

## Obituary for Olivier Chesneau

Olivier Chesneau, still a budding young astronomer, left us last week at age 42. He was struck a couple of years ago by a rare form of Leukemia, which finally consumed him. This was a great loss, not only because Olivier was simply a great guy and popular collaborator, but also because he was energetic and prolific in his science output. Anyone who writes his last paper on his death bed surrounded by his collaborators must be unusually courageous yet humble. A quick examination with ADS reveals a total of some 240 publications since 1998, ramping rapidly up to the present, of which over 90 (even more if one counts the SPIE papers) were in refereed journals. Many of these papers dealt with massive stars, the latest mentioned above being a first-author paper about interferometrically resolving the famous late-B supergiant Rigel.

Olivier has left a wonderful legacy in his published work of extraordinary quality and quantity. His dream was to reach a happy marriage between interferometry and (spectro-) polarimetry, where the gains would be enormous: what is 0.1% polarization in an unresolved star could suddenly become 1 or 10% or more when resolved. And I think he has advanced the field in that direction already.

I was particularly honoured as one of his three doctoral co-supervisors (that seems to be how many he needed to deal with his abundant energy!), after his masters<sup>â€™</sup> studies (DEC in France at the time) in Strasbourg with long-time colleague and friend Agnes Acker, who helped initiate a co-tutelle involving herself, Farokh Vakili (Observatoire de la CÃ´te d'Azur) and myself. This allowed Olivier to obtain a doctorate in France simultaneously with a PhD from North America - not a bad accomplishment. I like to think that this might have helped him reach the level he did, but that may be wishful thinking, since he most likely made it largely on his own laurels, which amply proved themselves in his latest permanent position at Observatoire de la CÃ´te d'Azur.

The last time I saw him in person was in 2011 at the so-called Tonyfest at Lac du Taureau, Quebec Province. He was in fine form in all ways, including scientifically, paddling canoes, at beach-volleyball and in his extraordinary musical talents. As he said in his last email to me: â€œYes, music is in my blood and I have really the brain connected to the instrument, and this for a long time.â€• He could play just about any music by ear on the spot on either the piano or the clarinet, the latter being an instrument that I struggled with in my youth. He was truly a gifted musician and I suspect this extended into many areas of his all-too-short life.

In his last weeks, I had some wonderful email correspondence with Olivier. Each time I read them I have to pinch myself in realizing that he is now gone. The pain will linger for quite a while yet. Sincere condolences to Olivier's wife Martine and the kids from the Massive Star Community.

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