Search for resonant diboson production in the $\ell\ellqq\bar{q}$ final state in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV with the ATLAS detector


DOI
10.1140/epjc/s10052-015-3261-8

Publication date
2015

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
European Physical Journal C

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Search for resonant diboson production in the $\ell\ell q\bar{q}$ final state in $pp$ collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV with the ATLAS detector

ATLAS Collaboration

CERN, 1211 Geneva 23, Switzerland

Received: 23 September 2014 / Accepted: 7 January 2015 / Published online: 10 February 2015
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Abstract This paper reports on a search for narrow resonances in diboson production in the $\ell\ell q\bar{q}$ final state using $pp$ collision data corresponding to an integrated luminosity of 20 fb$^{-1}$ collected at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV with the ATLAS detector at the Large Hadron Collider. No significant excess of data events over the Standard Model expectation is observed. Upper limits at the 95 % confidence level are set on the production cross section times branching ratio for Kaluza–Klein gravitons predicted by the Randall–Sundrum model and for Extended Gauge Model $W'$ bosons. These results lead to the exclusion of mass values below 740 and 1590 GeV for the graviton and $W'$ boson respectively.

1 Introduction

This paper presents a search for narrow diboson resonances in the semileptonic decay channel $ZW$ or $ZZ \rightarrow \ell\ell q\bar{q}$ (where $\ell$ stands for electron or muon) in $pp$ collision data corresponding to an integrated luminosity of 20 fb$^{-1}$ recorded with the ATLAS detector at a centre-of-mass energy $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC). This type of resonances appear in models such as Technicolor [1–3], Warped Extra Dimensions [4–6], and Grand Unified Theories [7–10]. The semileptonic decay channel has a relatively large branching ratio compared to the fully leptonic mode, while the requirement of the presence of two decay leptons can suppress the multijet background present in the fully hadronic mode. Additionally, the absence of neutrinos in the final state allows to reconstruct the invariant mass of the diboson system.

This analysis is optimized using two models with narrow resonances as benchmarks: spin-2 Kaluza–Klein (KK) gravitons ($G^* \rightarrow ZZ$), and spin-1 $W'$ gauge bosons ($W' \rightarrow ZZ$) of the Sequential Standard Model (SSM) with modified coupling to $ZW$, also referred to as the Extended Gauge Model (EGM) [11]. For both models, the $W$ and $Z$ bosons from resonance decays are longitudinally polarized over a pole mass range relevant to this analysis.

The KK graviton interpretation is based on an extended Randall–Sundrum (RS) model with a warped extra dimension in which the Standard Model (SM) fields can propagate [12]. This extended “bulk” RS model avoids constraints on the original RS model [4], referred to as RS1 hereafter, from limits on flavour-changing neutral currents and from electroweak precision tests. The bulk RS model is characterized by a dimensionless coupling constant $k/M_{Pl} \sim 1$ where $k$ is the curvature of the warped extra dimension and $M_{Pl} = M_{Pl}/\sqrt{\kappa}$ is the reduced Planck mass. The width relative to the mass of the bulk RS graviton with $k/M_{Pl} = 1$ varies between 3 and 6 % within the pole mass range of 300–2000 GeV.

The EGM introduces $W'$ and $Z'$ bosons with SM couplings to fermions and with the coupling strength of the heavy $W'$ to $WZ$ modified by a mixing factor $\xi = c \times (m_W/m_{W'})^2$ relative to the SM couplings, where $m_W$ and $m_{W'}$ are the pole masses of the $W$ and $W'$ bosons respectively, and $c$ is a coupling scaling factor. In this scenario the partial width of the $W'$ boson to $WZ$ scales linearly with $m_{W'}$, leading to a narrow resonance over the accessible mass range, in contrast to the SSM where the width grows rapidly as $m_{W'}^5$. For the simulated EGM $W'$ samples used in the analysis, the natural $W'$ width is about 3 % at a pole mass of 300 GeV and increases slightly to 4 % at a pole mass of 2000 GeV.

Previous searches for diboson resonances have been carried out using $p\bar{p}$ collision data at $\sqrt{s} = 1.96$ TeV at the Tevatron and $pp$ collision data at $\sqrt{s} = 7$–8 TeV at the LHC. The D0 Collaboration searched for resonances in $WW$ and $ZW$ production [13,14] and excluded $W'$ bosons in the mass range of 180–690 GeV and RS1 gravitons in the mass interval 300–754 GeV at the 95 % confidence level (CL). The CDF experiment searched for resonances in the $ZZ$ decay channel and set limits on the production cross section of RS1 gravitons in the mass range 300–1000 GeV at the 95 % CL [15]. The ATLAS Collaboration reported searches for resonant $ZZ (\rightarrow \ell\ell\ell', \ell\ell q\bar{q})$ [16], $WW (\rightarrow \ell\nu q\bar{q})$ [17] and $WZ (\rightarrow \ell q\bar{q}, \ell\nu\ell')$ [17,18] production, and searches for new phenomena in high-mass $WW (\rightarrow \ell\nu\ell')$ processes [19]
using $pp$ collision data recorded at $\sqrt{s} = 7$ TeV, except for the $WZ \rightarrow \ell\nu\ell'$ search in Ref. [18], which used data recorded at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV. Here $\ell'$ stands for an electron or muon. These studies excluded EGM $W'$ bosons with masses up to 1.52 TeV for $WZ$ final states, RS1 gravitons with masses up to 845 GeV for $ZZ$ final states and up to 1.23 TeV for $WW$ final states. The CMS Collaboration searched for $ZZ$ and $WW$ resonances in the semileptonic decay channel, setting exclusion limits on the production cross section of bulk RS gravitons [20]. In the fully hadronic channel, the CMS Collaboration excluded RS1 gravitons with $k/\bar{M}_{Pl} = 0.1$ for masses up to 1.2 TeV, and $W'$ bosons for masses up to 1.7 TeV [21]. Both of these searches implement jet substructure techniques to identify the event topology where the hadronic system from the decay of one or two gauge bosons is produced at high transverse momentum $p_T$, resulting in a single reconstructed jet. In the analysis presented here, a similar technique has been used to identify hadronically decaying $W$ or $Z$ boson produced at high $p_T$. This technique uses the characteristics of two cores (“sub-jets”) inside a single reconstructed jet and allows for a significant improvement in acceptance and selection efficiency for high mass states with boosted $W$ and $Z$ bosons over the previous analysis [16].

2 Analysis

In this study, three optimized sets of selection criteria classify $ZW/ZZ \rightarrow \ell\ell\bar{q}q$ events into distinct kinematic regions, namely the “low-$p_T$ resolved region” (LR), “high-$p_T$ resolved region” (HR) and “merged region” (MR), based on the $p_T$ of the dilepton and the hadronic system. In the LR and HR the hadronic boson decay is reconstructed as two distinct jets, whereas in the MR it is reconstructed as a single jet. In all three cases, the dilepton (hadronic system) mass is required to be consistent with the mass of the $Z$ boson ($W$ or $Z$ boson). In the MR, additional jet substructure information, optimized for the identification of the hadronic decay of a longitudinally polarized high-$p_T$ boson, is used to improve the sensitivity. Finally, the $\ell\ell\bar{q}q$ mass spectrum, reconstructed as the mass of the dilepton and the two-jet system in the LR and HR ($m_{\ell\ell\bar{q}q}$) or the dilepton and the single-jet system in the MR ($m_{\ell\ell\bar{F}}$), is examined for excesses with respect to the expectation from SM processes (background).

2.1 Detector and data sample

The ATLAS detector [22] consists of an inner detector (ID) providing charged particle tracking for the pseudorapidity

$$\eta = -\ln(\tan(\theta/2)).$$

Footnote 1 continued

The ATLAS Collaboration [23] used an integrated luminosity of 20.3 fb$^{-1}$ of $pp$ collision data collected in 2012. The luminosity is derived from beam-separation scans [23] and has an uncertainty of 2.8%. Events are selected with lepton triggers that require the presence of at least one lepton (electron or muon) with $p_T > 24$ GeV. The trigger efficiency for signal events that pass the selection criteria described in Sect. 2.3 is approximately 92% for the muon channel and greater than 99% for the electron channel.

2.2 Simulated event samples

To model the acceptance and the reconstructed mass spectra for narrow resonances, benchmark signal samples are generated with pole masses between 300 and 2000 GeV, in 100 GeV steps. Additional samples are generated between 350 and 950 GeV for the bulk RS $G^*$ signal so that the mass gap is reduced to 50 GeV, which is comparable to the detector resolution of the reconstructed $\ell\ell\bar{q}q$ mass in this mass interval. The bulk RS $G^*$ signal events are generated by CALCHEP [24] with $k/\bar{M}_{Pl} = 1.0$, and the $W'$ signal sample is generated with PYTHIA 8 [25], setting the coupling scale factor $\kappa = 1$. The factorization and renormalization scales are set to the resonance mass. The hadronisation and fragmentation are modelled with PYTHIA 8 in both cases, and the CTEQ6L1 [26] (MSTW2008LO [27]) parton distribution functions (PDFs) are used for the $G^*$ ($W'$) signal. The $W'$ production cross section is scaled to a next-to-next-to-leading-order (NNLO) calculation in $\alpha_s$ by ZWPROD [28]. Calculated production cross section times branching ratio values for different pole masses are given in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pole mass (GeV)</th>
<th>$\sigma_{G^*} \cdot BR (fb)$</th>
<th>$\sigma_{W'} \cdot BR (fb)$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>4100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Theoretical production cross section times branching ratio $\sigma_{G^*} (pp \rightarrow G^*) \cdot BR(G^* \rightarrow ZZ)$ with $k/\bar{M}_{Pl} = 1.0$ and $\sigma_{W'} (pp \rightarrow W') \cdot BR(W' \rightarrow ZW)$ with $\kappa = 1$ for different pole masses of the resonances.
The main background sources are $Z$ bosons produced in association with jets ($Z + \text{jets}$), followed by top-quark pair and non-resonant vector-boson pair production. The contribution from multijet events is negligible after the selection cuts described in Sect. 2.3. All background estimates are based on simulation. Additionally, the main background source, $Z + \text{jets}$, is estimated using constraints from data as described in Sect. 2.4. The $Z + \text{jets}$ background is modelled by the Sherpa generator [29] with CT10 PDFs [30]. The top pair, s-channel single-top and $Wt$ processes are modelled by the MC@NLO [31–34] generator with CT10 PDFs, interfaced to HERWIG [35,36] for hadronisation and JIMMY [37] for modelling of the underlying event. The top pair production cross section is calculated at NNLO in QCD including resummation of next-to-next-to-leading logarithmic soft gluon terms with Top++2.0 [38–43]. The QCD including resummation of next-to-next-to-leading logarithmic soft gluon terms with Top++2.0 [38–43]. The diboson production cross sections are normalized to predictions at next-to-leading-order accuracy using the CT10 PDFs. The diboson production cross sections are normalized to predictions at next-to-leading-order accuracy as calculated with [46]. Generated events are processed with the ATLAS detector simulation program [47] based on the GEANT4 package [48]. Effects from additional inelastic $pp$ interactions (pile-up) occurring in the same bunch crossing are taken into account by overlaying minimum-bias events simulated by PYTHIA 8.

2.3 Object and event selection

Electron candidates are selected from energy clusters in the electromagnetic calorimeter according to the medium criteria of Ref. [49], which impose requirements on the shower profile and demand an associated ID track. Offline reconstructed electrons are required to have $p_T > 25$ GeV and $|\eta| < 2.47$. The transition region between the barrel and endcaps ($1.37 < |\eta| < 1.52$) exhibits degraded energy resolution and is therefore excluded.

Muon candidates are reconstructed by combining ID and MS tracks which have consistent position, charge and momentum measurements [50]. The muon candidates are required to have $p_T > 25$ GeV and $|\eta| < 2.4$.

A primary vertex reconstructed from at least three well-reconstructed charged particle tracks, each with $p_T > 400$ MeV, is required in order to remove non-collision background. If an event contains more than one primary vertex candidate, the vertex with the highest $\Sigma p_T^2$ of the associated tracks is selected. To ensure that both electrons or muons originate from the primary vertex, it is required that the product of the longitudinal impact parameter ($z_0$) and the sine of the polar angle of the candidate ($\theta$) satisfies $|z_0 \sin(\theta)| < 0.5$ mm, and that the ratio of the transverse impact parameter ($d_0$) to its uncertainty ($\sigma_{d_0}$) for electrons (muons) fulfils $|d_0|/\sigma_{d_0} < 6$ (3.5). In addition, the lepton candidates are required to be isolated from other tracks and calorimetric activity. The scalar sum of the transverse momenta of tracks within a cone of size $\Delta R \equiv \sqrt{(\Delta \eta)^2 + (\Delta \phi)^2} = 0.2$ around the lepton track is required to be less than 15% of the candidate $p_T$. Similarly, the sum of transverse energy deposits in the calorimeter within a cone of size $\Delta R = 0.2$, excluding the transverse energy due to the lepton, and corrected for the expected pile-up contribution, is required to be less than 30% of the candidate $p_T$ (calorimetric isolation).

To improve the acceptance for events with boosted $Z$ bosons, with $p_T > 800$ GeV, the isolation method is modified for dilepton objects: a dilepton track isolation variable is calculated for each lepton of a like-flavour pair by subtracting the $p_T$ of the paired lepton from the $p_T$ sum described above if it falls inside the isolation cone of the lepton under consideration. The modified scalar sum $p_T$ variable for the dilepton isolation is required to be less than 15% of the lepton $p_T$, as in the standard track isolation. The calorimetric isolation requirements are dropped if $\Delta R(\ell\ell) < 0.25$.

Jets are reconstructed from clusters of calorimeter cells using the anti-$k_t$ algorithm [51,52] with a distance parameter $R = 0.4$. Jets are required to be in the range $|\eta| < 2.1$ and have $p_T > 30$ GeV after correcting for energy losses in passive material, the non-compensating response of the calorimeter and extra energy due to event pile-up [53]. Furthermore, for jets with $p_T < 50$ GeV, the scalar sum $p_T$ of associated tracks from the primary vertex is required to be at least 50% of the scalar sum $p_T$ of all associated tracks to suppress jets from pile-up interactions. The selected anti-$k_t$ jets are referred to as small-$R$ jets and denoted by “$j$” hereafter.

For resonances with a mass above about 900 GeV, the $q \bar{q}$ pair is often merged into a single jet and the fraction of merged $q \bar{q}$ pairs increases with the resonance mass. Such jets are reconstructed with the Cambridge–Aachen jet clustering algorithm [54] with a distance parameter $R = 1.2$. To exploit the characteristics of the decay of the massive boson into a $q \bar{q}$ pair, these jets are further required to pass a splitting and filtering algorithm similar to the algorithm described in Ref. [55] but optimized for the identification of very high-$p_T$ boson decays [56]. These jets are required to be within $|\eta| < 1.2$ and to have $p_T > 100$ GeV, and are referred to as large-$R$ jets or “$J$” hereafter.

Events which contain exactly two electrons or muons satisfying the above criteria are selected if at least one is associated with a lepton trigger candidate. To select lepton pairs originating from a $Z$ boson decay, the dilepton invariant mass ($m_{\ell\ell}$) is required to be in the range $66 \text{ GeV} < m_{\ell\ell} < 116$ GeV. The $m_{\ell\ell}$ cut range is chosen to be wide to enhance the signal sensitivity, given that the dominant background is from the $Z + \text{jets}$ processes and a narrower cut would not provide additional discrimination power. Muon-pair events are further required to have muons of opposite charge. The
The simulation of the main background source (Z + jets) is corrected using data. The normalization and $m_{\ell\ell jj}/J$ shape corrections of the simulated Z + jets background sample is determined from data in a control region defined by all selection cuts but with an inverted cut on $m_{jj/J}$, namely $m_{jj/J} < 70 $ GeV or $m_{jj/J} > 110 $ GeV, in the resolved and merged regions, respectively. The normalization corrections, obtained as the ratio of event yields in the data and Z + jets simulated samples for the electron and muon channel, after removing contributions from subdominant backgrounds from the data spectrum, range between 2 and 10 %. The $m_{\ell\ell jj}/J$ shape correction is well reproduced with a linear fit to the ratio of data to Z + jets background, derived for each signal region after combining the electron and muon channels. This results in bin-by-bin corrections of up to 7 % in the LR, 3 % in the HR, and 22 % in the MR. The other backgrounds, from diboson and top production, are taken from simulation without applying corrections from data control regions.

The event yield in the three signal regions is summarized in Table 2. The total event yield with combined statistical and systematic uncertainties is given before and after the simultaneous fit to the three signal regions (cf. Sect. 3).

### 2.5 Systematic uncertainties

The main systematic uncertainty on the $m_{\ell\ell jj}/J$ spectrum comes from the uncertainty in the Z + jets background modelling. The normalization uncertainty of the Z + jets background is estimated from the relative difference between the normalization corrections derived from the nominal control region ($m_{jj/J} < 70 $ GeV or $> 110 $ GeV) and either the lower or higher mass region, taking the larger of the two as an estimate of the systematic uncertainty. If the resulting uncertainty is smaller than the statistical uncertainty of the normalization correction from the nominal control region, the latter is used as the systematic uncertainty. The uncertainty of the shape correction is estimated from the uncertainty on the slope parameter of the linear fit and is treated as uncorrelated with respect to the normalization uncertainty. The combined normalization and shape uncertainties vary as a function of $m_{\ell\ell jj}/J$ and range from 6 to 9 % in the LR, 2 to 8 % in the HR,
and 11 to 47% in the MR. For all simulated samples, detector performance-related systematic uncertainties including the small-\(R\) jet energy scale and resolution, large-\(R\) jet energy, mass and momentum-balance scales and resolutions, the lepton reconstruction and identification efficiencies, and lepton momentum scales and resolutions are also considered. The large-\(R\) jet energy and mass scale uncertainties are evaluated by comparing the ratio of calorimeter-based to track-based measurements in dijet data and simulated events, and are validated using a data sample of high-\(p_T\) \(W\) bosons produced in association with jets. A Kolmogorov–Smirnov (KS) test \cite{57} is then performed between the nominal and systematically varied distributions for a given systematic uncertainty source to determine if it has a sizeable effect on the shape of background and signal estimations. Only significant systematic effects are retained in the analysis by requiring a KS probability of less then 10%. For the normalization, if the event yield changes by more than half the statistical uncertainty of the nominal yield, the systematic uncertainty is included.

Uncertainties on signal acceptance due to PDF sets, renormalization and factorization scale choices, initial- and final-state gluon radiation (ISR/FSR) modelling, and LHC beam energy uncertainty are also considered. The PDF uncertainties are estimated by taking the acceptance difference between CTEQL1 and MSTW2008LO PDFs and adding it in quadrature to the difference between MSTW2008LO error sets. The uncertainties due to the scale and ISR/FSR modelling are estimated by varying relevant parameters in \textsc{Pythia} 8 by a factor of 2.0 and 0.5. The beam energy systematic uncertainty is assessed with simulation by varying the beam energy within the measured uncertainty of 0.66% \cite{58}, leading to at most a 1% effect on acceptance. The dominant uncertainty comes from ISR/FSR modelling and is approximately 5%.

3 Results

The invariant mass of the diboson system is reconstructed from the \(\ell\ell jj\) or \(\ell\ell J\) system. The reconstructed \(m_{\ell\ell jj/J}\) distributions for data and simulated background events in the three signal regions are shown in Fig. 1 for the combined electron and muon channels. Good agreement is observed between the data and the background predictions, with \(p\) value\(^2\) ranging from 0.98 to 0.10, and the results are presented as 95% confidence level upper limits on the production cross section times branching ratio for the \(G^*\) and \(W'\) models. The upper limits are determined using the \(C L_S\) modified frequentist formalism \cite{59} with a profile likelihood test statistic \cite{60}.

\(^2\) The \(p\) value is the probability that the background can produce a fluctuation greater than or equal to the excess observed in data.
4 Conclusion

In summary, a search for narrow, heavy resonances produced in pp collisions and decaying to diboson final states at the Large Hadron Collider has been performed. The data sample analysed, corresponding to an integrated luminosity of 20 fb$^{-1}$ at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV, was recorded with the ATLAS detector. No significant excess over the Standard Model background expectation was found. Upper limits on the production cross section times branching ratio and mass exclusion limits are derived for $W'$ bosons in the theoretical framework of an Extended Gauge Model and for gravitons in warped extra dimensions in the context of the bulk Randall–Sundrum model. The results represent a significant improvement over previously reported limits by ATLAS [16] due to increased pp collision energy and data set size as well as the development of new techniques to analyse heavily boosted decays of bosons.

Acknowledgments  We thank CERN for the very successful operation of the LHC, as well as the support staff from our institutions without whom ATLAS could not be operated efficiently. We acknowledge the support of ANPCyT, Argentina; YerPhI, Armenia; ARC, Australia; BMWFW and FWF, Austria; ANAS, Azerbaijan; SSTC, Belarus; CNPq and FAPESP, Brazil; NSERC, NRC and CFI, Canada; CERN; CONICYT, Chile; CAS, MOST and NSFC, China; COLCIENCIAS, Colombia; MSMT CR, MPO CR and VSC CR, Czech Republic; DNRF, DNSRC and Lundbeck Foundation, Denmark; EPLANET, ERC and NSRF, European Union; IN2P3-CNRS, CEA-DSM/IRFU, France; GNSF, Georgia; BMBF, DFG, HGF, MPG and AvH Foundation, Germany; ISF, MINERVA, GIF, I-Core and Benoziyo Center, Israel; INFN, Italy; MEXT and JSPS, Japan; CNRST, Morocco; FOM and NWO, Netherlands; BRF and RCN, Norway; MNiSW and NCN, Poland; GRICES and FCT, Portugal; MNE/IFA, Romania; MES of Russia and ROSATOM, Russian Federation; JINR; MSTD, Serbia; MSSR, Slovakia; ARRS and MIZŠ, Slovenia; DST/NRF, South Africa; MINECO, Spain; SRC and Wallace Foundation, Sweden; SER, SNF and Cantons of Bern and Geneva, Switzerland; NSC, Taiwan; TAEK, Turkey; STFC, the Royal Society and Leverhulme Trust, UK; DOE and NSF, USA. The crucial computing support from all WLCG partners is acknowledged gratefully, in particular from CERN and the ATLAS Tier-1 facilities at TRIUMF (Canada), NDGF (Denmark, Norway, Sweden), CC-IN2P3 (France), KIT/GridKA (Germany), INFN-CNAF (Italy), NL-T1 (Netherlands), PIC (Spain), ASGC (Taiwan), RAL (UK) and BNL (USA) and in the Tier-2 facilities worldwide.

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References


The test statistic is evaluated with a maximum likelihood fit of signal models and background predictions to the reconstructed $m_{(e\mu)/j}$ spectra shown in Fig. 1. Systematic uncertainties and their correlations are taken into account as nuisance parameters with Gaussian constraints. The likelihood fit, which takes into account correlations between the systematic uncertainties, is performed for signal pole masses ranging between 300 and 850 GeV for the LR, 550 and 1800 GeV for the HR and 800 and 2000 GeV for the MR. Overlapping regions are fit simultaneously.

Figure 2 shows 95 % CL upper limits on the production cross section times branching fraction into $ZZ$ or $ZW$ as a function of the resonance pole mass. The theoretical predictions for the EGM $W'$ and the bulk RS $G^*$ with two different values of the coupling constant, shown in the figure, allow the extraction of observed (expected) lower mass limits of 1590 (1540) GeV for the $W'$, and 740 and 540 (700 and 490) GeV for the $G^*$ with $k/\tilde{M}_{Pl} = 1.0$ and 0.5 respectively. The most powerful search regions are the LR for masses below 550 GeV, the HR from 500 to 850 GeV and the MR for higher masses.
Institut für Astro- und Teilchenphysik, Leopold-Franzens-Universität, Innsbruck, Austria
University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA, USA
Department of Physics and Astronomy, Iowa State University, Ames, IA, USA
Joint Institute for Nuclear Research, JINR Dubna, Dubna, Russia
KEK, High Energy Accelerator Research Organization, Tsukuba, Japan
Graduate School of Science, Kobe University, Kobe, Japan
Faculty of Science, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan
Kyoto University of Education, Kyoto, Japan
Department of Physics, Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan
Instituto de Física La Plata, Universidad Nacional de La Plata and CONICET, La Plata, Argentina
Physics Department, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK
Oliver Lodge Laboratory, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK
Department of Physics, Jožef Stefan Institute and University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia
School of Physics and Astronomy, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK
Department of Physics, Royal Holloway University of London, Surrey, UK
Department of Physics and Astronomy, University College London, London, UK
Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA, USA
Laboratoire de Physique Nucléaire et de Hautes Energies, UPMC and Université Paris-Diderot and CNRS/IN2P3, Paris, France
Fysiska institutionen, Lunds universitet, Lund, Sweden
Departamento de Física Teorica C-15, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Madrid, Spain
Institut für Physik, Universität Mainz, Mainz, Germany
School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK
CPPM, Aix-Marseille Université and CNRS/IN2P3, Marseille, France
Department of Physics, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, USA
Department of Physics, McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada
School of Physics, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia
Department of Physics, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA
Department of Physics and Astronomy, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA
(a) INFN Sezione di Milano, Milan, Italy; (b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Milano, Milan, Italy
B.I. Stepanov Institute of Physics, National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Minsk, Republic of Belarus
National Scientific and Educational Centre for Particle and High Energy Physics, Minsk, Republic of Belarus
Department of Physics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA
Group of Particle Physics, University of Montreal, Montreal, QC, Canada
P.N. Lebedev Institute of Physics, Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
Institute for Theoretical and Experimental Physics (ITEP), Moscow, Russia
Moscow Engineering and Physics Institute (MEPhI), Moscow, Russia
D.V. Skobeltsyn Institute of Nuclear Physics, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia
Fakultät für Physik, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Munich, Germany
Max-Planck-Institut für Physik (Werner-Heisenberg-Institut), Munich, Germany
Nagasaki Institute of Applied Science, Nagasaki, Japan
Graduate School of Science and Kobayashi-Maskawa Institute, Nagoya University, Nagoya, Japan
(a) INFN Sezione di Napoli, Naples, Italy; (b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Napoli, Naples, Italy
Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, USA
Institute for Mathematics, Astrophysics and Particle Physics, Radboud University Nijmegen/Nikhef, Nijmegen, The Netherlands
Nikhef National Institute for Subatomic Physics and University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Department of Physics, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, USA
Budker Institute of Nuclear Physics, SB RAS, Novosibirsk, Russia
Department of Physics, New York University, New York, NY, USA
Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA
Faculty of Science, Okayama University, Okayama, Japan
School of Physics, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan
Department of Physics, Technion: Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa, Israel
Raymond and Beverly Sackler School of Physics and Astronomy, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel
Department of Physics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece
Department of Physics, International Center for Elementary Particle Physics, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
Graduate School of Science and Technology, Tokyo Metropolitan University, Tokyo, Japan
Department of Physics, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Japan
Department of Physics, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada
(a) TRIUMF, Vancouver, BC, Canada; (b) Department of Physics and Astronomy, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada
Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Japan
Department of Physics and Astronomy, Tufts University, Medford, MA, USA
Centro de Investigaciones, Universidad Antonio Narino, Bogotá, Colombia
Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA, USA
(a) INFN Gruppo Collegato di Udine, Sezione di Trieste, Udine, Italy; (b) ICTP, Trieste, Italy; (c) Dipartimento di Chimica, Fisica e Ambiente, Università di Udine, Udine, Italy
Department of Physics, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL, USA
Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Uppsala, Uppsala, Sweden
Istituto di Fisica Corpuscular (IFIC) and Departamento de Física Atómica, Molecular y Nuclear and Departamento de Ingeniería Electrónica and Instituto de Microelectrónica de Barcelona (IMB-CNM), University of Valencia and CSIC, Valencia, Spain
Department of Physics, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada
Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada
Department of Physics, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan
Department of Particle Physics, The Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, Israel
Department of Physics, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, USA
Fakultät für Physik und Astronomie, Julius-Maximilians-Universität, Würzburg, Germany
Fachbereich C Physik, Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Wuppertal, Germany
Department of Physics, Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA
Yerevan Physics Institute, Yerevan, Armenia
Centre de Calcul de l’Institut National de Physique Nucléaire et de Physique des Particules (IN2P3), Villeurbanne, France

Also at Department of Physics, King’s College London, London, UK
Also at Institute of Physics, Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, Baku, Azerbaijan
Also at Novosibirsk State University, Novosibirsk, Russia
Also at Particle Physics Department, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Didcot, UK
Also at TRIUMF, Vancouver, BC, Canada
Also at Department of Physics, California State University, Fresno, CA, USA
Also at Tomsk State University, Tomsk, Russia
Also at CPPM, Aix-Marseille Université and CNRS/IN2P3, Marseille, France
Also at Università di Napoli Parthenope, Naples, Italy
Also at Institute of Particle Physics (IPP), Victoria, Canada
Also at Department of Physics, St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University, St. Petersburg, Russia
Also at Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China
Also at Department of Financial and Management Engineering, University of the Aegean, Chios, Greece
Also at Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA, USA
Also at Institucio Catalana de Recerca i Estudis Avancats, ICREA, Barcelona, Spain
Also at Department of Physics, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA
Also at Institute of Theoretical Physics, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia
Also at CERN, Geneva, Switzerland
Also at Ochadai Academic Production, Ochanomizu University, Tokyo, Japan
† Also at Manhattan College, New York, NY, USA
u Also at Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan
v Also at LAL, Université Paris-Sud and CNRS/IN2P3, Orsay, France
w Also at Academia Sinica Grid Computing, Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan
x Also at Laboratoire de Physique Nucléaire et de Hautes Energies, UPMC and Université Paris-Diderot and CNRS/IN2P3, Paris, France
y Also at School of Physical Sciences, National Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar, India
z Also at Dipartimento di Fisica, Sapienza Università di Roma, Rome, Italy
aa Also at Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology State University, Dolgoprudny, Russia
ab Also at Section de Physique, Université de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland
ac Also at International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA), Trieste, Italy
ad Also at Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA
ae Also at School of Physics and Engineering, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China
af Also at Faculty of Physics, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia
ag Also at Moscow Engineering and Physics Institute (MEPhI), Moscow, Russia
ah Also at Institute for Particle and Nuclear Physics, Wigner Research Centre for Physics, Budapest, Hungary
ai Also at Department of Physics, Oxford University, Oxford, UK
aj Also at Department of Physics, Nanjing University, Jiangsu, China
ak Also at Institut für Experimentalphysik, Universität Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany
al Also at Department of Physics, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA
am Also at Discipline of Physics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa
an Also at Department of Physics, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
* Deceased