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C. Karoff, W.J. Chaplin, Thierry Appourchaux, Y. Elsworth, R.A. Garcia, et al.. Asteroseismology of solar-type stars with Kepler I: Data analysis. *Astronomical Notes / Astronomische Nachrichten*, 2010, 331 (9-10), pp.972-976. 10.1002/asna.201011438 . hal-00683333

HAL Id: hal-00683333

<https://hal.science/hal-00683333>

Submitted on 18 Oct 2020

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Asteroseismology of solar-type stars with Kepler I: Data analysis

C. Karoff^{1,2,*}, W.J. Chaplin¹, T. Appourchaux³, Y. Elsworth¹, R.A. Garcia⁴, G. Houdek⁵, T.S. Metcalfe⁶, J. Molenda-Żakowicz⁷, M.J.P.F.G. Monteiro⁸, M.J. Thompson⁹, J. Christensen-Dalsgaard², R.L. Gilliland¹⁰, H. Kjeldsen², S. Basu¹¹, T.R. Bedding¹², T.L. Campante^{2,8}, P. Eggenberger¹³, S.T. Fletcher¹⁴, P. Gaulme³, R. Handberg², S. Hekker¹, M. Martić¹⁵, S. Mathur⁶, B. Mosser¹⁶, C. Regulo^{17,18}, I.W. Roxburgh¹⁹, D. Salabert^{17,18}, D. Stello¹², G.A. Verner¹⁹, K. Belkacem²⁰, K. Biazzo²¹, M.S. Cunha⁸, M. Gruberbauer²², J.A. Guzik²³, F. Kupka²⁴, B. Leroy¹⁶, H.-G. Ludwig²⁵, S. Mathis²⁶, A. Noels²⁰, R.W. Noyes²⁷, T. Roca Cortes^{17,18}, M. Roth²⁸, K.H. Sato⁴, J. Schmitt²⁹, M.D. Suran³⁰, R. Trampedach³¹, K. Uytterhoeven⁴, R. Ventura³², and P.A. Wilson^{33,34}

- ¹ School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK
- ² Department of Physics and Astronomy, Aarhus University, Ny Munkegade 120, DK-8000 Aarhus C, Denmark
- ³ Institut d'Astrophysique Spatiale, Université Paris XI-CNRS (UMR8617), Batiment 121, 91405 Orsay Cedex, France
- ⁴ Laboratoire AIM, CEA/DSM-CNRS, Université Paris 7 Diderot, IRFU/SAP-SEDI, Centre de Saclay, 91191, Gif-sur-Yvette, France
- ⁵ Institute of Astronomy, University of Vienna, A-1180 Vienna, Austria
- ⁶ High Altitude Observatory and Scientific Computing Division, National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder, CO 80307, USA
- ⁷ Astronomical Institute, University of Wrocław, ul. Kopernika, 11, 51-622 Wrocław, Poland
- ⁸ Centro de Astrofísica and DFA-Faculdade de Ciências, Universidade do Porto, Ruas das Estrelas, 4150-762 Porto, Portugal
- ⁹ School of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Sheffield, Hounsfield Road, Sheffield S3 7RH, UK
- ¹⁰ Space Telescope Science Institute, Baltimore, MD 21218, USA
- ¹¹ Department of Astronomy, Yale University, P.O. Box 208101, New Haven, CT 06520-8101, USA
- ¹² Sydney Institute for Astronomy (SfA), School of Physics, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia
- ¹³ Geneva Observatory, University of Geneva, Maillettes 51, 1290 Sauverny, Switzerland
- ¹⁴ Materials Engineering Research Institute, Faculty of Arts, Computing, Engineering and Sciences, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, S1 1WB, UK
- ¹⁵ LATMOS-IPSL, CNRS, Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin, 11, boulevard d'Alembert, 78280 Guyancourt, France
- ¹⁶ LESIA, CNRS, Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Université, Denis Diderot, Observatoire de Paris, 92195 Meudon Cedex, France
- ¹⁷ Departamento de Astrofísica, Universidad de La Laguna, E-38206 La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain
- ¹⁸ Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias, E-38200 La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain
- ¹⁹ Queen Mary University of London, Astronomy Unit, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS, UK
- ²⁰ Département d'Astrophysique, Géophysique et Océanographie (AGO), Université de Liège, Allée du 6 Août 17 4000 Liège 1, Belgium
- ²¹ Arcetri Astrophysical Observatory, Largo Enrico Fermi 5, 50125 Firenze, Italy
- ²² Department of Astronomy and Physics, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, NS B3H 3C3, Canada
- ²³ Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, NM 87545-2345, USA
- ²⁴ Faculty of Mathematics, University of Vienna, Nordbergstraße 15, A-1090 Wien, Austria
- ²⁵ ZAH – Landessternwarte, Königstuhl 12, 69117 Heidelberg, Germany
- ²⁶ Laboratoire AIM, CEA/DSM-CNRS-Université Paris Diderot, IRFU/SAP Centre de Saclay, F-91191 Gif-sur-Yvette, France
- ²⁷ Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, Cambridge, MA, USA
- ²⁸ Kiepenheuer-Institut für Sonnenphysik, Schöneckstr. 6, 79104 Freiburg, Germany
- ²⁹ Observatoire de Haute-Provence, F-04870, St.Michel l'Observatoire, France
- ³⁰ Astronomical Institute of the Romanian Academy, Str. Cutitul de Argint, 5, RO 40557, Bucharest, Romania
- ³¹ JILA, University of Colorado, 440 UCB, Boulder, CO 80309-0440, USA
- ³² INAF Osservatorio Astrofisico di Catania, Via S.Sofia 78, 95123, Catania, Italy
- ³³ Nordic Optical Telescope, Apartado 474, E-38700 Santa Cruz de la Palma, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain
- ³⁴ Institute of Theoretical Astrophysics, University of Oslo, P.O. Box 1029, Blindern, N-0315 Oslo, Norway

Received 2010 Sep 9, accepted 2010 Sep 13

Published online 2010 Nov 11

Key words methods: data analysis – stars: interiors – stars: late-type – stars: oscillations

We report on the first asteroseismic analysis of solar-type stars observed by Kepler. Observations of three G-type stars, made at one-minute cadence during the first 33.5 days of science operations, reveal high signal-to-noise solar-like oscillation spectra in all three stars: About 20 modes of oscillation can clearly be distinguished in each star. We discuss the appearance of the oscillation spectra, including the presence of a possible signature of faculae, and the presence of mixed modes in one of the three stars.

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1 Introduction

The year 2009 marked an important milestone in asteroseismology, with the launch of the NASA Kepler Mission (Gilliland et al. 2010). Kepler will realize significant advances in our understanding of stars, thanks to

its asteroseismology program, particularly for cool (solar-type) main-sequence and subgiant stars that show solar-like oscillations, i.e., small-amplitude oscillations intrinsically damped and stochastically excited by the near-surface convection (see Christensen-Dalsgaard 2004 for a recent review). Solar-like oscillation spectra have many modes excited to observable amplitudes. The rich information con-

* Corresponding author: karoff@bison.ph.bham.ac.uk

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tent of these seismic signatures means that the fundamental stellar properties (e.g., mass, radius, and age) may be measured and the internal structures constrained to levels that would not otherwise be possible (e.g., see Gough 1987; Cunha et al. 2007).

For its first ten months of science operations, Kepler will survey around 2000 solar-type stars for solar-like oscillations, with each star being observed for one month at a time. After this initial “Survey Phase” approximately 100 solar-type stars will be selected for long-term observations. At the time of writing, the number of known solar-type oscillators has increased by approximately one order of magnitude, thanks to Kepler. This is with only about 40 % of the total Survey Phase data available. The large homogeneous sample of data presented by Kepler opens the possibility to conduct a seismic survey of the solar-type part of the colour-magnitude diagram, to compare trends in observed properties with trends predicted from stellar structure and evolutionary models.

In the Kepler Asteroseismic Science Consortium (KASC) Working Group #1 has responsibility for asteroseismic analysis of solar-type stars. First results were presented by Chaplin et al. (2010) on three G-type stars, and many publications from the Survey Phase are planned for the second half of 2010.

2 Kepler Asteroseismic Science Consortium Working Group #1: solar-like oscillators

The KASC Working Group #1 is responsible for the data analysis and modeling of the solar-type stars observed by Kepler. The Group, which is chaired by W.J. Chaplin, is divided into nine sub-groups:

1. Extraction of Mean Parameters,
chair: R. A. García;
2. Extraction of individual mode parameters,
chair: T. Appourchaux;
3. Analysis of Mode Excitation and Damping,
chair: G. Houdek;
4. The Stellar Background,
chair: C. Karoff;
5. Model Grid Comparison,
chair: T. S. Metcalfe;
6. Fitting Models to Observed Frequencies,
chair: M. J. P. F. G. Monteiro;
7. Modeling Rotation, Mixing and New Physics,
chair: M. J. Thompson;
8. Analysis of Long-Term Variations,
chair: Y. Elsworth;
9. Ground-based Follow-Up,
chair: J. Molenda-Żakowicz.

This paper gives a brief summary of the work undertaken by sub-groups 1 to 4 on the three G-type dwarfs in Chaplin et al. (2010). Metcalfe et al. (this volume) and

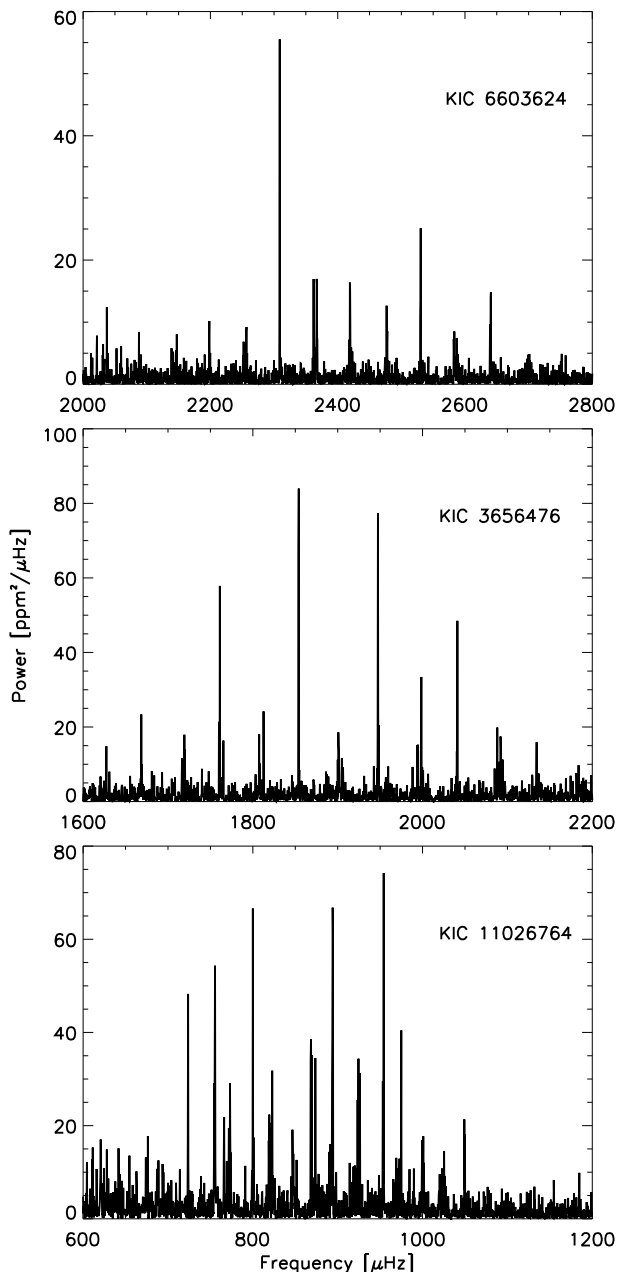


Fig. 1 Power density spectra of the three G-type stars analyzed by Chaplin et al. (2010).

Molenda-Żakowicz et al. (this volume) describe, respectively, the corresponding work performed by sub-groups 5 to 7, and sub-group 9.

Recent improvements in the quality of asteroseismic observations, in particular from the excellent quality CoRoT data (Michel et al. 2008), but also from other space- and ground-based observing facilities, have driven improvements in asteroseismic data analysis techniques. These improvements have been followed by significant work on preparing for the mode-parameter analysis of the Kepler data. This analysis involves the estimation of individual and average mode parameters, and also estimation of parameters

that describe non-resonant signatures of convection and activity that are present in the Kepler data. Examples include work conducted in the framework of asteroFLAG (Chaplin et al. 2008); and work undertaken by the CoRoT Data Analysis Team (e.g., Appourchaux et al. 2008). This has led to the development of suites of analysis tools for application to the Kepler data (e.g., see Campante et al. 2010; Hekker et al. 2010; Huber et al. 2009; Karoff et al. 2010; Mathur et al. 2010; Mosser & Appourchaux 2009; Roxburgh 2009). The levels of preparedness meant that analysis of the first observations of solar-type stars by Kepler (see Fig. 1) could be made in a timely fashion, in order to meet the publication deadlines set down by NASA. Shown below is a list of the different tasks that were conducted for the Chaplin et al. (2010) paper:

- 21 Oct.: data received;
- 23 Oct.: global seismic analysis;
- 26 Oct.: paper written and sent to sub-group chairs;
- 2 Nov.: paper approved by working sub-group chairs and sent to working group members;
- 16 Nov.: paper approved by working group members and submitted.

3 Signatures of convection in the stellar background

Power-frequency spectra of photometric observations of the Sun and other solar-type stars show not only signatures of oscillations, but also signatures arising from other intrinsic stellar phenomena. In order of increasing frequency there is power due to: rotational modulation of effects of magnetic activity, like starspots, and also the decay of active regions; granulation; and faculae. We might also hope in the future to be able to detect signatures of chromospheric oscillations and high-frequency waves, both of which are observed in the Sun.

The characteristic timescales and amplitudes of the components arising from the decay of active regions, granulation, and faculae are commonly represented using a Harvey-like model (Harvey 1985):

$$B(\nu) = \sum_i \frac{4\sigma_i^2 \tau_i}{1 + (2\pi\nu\tau_i)^\alpha} + c, \quad (1)$$

where σ is the amplitude of the component, τ is the characteristic timescale, ν is the frequency, and c is a constant that give the white noise level. The exponent α depends on the “memory” of the physical process responsible for the component.

Chaplin et al. (2010) were able to measure not only the characteristic timescales and amplitudes of the granulation component, but also the presence (and properties of) a component assumed to be the signature of faculae (marked by the arrow in Fig. 2). We are now in the process of measuring the characteristic timescales and amplitudes of the different background components in around 200 solar-type stars

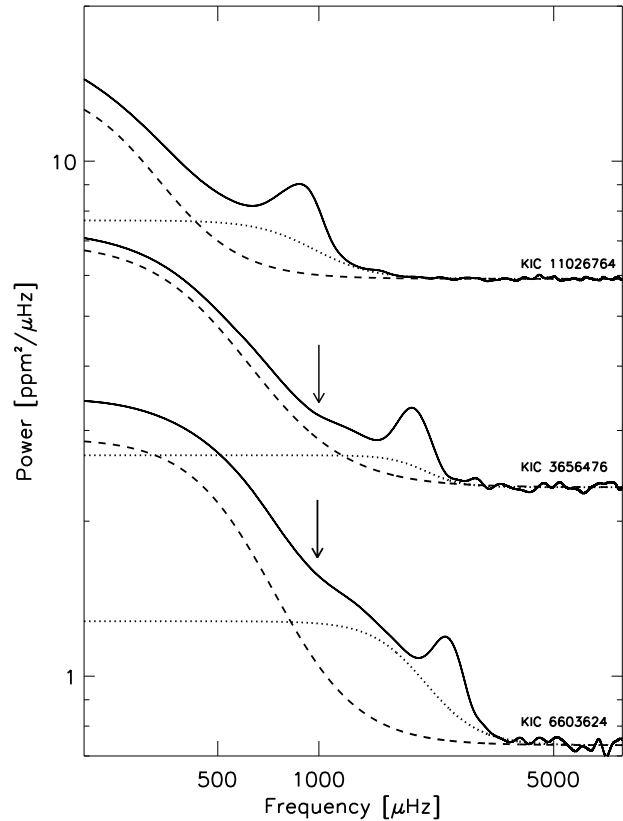


Fig. 2 Power density spectra of the three G-type stars analyzed by Chaplin et al. (2010), smoothed by Gaussian running-means of width of two times the large frequency separations. The spectra of KIC 3656476 and KIC 11026764 have been shifted upwards by 1 and 5 $\text{ppm}^2/\mu\text{Hz}$, respectively. The arrows mark the locations of the signature of faculae. The dashed and dotted lines show the best-fitting models of the granulation and facular components, respectively.

observed during the first four months of the Kepler asteroseismic survey. These stars have been selected because they show clear signatures of solar-like oscillations, meaning that we will also be able to perform a full asteroseismic analysis of their data to provide estimates of masses, radii and ages. The aim of this study will be to identify how signatures of convection and activity vary with stellar properties.

4 The échelle diagrams

Solar-like p modes of high radial order and low angular degree are reasonably well-described by the asymptotic relation (Tassoul 1980):

$$\nu_{n,l} \sim \Delta\nu(n + l/2 + \epsilon) - l(l+1)D_0. \quad (2)$$

Here, n (the radial order) and l (the angular degree) are integers. D_0 is the small frequency separation parameter and ϵ is a phase constant determined by the reflection properties near the surface.

Departures of stellar oscillation frequencies from the asymptotic relation may be shown visually by plotting the

oscillation power in a so-called échelle diagram (Grec et al. 1983), as is done in Fig. 3. Here, the oscillation power for each star has been plotted against the frequencies modulo the average large frequency separation. Individual strips of the power spectrum are offset vertically, such that the mean value of each échelle order gives the lower frequency of each échelle order.

Were a star to obey strictly the asymptotic relation, its frequencies would lie in vertical ridges in the échelle diagram. The échelle diagrams in Fig. 3 show that stars KIC 6603624 and KIC 3656476 exhibit only small departures from an asymptotic description, whereas KIC 11026764 shows clear deviations in its $l = 1$ ridge. These deviations are due to the fact that this star has started to evolve off the main sequence and thus shows avoided crossings (Osaki 1975; Aizenman et al. 1977). Avoided crossings result from interactions between acoustic modes and buoyancy modes, which affect (or “bump”) the frequencies and also change the intrinsic properties of the modes, with some taking on mixed acoustic and buoyancy characteristics. The precise signatures of these avoided crossings are very sensitive to the evolutionary state of the star. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the presence of mixed modes will improve significantly the age determination of stars.

For solar-type stars $\Delta\nu$ provides a measure of the inverse of the sound travel time across the star, while D_0 is sensitive to the sound-speed gradient near the core. It is conventional to define two small frequency separations: $\delta\nu_{02}$, which is the spacing between adjacent modes of $l = 0$ and $l = 2$; and $\delta\nu_{13}$, the spacing between adjacent modes of $l = 1$ and $l = 3$. The asymptotic relation then predicts that $\delta\nu_{02} = 6D_0$ and $\delta\nu_{13} = 10D_0$. The spacings $\delta\nu_{02}$ are seen clearly in all three stars. It is normally assumed that $l = 3$ modes are too weak to be visible in stellar photometric observations like the ones we have from Kepler (Kjeldsen et al. 2008). None of the three stars reported here shows convincing evidence for $l = 3$ modes; however, preliminary analyses of Kepler Survey data do show possible evidence of $l = 3$ modes in some stars.

We add in passing that KIC 3656476 does show signs of extra power on the high-frequency side of its $l = 1$ mode at $\approx 1770 \mu\text{Hz}$ (marked by the arrow in Fig. 3). We do not expect this power to be due to the presence of an $l = 3$ mode. Such power would lie on the low-frequency side of the stronger $l = 1$ mode, like its $l = 2$ counterparts, which for this star clearly lie on the low-frequency side of their $l = 0$ neighbours. Aside from the possibility this might be an artifact, it is conceivable that the extra power might be the signature of a mixed mode (see also Bedding et al. 2010 for a discussion of this).

5 Individual mode parameters

At the time of writing we have access to data on a few hundred solar-type stars. The quality of these data is such that

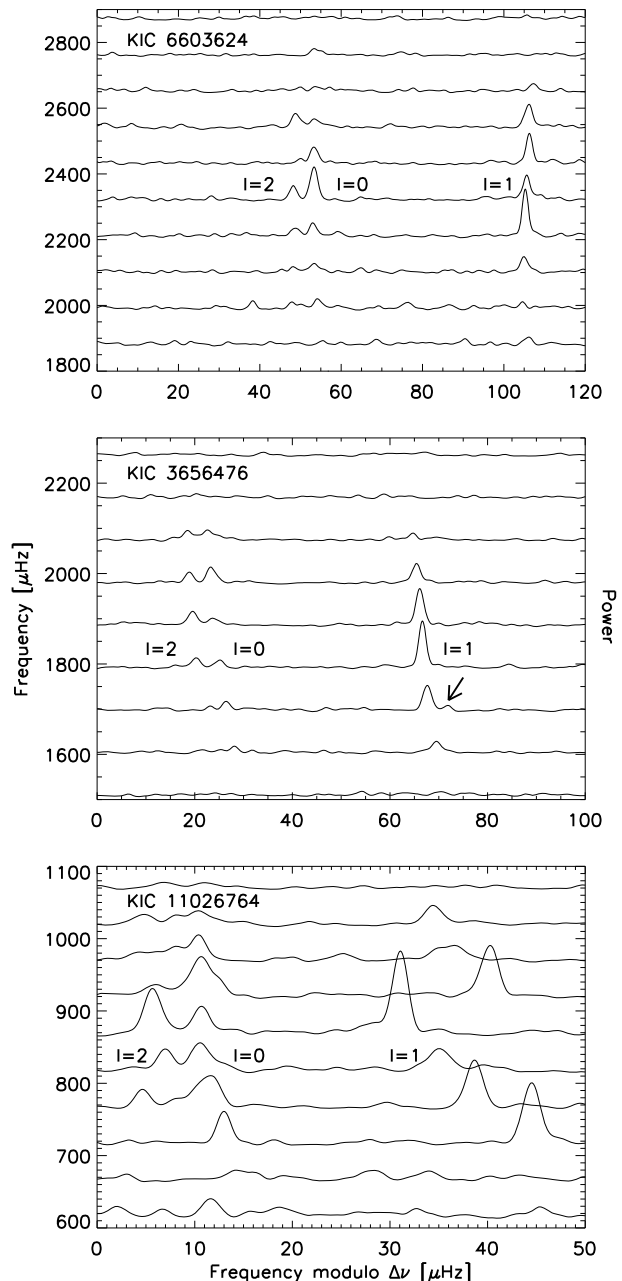


Fig. 3 Échelle diagrams of the three G-type stars analyzed by Chaplin et al. (2010). The spectra have been smoothed by a Gaussian running-mean with a width of $2 \mu\text{Hz}$, before substrings of the spectra were stacked on top of one another. The large separation in the three stars were measured to 110.2 ± 0.6 , 94.1 ± 0.6 and $50.8 \pm 0.3 \mu\text{Hz}$ (from top to bottom).

it is possible to extract estimates of individual frequencies, amplitudes, and also some mode lifetimes, in a large fraction of the targets showing evidence for solar-type oscillations. It may also be possible to extract estimates of rotational splittings in some of the more rapidly rotating stars.

The analysis of the three G-type stars has shown that not only can the oscillation mode frequencies and amplitudes be measured with high precision, but it is also possible to place

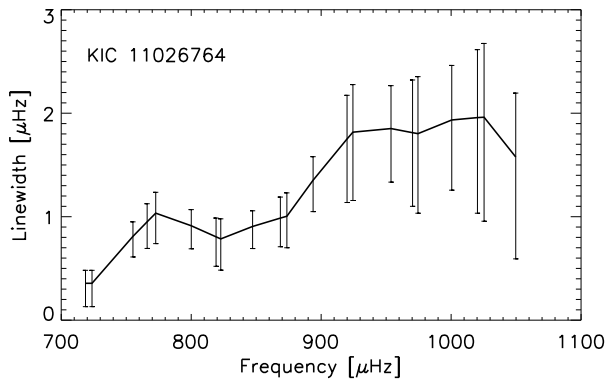


Fig. 4 Oscillation mode linewidth for KIC 11026764. Note how similar the change in linewidth as a function of frequency is to what has been observed for the Sun.

constraints on the mode lifetimes, which in all three cases appear to be similar in length to the Sun. Moreover, the analysis of KIC 11026764 show that the mode lifetimes plateau is at frequencies close to the frequency of maximum power ν_{\max} (see Fig. 4), just as for the Sun (see Chaplin et al. 2009 for a discussion of the predictions of mode lifetimes).

The observed maximum mode amplitudes of the three stars are all higher than solar. This is in line with predictions from simple scaling relations (Kjeldsen & Bedding 1995; Samadi et al. 2007), which use the inferred fundamental stellar properties as input. Data from a larger selection of survey stars are required before we can say anything more definitive about the relations.

Kepler will deliver multi-year datasets for the best solar-type asteroseismic targets, and from these data we expect to be able to extract: signatures of rapid structural changes in the stellar interiors, from the borders of convective regions and from zones of ionization in the near-surface layers; rotational splittings as a function of n and l , and possibly subtle signatures originating from differential rotation; and changing oscillation mode frequencies and amplitudes due to stellar cycles (see Karoff et al. 2009 for details)

Acknowledgements. CK acknowledges financial support from the Danish Natural Sciences Research Council.

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