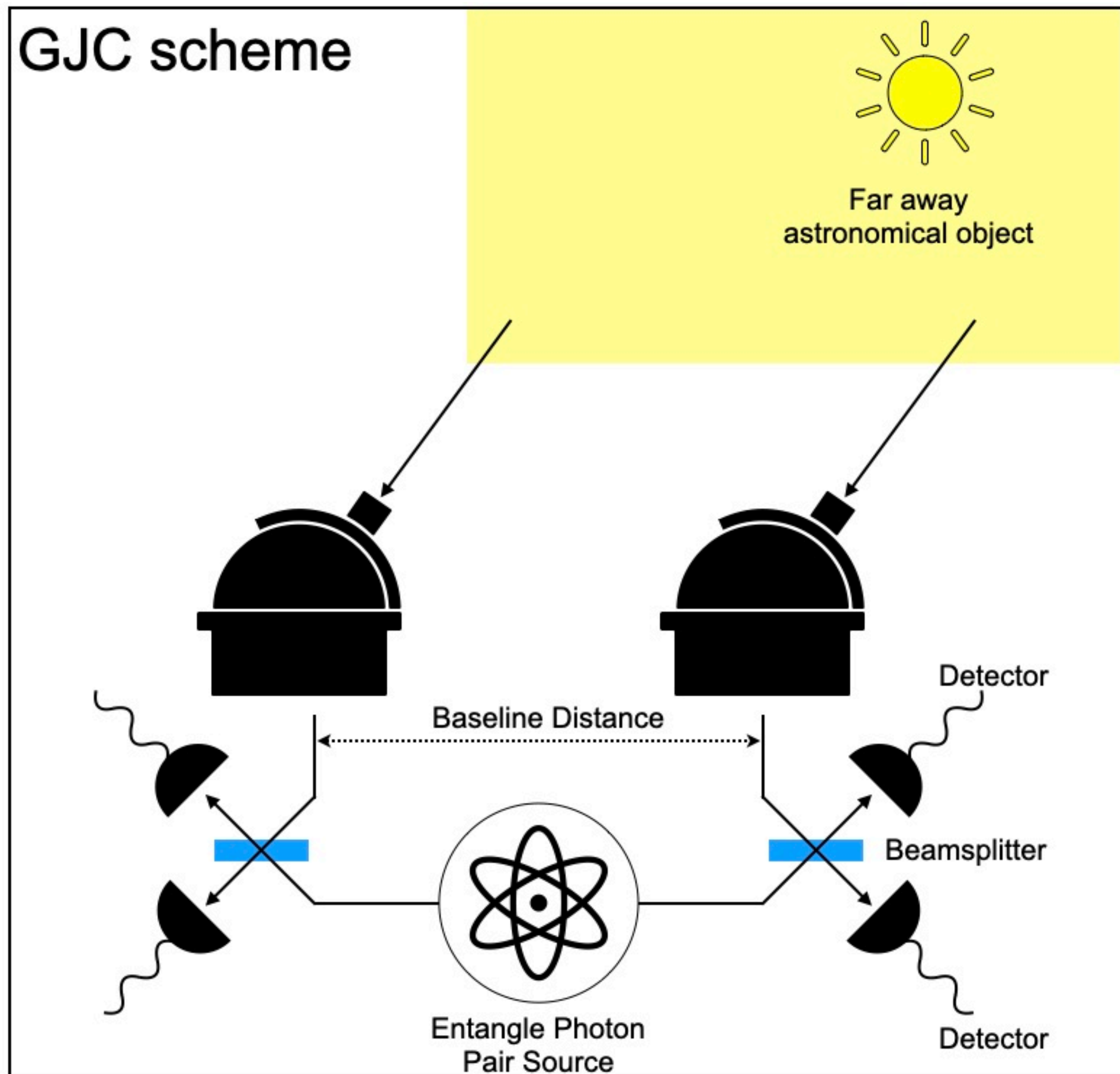
Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

(Received 25 October 2011; revised manuscript received 22 May 2012; published 16 August 2012)



$$|0\rangle_L |1\rangle_R + e^{i\phi} |1\rangle_L |0\rangle_R,$$





Longer-Baseline Telescopes Using Quantum Repeaters

PRL 2012

Seminal work in the field

Very interesting

Not feasible with current quantum technology

Cost? Scale?

Gottesman, D. "Quantum telescopes." Optical and Infrared Interferometry and Imaging VII. Vol. 11446. SPIE, 2020.

There is an alternative!

Two-photon amplitude interferometry for precision astrometry

Paul Stankus, Andrei Nomerotski, Anže Slosar, Stephen Vintskevich

<https://doi.org/10.21105/astro.2010.09100>

Astronomical Instrumentation

Astrometry

Quantum Physics

Interferometry

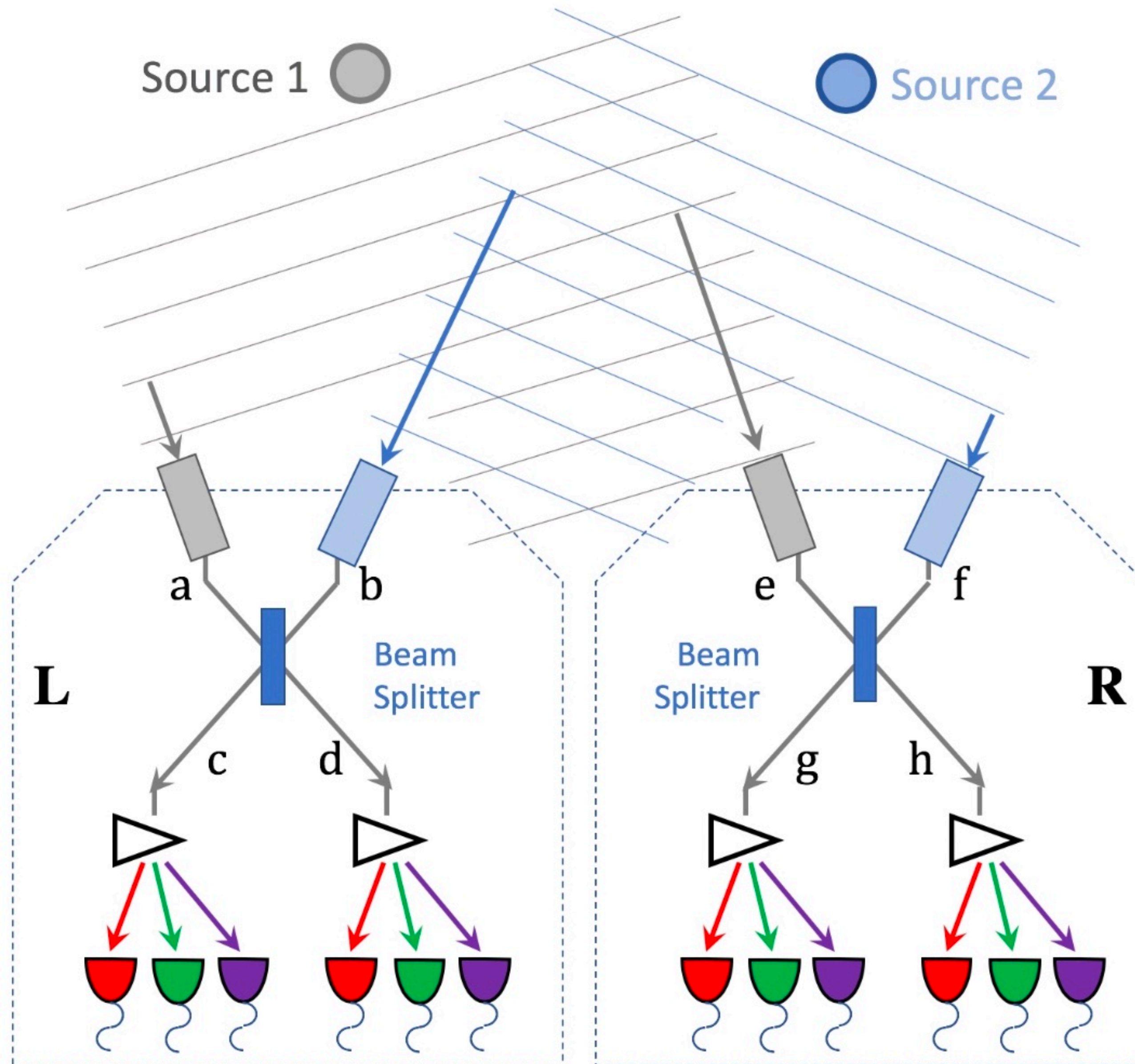
Interferometric Correlation



CCBY-4.0

Stankus, Paul, Andrei Nomerotski, Anže Slosar, and Stephen Vintskevich. 2022. "Two-Photon Amplitude Interferometry for Precision Astrometry." *The Open Journal of Astrophysics* 5 (November). <https://doi.org/10.21105/astro.2010.09100>.

Stankus et al.



One photon from Source 1
arrives at **a** and **e**

$$|0\rangle_L |1\rangle_R + e^{i\delta_1} |1\rangle_L |0\rangle_R$$

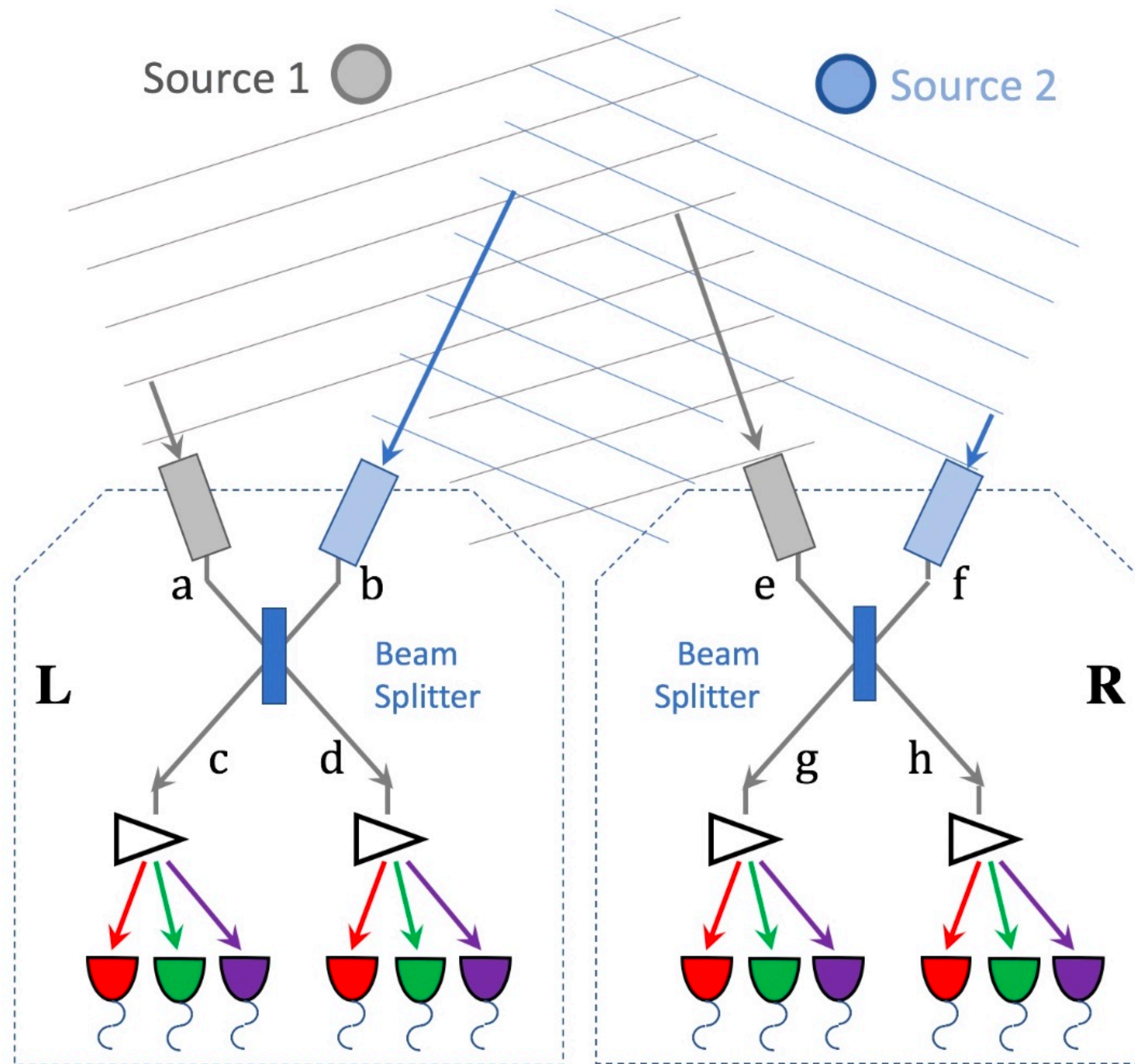
Another photon from
Source 2 arrives at **b** and **f**

$$|0\rangle_L |1\rangle_R + e^{i\delta_2} |1\rangle_L |0\rangle_R$$

(path entanglement)

Stankus et al.
Two-photon amplitude interferometry for precision astrometry
The Open Journal of Astrophysics 2022

Stankus et al.



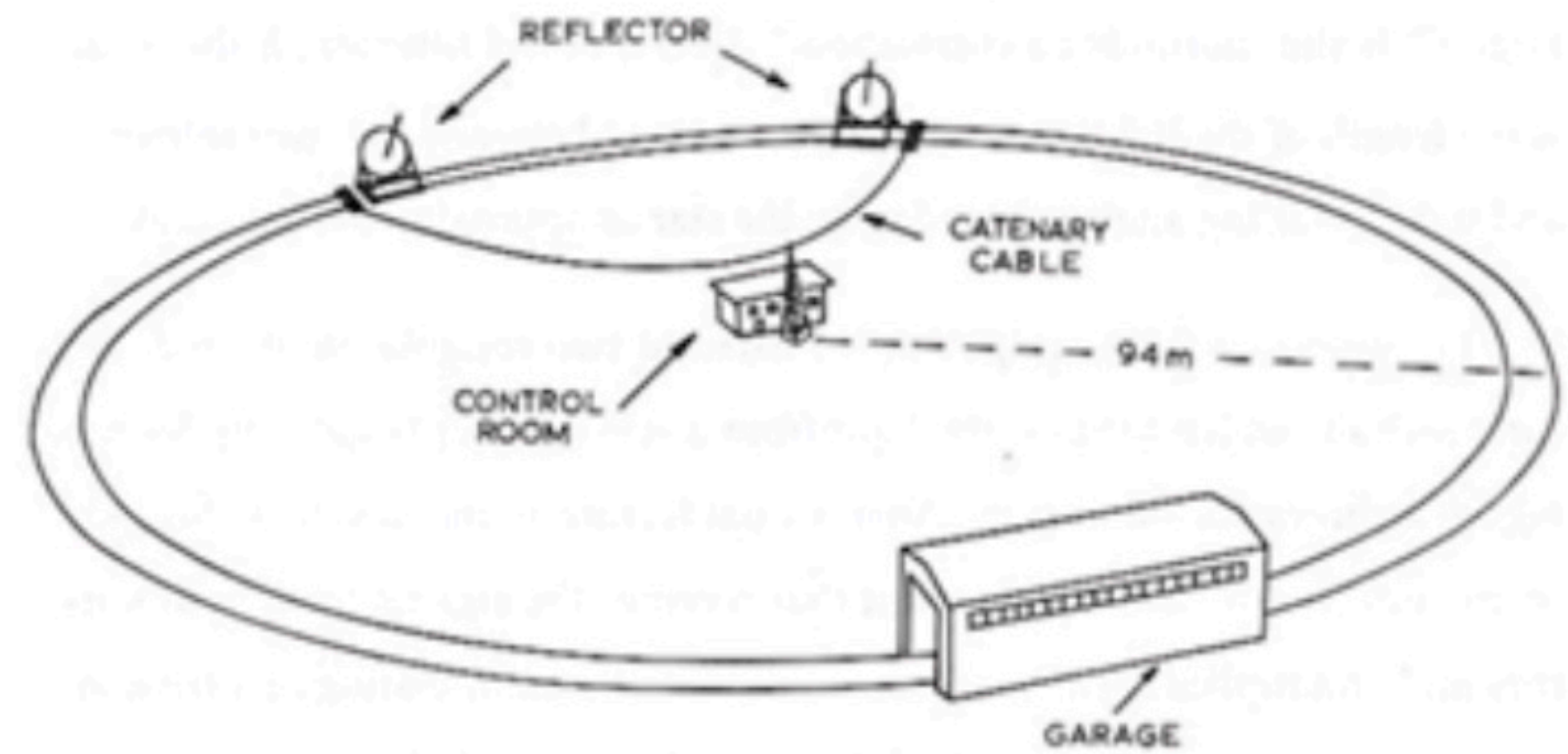
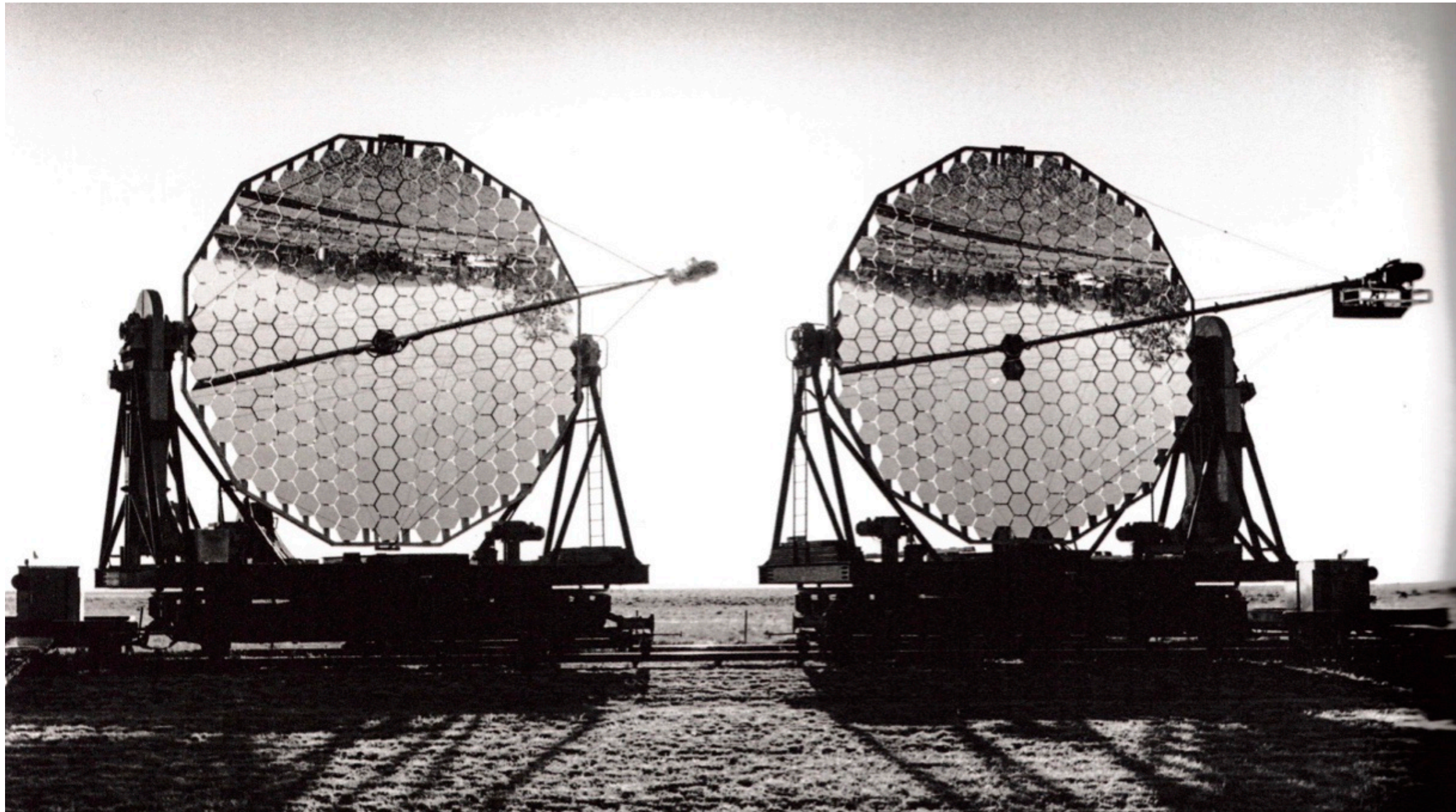
Output

$$P_{12}(cg) = P_{12}(dh) = (1/8)(1 + \cos(\delta_1 - \delta_2))$$
$$P_{12}(ch) = P_{12}(dg) = (1/8)(1 - \cos(\delta_1 - \delta_2))$$

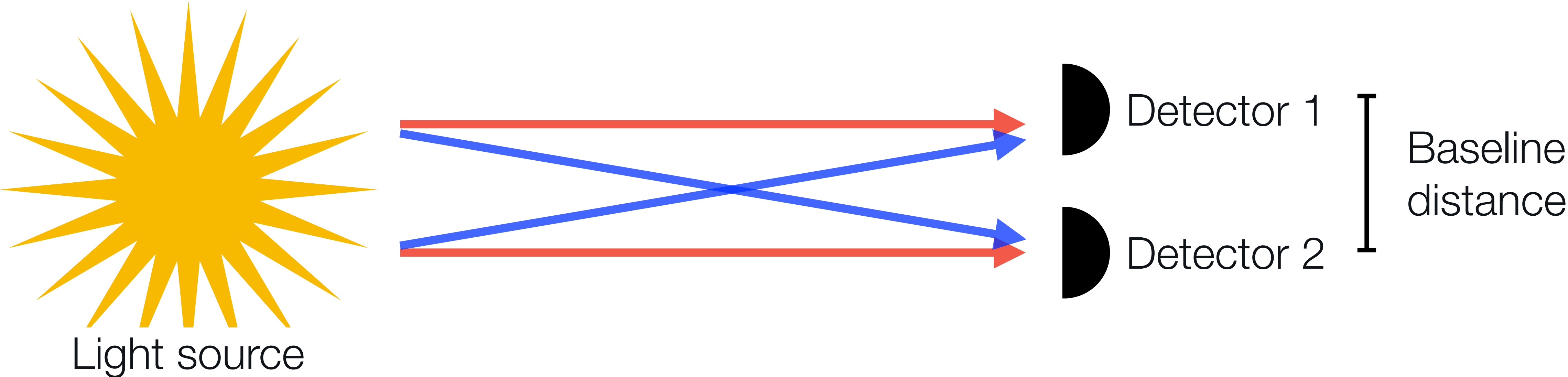
In some cases, we get Hong-Ou-Mandel cancellations.

A combination of both the HBT and HOM effects.

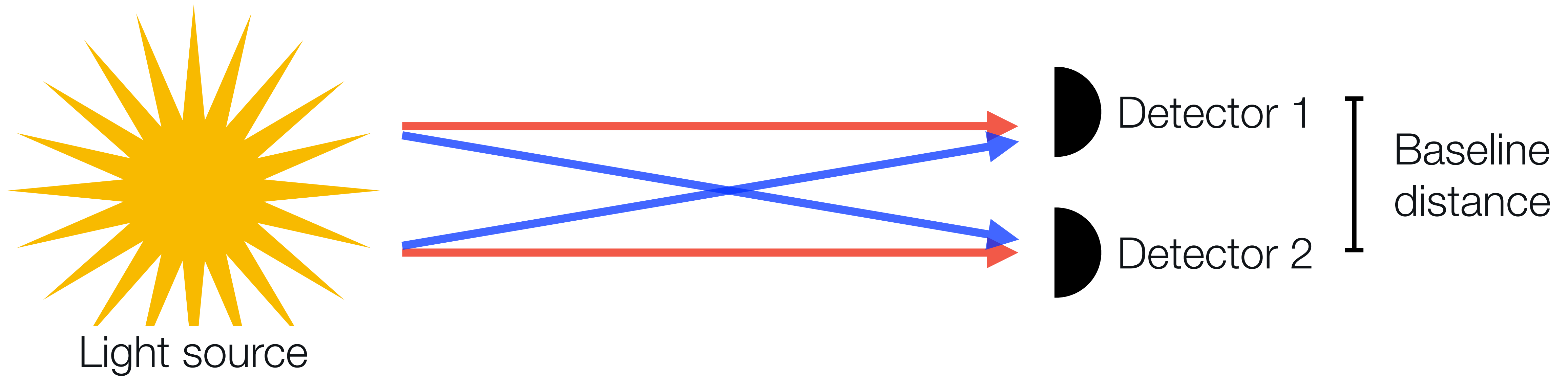
Hanbury Brown - Twiss effect



Hanbury Brown - Twiss effect



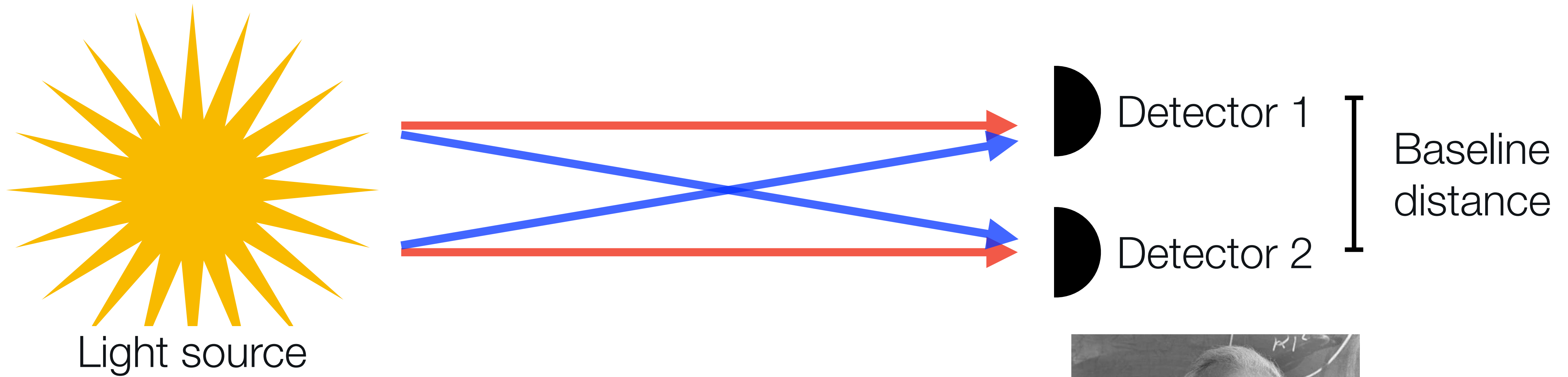
Hanbury Brown - Twiss effect



HBT:

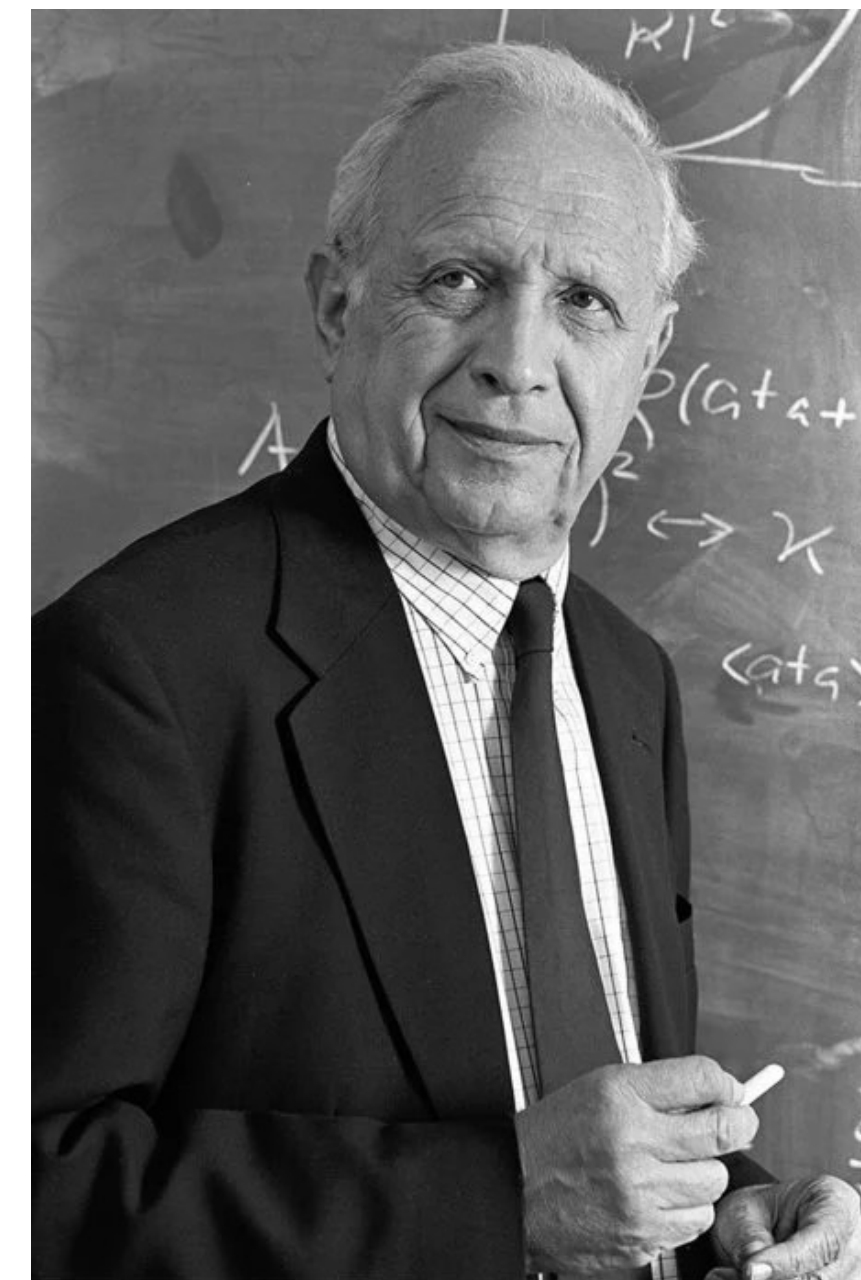
- the bunching of photons coming from a thermal light source
- produces an enhancement in the rate of photon coincidences, creating a peak in the distribution of pair arrival time differences Δt

Hanbury Brown - Twiss effect

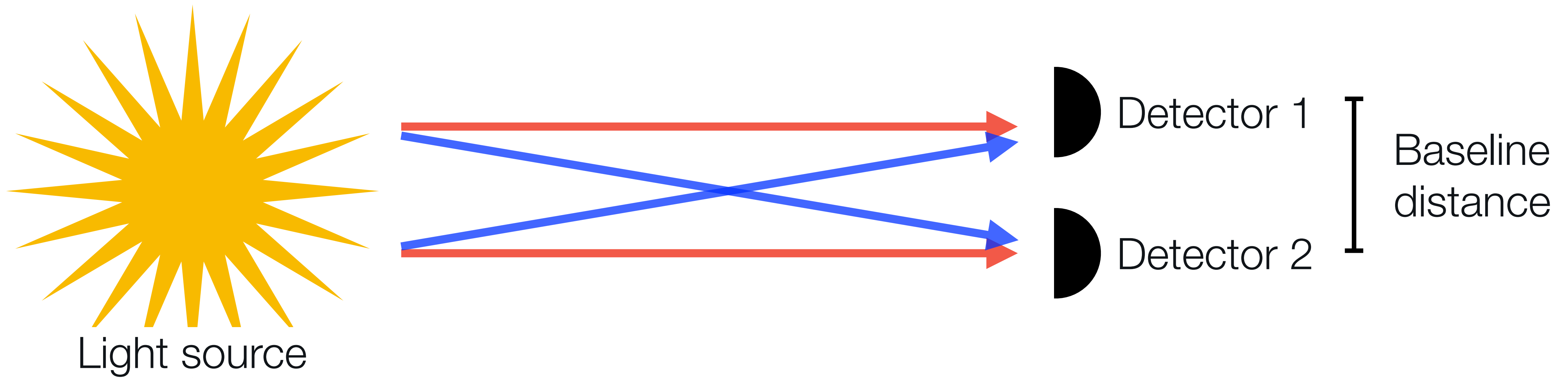


Crucial for the development of Quantum Optics

Roy Glauber (Physics Nobel, 2005)



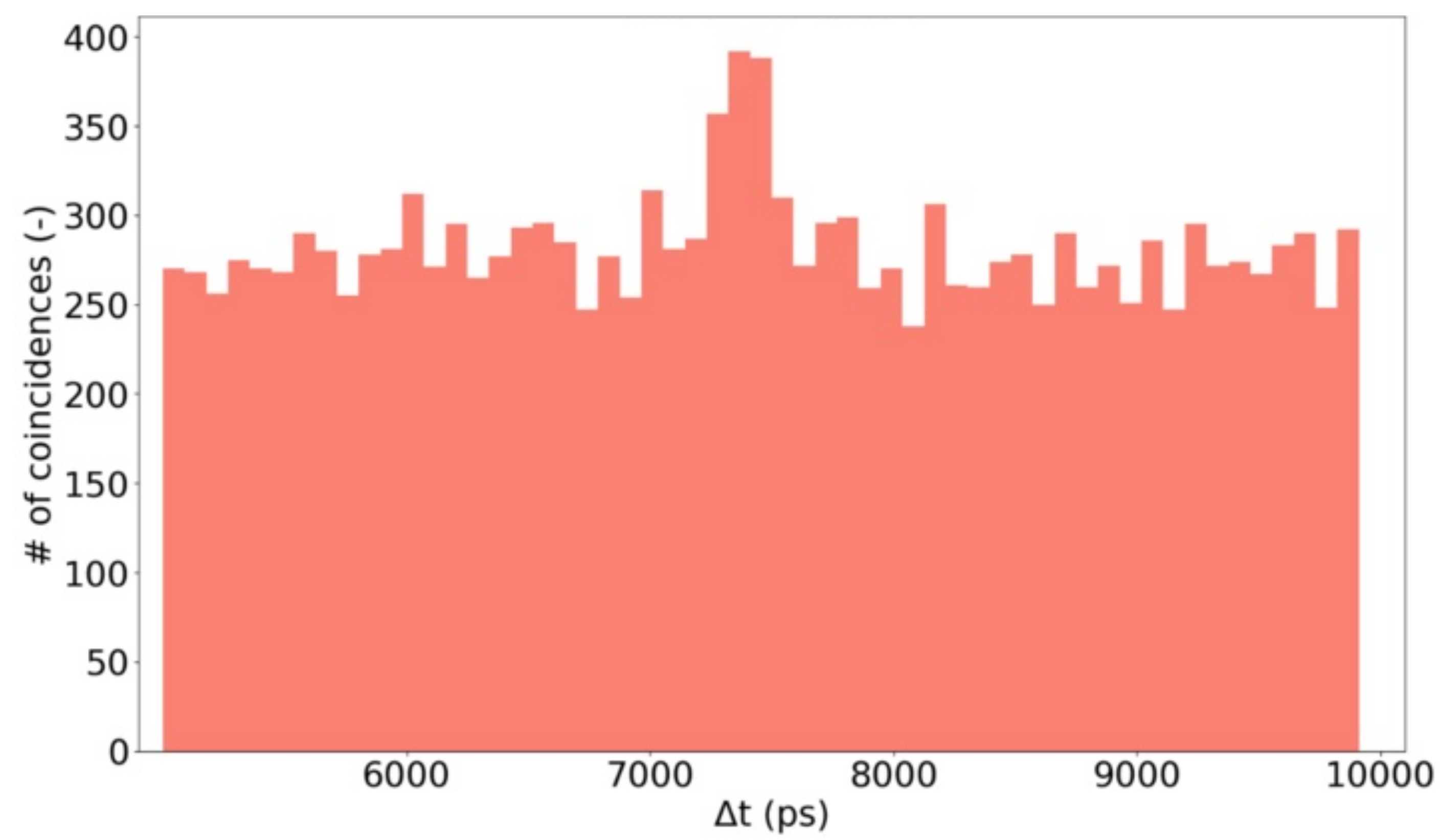
Hanbury Brown - Twiss effect



Applications in many areas: nuclear physics

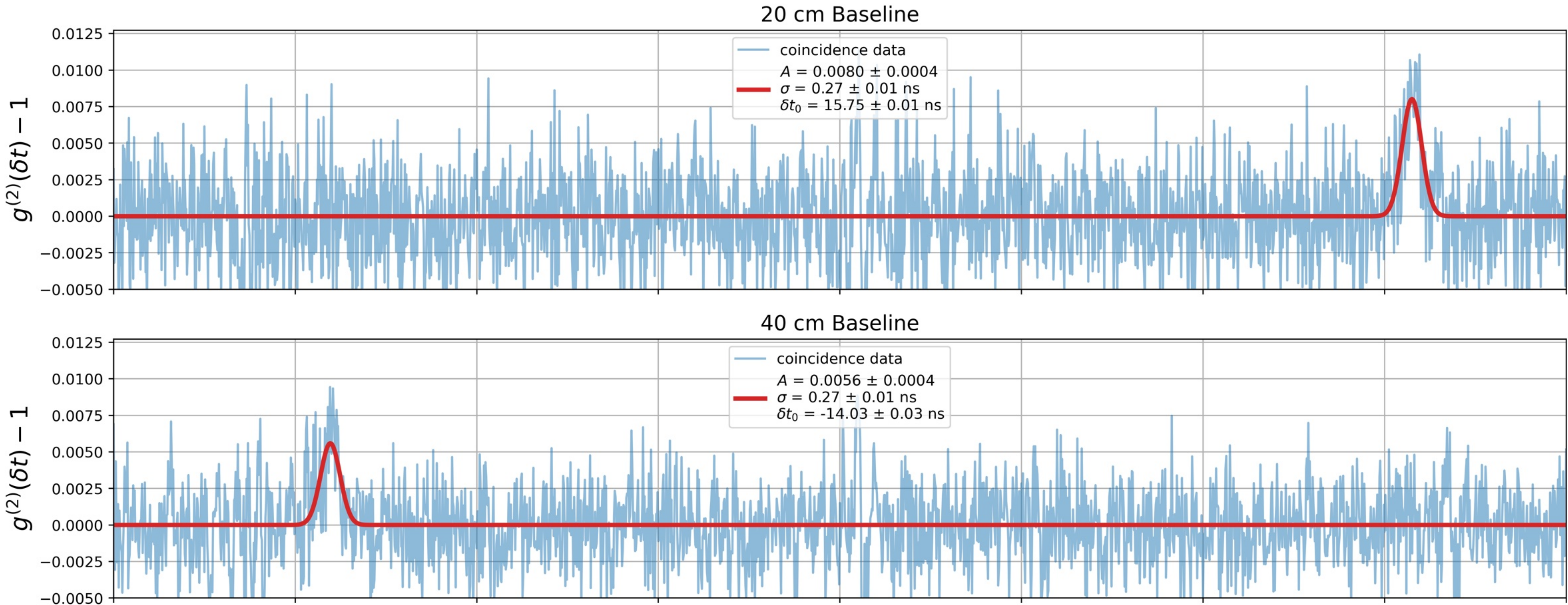
Baym, Gordon. "The physics of Hanbury Brown--Twiss intensity interferometry: from stars to nuclear collisions." *arXiv preprint nucl-th/9804026* (1998).

Hanbury Brown - Twiss effect

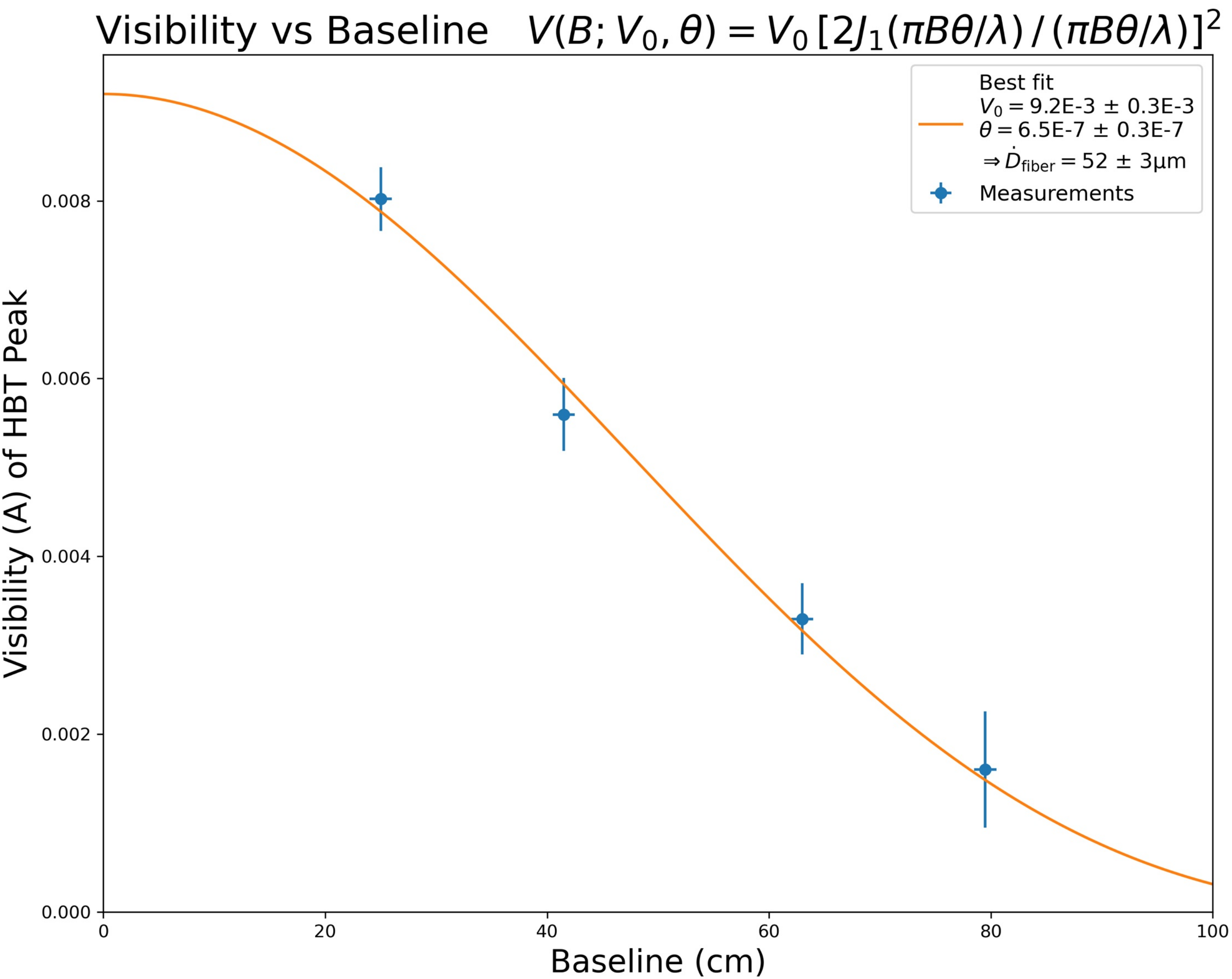


Hanbury Brown - Twiss effect

Raw Data with Fit $G(\delta t; A, \sigma, \delta t_0) = A \exp\left(-\frac{(\delta t - \delta t_0)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)$



Hanbury Brown - Twiss effect



A side note ...

PHYSICAL REVIEW LETTERS **123**, 143604 (2019)

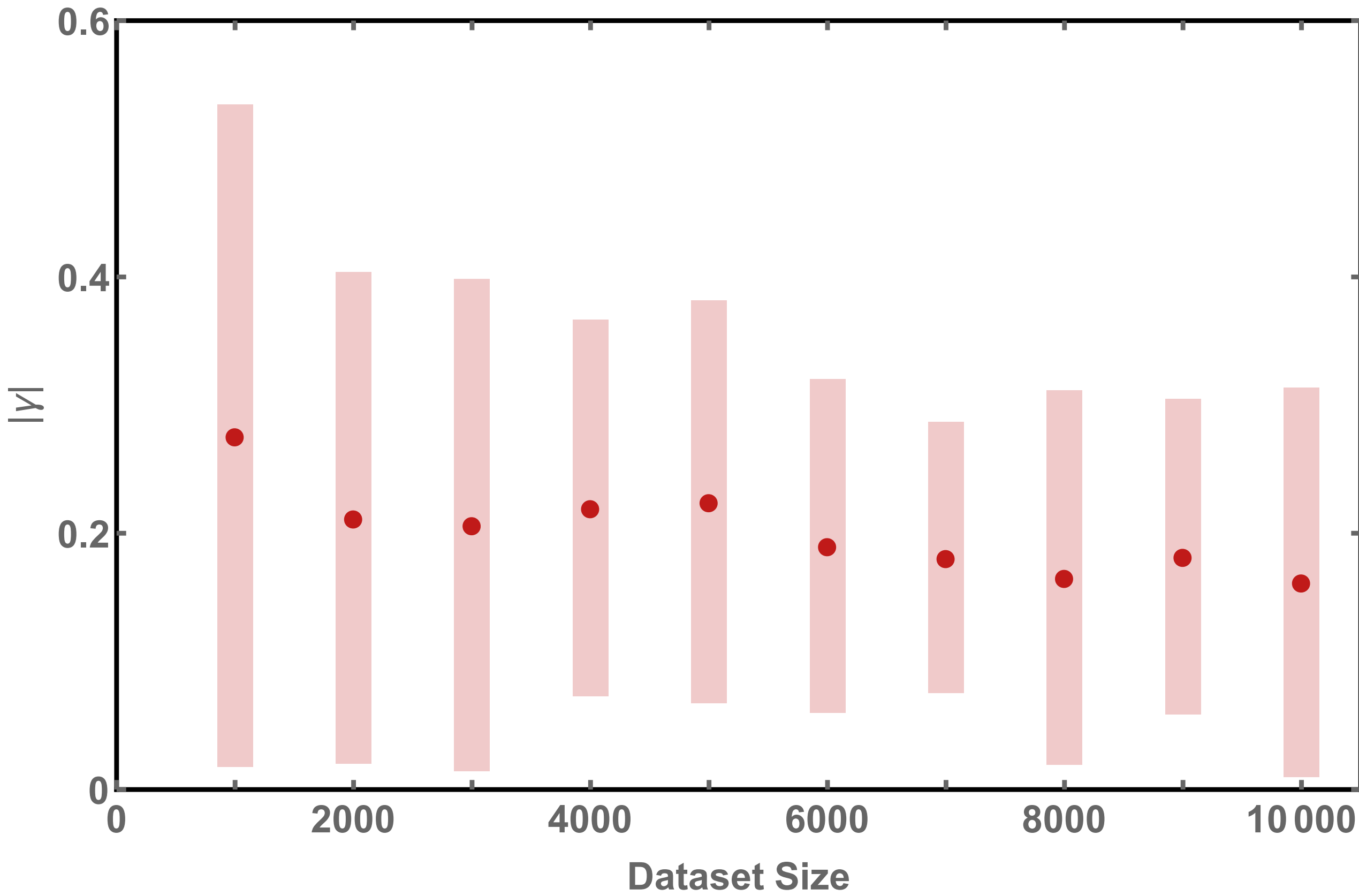
Optimal Imaging of Remote Bodies Using Quantum Detectors

L. A. Howard,¹ G. G. Gillett,¹ M. E. Pearce,² R. A. Abrahao,¹ T. J. Weinhold,¹ P. Kok,² and A. G. White¹

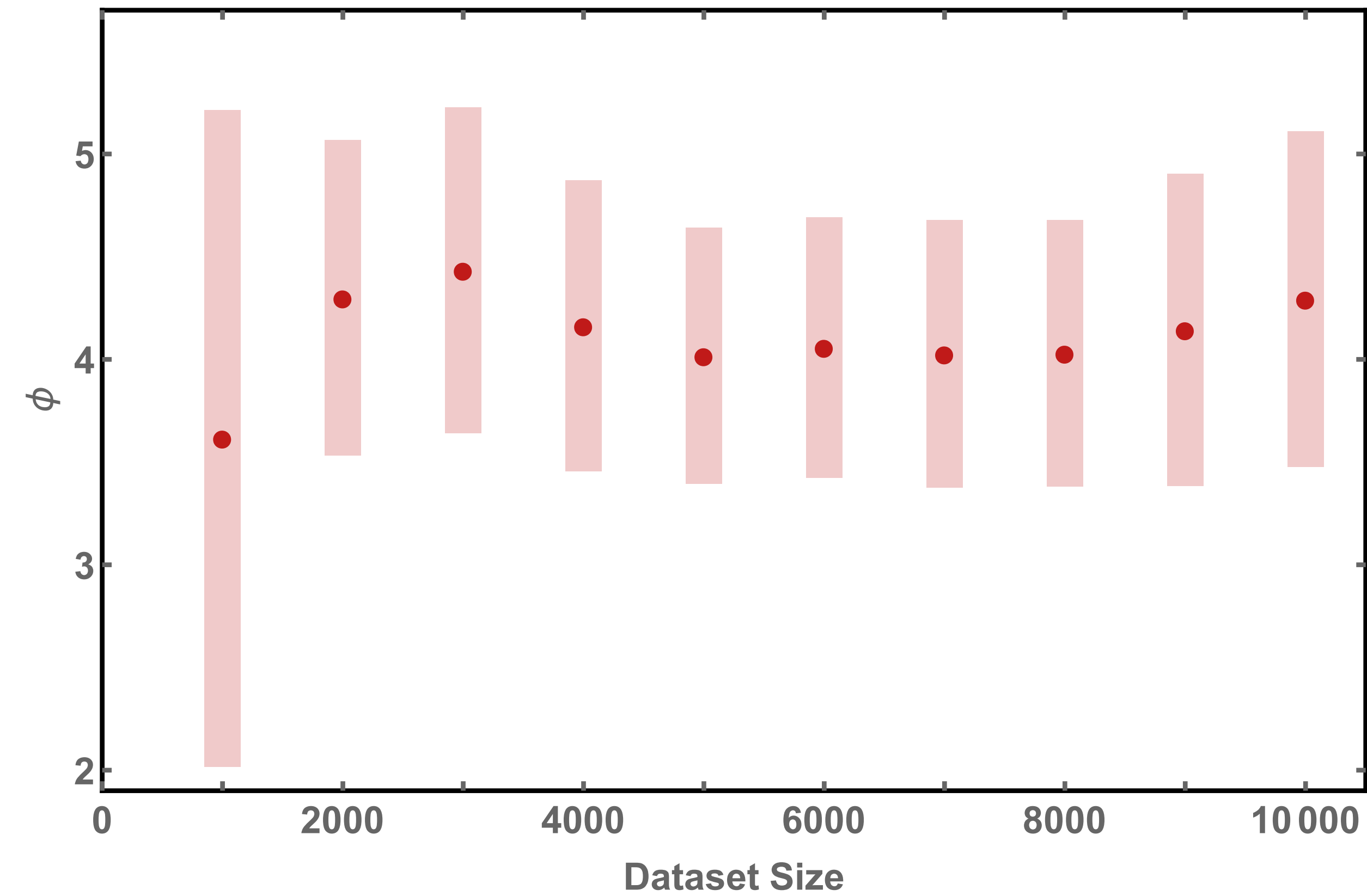
¹*Centre for Engineered Quantum Systems, School of Mathematics and Physics, University of Queensland, 4072 Brisbane, Australia*

²*Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Sheffield, Sheffield S3 7RH, United Kingdom*

Incoherent source: traditonal scheme

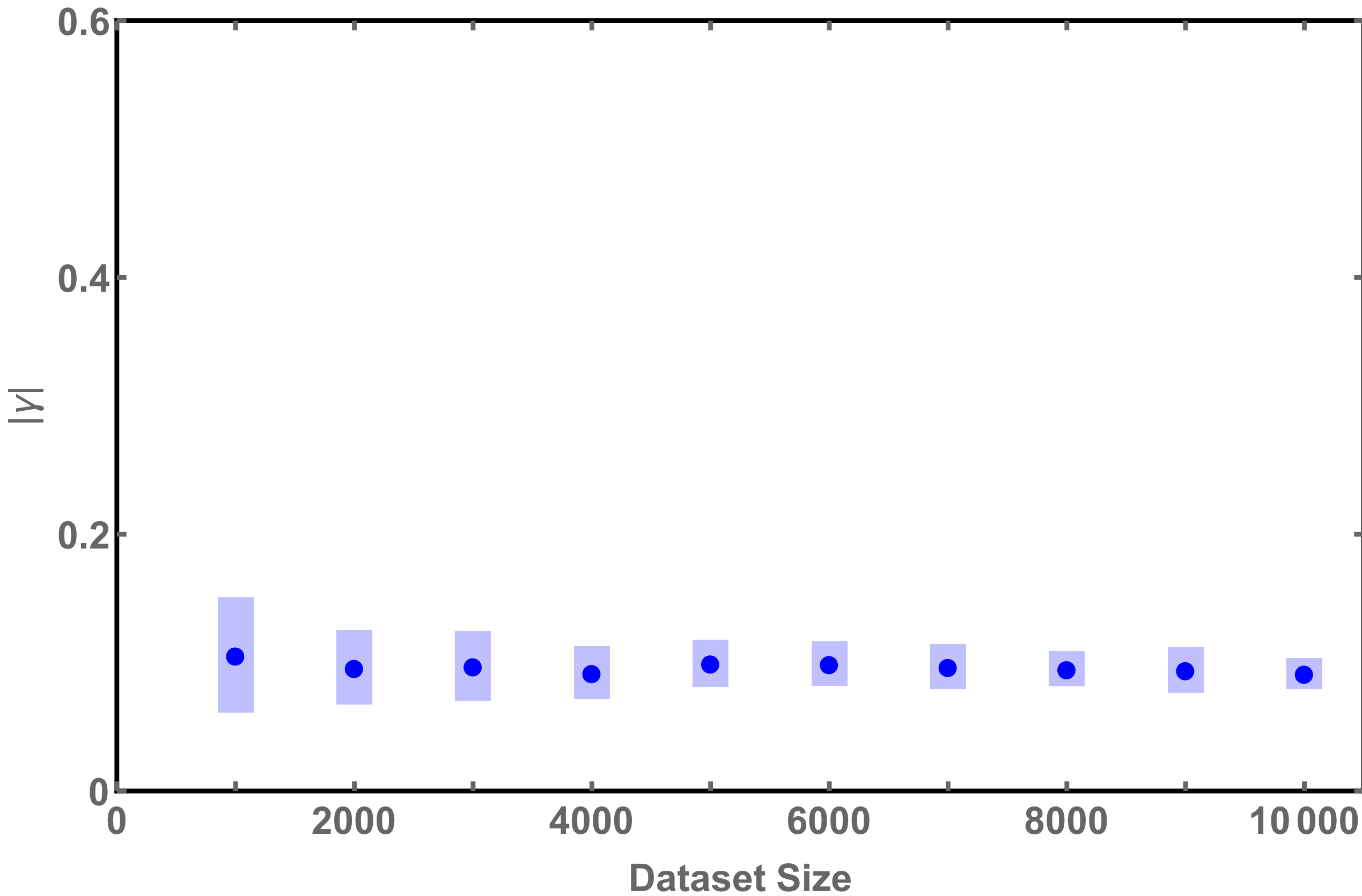


$$\gamma = 0.20 \pm 0.16$$



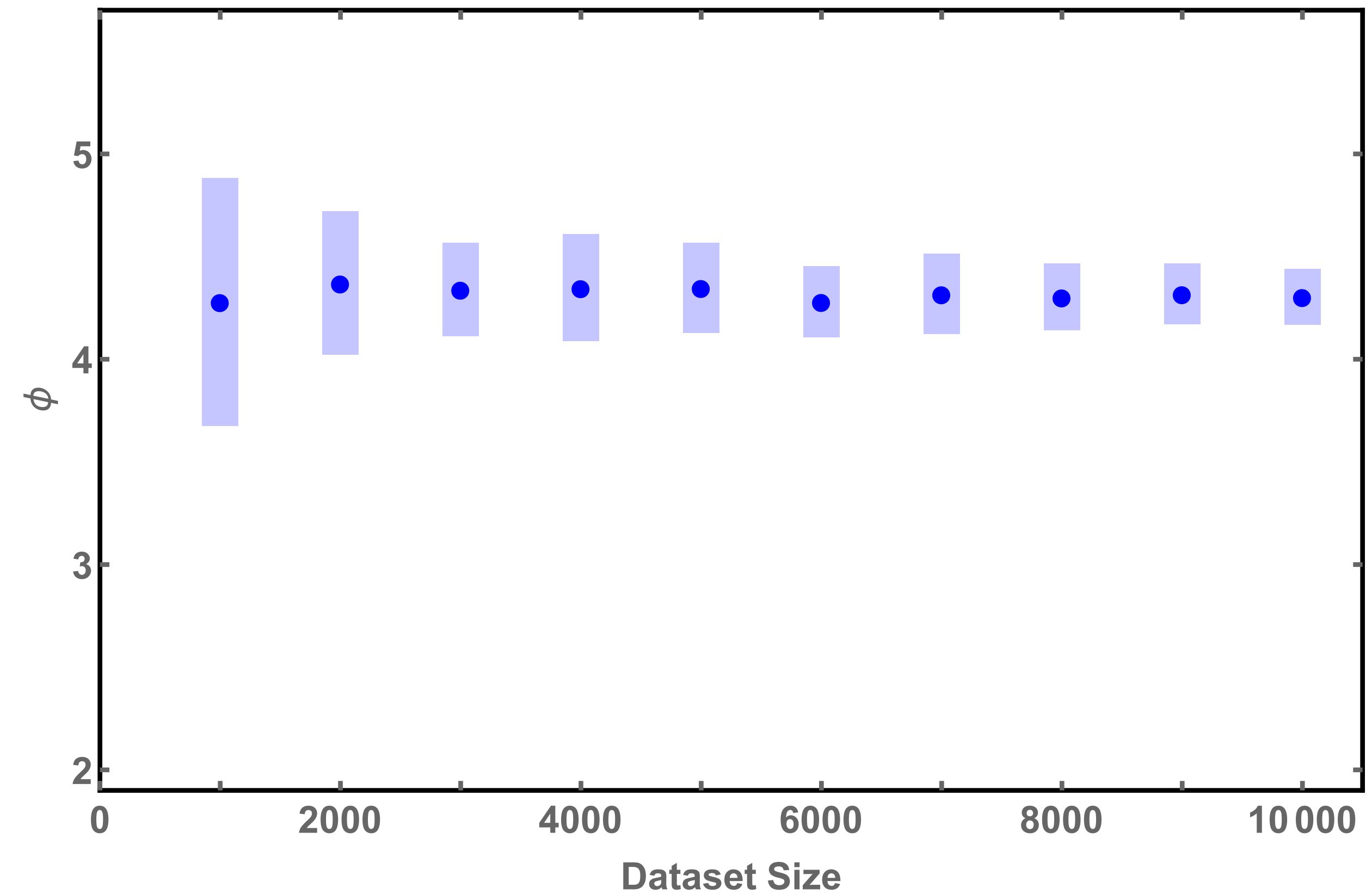
$$\phi = 4.50 \pm 1.0$$

Incoherent source: count scheme



$$\gamma = 0.20 \pm 0.16$$

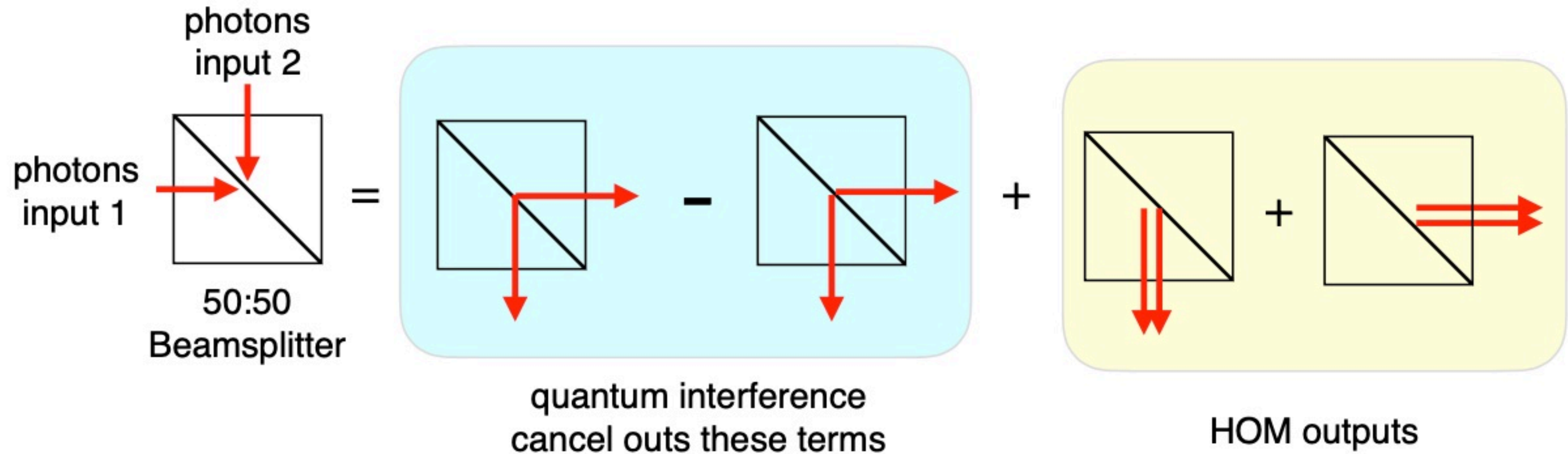
$$\gamma = 0.096 \pm 0.022$$



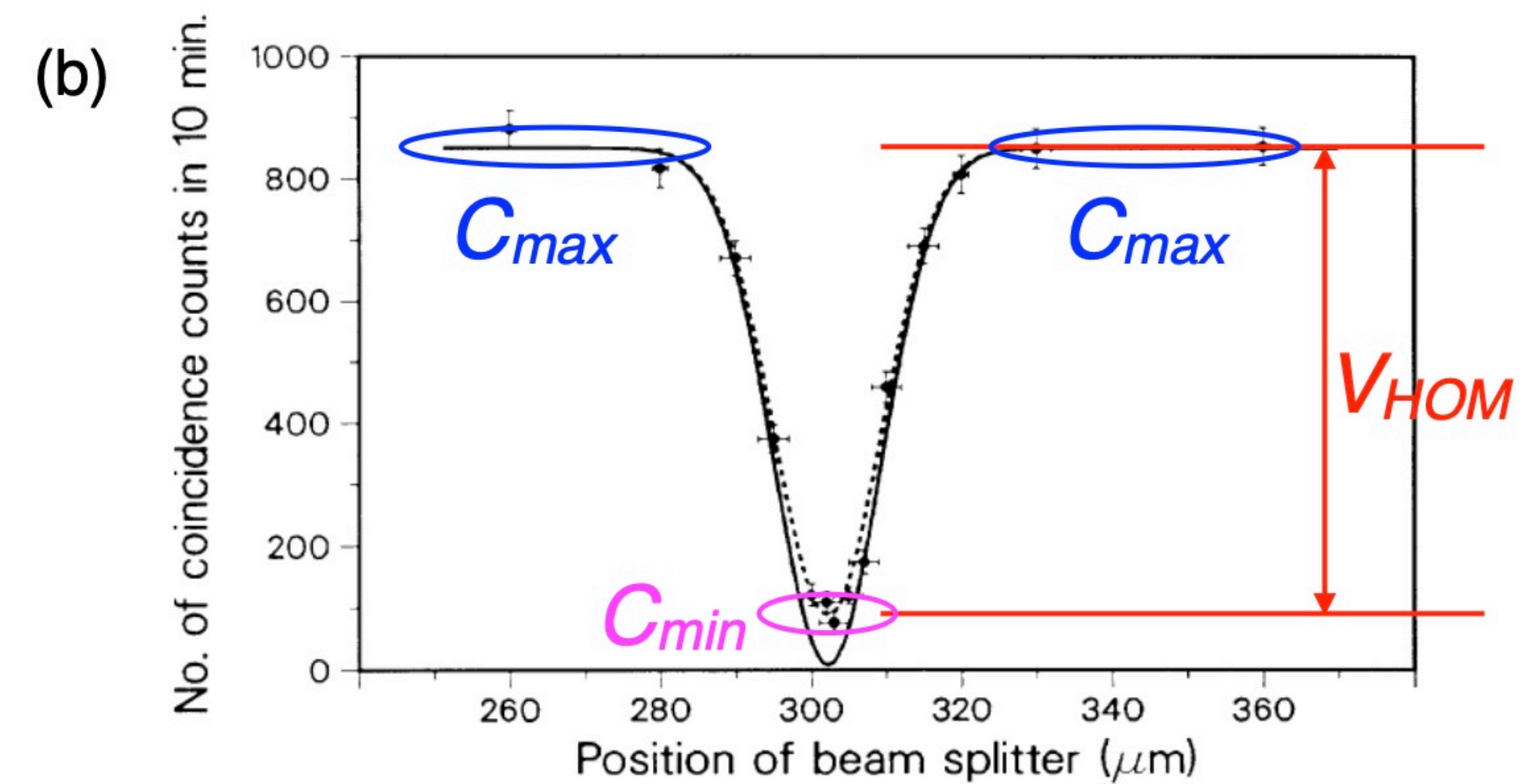
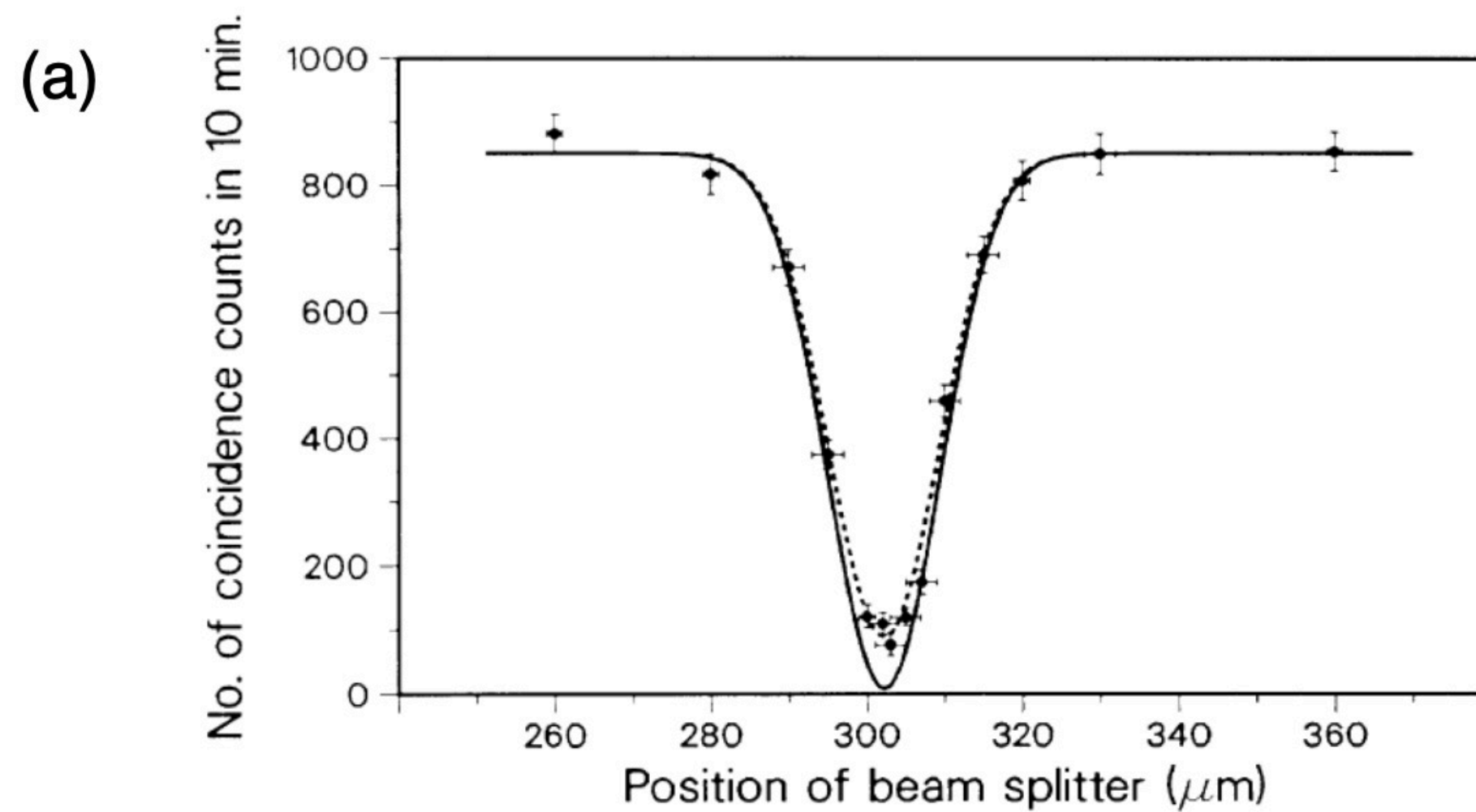
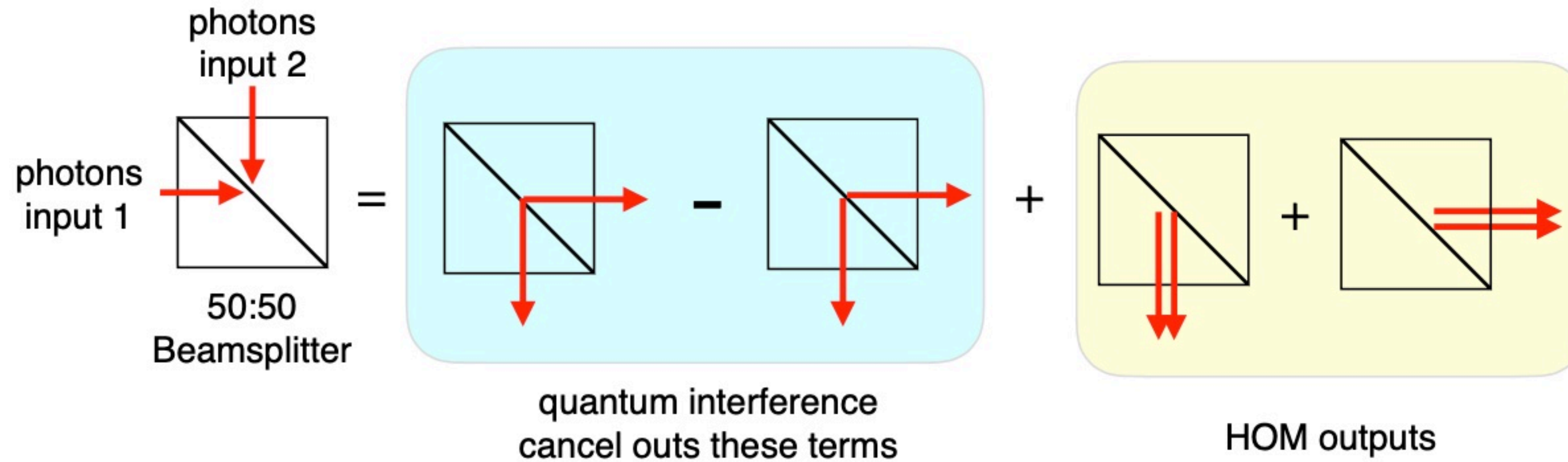
$$\phi = 4.50 \pm 1.0$$

$$\phi = 4.32 \pm 0.25$$

Hong-Ou-Mandel Effect



Hong-Ou-Mandel Effect



C.-K. Hong, Z.-Y. Ou, and L. Mandel, "Measurement of subpicosecond time intervals between two photons by interference," Physical Review Letters, vol. 59, no. 18, p. 2044, 1987.

Another side note ...

PHYSICAL REVIEW A **106**, 063715 (2022)

Quantum metrology timing limits of the Hong-Ou-Mandel interferometer and of general two-photon measurements

Kyle M. Jordan ^{1,*} Raphael A. Abrahao ^{1,2} and Jeff S. Lundeen^{1,3}

¹*Department of Physics and Center for Research in Photonics, University of Ottawa,
25 Templeton Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 6N5*

²*Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, New York 11973, USA*

³*Joint Center for Extreme Photonics, University of Ottawa and National Research Council of Canada,
100 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0R6*

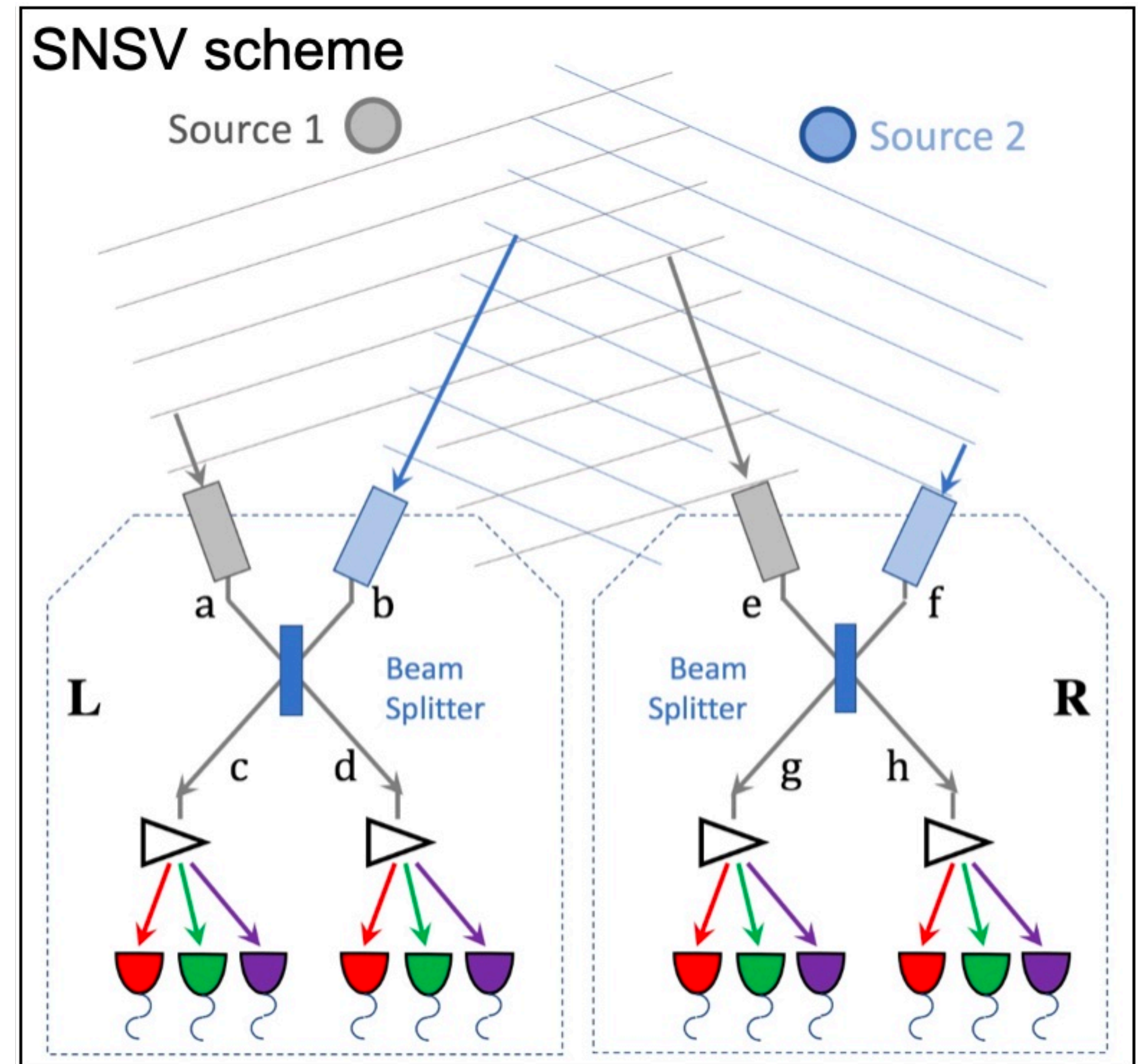


(Received 4 July 2022; accepted 2 December 2022; published 22 December 2022)

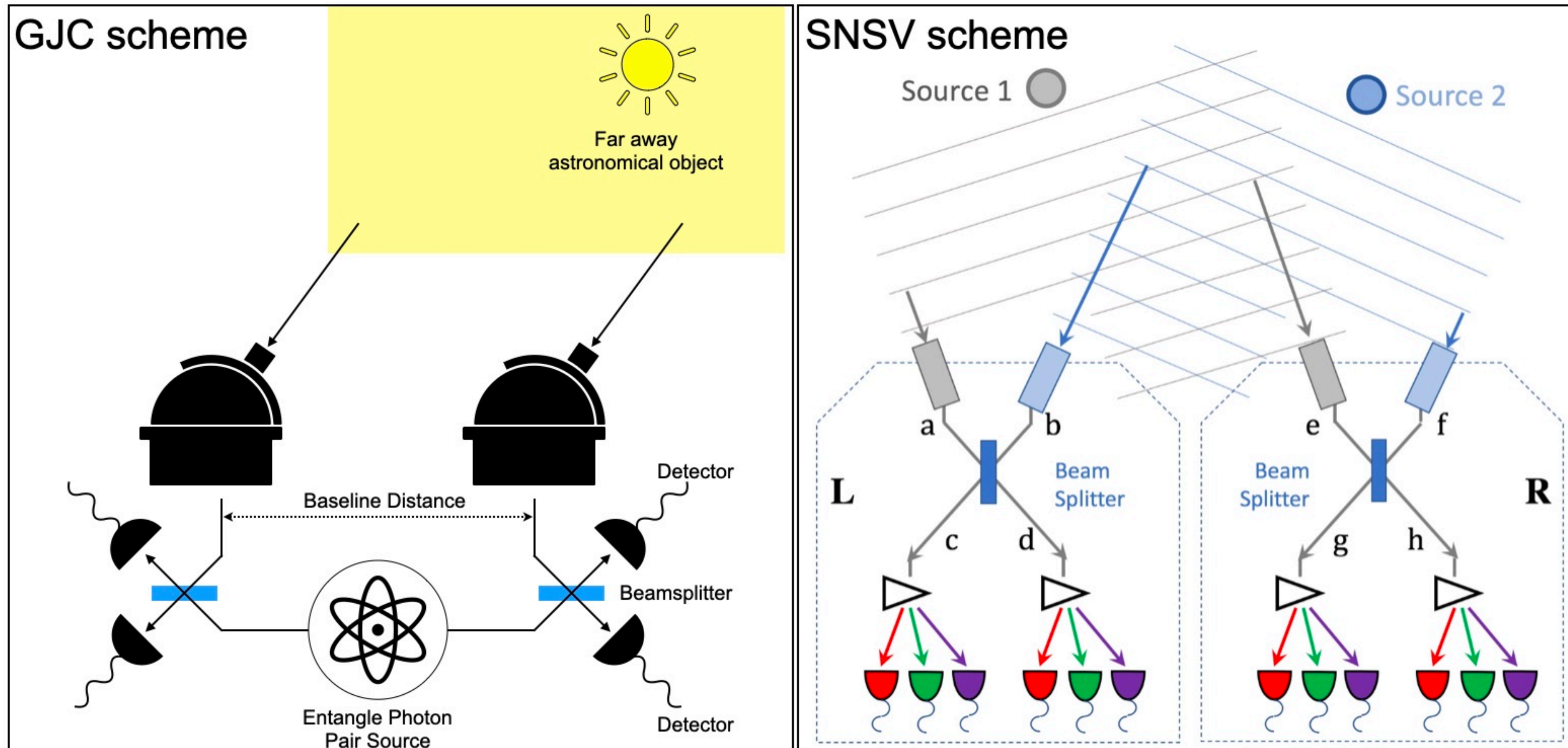
No need for optical connection
between base stations

Enable long distance baseline

Requires 2 photons \rightarrow brighter
objects



Two-photon amplitude interferometry for precision astrometry
The Open Journal of Astrophysics 2022

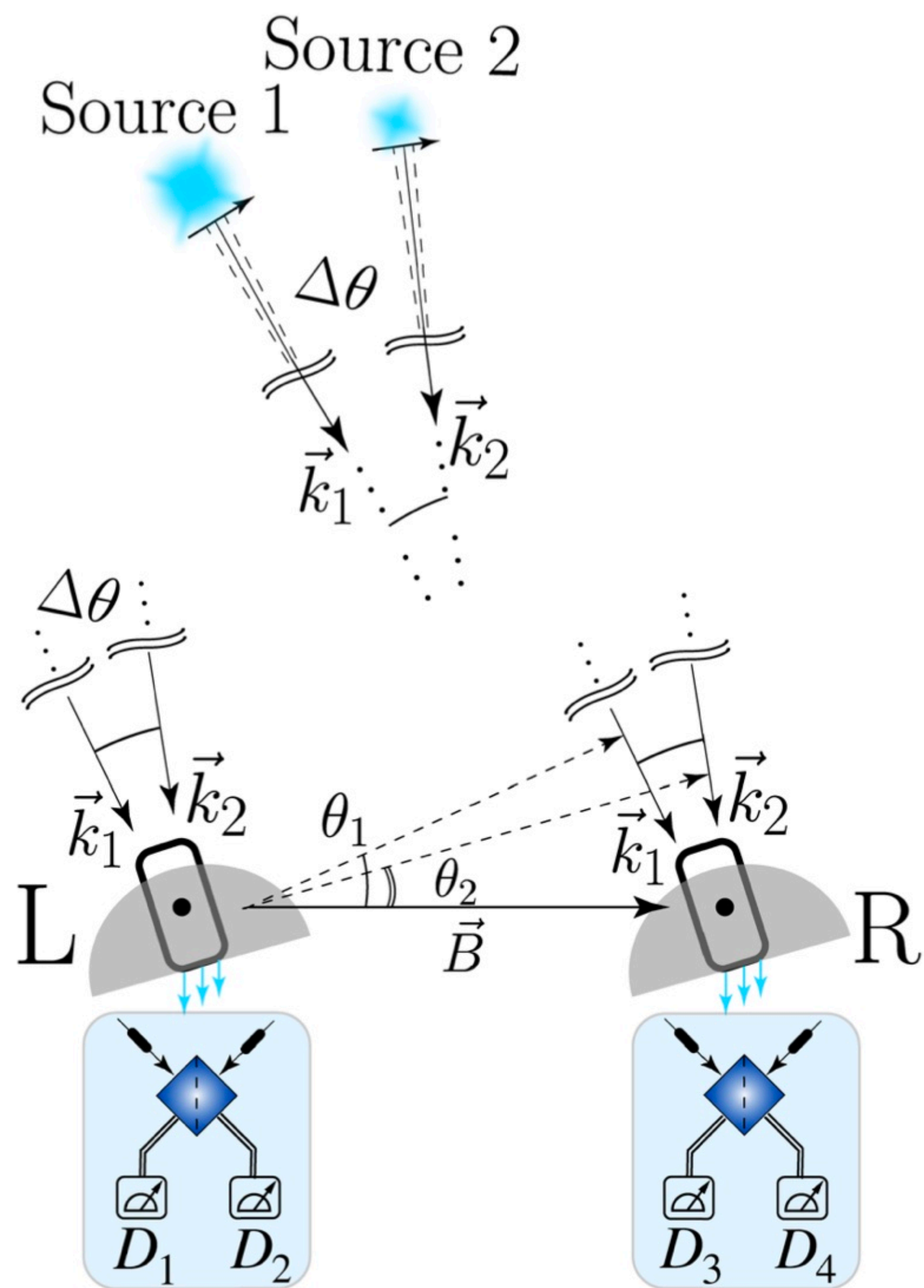


Many great applications in
Astrophysics and Cosmology

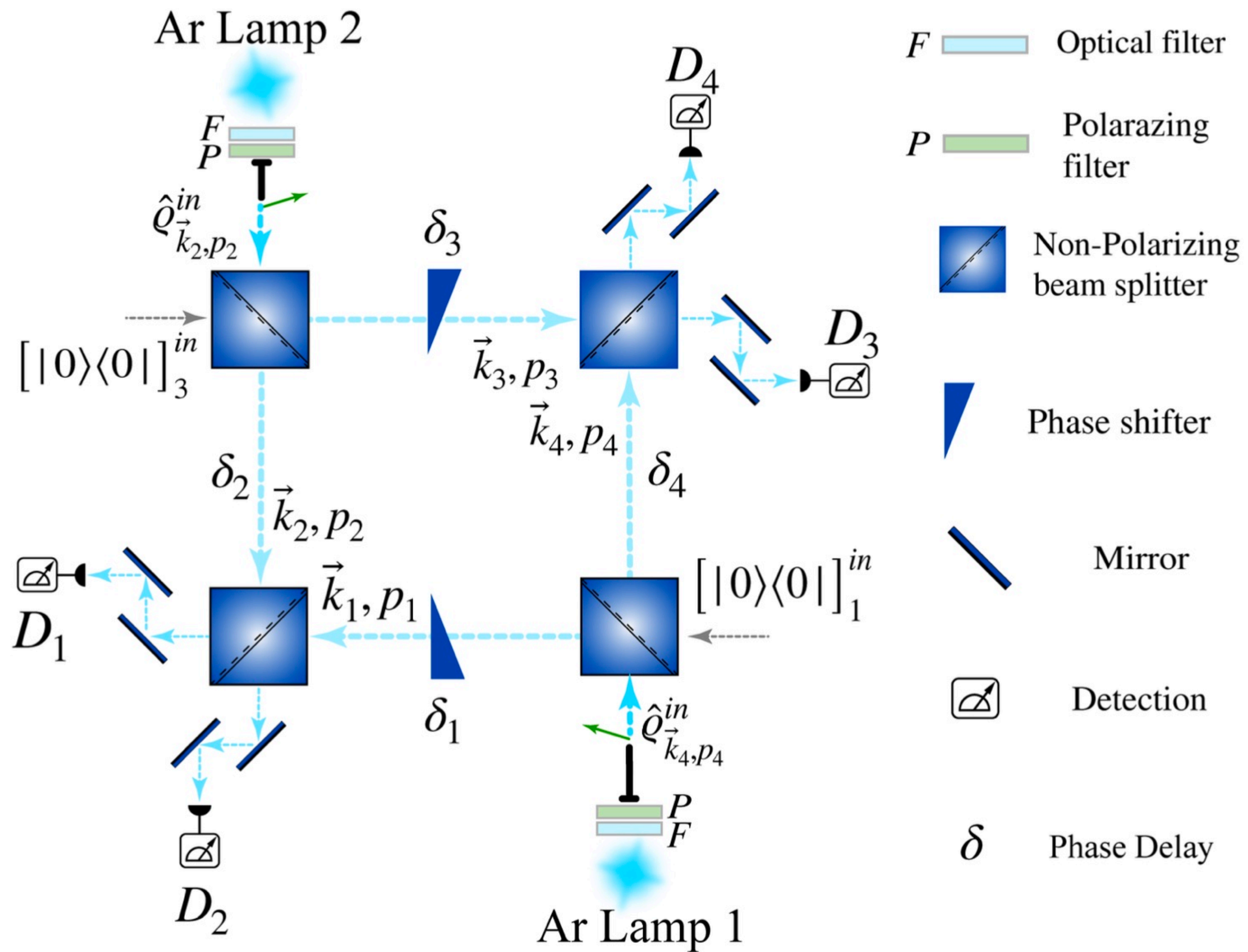
Towards quantum telescopes: demonstration of a two-photon interferometer for precision astrometry

JESSE CRAWFORD,¹ DENIS DOLZHENKO,¹ MICHAEL KEACH,¹
AARON MUENINGHOFF,² RAPHAEL A. ABRAHAO,¹ JULIAN
MARTINEZ-RINCON,¹  PAUL STANKUS,¹ STEPHEN VINTSKEVICH,³
AND ANDREI NOMEROTSKI^{2,*} 

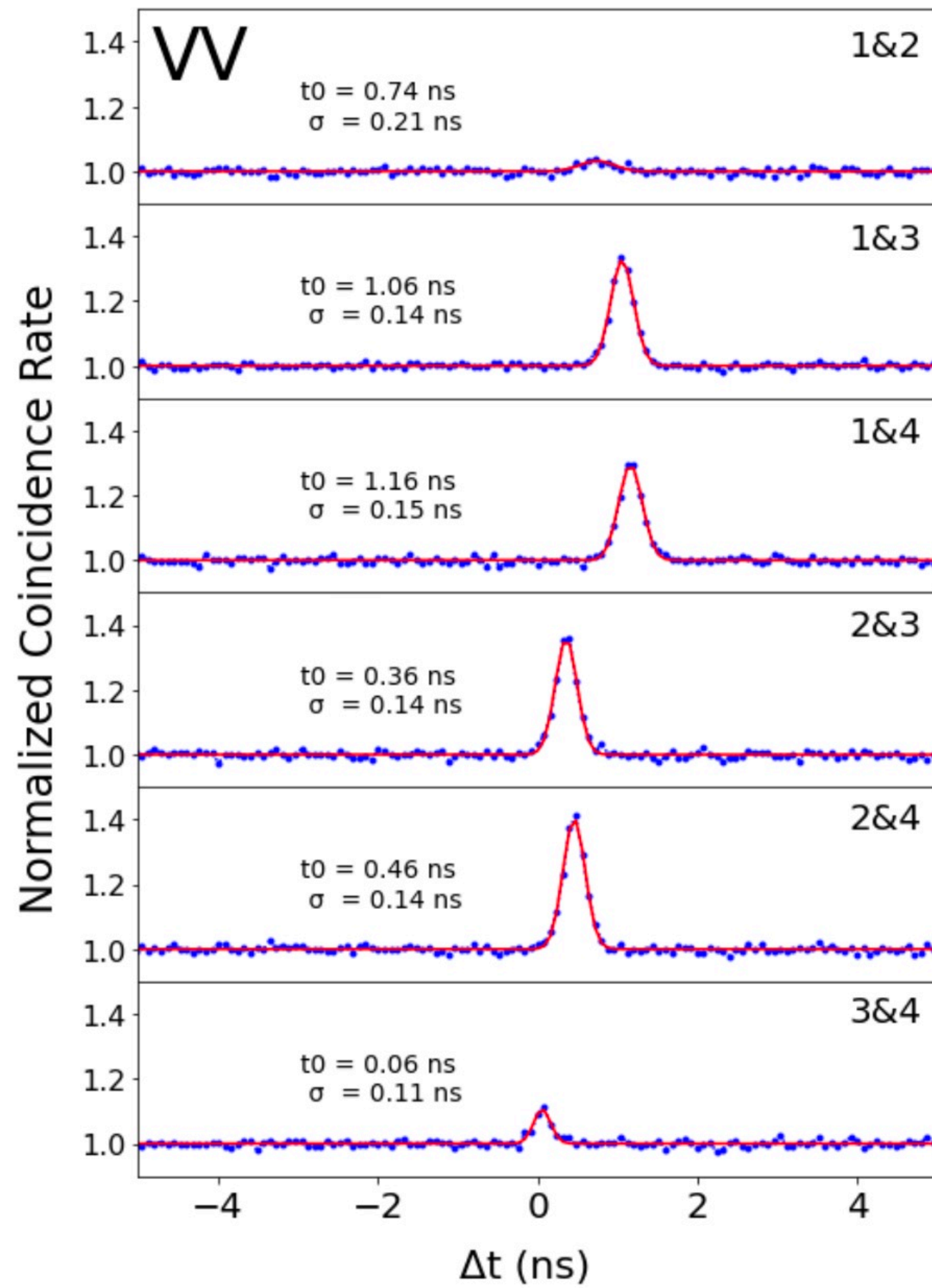
Proof-of-principle tabletop experiment



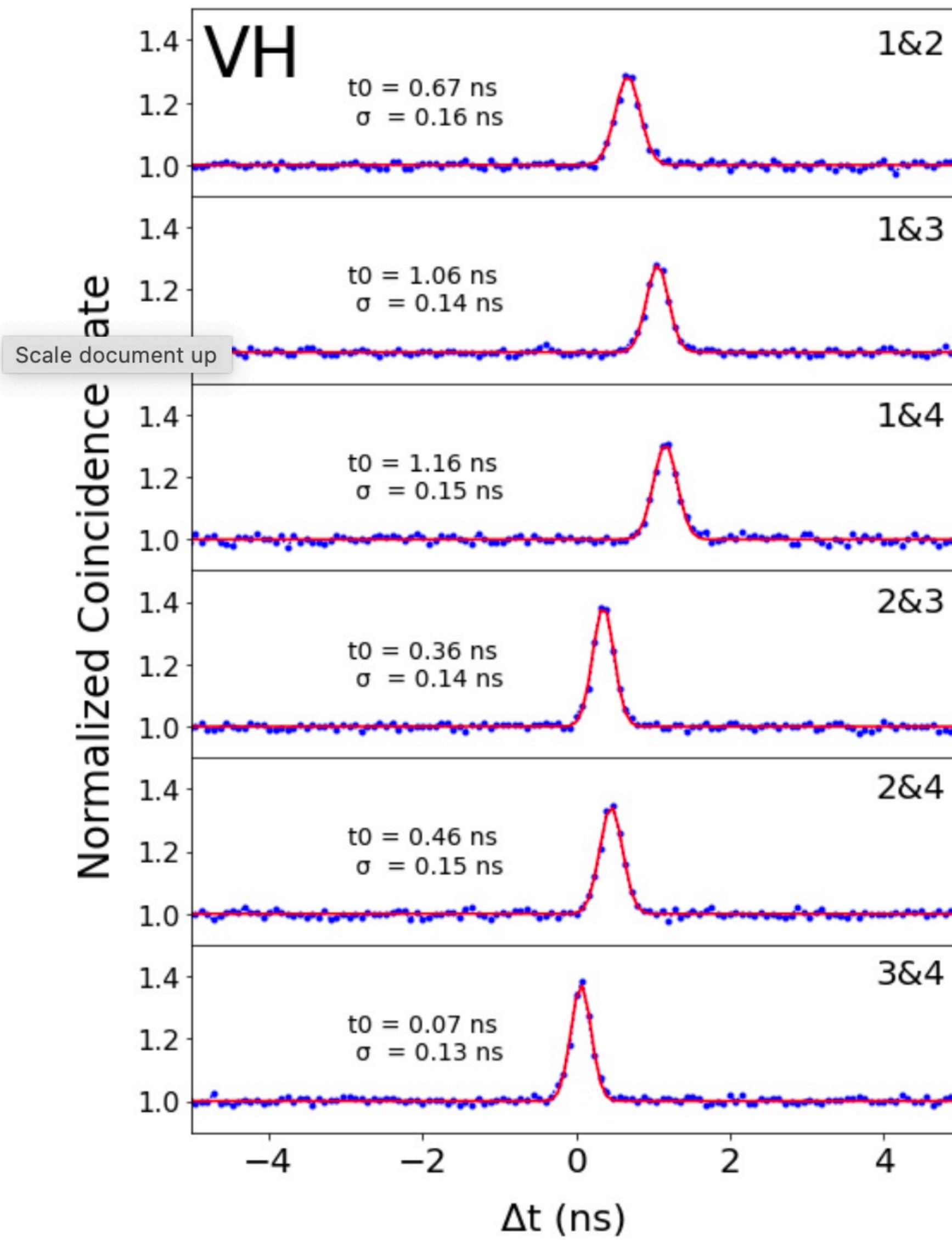
(a) SNSV scheme



(b) Tabletop implementation



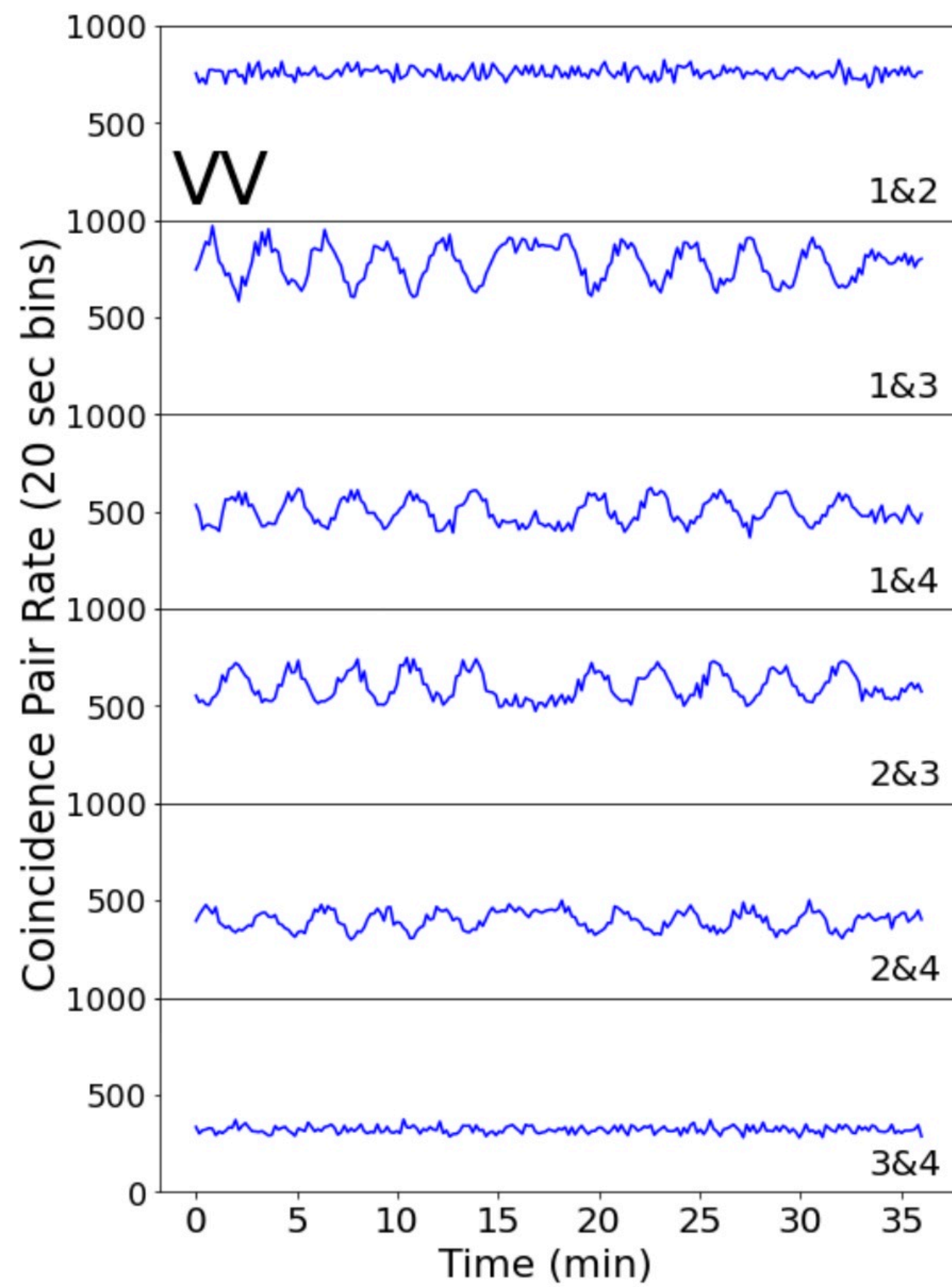
(a) VV



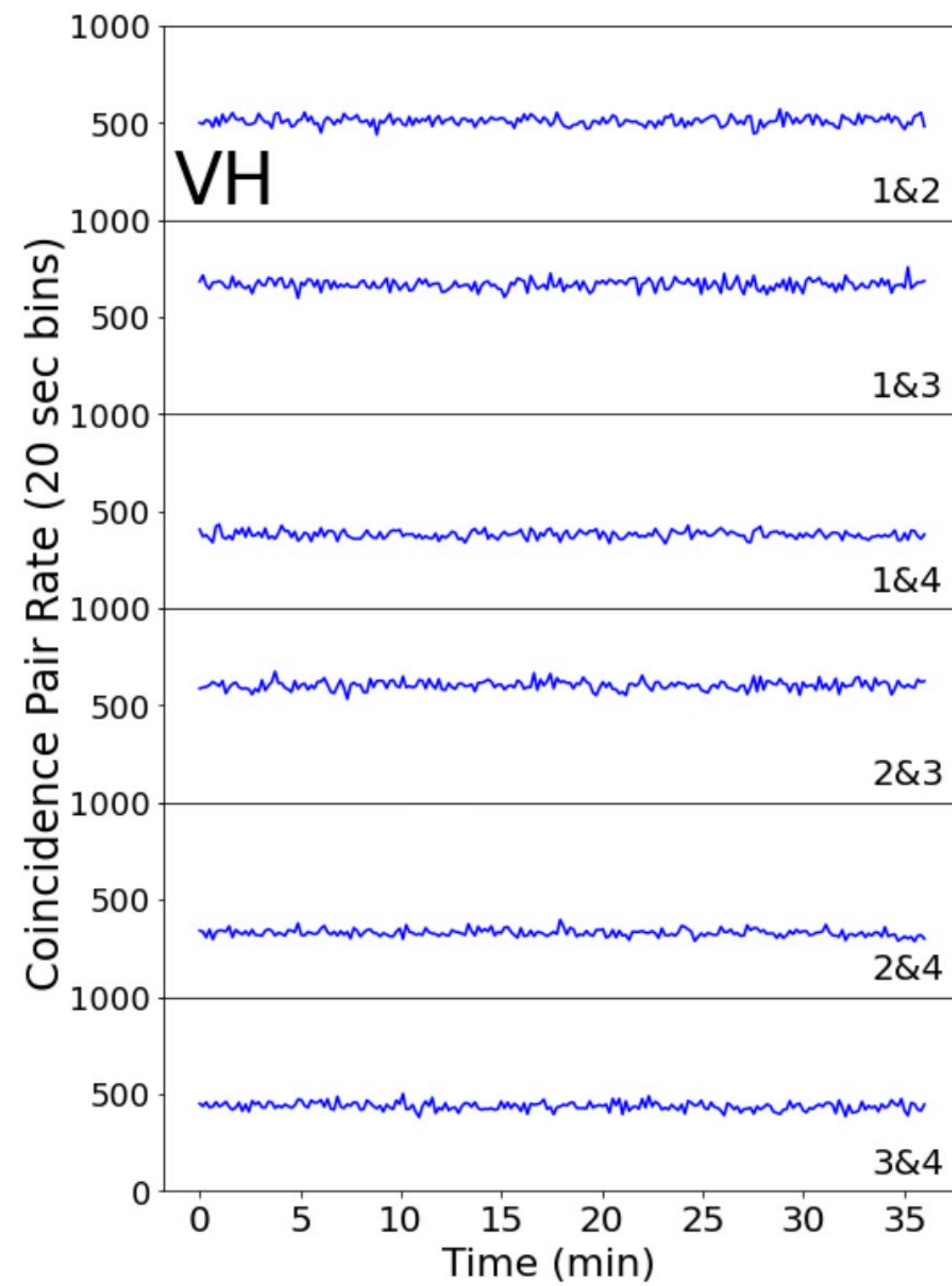
(b) VH

HBT peaks





(a) VV



(b) VH

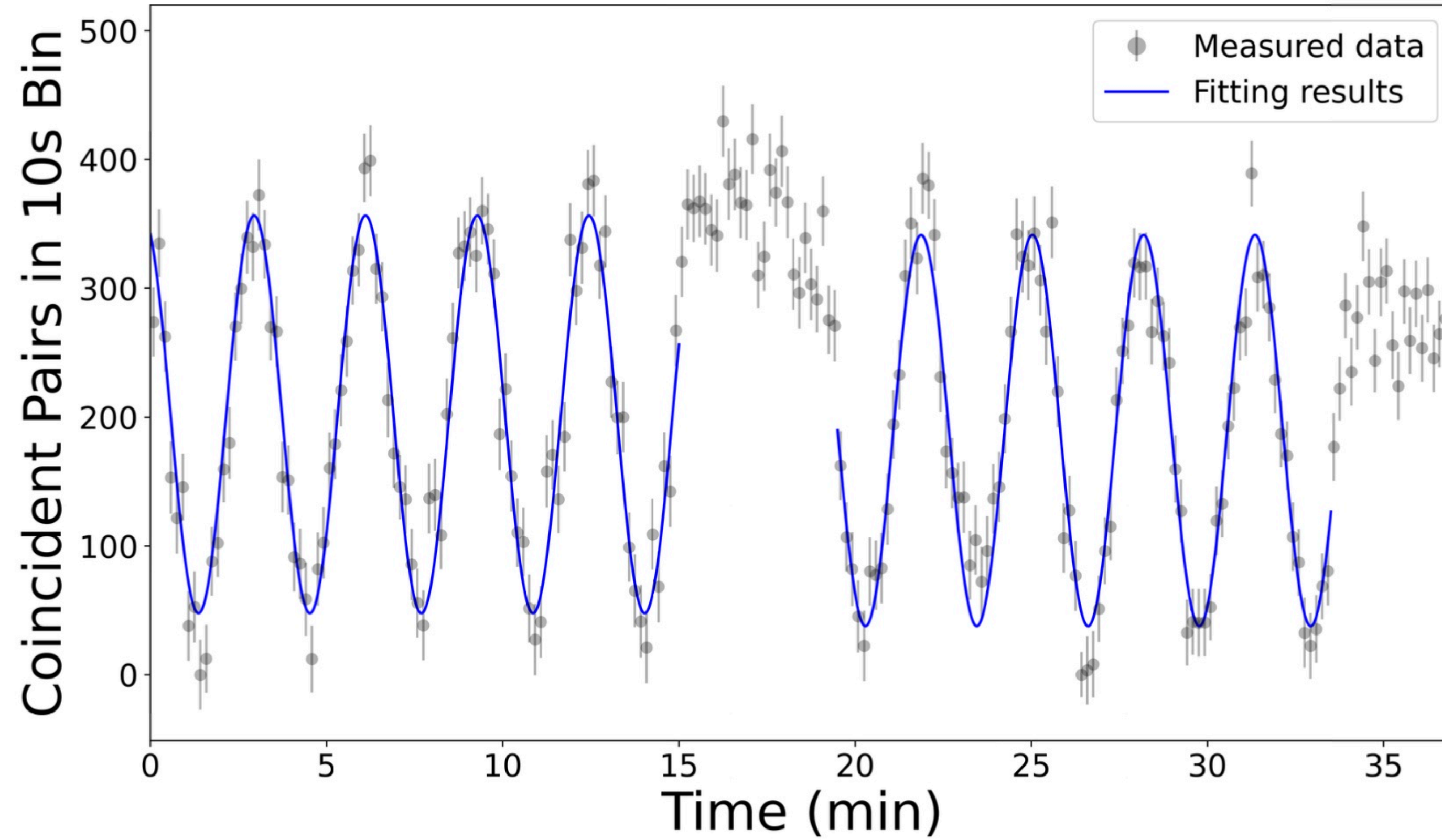
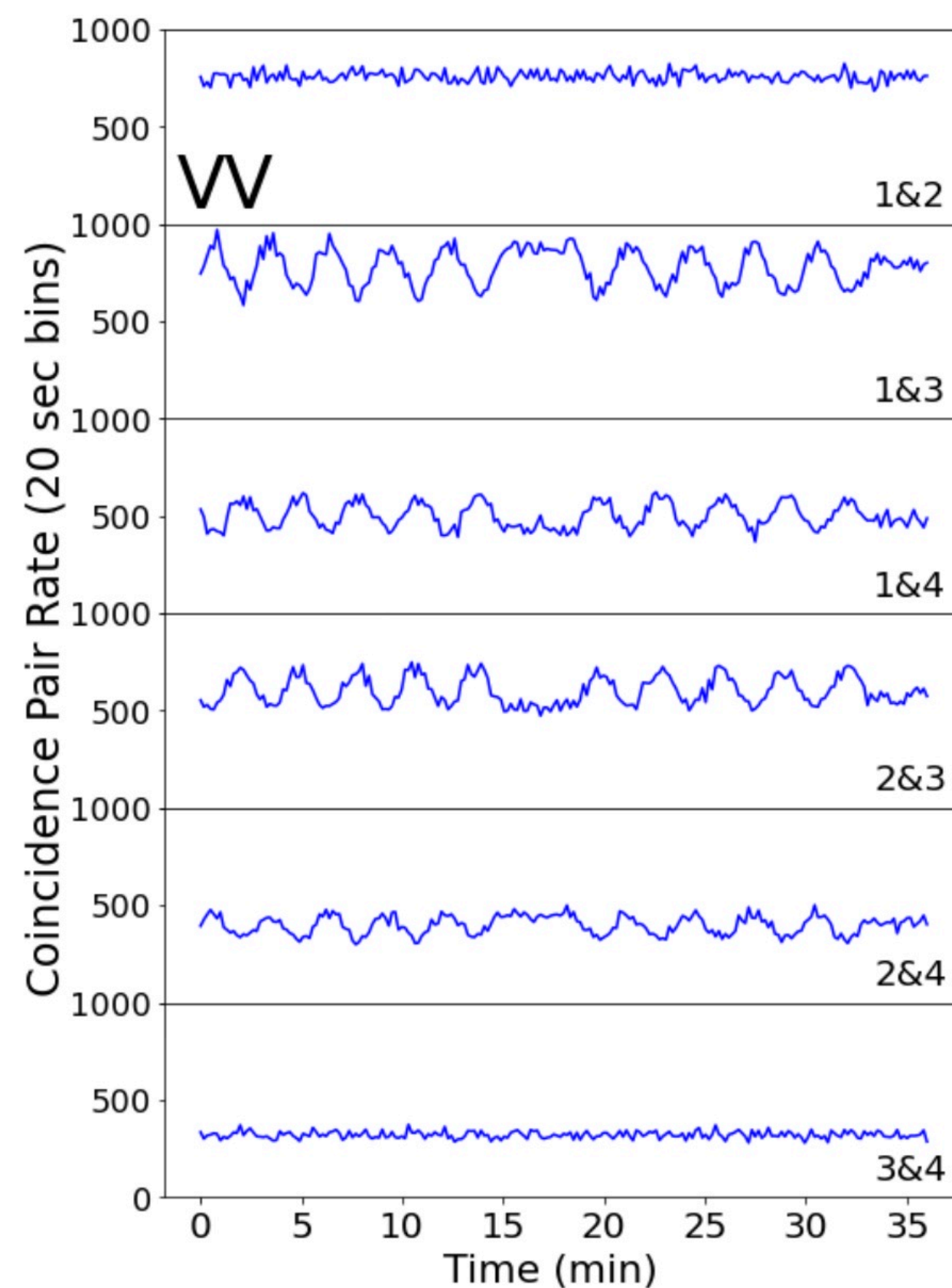
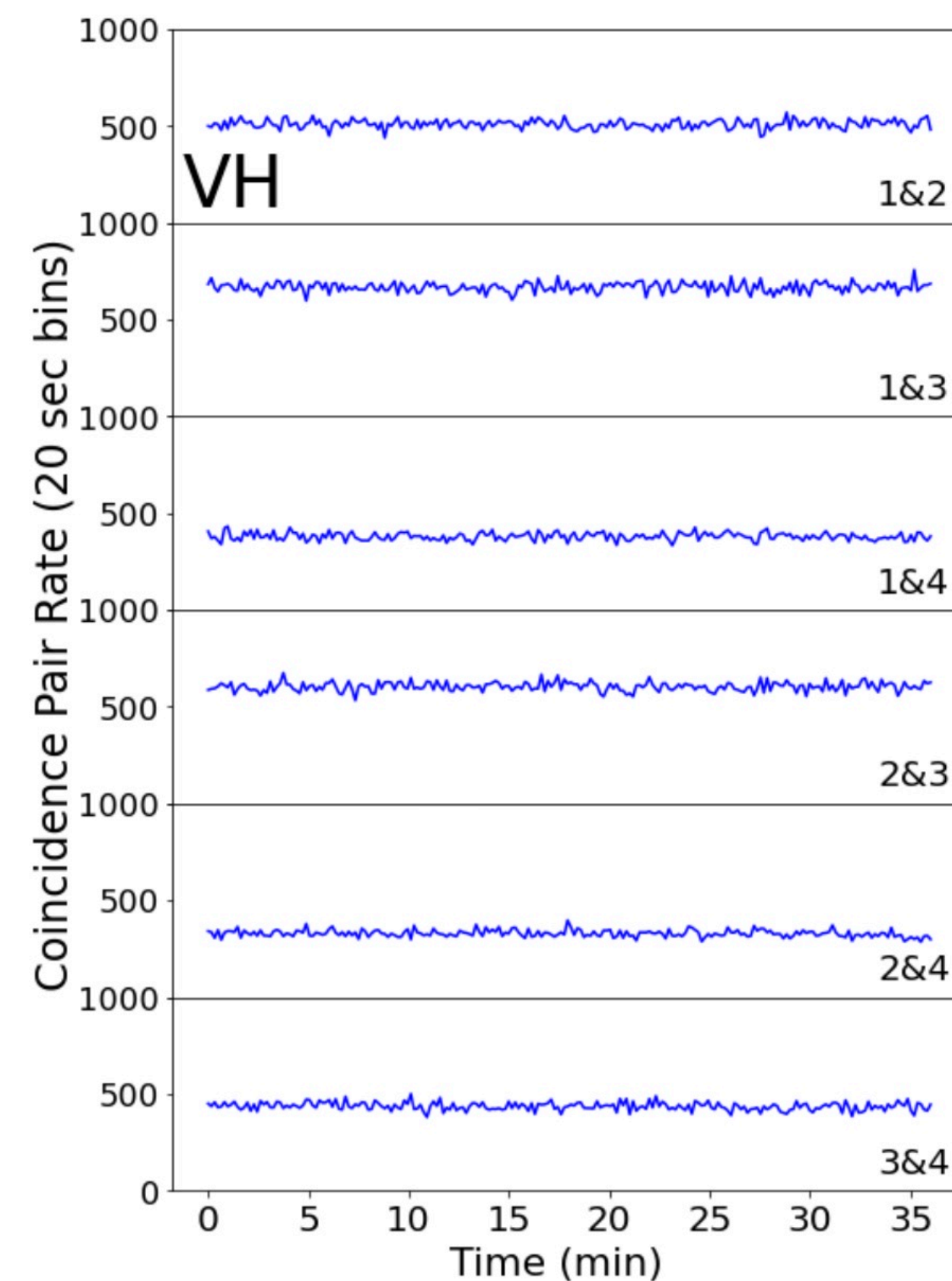


Fig. 4. Two-photon coincidences count rates for the oscillations for detectors 1&3 in the SNSPD data set with VV polarization fit to Eq. (3). The coincidences rates were determined by fitting a Gaussian peak in each 10-second time bin. Data points are presented together with one standard deviation error bars.



(a) VV



(b) VH

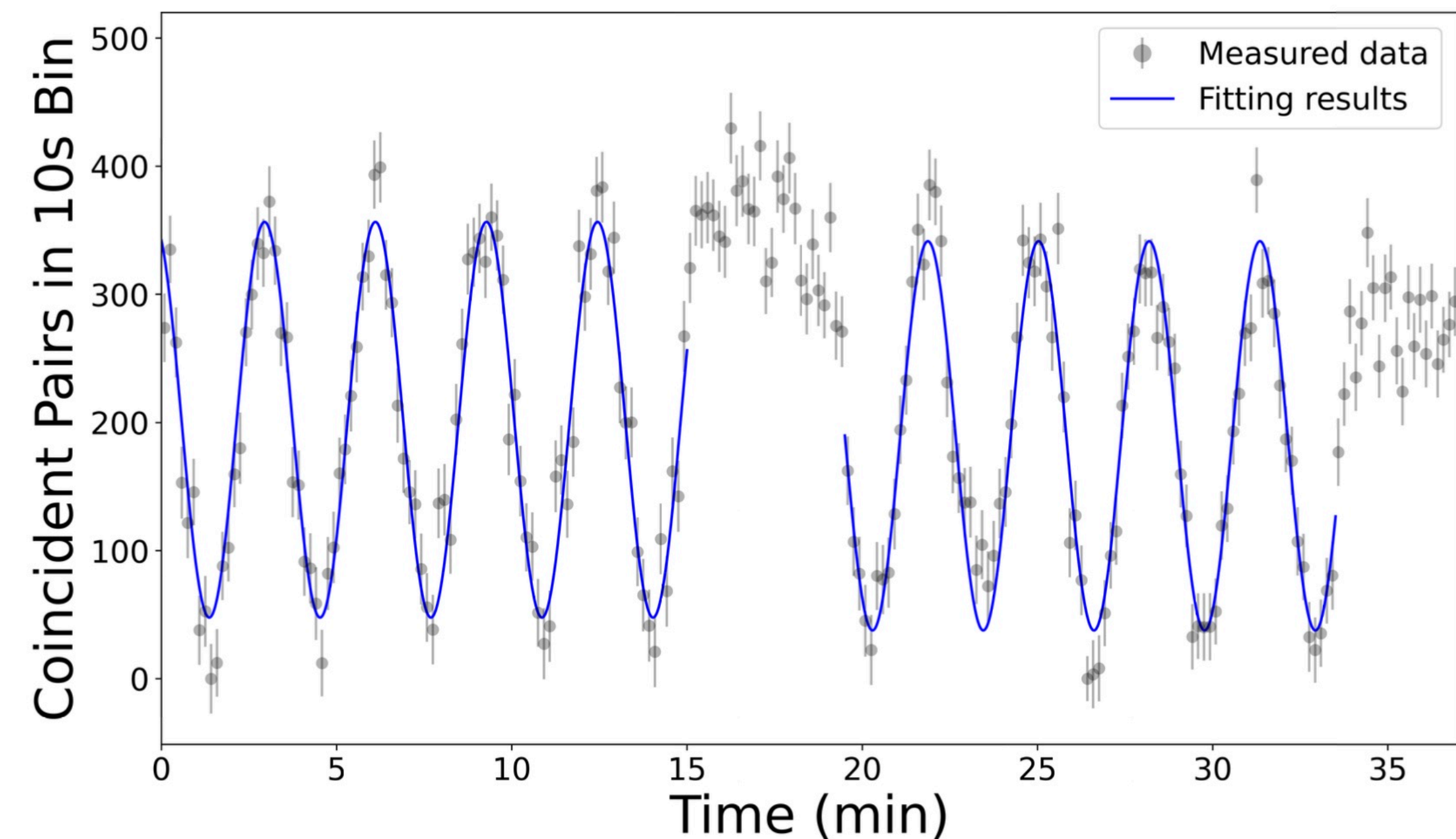
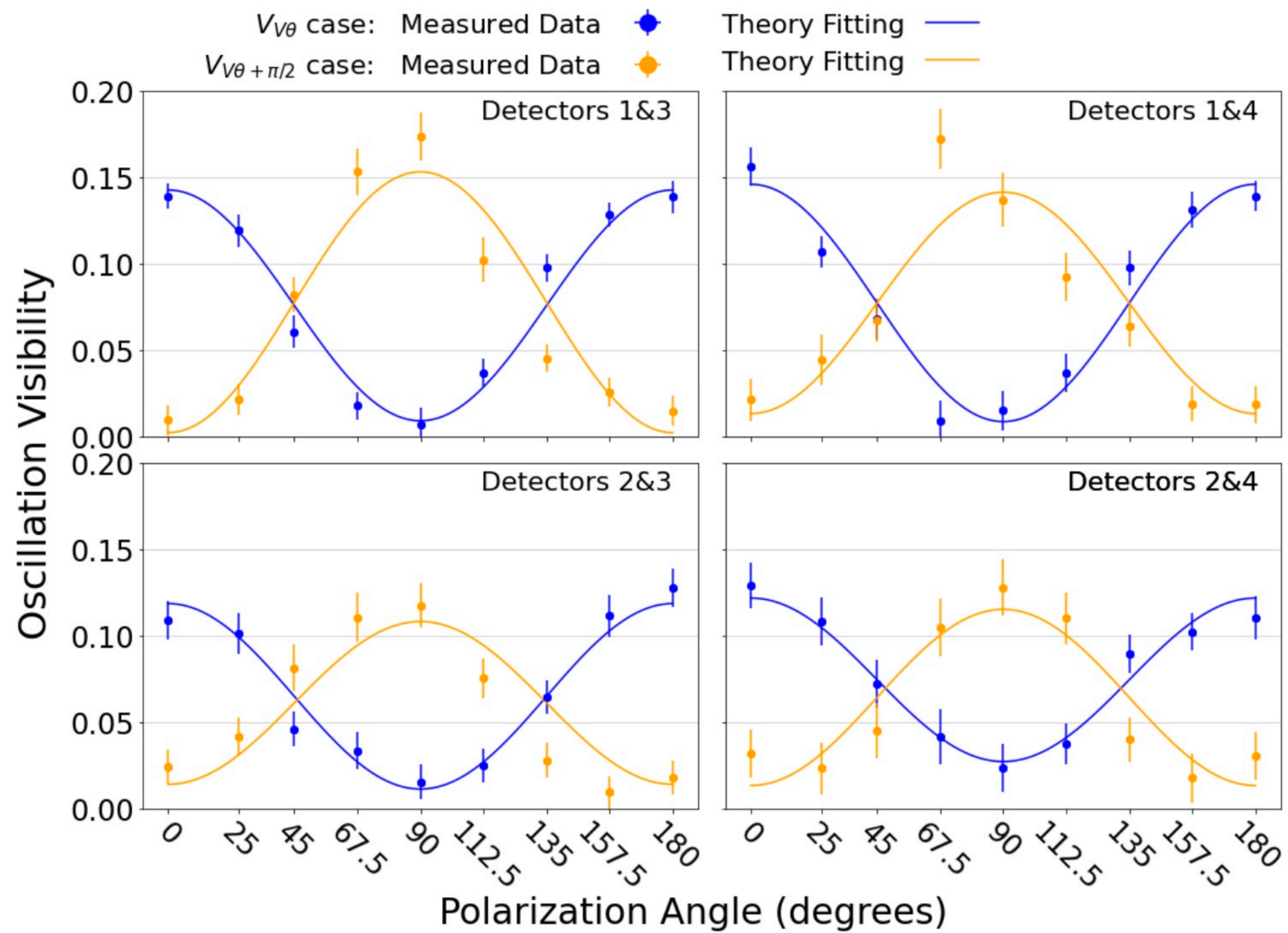


Fig. 4. Two-photon coincidences count rates for the oscillations for detectors 1&3 in the INSPD data set with VV polarization fit to Eq. (3). The coincidences rates were determined by fitting a Gaussian peak in each 10-second time bin. Data points are presented together with one standard deviation error bars.

Phase Oscillations





Visibility



Expanding the tool box

+

Spectral binning

The spectral binning technique enable us to essentially perform multiple measurements together, because each frequency can be treated as an independent measurement.

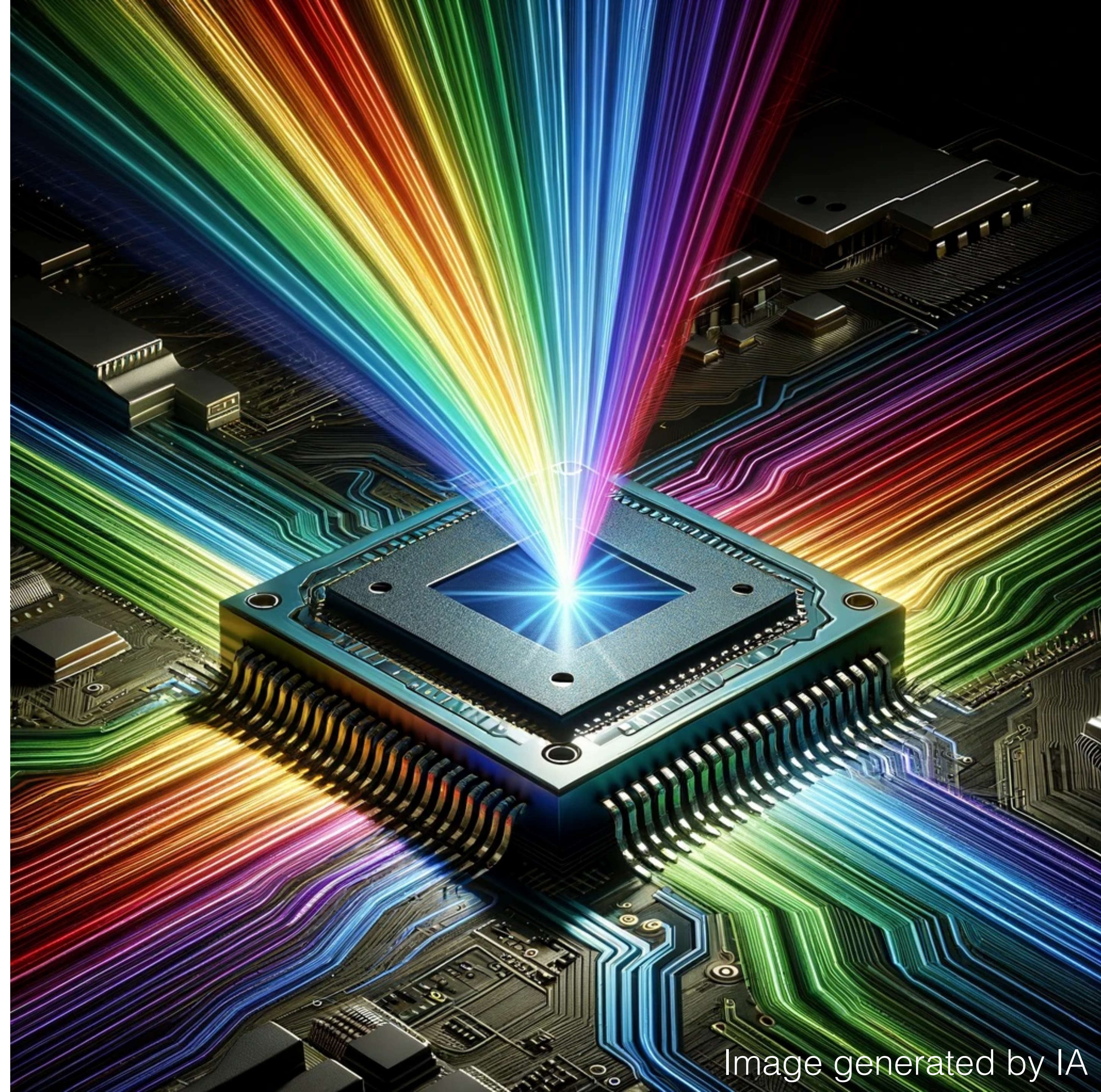
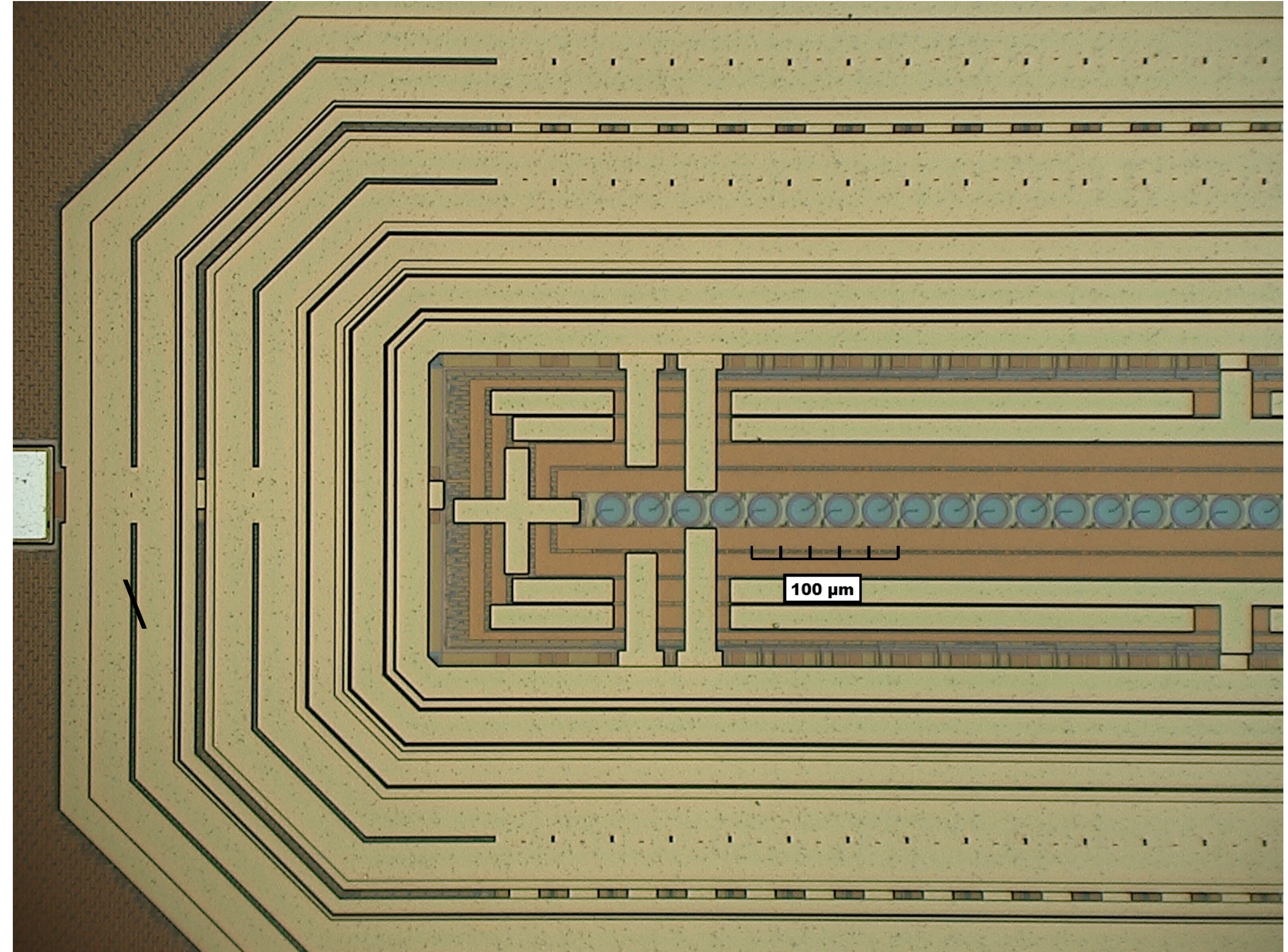


Image generated by IA

LinoSPAD2

- 512 pixels
- $26.2\ \mu\text{m} \times 26.2\ \mu\text{m}$ pixel size
- fast data-driven operation

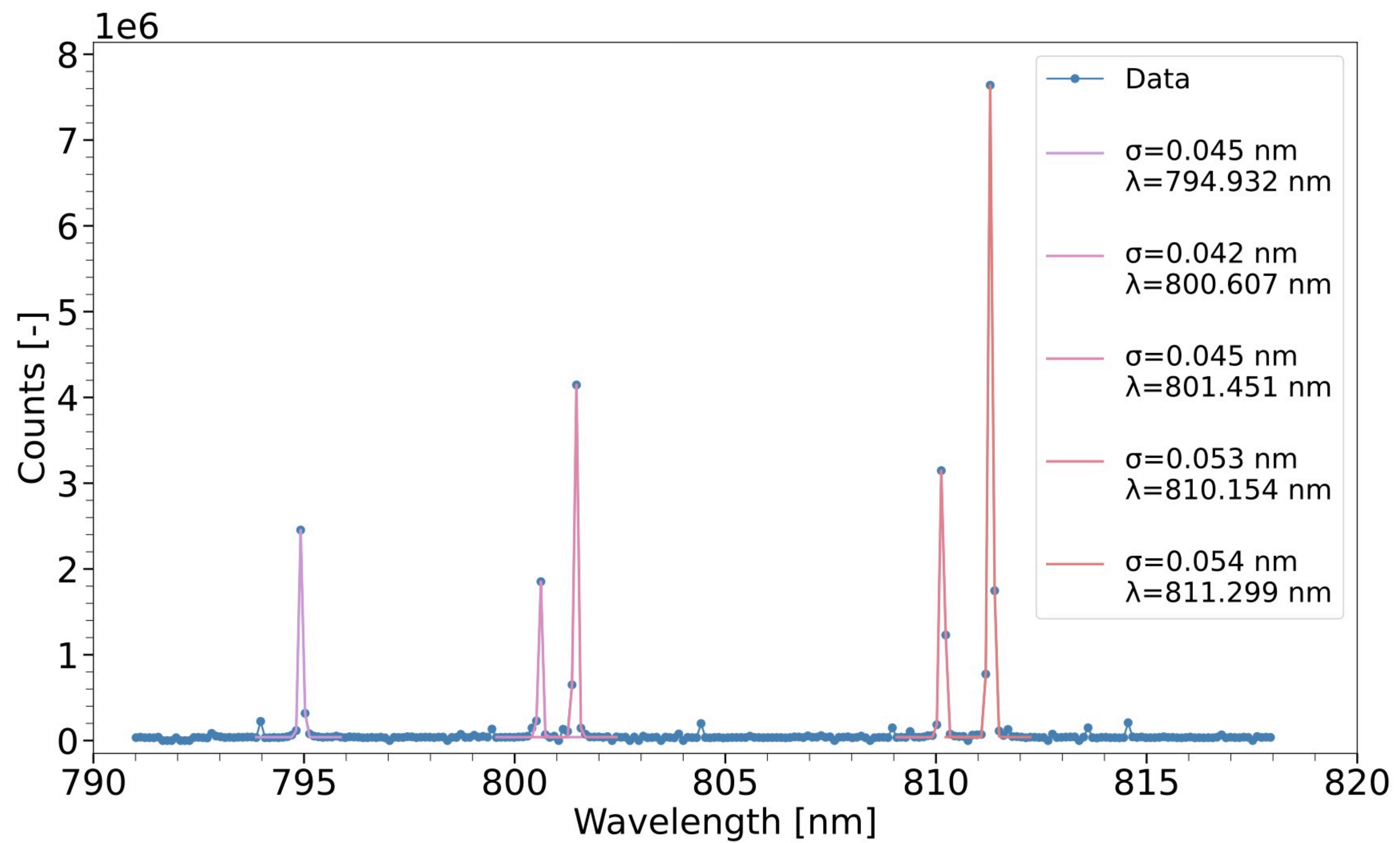
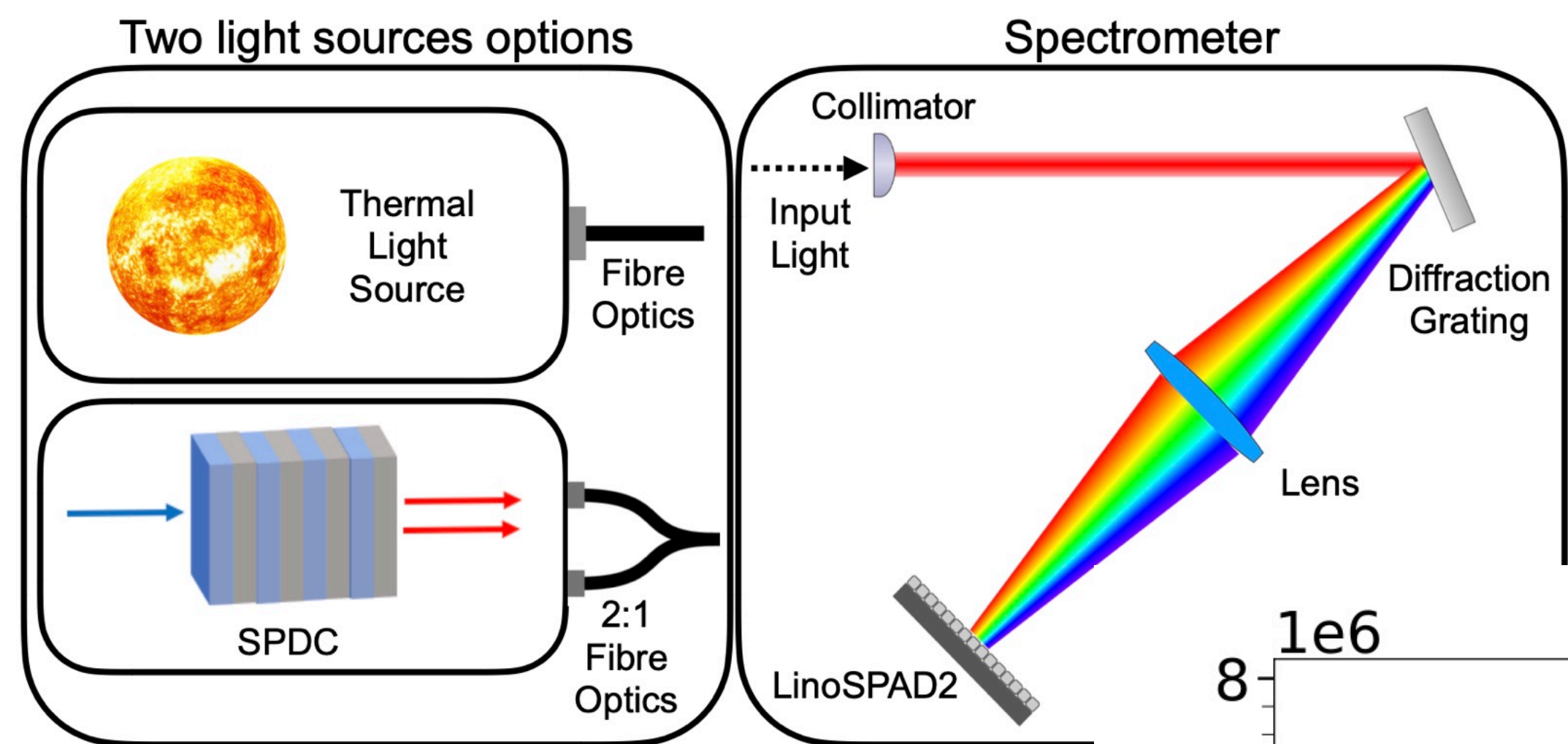


Collaborations:

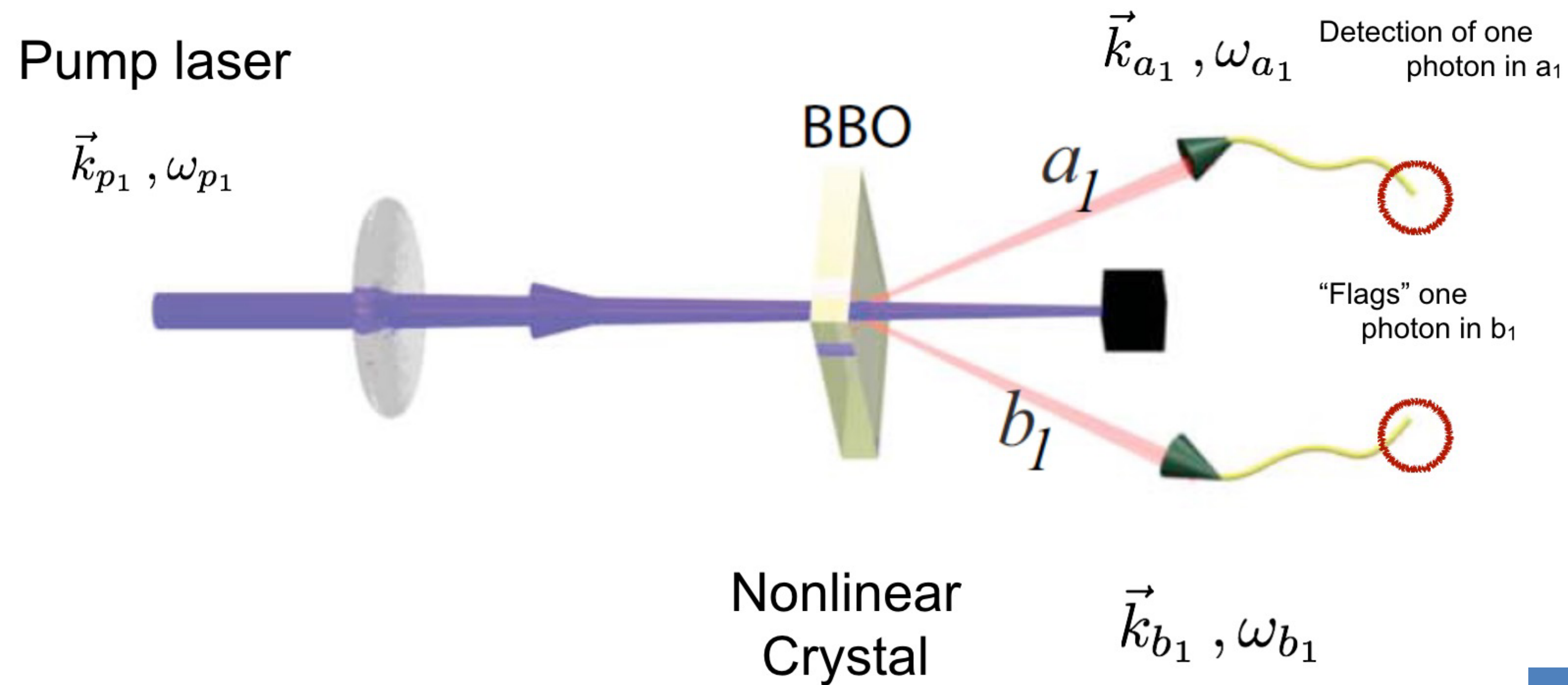
École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL)

AQUA - Advanced Quantum Architecture Laboratory

Czech Technical University in Prague



SPDC: Spontaneous Parametric Down Conversion



Phase-matching
conditions

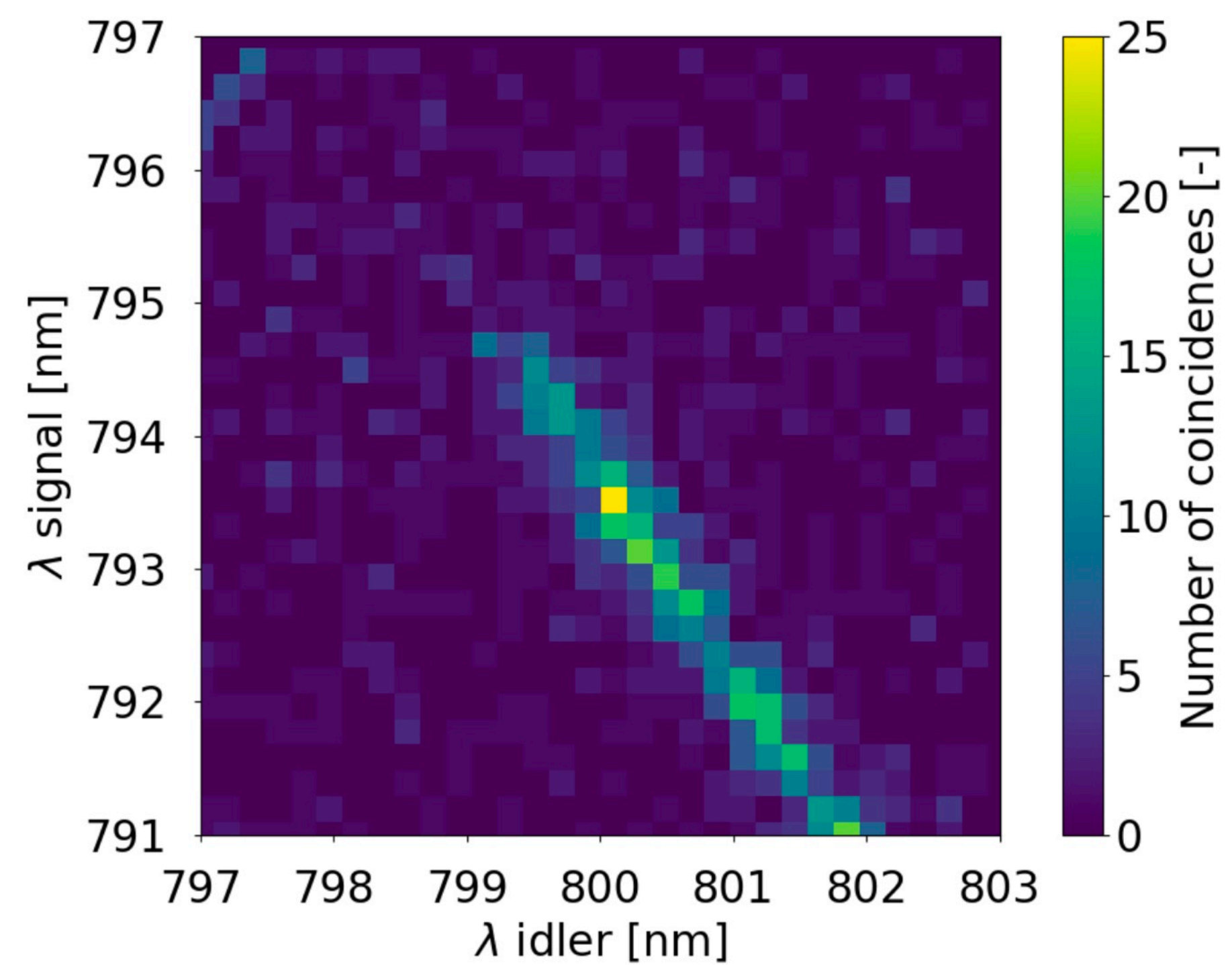
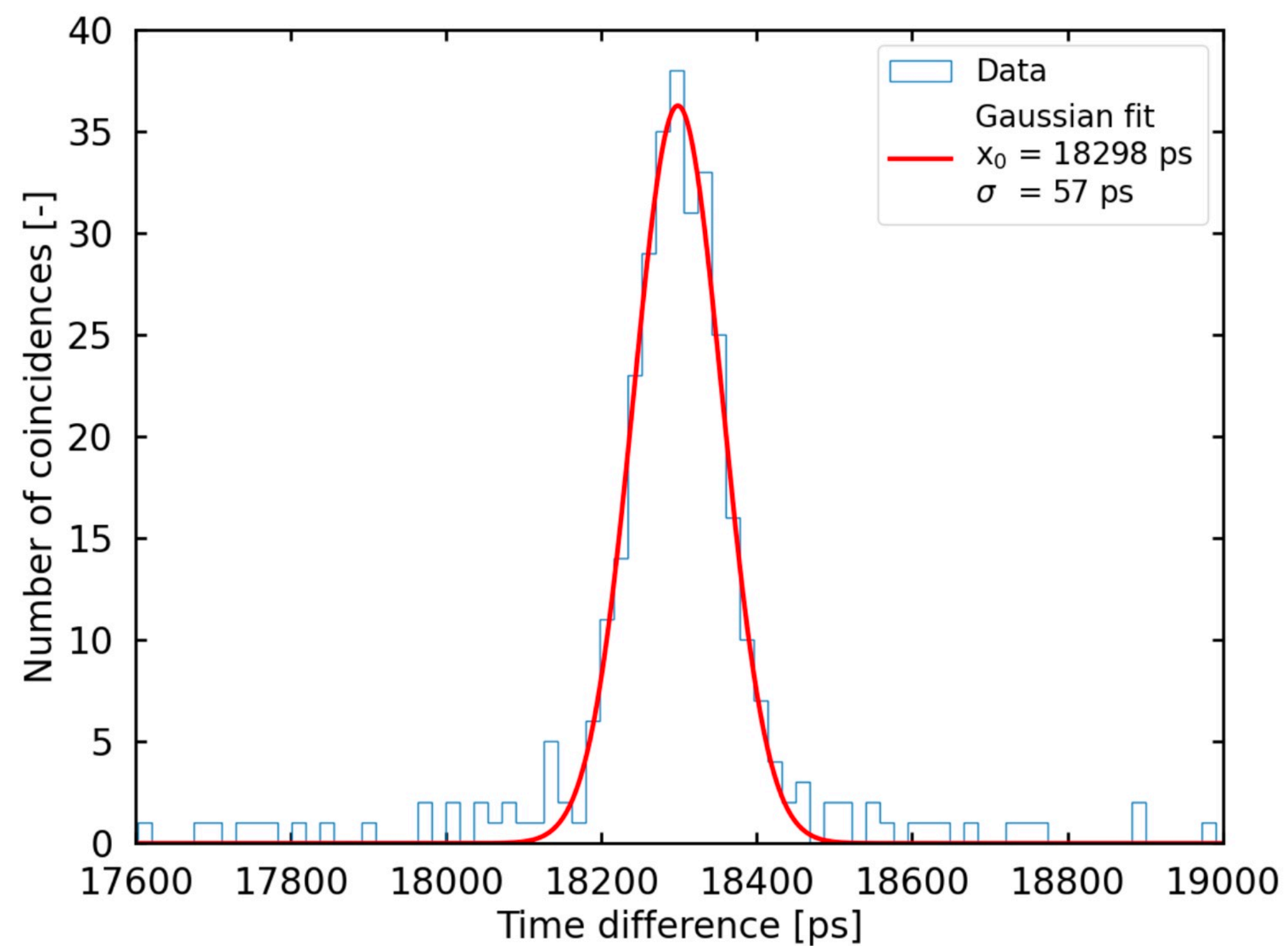
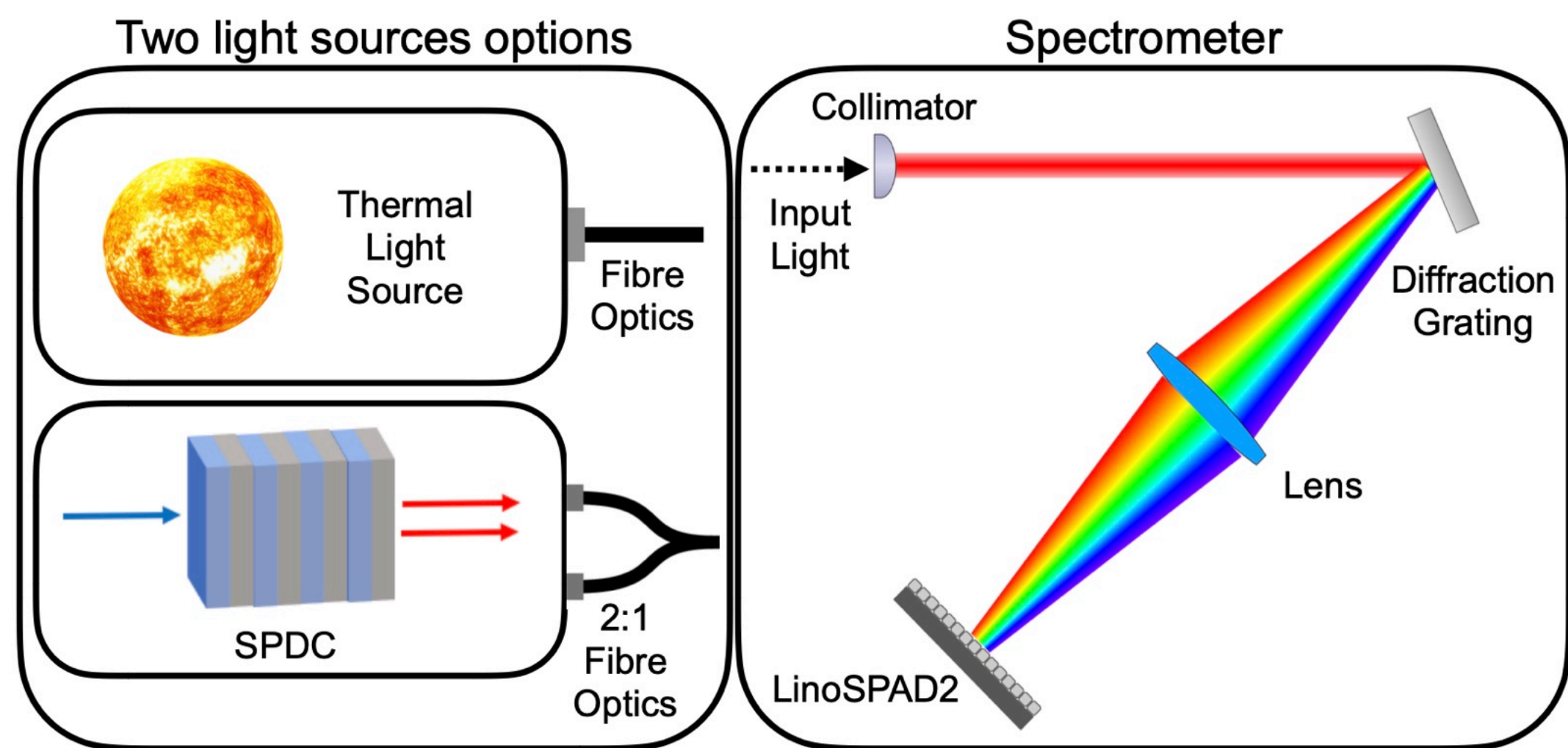
$$\vec{k}_{a_1} + \vec{k}_{b_1} = \vec{k}_{p_1}$$

$$\omega_{a_1} + \omega_{b_1} = \omega_{p_1}$$

SPDC

Nonlinear

Probabilistic



Fast data-driven spectrometer with direct measurement of time and frequency for multiple single photons

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For multifrequency HBT

We need

- Good spectral resolution
- Good temporal resolution
- Single-photon sensitivity
- Decent detection efficiency

We would like

- Room temperature operation

For multifrequency HBT

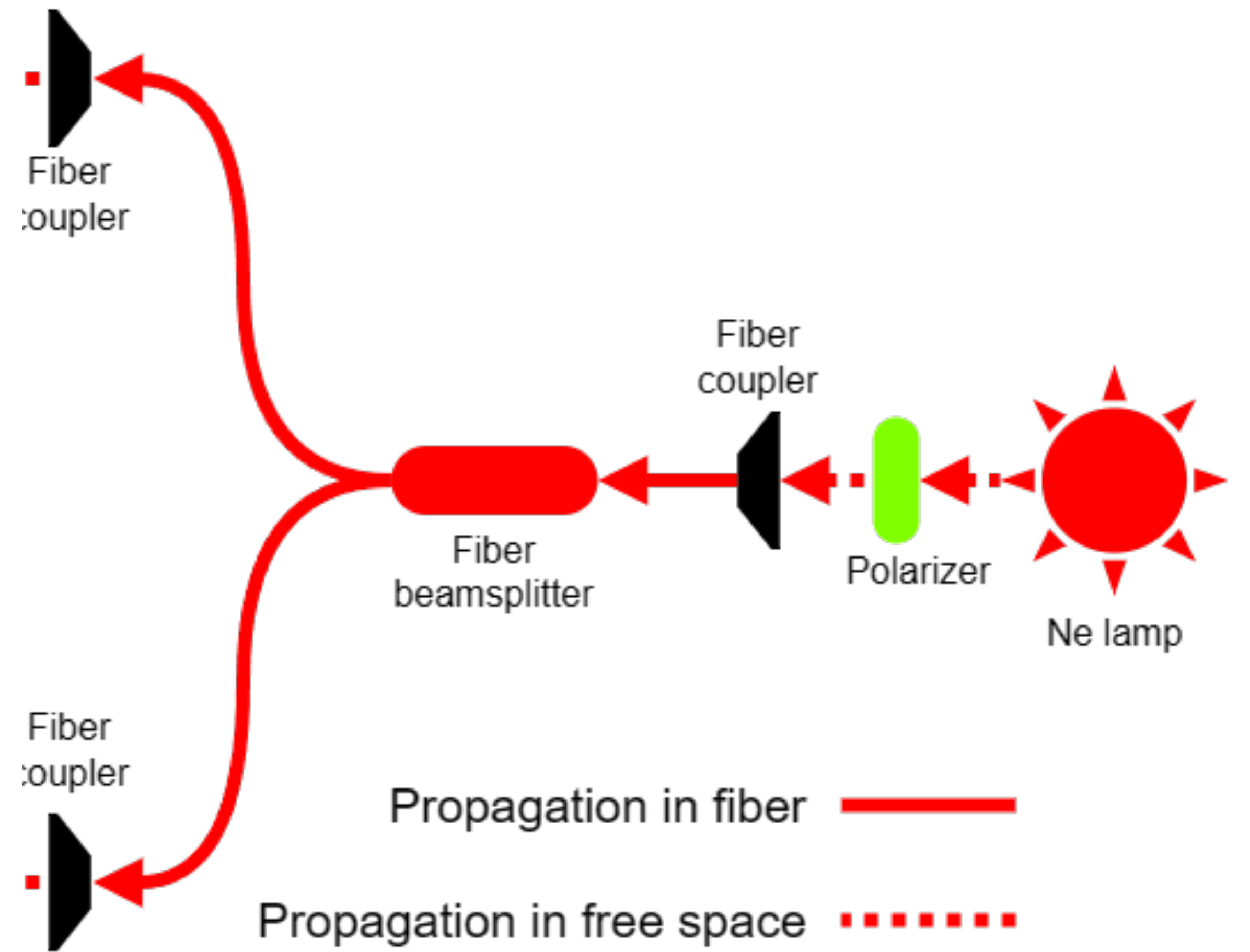
We need

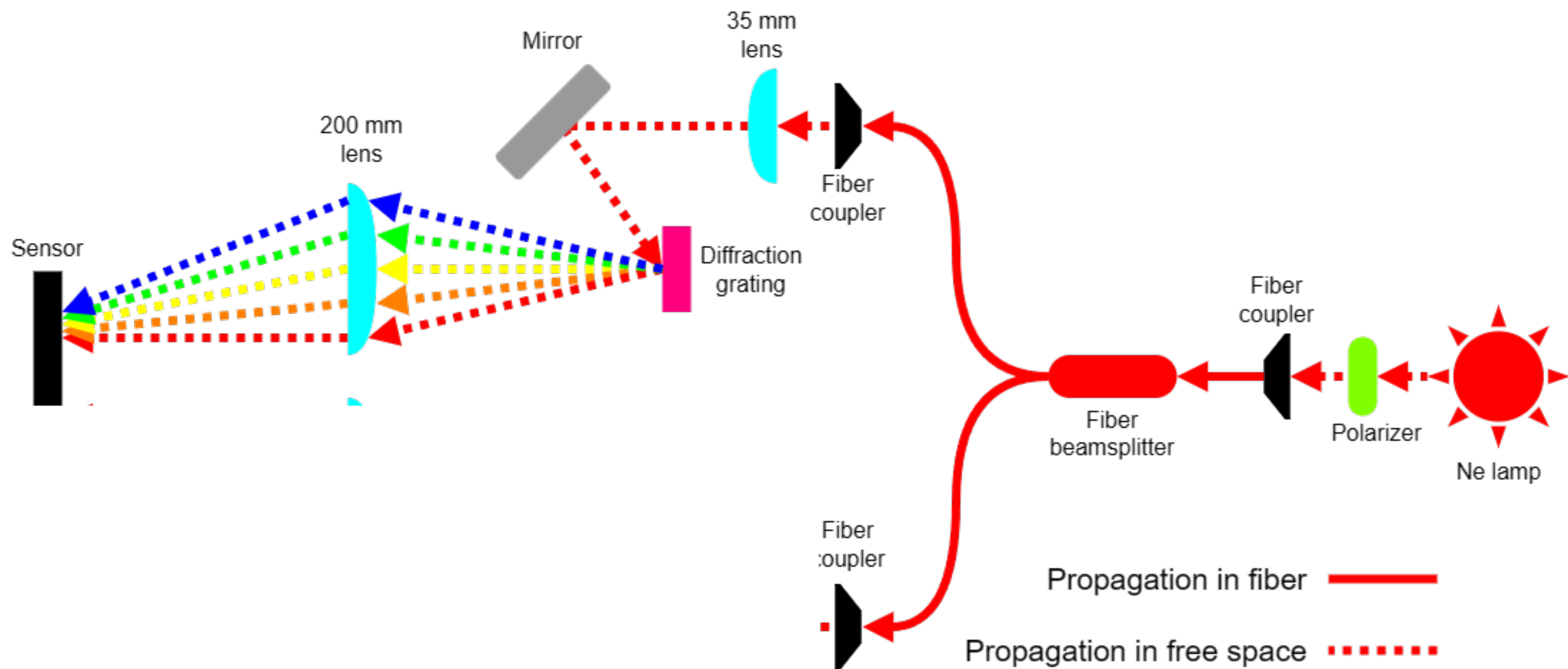
- Good spectral resolution
- Good temporal resolution
- Single-photon sensitivity
- Decent detection efficiency

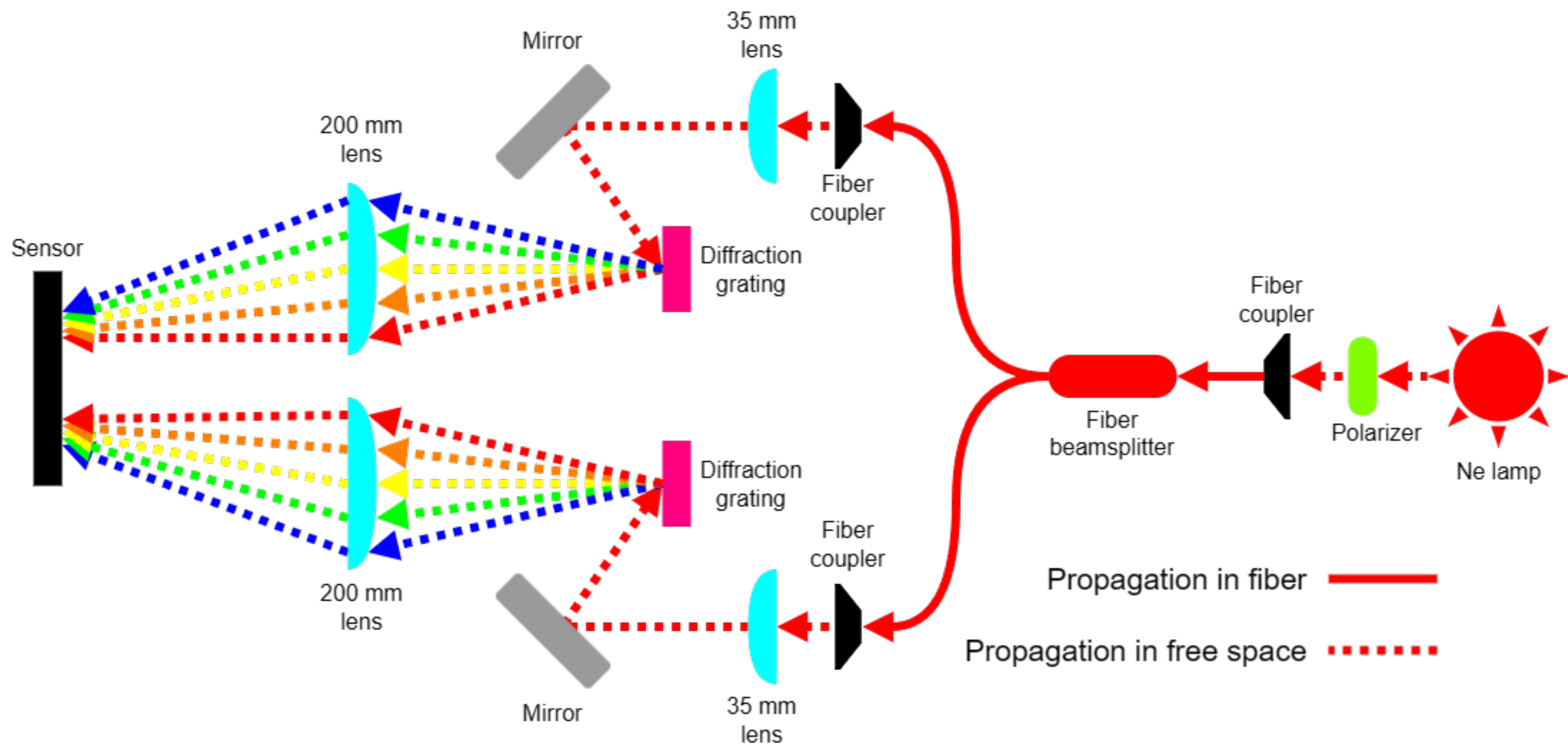
We would like

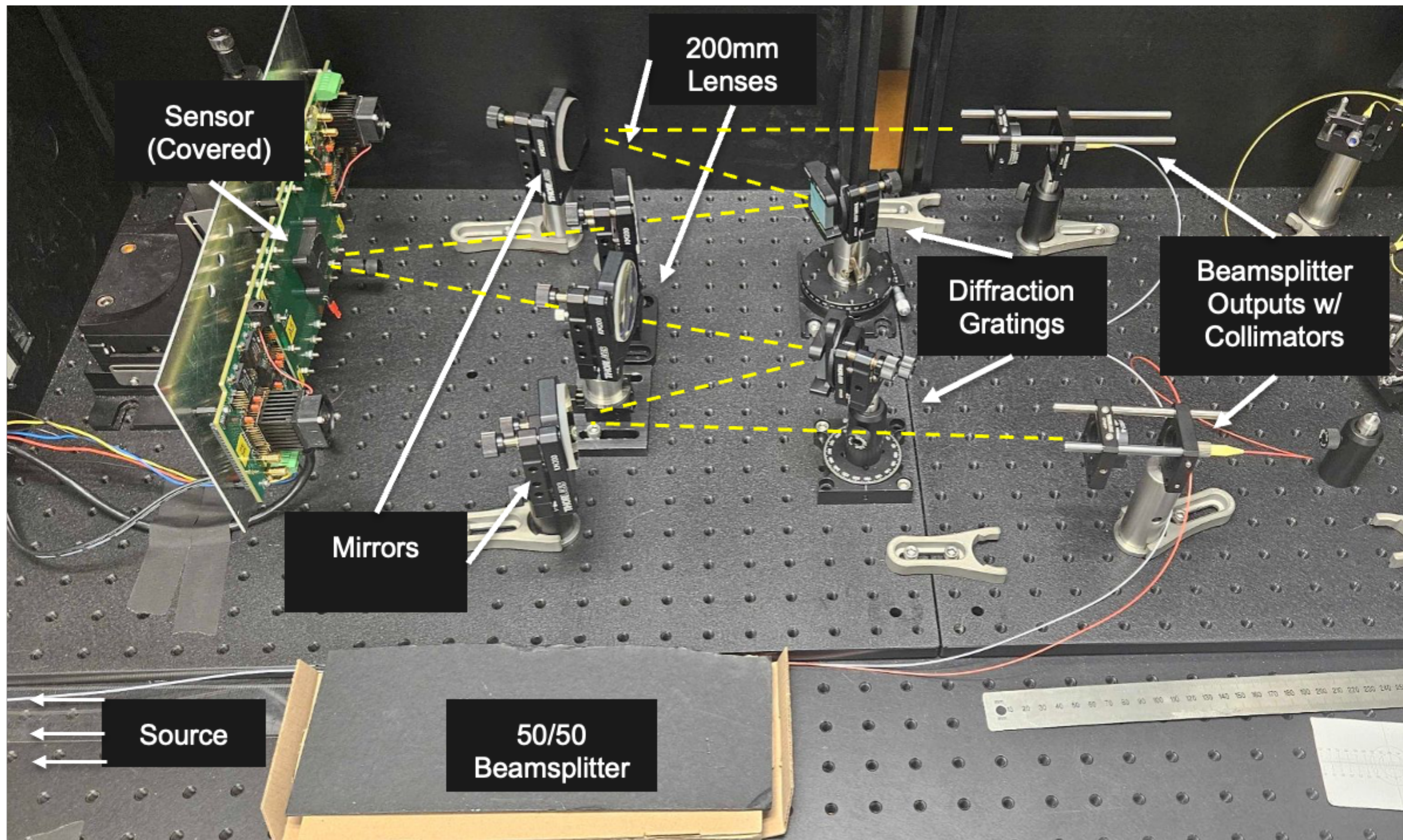
- Room temperature operation

Not an easy list, but we did!

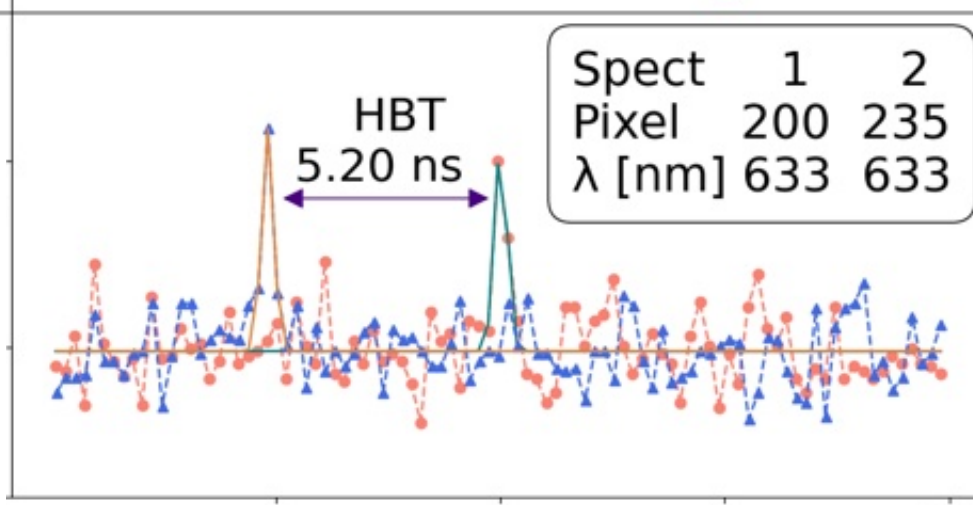
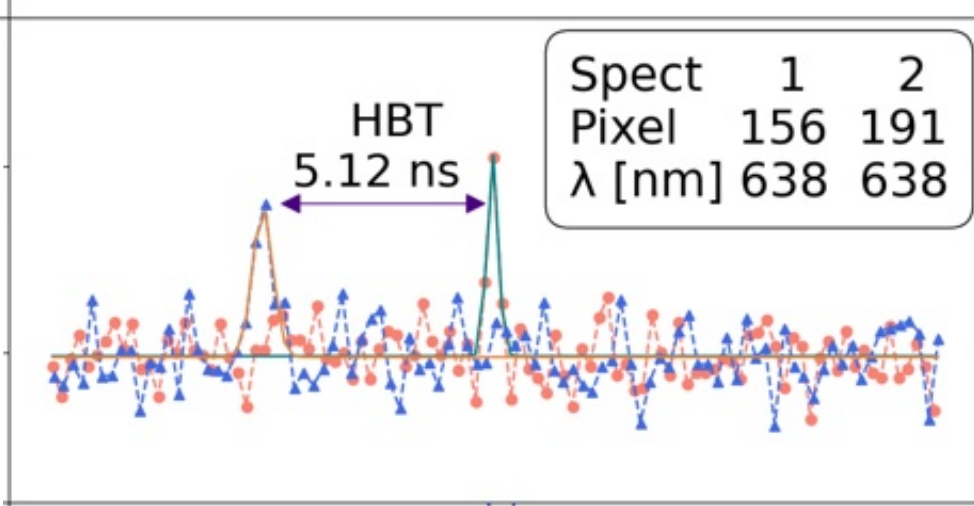
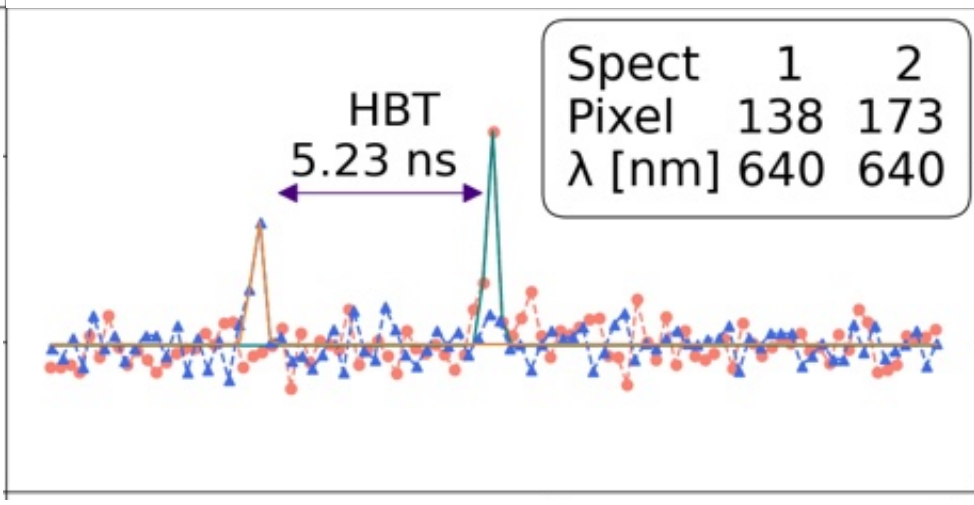
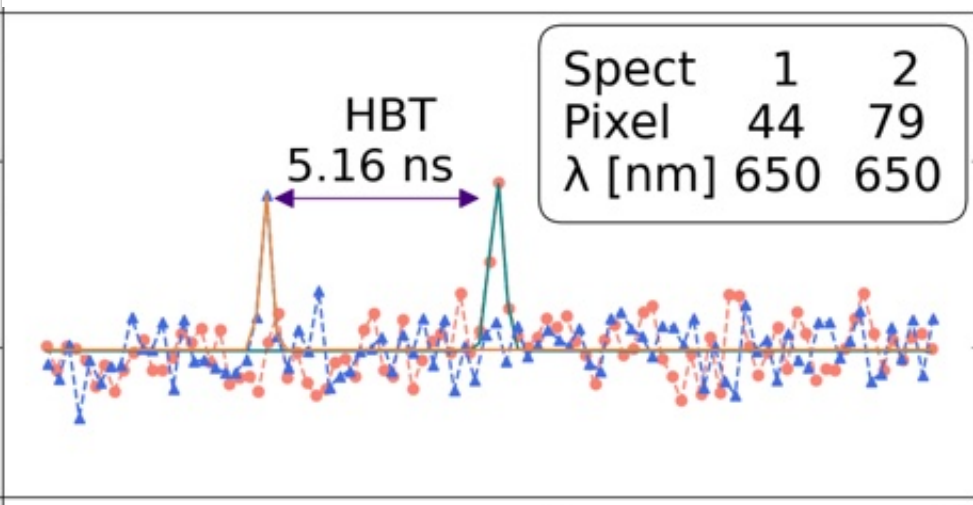
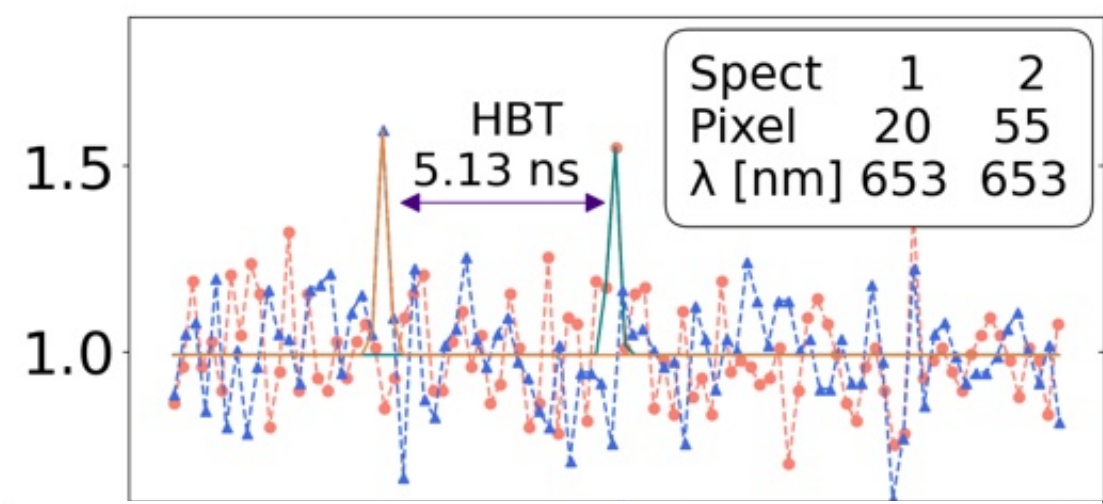




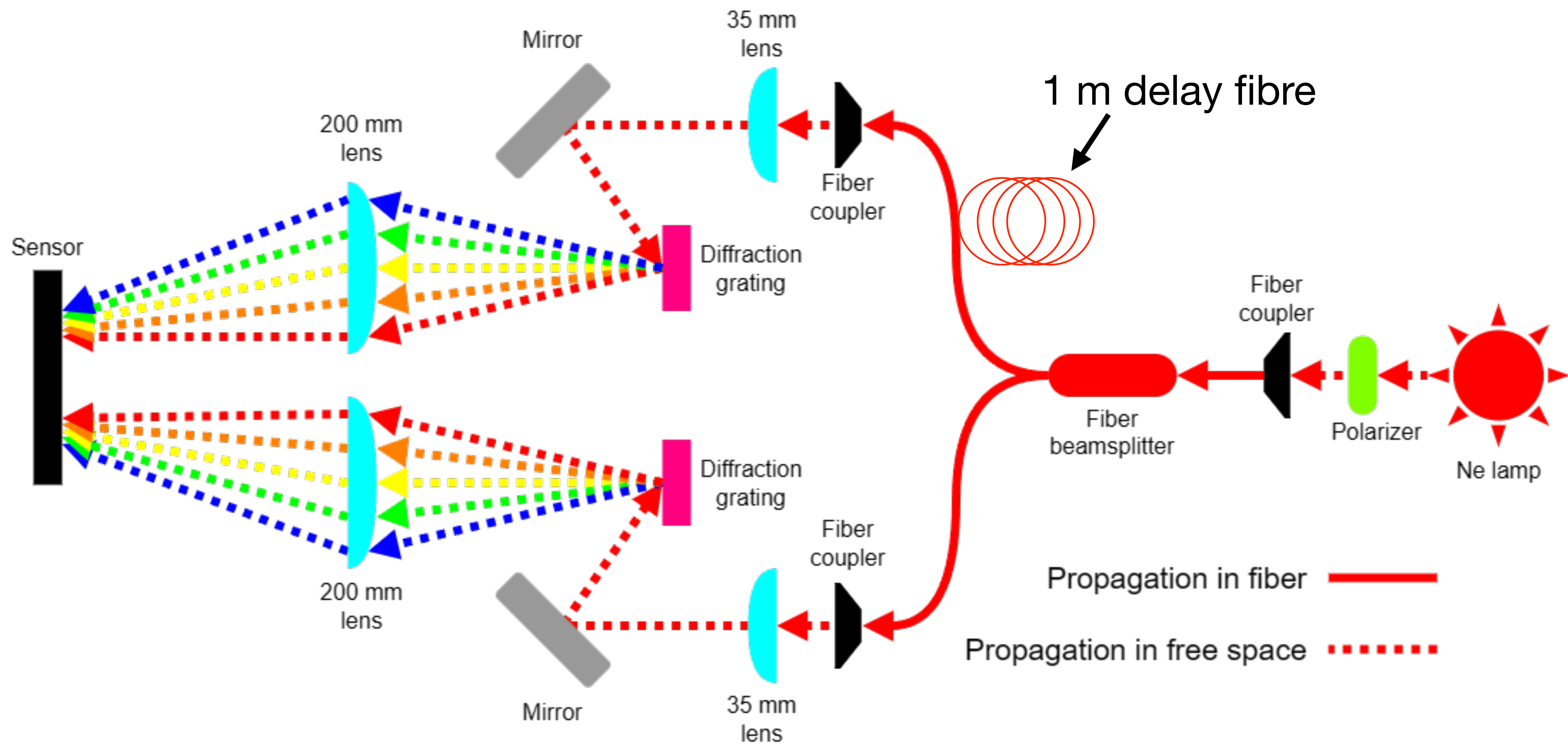




Normalized coincidences [-]

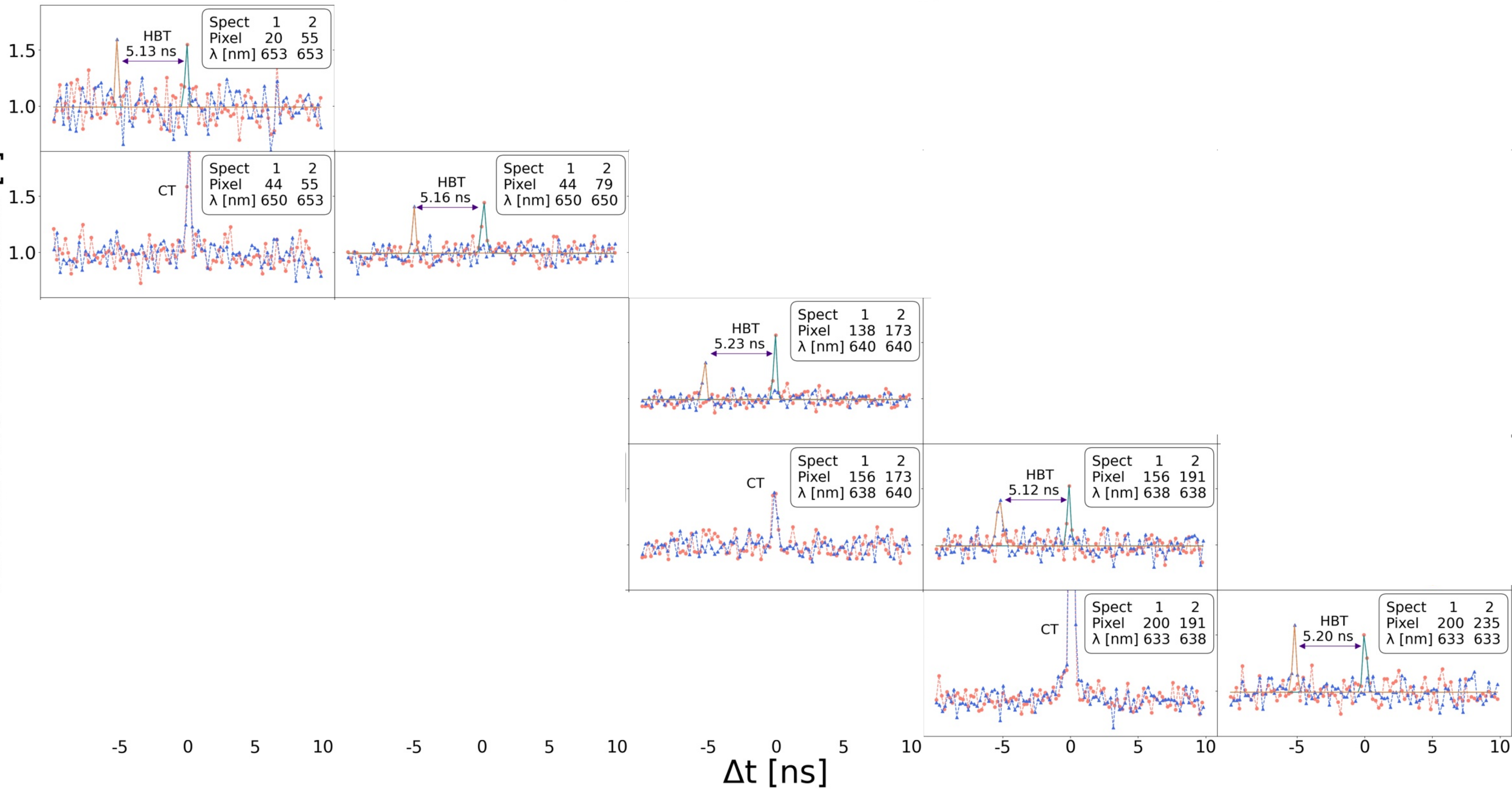


Δt [ns]



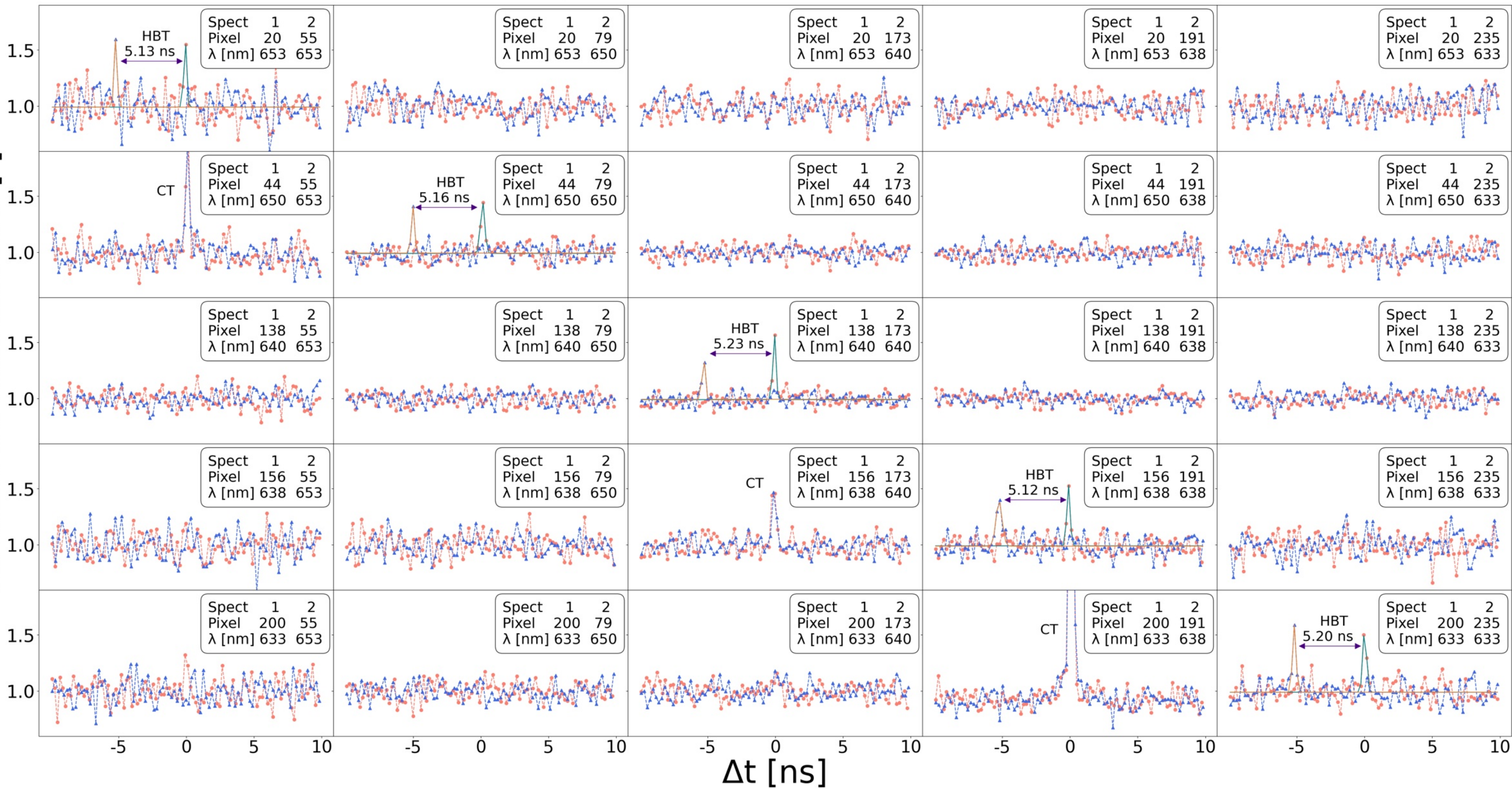
Normalized coincidences [-]

Undelayed Delayed



Normalized coincidences [-]

Undelayed Delayed



We are clearly in the multifrequency regime.

This allows:

- Shorter data taking times
- More information for the same data taking duration

This quantum technology can benefit current classical observatories!

We are clearly in the multifrequency regime.

This allows:

- Shorter data taking times
- More information for the same data taking duration

This quantum technology can benefit current classical observatories!

Spectral binning:

Instead of working with one frequency at a time, we can work with multiple frequencies at the same time.

↪ Can also benefit quantum information

Multifrequency-resolved Hanbury Brown–Twiss effect

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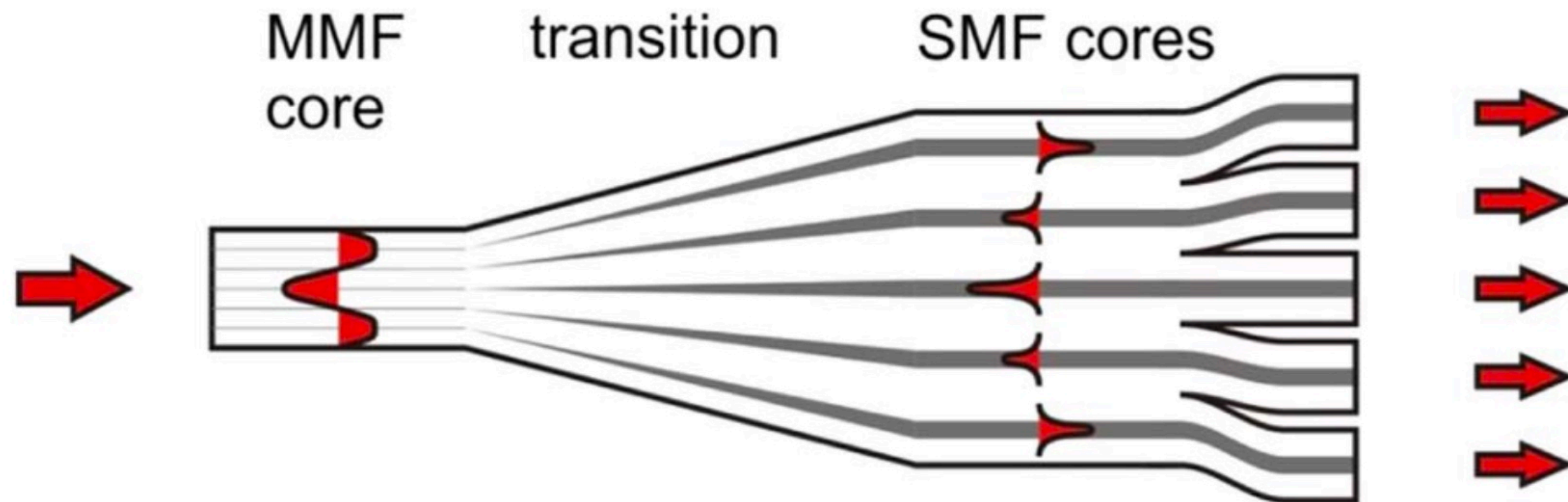
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⁷ Florida International University, Miami, Florida 33199, USA

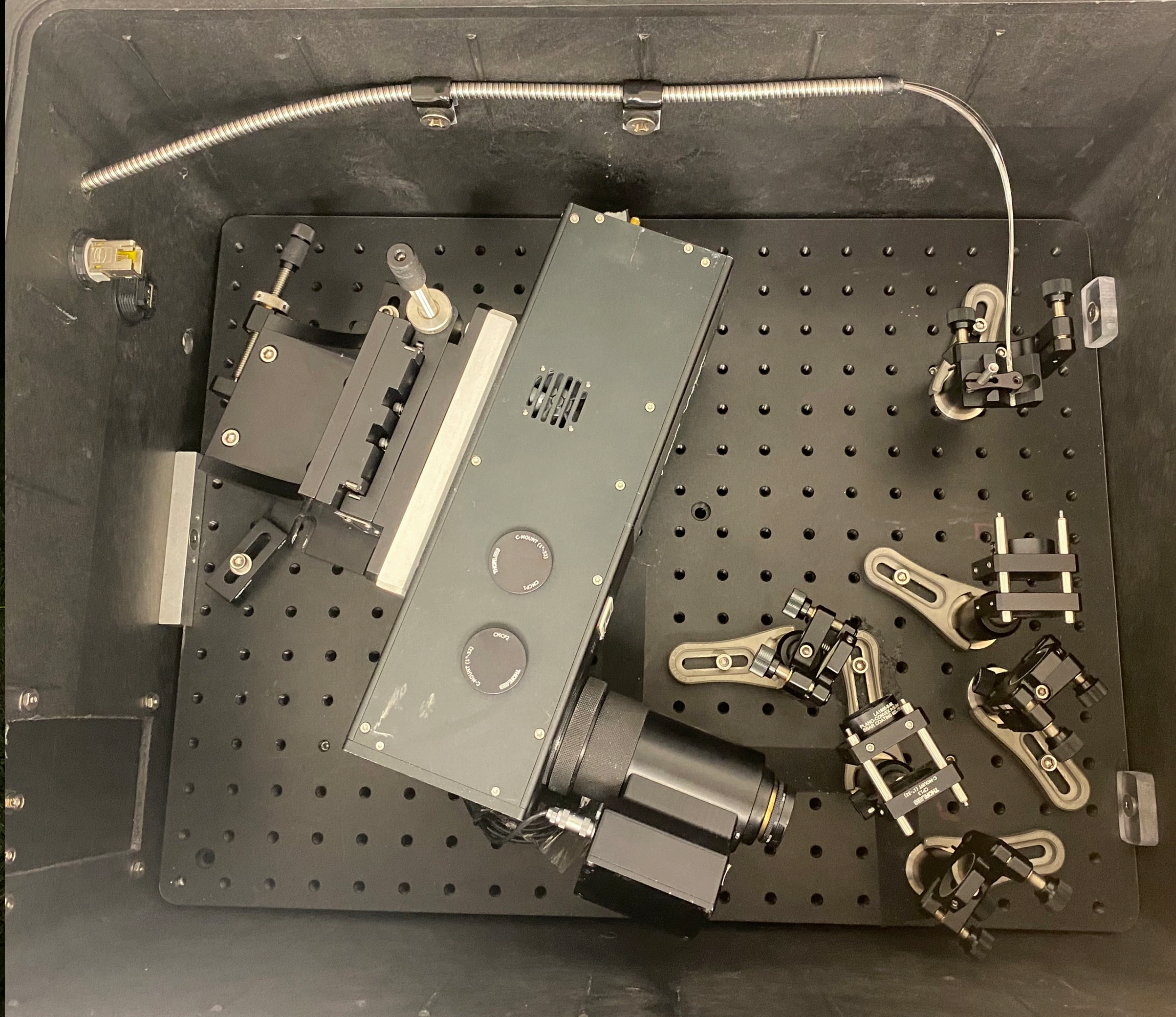
^{a)} Author to whom correspondence should be addressed: rakelabra@bnl.gov

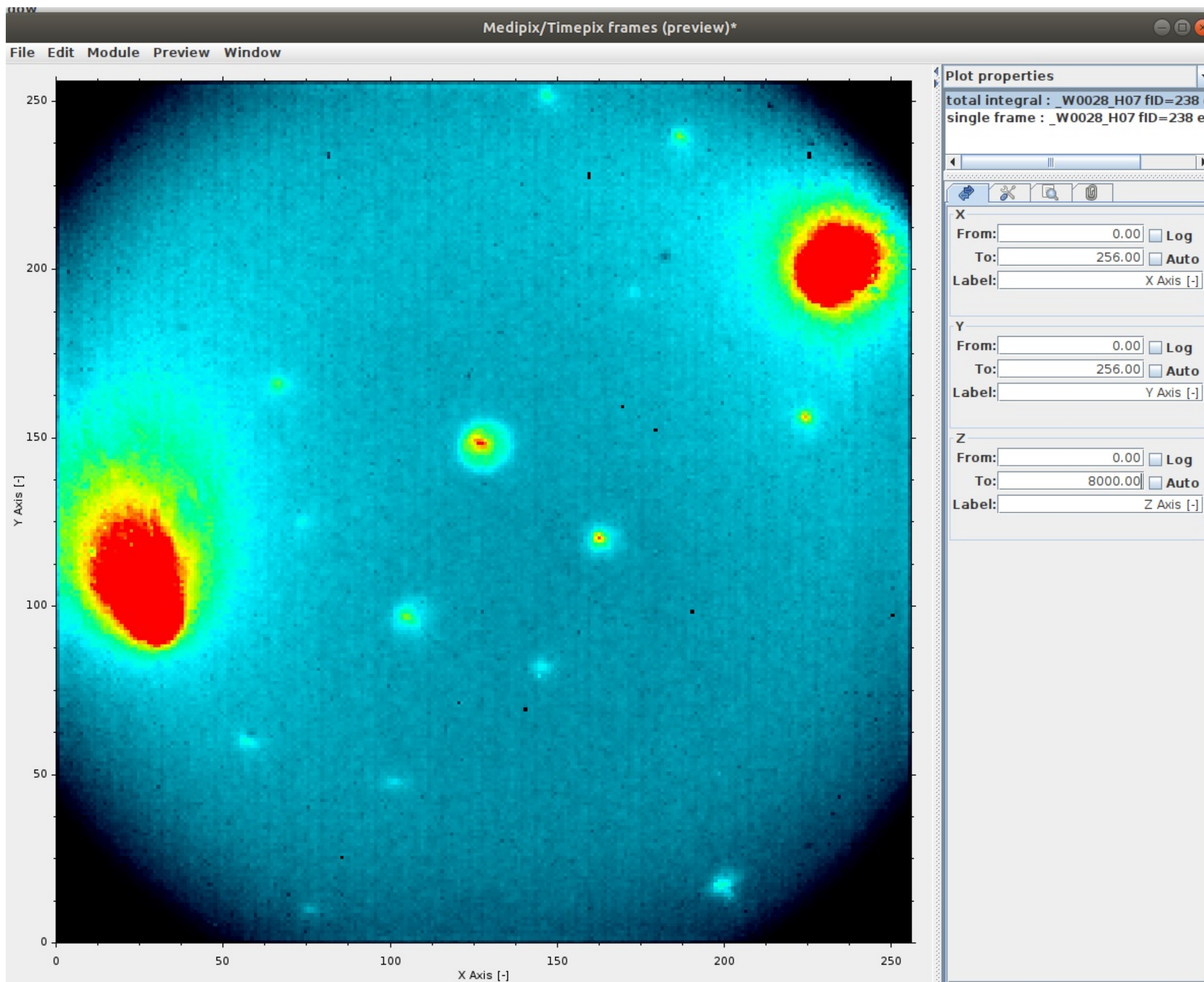
Technology development

Photonic Lantern - partnership with UCF - Astrophotonics group



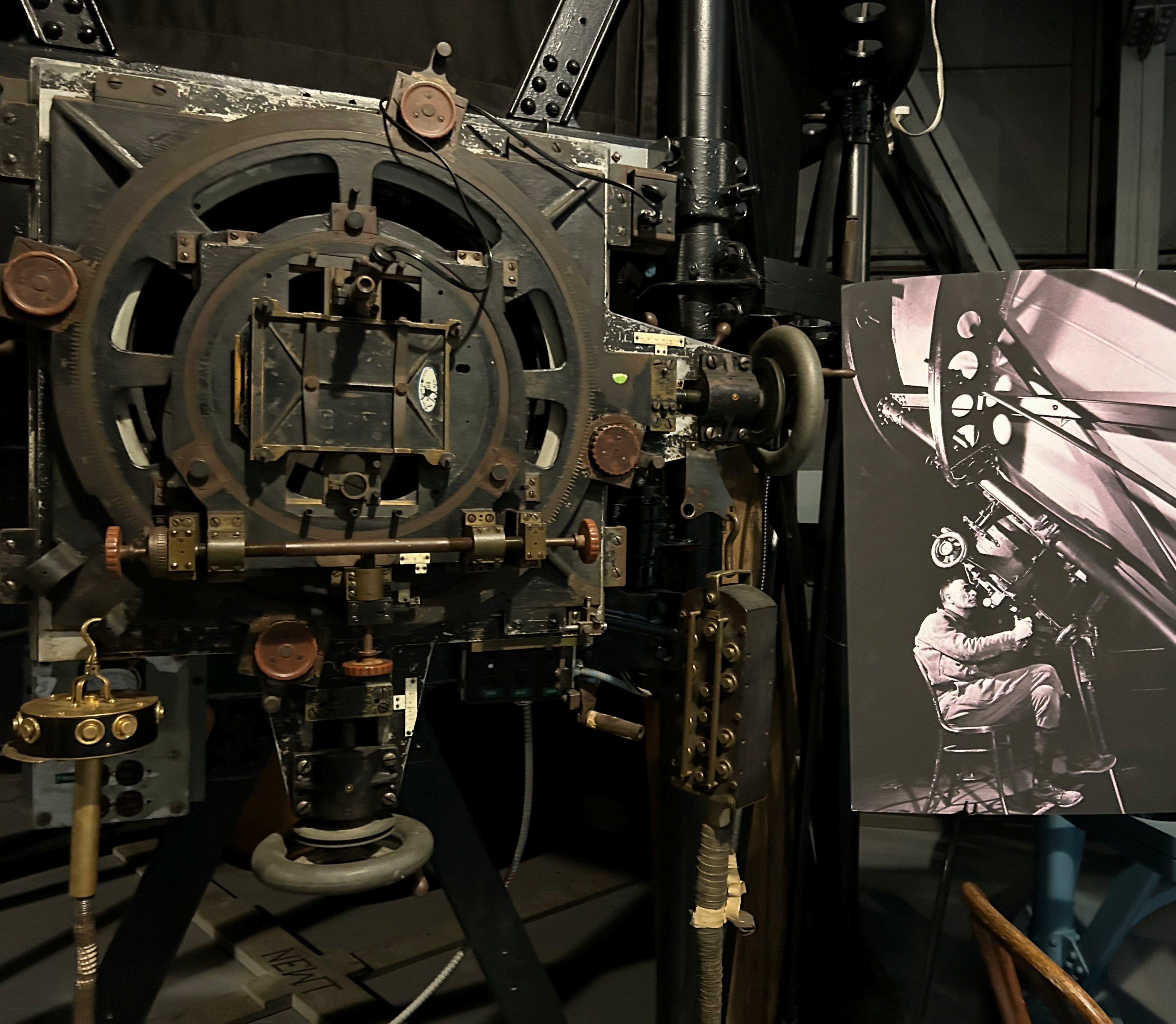
T. A. Birks, I. Gris-Sánchez, S. Yerolatsitis, S. G. Leon-Saval, and R. R. Thomson, "The photonic lantern," Adv. Opt. Photon. 7, 107-167 (2015)





Collaboration with CHARA



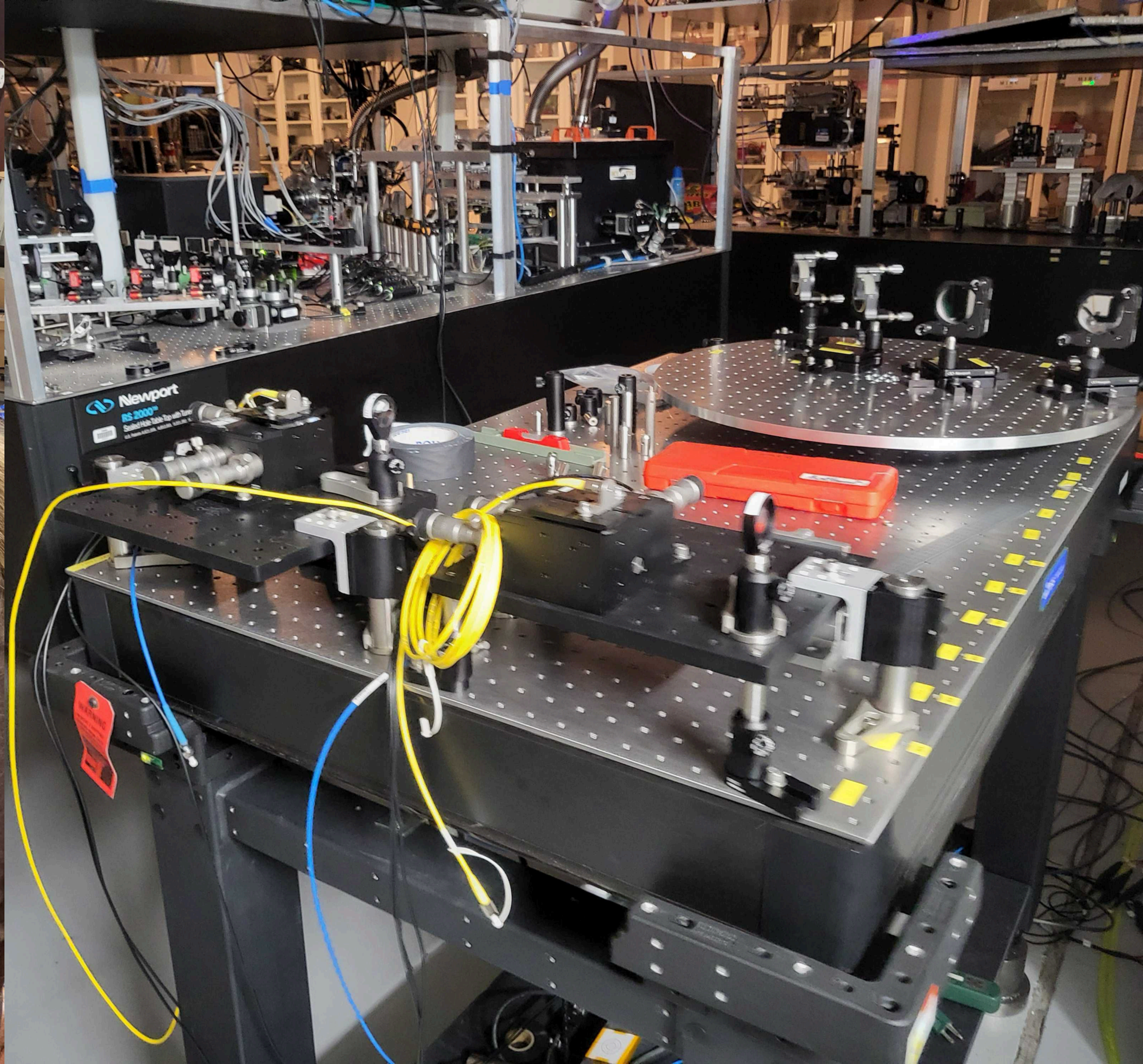


Collaboration with CHARA



Collaboration with CHARA

Last week





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Raphael Abrahao