Biological Cell Resonators

by

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A thesis submitted to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the
Faculty of Sciences
School of Physical Sciences

August 2017
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I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

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Date: 21 August 2017
Modern sensing technologies developed within the field of photonics incorporate a number of optical and acoustic phenomena. One such effect that has become a focal point in biosensing is whispering gallery modes. These modes occur within optical cavities that exhibit a degree of symmetry, and are thus able to support resonating waves. This thesis develops the theory of resonances, exploring under what conditions a micro or nanoscale device can sustain these resonances, and for which physical criteria the resonance conditions deteriorate. The study is then extended to consider the biological cell. The discovery of a biological cell resonator, in which modes are definitively sustained without artificial assistance, represents the culmination of this thesis.

The properties of resonators and their emitted energy spectra are studied within the general framework of the Finite Difference Time Domain method, requiring supercomputing resources to probe the transient behaviour and interactions among the electromagnetic fields. The formal theory of Mie scattering is extended to develop a cutting-edge, computationally efficient model for general, multilayer microspheres, which represents a valuable achievement for the scientific community in its own right. The model unifies the approaches in the field of mathematical modelling to express the energy spectrum in a single encompassing equation, which is then applied in a range of contexts.
The gulf between modelling and biological resonators is bridged by an in-depth study of the physical characteristics of a range of biological cells, and the selection criteria for viable resonator candidates are developed through a number of detailed feasibility studies. The bovine embryo is consequently selected as the optimal choice.

The scientific advancements contained within each chapter, including the improved models, the selection criteria and the experimental techniques developed, are integrated together to perform the principal measurements of the spectra within a biological cell. Evidence is established for the ability of a bovine embryo to sustain whispering gallery modes. This is a significant finding covering extensive research ground, since it is the first such measurement world-wide. The ability of a cell to sustain modes on its own represents a conceptually elegant paradigm for new technologies involving on-site cell interrogation and reporting of the status and health of a biological cell in the future. The methodological and technological developments contained within this interdisciplinary thesis thus become a vital asset for the future realisation of autonomous biological cell sensors.
Acknowledgments

In this thesis lies a significant œuvre of work across multiple disciplines, including all the inherent logistical challenges of such a task. I would like to formally acknowledge my supervisors for their respective roles in this project: Prof. Tanya Monro, through the Australian Research Council Georgina Sweet Laureate Fellowship which supported the Laureate Scholarship, Assoc. Prof. Shahraam Afshar Vahid, and Dr. Alexandre François.

The unending positivity of Prof. Mark Hutchinson must be mentioned, along with the dedicated professional staff of the Centre for Nanoscale BioPhotonics, especially Ms. Melodee Trebilcock, both of whom I was able to turn to when the management psychology of such diverse interdisciplinary research led inevitably to conflicting procedural expectations.

My friends and colleagues, Dr. Tess Reynolds and Dr. Matthew Henderson, were also always supportive. I wish to thank Mr. Steven Amos for his help during all the hours I spent over at the School of Chemical Engineering, and for teaching me the chemistry and practices required to mix my own media, and also Dr. Nicolas Riesen for conversations about measurement apparatus. My thanks also go to Dr. Wenle Weng, who assisted me in the clear measurement and identification of whispering gallery modes early in the experimental portion of the project.

For all my friends in the OSA and SPIE Adelaide University Chapters, the IONS-KOALA 2014 International Conference organisation committee members, and the wonderful experiences we shared together to pull off the best conference in the series.

Interstate, the moral support I received for the supercomputing portion of the thesis from Prof. Andrew Greentree and my friend and colleague Dr. Daniel Drumm (RMIT) should not be understated. In addition, the directional insights of Prof. Ewa Goldys (Macquarie University) have helped keep my research priorities focused.

The resources from eResearch SA, and The National Computational Infrastructure (NCI) Facility (ANU) were vital in the completion of the early modelling inves-
I wish to thank The University of Adelaide, Adelaide Enterprise, and The University of South Australia, as many people came forward to assist me at different phases of the project. I thank the Robinson Research Institute in reproductive health for their time and resources, including the assistance and understanding of my friend Mr. Avishkar Saini.

On a personal level, I thank my friends for their support and understanding, especially Ian Kennedy, for all the conversations we had. I also thank the Burnside Symphony Orchestra and Haydn Chamber Orchestra for doing without me by the end of the project. The ongoing interest I keep to heart with Prof. Derek Leinweber, Elder Prof. Anthony Thomas and the CSSM, and the perpetual Visiting Research Associate status they granted me early in the project to continue integrating my research skills across multiple sub-fields was greatly valued. Finally, and most importantly, I acknowledge my family for unending support through all the complex phases of the project for whom any thanks I could bring to bear would be inadequate.
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