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# Backward optical parametric oscillator threshold and linewidth studies

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**Abstract:** We carry out the theoretical investigation of the backward interaction optical parametric oscillator (OPO), in which one of the generated waves is counterpropagating with respect to the pump. We derive simple, self-consistent analytical formulas for the continuous-wave and pulsed regimes. While consistent with previous works on continuous-wave regime, our study enables to extend the analysis to the pulsed regime. In particular, we derive simple expressions of the oscillation build-up time, pulsed threshold and efficiency, for the first time to our knowledge. We also investigate the peculiar spectral features of the backward OPO when pumped with a narrow-linewidth pulsed radiation, in particular the absence of tolerance to phase mismatch and the natural ability to emit two waves with a Fourier-transform limited spectrum. Comparison with the convention forward OPO are also carried out to emphasize the unique properties of the backward OPO.

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## 1. Introduction

Initially proposed by Harris in 1966 [1], the backward-wave optical parametric oscillator (BWOPO) is based on three-wave second-order nonlinear interaction in a nonlinear medium where one generated wave, referred as the backward wave, propagates in the opposite direction of the incident pump wave and the other generated wave, referred as the forward wave. In contrast to conventional optical parametric oscillators (OPOs) based on three co-propagating waves where an external feedback has to be provided to the nonlinear medium by an optical cavity, resonant at one or the two generated waves, oscillation in a BWOPO can occur thanks to the distributed feedback due to the presence of two counter-propagating parametric waves. Thus, for its operation, the BWOPO does not require to adjust and maintain any fine alignment of cavity mirrors, making the device very simple and reliable.

Despite this striking attractive feature, it took 40 years before its experimental demonstration by Canalias and Pasiskevicius [2]. This long time gap was due to the fact that quasi-phase matching material with sub-micrometer poling period had first to be developed since conventional phase matching would require an extraordinary large birefringence. In [2], the authors also validated the unique spectral properties of the light emitted by the BWOPO, in which the spectral bandwidth of the pump wave is basically transferred to the forward wave while the backward wave exhibits a narrow spectral linewidth. These spectral properties have then been extensively investigated through experimental and numerical studies in pulsed regime and exploited to carry out coherent phase transfer from the pump wave to the signal wave [3–6].

Regarding theoretical work, general plane-wave solutions to backward three-wave mixing in the continuous-wave (CW) regime, involving Jacobi elliptic functions, were derived by Meadors in 1969 [7]. Other theoretical studies devoted to the CW BWOPO were then published [8–10]. In particular, [10] contains convenient analytical expressions to determine the CW BWOPO conversion efficiency and oscillation threshold.

Due its high CW oscillation threshold intensity, typically of 50–100 MW/cm<sup>2</sup>, the BWOPO has only been operated in the pulsed regime so far. In this context, a theoretical analysis of the

46 BWOPO threshold and efficiency in the pulsed regime is worth investigating. In particular, even  
47 through most of previous reported works involved pump pulses in the 10's to 100's picoseconds  
48 duration, the BWOPO is also very promising for operation with longer nanosecond pulses [11],  
49 where its unique spectral properties are promising for applications such as lidar remote gas  
50 sensing.

51 Depending on the pulse duration, the pulsed threshold can be significantly higher than the CW  
52 threshold. To guide BWOPO design, it would thus be valuable to derive a BWOPO analog of  
53 the Brosnan–Byer expression of the pulsed OPO threshold [12]. A first step in this direction  
54 was taken in [13], but it was limited to the numerical investigation of the pulsed threshold as a  
55 function of the pump pulse duration and the derivation of an analytical expression of the pulsed  
56 threshold was not reported.

57 In this paper, we carry out the theoretical investigation of the BWOPO by extending the  
58 approach we previously applied to conventional OPOs [14–17]. Exactly taking into account the  
59 nonlinear interactions between the waves in the nonlinear crystal, we derive universal expressions  
60 for the BWOPO in CW and pulsed regimes which enables to carry out convenient comparisons  
61 with the usual singly resonant OPO (SROPO). One of the main outcomes is the derivation of the  
62 analytical expressions of the BWOPO pulsed threshold and build-up time as well as the optimal  
63 pulse duration to minimize the threshold energy. We also provide an approximate expression  
64 of the pulsed conversion efficiency which could also be helpful for the design of a BWOPO.  
65 We finally carry out numerical simulation of the BWOPO by finite-difference time-domain  
66 (FDTD) modeling to assess the validity of our analytical expressions and further emphasize some  
67 distinctive spectral properties of the BWOPO compared to the conventional pulsed OPO.

68 This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the analysis of the threshold and the  
69 efficiency of the pulsed BWOPO. First, the coupled-wave equations and main assumptions are  
70 presented. Secondly, we derive the exact solutions to the equations in the CW regime using Jacobi  
71 elliptic functions. We recover the expressions previously derived in the literature and compare  
72 the characteristics of the BWOPO with the conventional SROPO. In particular, we determine  
73 the mirror reflectivity to have a SROPO with the same oscillation threshold as a mirrorless  
74 BWOPO based on an equivalent nonlinear medium. Then, we derive simple expressions to  
75 evaluate the pulsed oscillation threshold and efficiency, which are reported here for the first  
76 time to our knowledge. Section 3 is devoted to the investigation of the spectral properties of  
77 the BWOPO. First, we analyse particular phase-matching acceptance which is much narrower  
78 than for forward parametric interaction. Secondly, we investigate the parametric amplification  
79 bandwidth. In particular, we show that perfect phase-matching is required to be able to reach  
80 the BWOPO threshold. Thirdly, numerical calculations are carried out to validate the analytical  
81 results and to compare the spectral properties of the BWOPO with the conventional SROPO. The  
82 calculation confirms the ability of the BWOPO to naturally deliver single frequency radiation  
83 with a Fourier-transform linewidth. The final section summarizes the conclusions.

## 84 **2. Backward OPO threshold and efficiency**

### 85 *2.1. Coupled-wave equations*

The geometry of the studied BWOPO is shown in Fig. 1. We consider a second-order nonlinear material of length  $L$  containing a quasi-phase-matching grating to enable efficient interaction with a backward propagating wave. For the theoretical analysis, we start with the nonlinear three-wave mixing coupled equations in the slowly-varying envelope approximation which reduce

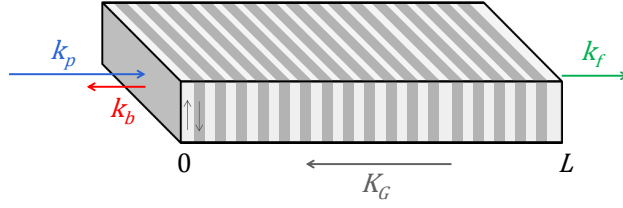


Fig. 1. Schematic of the BWOPO based on a periodically domain-inverted ferroelectric crystal.

in the plane-wave limit to [4, 18]

$$\frac{\partial A_b}{\partial z} - \frac{1}{v_{gb}} \frac{\partial A_b}{\partial t} = -i\kappa A_p A_f^* \exp(i\Delta k z), \quad (1a)$$

$$\frac{\partial A_f}{\partial z} + \frac{1}{v_{gf}} \frac{\partial A_f}{\partial t} = i\kappa A_p A_b^* \exp(i\Delta k z), \quad (1b)$$

$$\frac{\partial A_p}{\partial z} + \frac{1}{v_{gp}} \frac{\partial A_p}{\partial t} = i\kappa A_b A_f \exp(-i\Delta k z), \quad (1c)$$

86 with  $v_{gj}$  the group velocity of wave  $j$ , where  $j = b, f$ , and  $p$  corresponds respectively to the  
87 backward, forward, and pump wave,  $\kappa$  the nonlinear coupling coefficient

$$\kappa = \frac{d_{\text{eff}}}{c} \sqrt{\frac{\omega_b \omega_f \omega_p}{n_b n_f n_p}}, \quad (2)$$

with  $d_{\text{eff}}$  the effective nonlinear coefficient.  $A_b$ ,  $A_f$ , and  $A_p$  are the complex amplitudes related to the real electric fields as follows:

$$E_b(z, t) = \frac{1}{2} \sqrt{\frac{\omega_b}{n_b}} A_b(z, t) \exp[i(-k_b z - \omega_b t)] + c.c., \quad (3a)$$

$$E_{p,f}(z, t) = \frac{1}{2} \sqrt{\frac{\omega_{p,f}}{n_{p,f}}} A_{p,f}(z, t) \exp[i(k_{p,f} z - \omega_{p,f} t)] + c.c., \quad (3b)$$

88 where  $n_j$ ,  $\omega_j$ , and  $k_j$  are respectively the refractive index, angular frequency and wavevector of  
89 wave  $j$ , and  $\Delta k$  is the phase mismatch

$$\Delta k = k_p - k_f + k_b - K_G, \quad (4)$$

90 with  $K_G$  the quasi-phase matching wavevector. The analysis is limited to plane waves in order  
91 to derive simple formulas. The investigation of finite beam effects which would require a  
92 more elaborate model is beyond the scope of this paper. The model could nonetheless be  
93 straightforwardly extended to waveguide structures by using mode propagation constants instead  
94 of wavevectors, introducing mode overlap integrals, and, if necessary, adding waveguide losses.

For simplicity's sake, we consider that the magnitude of the group velocity is the same for the three waves. However, since the backward wave propagates in the opposite direction, its group velocity has an opposite sign compared to the group velocity of the forward and pump waves. As a consequence, the relative group velocity difference is very large given that it is equal to  $2v_g$ , which is dominant compared to other chromatic dispersion effects. Thereby, coupled equations

(1a)-(1c) become

$$\frac{\partial A_b}{\partial z} - \frac{1}{v_g} \frac{\partial A_b}{\partial t} = -i\kappa A_p A_f^*, \quad (5a)$$

$$\frac{\partial A_f}{\partial z} + \frac{1}{v_g} \frac{\partial A_f}{\partial t} = i\kappa A_p A_b^*, \quad (5b)$$

$$\frac{\partial A_p}{\partial z} + \frac{1}{v_g} \frac{\partial A_p}{\partial t} = i\kappa A_b A_f, \quad (5c)$$

95 where perfect quasi-phase matching is also assumed to investigate the BWOPO. As shown in  
96 Section 3.2, this is actually a necessary condition for parametric oscillation.

## 97 2.2. Continuous-wave regime

In CW regime, one can discard time dependence and the related partial derivative. The system (5a)–(5c) thus simplifies into

$$\frac{dA_b}{dz} = -i\kappa A_p A_f^*, \quad (6a)$$

$$\frac{dA_f}{dz} = i\kappa A_p A_b^*, \quad (6b)$$

$$\frac{dA_p}{dz} = i\kappa A_b A_f, \quad (6c)$$

98 To solve the above system, we decompose the complex amplitudes as follows

$$A_j(z) = u_j(z) \exp[\varphi_j(z)], \quad (7)$$

99 where amplitude  $u_j(z)$  and phase  $\varphi_j(z)$  are both real-valued functions. For the BWOPO, we  
100 consider that there is no incident forward and backward waves, leading to the following boundary  
101 conditions:

$$u_f(0) = u_b(L) = 0, \quad (8)$$

and we assume that the relative phase  $\Delta\varphi = \varphi_p - \varphi_b - \varphi_f$  has reached the steady-state value which maximizes the coupling between the three waves and thus satisfies  $\cos[\Delta\varphi(z)] = 1$ . Moreover, we take pump depletion into account by a change of sign in  $u_p(z)$  rather than a step of  $\pi$  in  $\Delta\varphi(z)$ . With this additional assumption, we can now consider the following system which only involves real functions and parameters:

$$\frac{du_b}{dz} = -\kappa u_p u_f, \quad (9a)$$

$$\frac{du_f}{dz} = \kappa u_p u_b, \quad (9b)$$

$$\frac{du_p}{dz} = -\kappa u_b u_f, \quad (9c)$$

From Eqs. (9a)–(9c), the “constants of motion” are found to be

$$u_p^2(z) + u_f^2(z) = u_{p0}^2, \quad (10a)$$

$$u_p^2(z) - u_b^2(z) = u_{p0}^2 - u_{\text{out}}^2, \quad (10b)$$

$$u_f^2(z) + u_b^2(z) = u_{\text{out}}^2, \quad (10c)$$

102 where we use the compact notations:  $u_p(0) = u_{p0}$ ,  $u_b(0) = u_f(L) = u_{\text{out}}$ . These constant of  
 103 motion are determined by the boundary conditions. Equation (9b) describing the evolution of the  
 104 forward wave can then be rewritten as follows

$$\frac{du_f}{dz} = \kappa \sqrt{(u_{p0}^2 - u_f^2)(u_{\text{out}}^2 - u_f^2)}, \quad (11)$$

105 which may be formally integrated as

$$\kappa z = \int_0^{u_f(z)} \frac{du_f}{\sqrt{(u_{p0}^2 - u_f^2)(u_{\text{out}}^2 - u_f^2)}}, \quad (12)$$

106 This latter expression has a solution in terms of Jacobi functions:

$$u_f(z) = u_{\text{out}} \operatorname{sn} \left( \kappa z u_{p0} \left| \frac{u_{\text{out}}^2}{u_{p0}^2} \right. \right), \quad (13)$$

107 where the Jacobi inverse function  $\operatorname{sn}$  is defined by [19]

$$\int_0^x \frac{dt}{\sqrt{(a^2 - t^2)(b^2 - t^2)}} = \frac{1}{a} \operatorname{sn}^{-1} \left( \frac{x}{b} \left| \frac{b^2}{a^2} \right. \right). \quad (14)$$

108 The pump and backward waves spatial evolution can then be derived by use of (10a) and (10a):

$$u_p(z) = u_{p0} \operatorname{dn} \left( \kappa z u_{p0} \left| \frac{u_{\text{out}}^2}{u_{p0}^2} \right. \right), \quad (15)$$

109 and

$$u_b(z) = u_{\text{out}} \operatorname{cn} \left( \kappa z u_{p0} \left| \frac{u_{\text{out}}^2}{u_{p0}^2} \right. \right), \quad (16)$$

110 where we use the relations between the squares of the Jacobi functions:  $\operatorname{dn}^2(x|m) = 1 - m \operatorname{sn}^2(x|m)$   
 111 and  $\operatorname{cn}^2(x|m) = 1 - \operatorname{sn}^2(x|m)$

112 Setting  $z = L$  in (13), one obtains the implicit equation for BWOPO CW oscillation

$$\operatorname{sn} \left( \kappa L u_{p0} \left| \frac{u_{\text{out}}^2}{u_{p0}^2} \right. \right) = 1. \quad (17)$$

113 This expression is equivalent to the one derived by Meadors [7]. The CW oscillation threshold,  
 114  $u_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ , can then be easily derived using the approximation  $\operatorname{sn}(x|m) \approx \sin(x)$  when  $m \rightarrow 0$ :

$$u_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} = \frac{\pi}{2\kappa L}. \quad (18)$$

115 The above expression can be conveniently expressed in terms of intensity,  $I = \epsilon_0 c n \langle E^2 \rangle =$   
 116  $\epsilon_0 c \omega |A|^2 / 2$  (in  $\text{W/m}^2$ ), as follows:

$$I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} = \frac{\epsilon_0 c n_b n_f n_p \lambda_b \lambda_f}{32 d_{\text{eff}}^2 L^2}. \quad (19)$$

117 The latter expression of the threshold intensity is consistent with previously reported expressions  
 118 when one take the different definitions of the effective nonlinear coefficient into account [1,7,10,13]  
 119 One can introduce the photon conversion efficiency,  $\eta$ , defined as

$$\eta = u_{\text{out}}^2 / u_{p0}^2, \quad (20)$$

120 and consider that

$$\left( u_{p0} / u_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} \right)^2 = I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}. \quad (21)$$

121 The implicit equation for BWOPO CW oscillation (17) can then be rewritten:

$$\text{sn} \left( \frac{\pi}{2} \sqrt{I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} \middle| \eta \right) = 1. \quad (22)$$

122 After some algebra, the latter equation can also be written in terms of complete elliptic integral of  
 123 the first kind as follows, which is easier and faster for numerical solving and to derive approximate  
 124 expressions:

$$\frac{\pi}{2} \sqrt{I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} = K(\eta), \quad (23)$$

125 with

$$K(\eta) = \int_0^1 \frac{dx}{\sqrt{(1-x^2)(1-\eta x^2)}}. \quad (24)$$

126 Equation (23) is similar to the one derived by Ding and Khurgin [10].

127 Approximate expressions can be derived for BWOPO operation close to the oscillation threshold  
 128 by use of the following expansion of  $K(\eta)$ :

$$K(\eta) = \frac{\pi}{2} \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \left[ \frac{\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)_m}{m!} \right]^2 \eta^m, \quad (25)$$

129 where Pochhammer's symbol is defined as  $(a)_n = a(a+1)(a+2)\dots(a+n-1)$ . Equation  
 130 (25) yields the following first- and second-order approximations:

$$\eta \simeq 4 \left( \sqrt{I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} - 1 \right), \quad (26)$$

131 and

$$\eta \simeq \frac{8}{9} \left\{ \left[ 1 + 9 \left( \sqrt{I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} - 1 \right) \right]^{1/2} - 1 \right\}. \quad (27)$$

132 Conversely, for high conversion efficiencies ( $\eta \rightarrow 1$ ), the following approximation may be  
 133 considered:

$$K(\eta) \simeq \frac{1}{2} \ln \left( \frac{16}{1-\eta} \right), \quad (28)$$

134 which yields

$$\eta \simeq 1 - 16 \exp \left( -\pi \sqrt{I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} \right). \quad (29)$$

135 As seen in Fig. 2, the first-order approximation, (26), is only valid very close to the oscillation  
 136 threshold while the second-order approximation, (27), provides a reasonable agreement (better  
 137 than 10 %) for  $I_p < 1.4 I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ . Conversely, the accuracy of asymptotic expression (29) is better

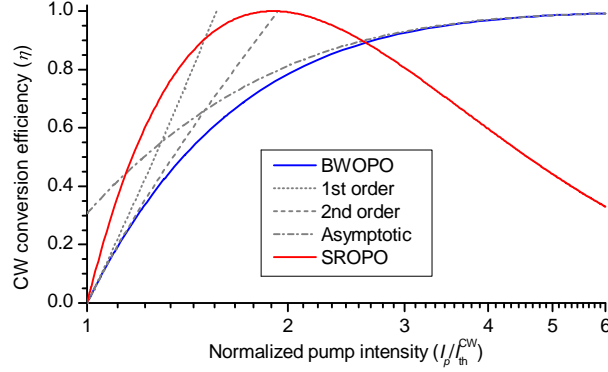


Fig. 2. CW conversion efficiency as a function of pump pump intensity normalized to the CW threshold intensity. The SROPO has a coupler reflectivity given by (31) which yields the same CW threshold intensity as the BWOPO.

138 than 10 % for  $I_p > 1.6 I_{th}^{CW}$ . As discussed in next section, this latter approximation is actually  
 139 convenient to evaluate the efficiency in pulsed regime where the involved peak intensity is often  
 140 high enough.

141 Let us now carry out a comparison with the more conventional singly resonant OPO (SROPO)  
 142 based on the forward nonlinear interaction between three co-propagating waves while the feedback  
 143 is provided by an optical cavity resonant at the signal wave. Using the same formalism as the one  
 144 derived here [14], the CW oscillation of the SROPO reads:

$$u_{th,SROPO}^{CW} = \frac{1}{\kappa L} \cosh^{-1} \left( \frac{1}{\sqrt{R}} \right), \quad (30)$$

145 where  $R$  is the output coupler reflectivity at the signal while the other loss are neglected and  
 146 the mirror reflectivity is zero for the idler and the pump. Combining (18) and (30) enables to  
 147 determine the coupler reflectivity,  $R_{SROPO}$ , which yields the same threshold for the BWOPO and  
 148 the SROPO:

$$R_{SROPO} = \frac{1}{\cosh^2(\pi/2)} \simeq 0.16, \quad (31)$$

149 where we suppose that the product  $\kappa L$  is the same for the two OPOs, i.e., we consider the same  
 150 nonlinear materials and the same wavelengths. We can now compare the conversion efficiencies  
 151 of both types of OPO with the same CW threshold using the SROPO implicit equation (16) of [14]  
 152 with  $R = R_{SROPO}$ . As seen in Fig. 2, the efficiency of the SROPO grows faster just above threshold  
 153 until it reaches complete pump depletion for  $I_p \simeq 1.9 I_{th}^{CW}$ . This optimal normalized pump  
 154 intensity, which can be evaluated with (24a) in [14], is different from the value of  $\pi^2/4 \simeq 2.4$   
 155 usually considered in SROPO because of the low cavity finesse with  $R_{SROPO} \simeq 0.16$ . Then, for  
 156 input pump intensity higher than this value, part of the signal and idler is converted back into  
 157 pump in the nonlinear crystal and the SROPO efficiency decreases. Such a back-conversion  
 158 effect is a well-known limit to the conversion efficiency of pulsed SROPOs [16, 17, 20]. On the  
 159 other hand, such a detrimental effect is not observed with the BWOPO where the CW conversion  
 160 efficiency presents a monotonic growth with an asymptotic limit of 1 for high pumping rates,  
 161 without the occurrence of back-conversion.

### 162 2.3. Pulsed regime

In addition to the steady-state conversion efficiency, another important effect for the overall  
 efficiency in pulsed regime is the build-up of the oscillation from quantum noise during which



the pump intensity is not significantly depleted. To derive an analytic expression of the build-up time, we have to further simplify the coupled-wave equations (5a)–(5c) which involve space and time partial derivatives. First, we neglect pump depletion during build-up which enables to reduce the system to (5a) and (5b) with the pump amplitude as a driving term. Secondly, we assume that the characteristic timescale of the pulses is longer than the propagation delay through the nonlinear crystal,  $\tau = L/v_g$ , so that space and time profiles can be factorized as separated functions with the longitudinal profiles determined with CW-regime solutions. With these two assumptions, the amplitudes of the three waves read:

$$A_b(z, t) = a_b(t) \cos [\pi z / (2L)], \quad (32a)$$

$$A_f(z, t) = a_f(t) \sin [\pi z / (2L)], \quad (32b)$$

$$A_p(z, t) = \pi / (2\kappa L) \sqrt{I_p(t) / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}}, \quad (32c)$$

where the longitudinal profiles correspond to CW solutions at threshold. Inserting amplitude profiles (32a)–(32c) in coupled equations (5a) and (5b) and carrying out integration over  $z$ , the following set of two coupled equations involving only time derivatives is obtained:

$$a_b(t) + \frac{2\tau}{\pi} \frac{da_b(t)}{dt} = \sqrt{I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} a_f^*(t), \quad (33a)$$

$$a_f(t) + \frac{2\tau}{\pi} \frac{da_f(t)}{dt} = \sqrt{I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} a_b^*(t). \quad (33b)$$

163 For a step-wise pump temporal profile with the pump intensity switched on to a constant value,  
164  $I_p$ , at  $t = 0$ , the solution in terms of intensity,  $I_{b,f} \propto |a_{b,f}|^2$ , is

$$I_{b,f}(t) = I_{b,f}(0) \exp(t / \tau_{\text{BWOPPO}}), \quad (34)$$

165 with

$$\frac{1}{\tau_{\text{BWOPPO}}} = \frac{\pi}{\tau} \left( \sqrt{\frac{I_p}{I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}}} - 1 \right). \quad (35)$$

166 The oscillation build-up time is defined as the time to reach a detectable intensity level,  $I_{\text{det}}$ ,  
167 starting from the quantum noise characterized by the equivalent intensity level,  $I_{\text{noise}}$ :

$$\tau_{\text{bu}} = \frac{\tau g_{\text{Log}}}{\pi \left( \sqrt{I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} - 1 \right)}, \quad (36)$$

168 with

$$g_{\text{Log}} = \ln \left( \frac{I_{\text{det}}}{I_{\text{noise}}} \right). \quad (37)$$

169 The duration of the build-up time is thus proportional to  $g_{\text{Log}}$  whose value depends on the  
170 detection sensitivity, the mode volume, and other experimental parameters. Conversely to the  
171 CW regime, the threshold definition in pulsed regime is thus somewhat arbitrary. For the  
172 calculations presented in the following, we set  $g_{\text{Log}} = 18$ , as in [16]. However, the value of  $g_{\text{Log}}$   
173 is straightforwardly adjustable to be more relevant for other conditions. Moreover, one could  
174 note that a variation of the noise or detection level over more than an order of magnitude only  
175 induces a 10 % variation of the  $g_{\text{Log}}$  value.

176 The comparison with the SROPO can be continued for the build-up time. In the case of a  
177 SROPO with the same CW threshold as the BWOPPO, i.e.  $R = R_{\text{SROPO}}$  with  $R_{\text{SROPO}}$  defined in  
178 (31), and with cavity mirrors directly located on the crystal facets so that the cavity round-trip

179 time  $\tau_{\text{cav}}$  is equal to  $2\tau$ , the SROPO build-up time can be determined from (A6) (see Appendix)  
 180 as follows:

$$\tau_{\text{bu,SROPO}} = \tau g_{\text{Log}} \left\{ \ln \left[ \cosh \left( \frac{\pi}{2} \sqrt{\frac{I_p}{I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}}} \right) \right] - \ln \left[ \cosh \left( \frac{\pi}{2} \right) \right] \right\}^{-1}. \quad (38)$$

181 The latter expression can be approximated with an accuracy better than 10% using the approxi-  
 182 mation  $\cosh(x) \approx \exp(x)/2$ , which yields:

$$\tau_{\text{bu,SROPO}} \approx \frac{2\tau g_{\text{Log}}}{\pi \left( \sqrt{I_p/I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} - 1 \right)} = 2\tau_{\text{bu}}. \quad (39)$$

183 Whatever the input pump intensity, the build-up time of the BWOPO is thus typically two  
 184 times shorter than the one of the considered “equivalent” SROPO. This is indeed confirmed  
 185 in Fig. 3 where we also indicate estimated values for OPO setups based on typical parameters  
 186 ( $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} = 75 \text{ MW/cm}^2$  and  $\tau = 44.3 \text{ ps}$ ). In Fig. 3, the build-up times calculated respectively with  
 187 formulas (36) and (38) are also compared with FDTD numerical simulations, where the coupled  
 188 nonlinear equations (5a)–(5c) are solved as explained in Section 3.3, except that we inject here a  
 189 constant intensity instead of a random noise for an easier evaluation of the oscillation threshold  
 190 criterion and consider here a step-wise pump temporal profile. The value of the build-up time  
 191 provided by the analytic evaluation of the BWOPO is higher than the one obtained by numerical  
 192 calculation. Nonetheless, except for peak intensities close to the CW threshold where there is a  
 193 factor of two between numerical and analytical evaluations, the difference between the two values  
 194 reduces rapidly to be less than 25 % for  $I_p > 2I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$  despite the relatively strong assumptions  
 195 made to derive the analytic expression.

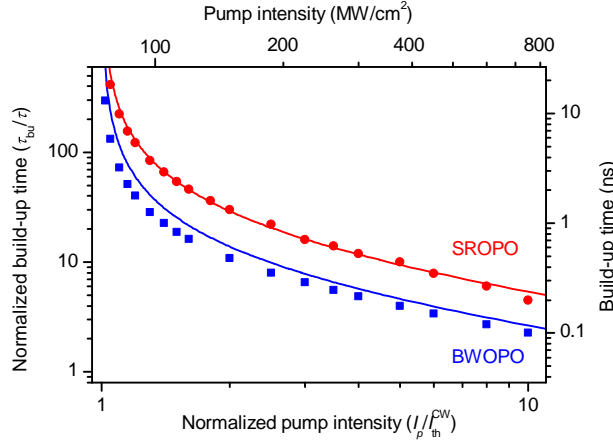


Fig. 3. Build-up time of BWOPO and SROPO (with  $R_{\text{SROPO}} = 1/\cosh^2(\pi/2)$  and  $\tau_{\text{cav}} = 2\tau$ ) as functions of the pump intensity normalized to the CW threshold intensity (solid lines: analytic formulas with  $g_{\text{Log}} = 18$ ; symbols: numerical simulation). The left axis provides the build-up time,  $\tau_{\text{bu}}$ , normalized to the light propagation time,  $\tau$ , through the nonlinear medium while the right axis gives the corresponding values for a typical nonlinear crystal with  $L = 7 \text{ mm}$  and  $n_g = 1.9$  (i.e.,  $\tau = 44.3 \text{ ps}$ ). The pump intensity of the top axis is evaluated for a typical CW threshold intensity  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} = 75 \text{ MW/cm}^2$ .

196 2.3.1. Square temporal profile

197 For a square temporal profile of duration  $\bar{\tau}_p$ , one can derive from (36) the pulsed peak intensity  
 198 to reach a detectable level of generated radiation at the trailing edge of the pump pulse:

$$\bar{I}_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}} = I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} \left( 1 + \frac{\tau}{\pi \bar{\tau}_p} g_{\text{Log}} \right)^2. \quad (40)$$

199 The corresponding threshold fluence is thus

$$\bar{J}_{\text{th}} = \bar{\tau}_p \left( 1 + \frac{\tau}{\pi \bar{\tau}_p} g_{\text{Log}} \right)^2 I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}. \quad (41)$$

200 The latter expression provides a first estimation of the threshold fluence for a given pulse duration.  
 201 Expression (41) has a minimum for pulse duration  $\bar{\tau}_{p,\text{opt}}$  which satisfies  $d\bar{J}_{\text{th}}/d\bar{\tau}_p = 0$ :

$$\bar{\tau}_{p,\text{opt}} = \tau g_{\text{Log}}/\pi, \quad (42)$$

202 with the corresponding minimum of the threshold fluence:

$$\bar{J}_{\text{th},\text{min}} = 4I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} \tau g_{\text{Log}}/\pi, \quad (43)$$

203 which corresponds to a peak power of 4 times the CW threshold power over a duration of  $4.7\tau$ .

204 The pulsed threshold peak intensity can be derived in the same way for the equivalent SROPO  
 205 from (38) or its approximation (39). The ratio between pulsed threshold peak intensities of the  
 206 BWOPO and its equivalent SROPO can then be written as

$$\frac{\bar{I}_{\text{th},\text{SROPO}}^{\text{peak}}}{\bar{I}_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}} \simeq \frac{\pi \bar{\tau}_p + 2\tau g_{\text{Log}}}{\pi \bar{\tau}_p + \tau g_{\text{Log}}}. \quad (44)$$

207 The ratio of the pulsed threshold peak intensities is thus between 1 for long pulse durations,  
 208 where the conditions become close to the CW regime, and 2 for short pulses. However, this must  
 209 be balanced by the fact that the considered equivalent SROPO is not representative of a typical  
 210 SROPO based on a higher finesse cavity whose threshold intensity would actually be lower.

211 As in [16], we can derive an approximate expression of the pulsed conversion efficiency. For  
 212 this purpose, we assume that the temporal profile of the output divides into two distinct temporal  
 213 phases in the same manner as in [20]. The first one is the BWOPO buildup phase, during which  
 214 the pump is assumed constant and whose duration is  $\tau_{\text{bu}}$ . The second one is the steady-state  
 215 regime where all the intensities are known and are identical to continuous-wave regime solutions  
 216 derived in Sec. 2.2. We can hence write

$$\bar{\eta}_{\text{pulse}} = \frac{\bar{\tau}_p - \tau_{\text{bu}}}{\bar{\tau}_p} \eta, \quad (45)$$

217 where  $\eta$  is given by (23) and  $\tau_{\text{bu}}$  by (36). The value of  $\bar{\eta}_{\text{pulse}}$  can then be numerically evaluated  
 218 by solving (45). If one also approximate  $\eta$  by its asymptotic value for strong pumping (29), an  
 219 analytical formula can be derived for a square temporal pulse profile:

$$\bar{\eta}_{\text{pulse}} = \left[ 1 - \frac{\tau g_{\text{Log}}}{\bar{\tau}_p \pi \left( \sqrt{\bar{I}_p^{\text{peak}}/I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} - 1 \right)} \right] \left[ 1 - 16 \exp \left( -\pi \sqrt{\bar{I}_p^{\text{peak}}/I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} \right) \right]. \quad (46)$$

220 The above equation can also be expressed in terms of pump fluence  $\bar{J} = \bar{\tau}_p \bar{I}_p^{\text{peak}}$ .

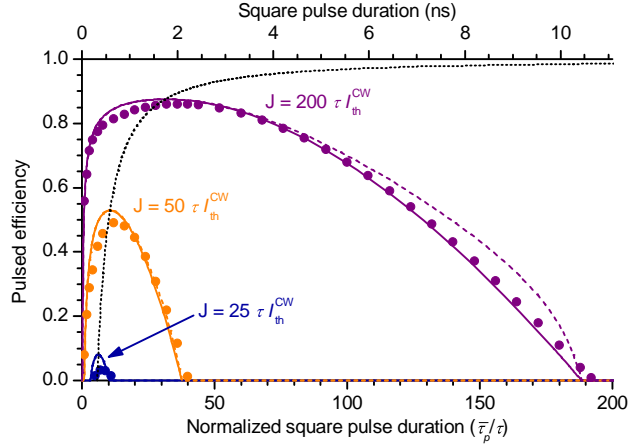


Fig. 4. BWOPO conversion efficiency as a function of the pulse duration for a square pulse profile and several pump fluences (solid lines: calculation with (45) with  $g_{\text{Log}} = 18$ ; dashed lines: approximated expression (46); symbol: numerical simulation). The bottom axis provides the square pulse duration,  $\bar{\tau}_p$ , normalized to the light propagation time,  $\tau$ , through the nonlinear medium while the top axis gives the corresponding values for a typical nonlinear crystal with  $L = 7$  mm and  $n_g = 1.9$  (i.e.,  $\tau \approx 44.3$  ps). For a typical CW threshold intensity  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} = 75$  MW/cm<sup>2</sup>, the three considered pump fluences are respectively 0.083, 0.166, and 0.665 J/cm<sup>2</sup>. The black dotted line provides the optimum duration and corresponding pulsed efficiency for increasing fluences.

221 Fig. 4 shows the pulsed conversion efficiency evaluated with expression (45) and its approx-  
 222 imation (46) as a function of the pulse duration for constant pump fluences. The agree-  
 223 ment between the two expressions is excellent for pulse duration leading to peak intensities which are  
 224 high enough for (29) to be accurate; i.e., better than 10% for  $\bar{\tau}_p < 0.62 \bar{J}/I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ . The estimation  
 225 remains nevertheless reasonable for longer pulse lengths.

226 Analytic evaluation of the pulsed efficiency is also compared with results obtained from  
 227 numerical simulations in Fig. 4. The largest discrepancy is observed at short pulse durations  
 228 where the assumption of a characteristic timescale longer than  $\tau$ , used to derive the analytic  
 229 formulas, is not valid. The agreement remains nevertheless quite good despite the pulse profiles  
 230 shown in Fig. 5(a) where steady-state is far from being reached during the pulse duration. On  
 231 the other hand, as expected, an excellent agreement is obtained in Fig. 4 for pulses lengths  
 232 corresponding to Fig. 5(b) and (c) where transient modulations only occurs during a relatively  
 233 short duration.

234 For a given pump fluence, the optimum of efficiency results from a balance between the  
 235 minimization of the energy lost during the build up phase during which the optimal peak power  
 236 is 4 times the CW threshold and the maximization of the steady-state conversion efficiency  
 237 which requires the highest possible peak power. For the pump fluences considered in Fig. 4, the  
 238 corresponding optimal pump peak power is respectively  $4.07$ ,  $4.71$  and  $6.37 \times I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ .

239 Fig. 6 presents the BWOPO efficiency as a function of the pump peak intensity for various  
 240 pulse durations. This illustrates the effect of the build-up time on the oscillation threshold and  
 241 efficiency. It can also be noticed that the BWOPO operation is expected to be close to the CW  
 242 limit for pulse durations longer than typically 100  $\tau$ , which corresponds to a few nanoseconds for  
 243 typical crystal parameters.

244 The impact of the quantum noise fluctuations on the pulsed conversion efficiency stability can

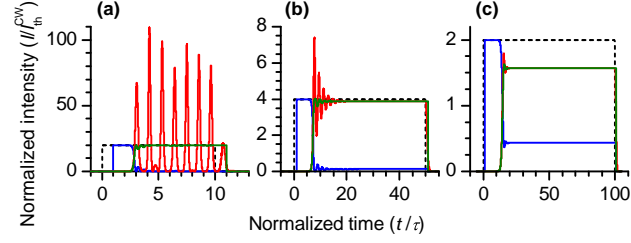


Fig. 5. Temporal profiles of input pump (dashed black line), depleted pump (blue line), forward (green line), and backward (red line) pulses corresponding to calculated efficiency in Fig. 4 for  $J = 200 \tau I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$  for incident pump pulse durations of (a)  $\bar{\tau}_p = 10 \tau$ , (b)  $50 \tau$ , and (c)  $100 \tau$ .

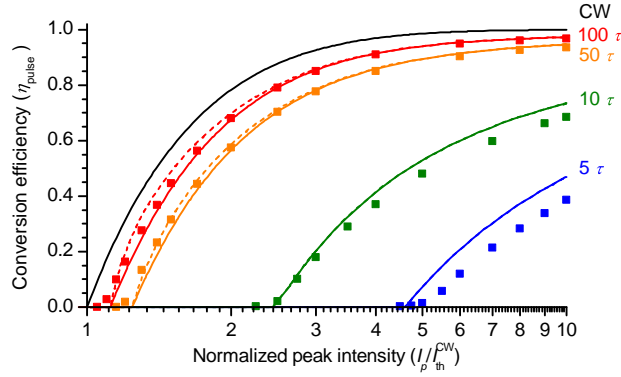


Fig. 6. BWOPO conversion efficiency as a function of the pump peak intensity for a square pulse profile and several durations (solid lines: calculation with (45) with  $g_{\text{Log}} = 18$ ; dashed lines: approximated expression (46); symbol: numerical simulation). For a typical nonlinear crystal with  $L = 7 \text{ mm}$  and  $n_g = 1.9$  (i.e.,  $\tau \approx 44.3 \text{ ps}$ ), the considered durations are respectively 0.22, 0.44, 2.21 and 4.43 ns.

245 be evaluated by differentiation of (45) with respect to  $I_{\text{noise}}$ . After some algebra, one can write

$$\frac{d\bar{\eta}_{\text{pulse}}}{\bar{\eta}_{\text{pulse}}} = \frac{dI_{\text{noise}}}{I_{\text{noise}}} \frac{1}{(\pi\bar{\tau}_p/\tau + g_{\text{Log}}) \left( \sqrt{I_p^{\text{peak}}/I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}} - 1 \right)}, \quad (47)$$

246 where (37) and (40) were used for the derivation of the latter expression. As expected, a higher  
 247 output fluence instability is awaited close to the oscillation threshold. In addition, the shorter is  
 248 the pulse duration, the higher is the anticipated fluctuation magnitude. This feature is related  
 249 to the higher relative impact of the buildup time fluctuation on the pulsed efficiency for shorter  
 250 pulses. For a given pumping ratio and with  $\tau = 44.3 \text{ ps}$ , it is thus expected to reduce the  
 251 fluctuation by typically an order of magnitude by increasing the pulse duration from 200 ps to  
 252 5 ns. This trend is confirmed by numerical simulation carried out with a random initial noise for  
 253 various pulse durations (not shown here). A similar analysis could straightforwardly be carried  
 254 out to evaluate the influence of pump intensity or pulse duration fluctuations.

255 2.3.2. Gaussian pulse profile

256 To derive the pulsed threshold formula, we chose the same convention as Brosnan and Byer [12]  
 257 to define the Gaussian pulse profile:

$$I_p(t) = I_p^{\text{peak}} \exp\left(-2t^2/\tau_p^2\right). \quad (48)$$

258 Also similarly to Brosnan and Byer, we introduce an equivalent square pulse profile whose  
 259 duration  $\bar{\tau}_p$  corresponds to the time during which the instantaneous power is higher than the CW  
 260 threshold power, i.e.  $I_p(t) > I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ . One obtains:

$$\bar{\tau}_p = \tau_p \sqrt{2 \ln\left(I_p^{\text{peak}}/I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}\right)}. \quad (49)$$

261 For the peak power  $\bar{I}_p^{\text{peak}}$  of the equivalent square pulse, it is defined such as the overall gain  
 262 experienced by the forward and backward waves is similar to one provided by the Gaussian pulse  
 263 when  $I_p(t) > I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ . From (33), this yields to the following relation

$$\bar{\tau}_p \sqrt{\bar{I}_p^{\text{peak}}} = \sqrt{I_p^{\text{peak}}} \int_{-\bar{\tau}_p/2}^{\bar{\tau}_p/2} \exp\left(-t^2/\tau_p^2\right) dt, \quad (50)$$

264 where  $\bar{\tau}_p$  is given by (49). One thus obtains

$$\bar{I}_p^{\text{peak}} = I_p^{\text{peak}} \frac{\pi}{4} \left\{ \frac{\text{erf}\left[\bar{\tau}_p/(2\tau_p)\right]}{\bar{\tau}_p/(2\tau_p)} \right\}^2, \quad (51)$$

265 with

$$\text{erf}(\tau) = \frac{2}{\sqrt{\pi}} \int_0^{\tau} \exp\left(-t^2\right) dt. \quad (52)$$

266 The equivalent-square-pulse intensity at the pulsed oscillation threshold  $\bar{I}_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}$  has to satisfy  
 267 (40) and the corresponding threshold peak intensity of the Gaussian pulse  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}$  is related to  
 268  $\bar{I}_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}$  through (51). For a given pulse duration  $\tau_p$ , it is thus possible to numerically evaluate the  
 269 threshold peak intensity of the Gaussian pulse by solving the closed system provided by (40),  
 270 (49), and (51). The corresponding threshold fluence of the Gaussian pulse is then given by

$$J_{\text{th}} = \sqrt{\frac{\pi}{2}} I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}} \tau_p. \quad (53)$$

271 The threshold fluence from (53) is plotted in Fig. 7 as a function of the Gaussian pulse duration.  
 272 The minimal fluence is obtained for a duration of typically  $3\tau$ , a fluence of  $25\tau I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ , and a  
 273 corresponding peak power  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}} = 6.6 I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ .

274 However, the latter evaluation of the threshold fluence requires to numerically solve several  
 275 equations and a more straightforward way to estimate the threshold peak intensity and fluence  
 276 for the Gaussian pulse would be more convenient for practical use. For this purpose, as in  
 277 Brosnan–Byer’s analysis, we assume that  $\bar{\tau}_p = 2\tau_p$ , which enables to derive a simple expression  
 278 of the threshold peak intensity:

$$I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}(\bar{\tau}_p = 2\tau_p) = \frac{4}{\pi \text{erf}^2(1)} \left(1 + \frac{\tau}{2\pi\tau_p} g_{\text{Log}}\right)^2 I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}. \quad (54)$$

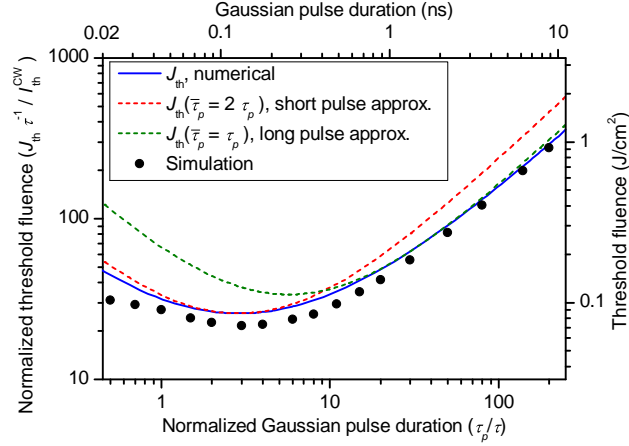


Fig. 7. Threshold fluence of BWOPO as a function of pulse duration for a Gaussian pulse profile. The pump intensity is normalized to the CW threshold intensity (solid blue line: numerical solution of (40), (49), and (50) with  $g_{\text{Log}} = 18$ ; dashed red line: analytic formula (55) for short pulses; dashed green line: analytic formula (57) for long pulses; symbols: numerical simulation). The left axis provides the build-up time,  $\tau_{\text{bu}}$ , normalized to the light propagation time,  $\tau$ , through the nonlinear medium while the right axis gives the corresponding values for a typical nonlinear crystal with  $L = 7$  mm and  $n_g = 1.9$  (i.e.,  $\tau \approx 44.3$  ps).

279 We can then use (53) to determine the corresponding threshold fluence

$$J_{\text{th}}(\bar{\tau}_p = 2\tau_p) = 2.25 \tau_p \left( 1 + \frac{g_{\text{Log}} n_g L}{2\pi \tau_p c} \right)^2 I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}, \quad (55)$$

280 with  $\tau = n_g L/c$  and where we use the numerical evaluation of the factor  $2\sqrt{2}/[\sqrt{\pi} \text{erf}^2(1)] =$   
 281 2.25. One could notice that the Gaussian pulse threshold fluence provided by (55) is actually  
 282 close to threshold fluence for a square pulse profile (41):  $J_{\text{th}}(\bar{\tau}_p = 2\tau_p) = 1.125 \bar{J}_{\text{th}}$ . Moreover,  
 283 as seen in Fig. 7, the accuracy of (54) and (55) is the highest close to the pulse duration leading  
 284 to the minimal threshold fluence; i.e.,  $\tau_{p,\text{opt}} = \tau g_{\text{Log}}/(2\pi)$

285 For longer pump pulses, a better accuracy is obtained assuming  $\bar{\tau}_p = \tau_p$ . The corresponding  
 286 approximated expressions are then:

$$I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}(\bar{\tau}_p = \tau_p) = \frac{1}{\pi \text{erf}^2(1/2)} \left( 1 + \frac{\tau}{\pi \tau_p} g_{\text{Log}} \right)^2 I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}, \quad (56)$$

287 and

$$J_{\text{th}}(\bar{\tau}_p = \tau_p) = 1.47 \tau_p \left( 1 + \frac{g_{\text{Log}} n_g L}{\pi \tau_p c} \right)^2 I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}, \quad (57)$$

288 where we use the numerical evaluation of the factor  $1/[\sqrt{2\pi} \text{erf}^2(1/2)] = 1.47$ .

289 Threshold fluences determined by numerical simulation are also shown in Fig. 7. A very good  
 290 agreement with approximate expression (57) is obtained for pulse durations longer than typically  
 291  $30\tau$ . For pulse shorter than  $10\tau$  it is more accurate to use approximate expression (55) with a  
 292 relative difference of typically 20% down to duration shorter than  $\tau$  where the assumptions made  
 293 to derive expressions (53) and (55) are too invalid. For such short pulse durations the threshold  
 294 fluence determined by numerical simulation grows more slowly than the one provided by the

295 expressions when the duration shortens. The discrepancy remains nonetheless still reasonable  
 296 (less than a factor 2).

297 To further assess the relevance of our model, we compare experimental values of the peak  
 298 intensity at threshold, reported in the literature for two different pulse durations (47 ps and 13 ns),  
 299 with  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}$ , determined by solving the closed system provided by (40), (49), and (51), and its  
 300 approximations  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}(\bar{\tau}_p = 2\tau_p)$  and  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}(\bar{\tau}_p = \tau_p)$ , respectively given by expressions (54) and  
 301 (56). As shown in Table 1, a good agreement (better than 5 %) between experimental values  
 302 and  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}$  is obtained for both pulse durations assuming  $d_{\text{eff}} = 8 \text{ pm/V}$  and with  $g_{\text{Log}} = 18$ . As  
 303 expected,  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}(\bar{\tau}_p = 2\tau_p)$  is more accurate than  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}(\bar{\tau}_p = \tau_p)$  for the shortest pulse duration  
 304 and conversely for the longest pulse duration. The threshold expressions provided by our model  
 might thus be useful for the practical design of BWOPOs.

Table 1. Measured threshold peak intensities of pulsed BWOPO reported in the literature and corresponding theoretical values determined with the expressions derived in this work.  $d_{\text{eff}} = 8 \text{ pm/V}$  is assumed for the calculation of  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ .

	Experiment	
$L_c$	5 mm	7 mm
$\tau_p$	47 ps	13 ns
$I_{\text{th,experiment}}^{\text{peak}}$	1.6 GW/cm <sup>2</sup>	83 MW/cm <sup>2</sup>
Reference	[2]	[11]
	Theory	
$I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$	101 MW/cm <sup>2</sup>	71.5 MW/cm <sup>2</sup>
$I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}$	1.52 GW/cm <sup>2</sup>	80.4 MW/cm <sup>2</sup>
$I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}(\bar{\tau}_p = 2\tau_p)$	1.56 GW/cm <sup>2</sup>	130.6 MW/cm <sup>2</sup>
$I_{\text{th}}^{\text{peak}}(\bar{\tau}_p = \tau_p)$	2.81 GW/cm <sup>2</sup>	87.3 MW/cm <sup>2</sup>

305

### 306 3. Linewidth

#### 307 3.1. Phase-matching acceptance bandwidth

308 As shown by Canalias and Pasiskevicius [2], the BWOPO exhibits peculiar spectral properties  
 309 with the generation of a very narrow backward radiation while the spectral content of the pump is  
 310 transferred to the forward wave. For a narrow, Fourier-transform limited pump it is thus expected  
 311 that both the backward and the forward waves have a narrow spectral linewidth.

312 Assuming that quasi-phase matching is satisfied for angular frequencies  $\omega_p$ ,  $\omega_b$ , and  $\omega_f$  with  
 313  $\omega_p = \omega_b + \omega_f$ , the magnitude of the phase mismatch,  $\Delta k(\Delta\omega)$ , for frequencies  $\omega'_b = \omega_b + \Delta\omega$   
 314 and  $\omega'_f = \omega_f - \Delta\omega$  is given by

$$\Delta k(\Delta\omega) = k(\omega_b + \Delta\omega) - k(\omega_b) - k(\omega_f - \Delta\omega) + k(\omega_f) \quad (58)$$

315 A first order Taylor expansion yields

$$\Delta k(\Delta\omega) = \left( \frac{1}{v_{gb}} + \frac{1}{v_{gf}} \right) \Delta\omega, \quad (59)$$



316 The difference-frequency generation (DFG) bandwidth for backward interaction, defined by  
 317 the condition  $\Delta kL/2 = \pi$ , thus reads in terms of frequency,  $\nu = \omega/(2\pi)$ , rather than angular  
 318 frequency

$$\Delta\nu_{\text{BWDFG}} = \frac{c}{2n_g L}, \quad (60)$$

319 where  $n_g$  is the average group index,  $n_g = (n_{gb} + n_{gf})/2$ .

320 One can compare the latter expression with the same definition of the DFG acceptance  
 321 bandwidth for forward interaction:

$$\Delta\nu_{\text{FWDFG}} = \frac{c}{\Delta n_g L}, \quad (61)$$

322 where  $\Delta n_g$  is the group index difference between signal and idler,  $\Delta n_g = |n_{gs} - n_{gi}|$ .

323 For similar crystal lengths, the ratio of the two bandwidth is thus given by

$$\frac{\Delta\nu_{\text{FWDFG}}}{\Delta\nu_{\text{BWDFG}}} = \frac{2n_g}{\Delta n_g}. \quad (62)$$

324 In terms of DFG acceptance bandwidth, backward interaction is thus equivalent to forward  
 325 interaction in a nonlinear medium with a ‘‘giant’’ group index difference equal to  $2n_g$ . If one  
 326 consider typical values  $n_g = 1.9$  and  $\Delta n_g = 0.02$  [4], the acceptance bandwidth for backward  
 327 interaction is thus more than a hundred times narrower than for forward interaction, as pointed out  
 328 in early backward DFG experiments [21]. This narrow acceptance bandwidth is very promising  
 329 to generate Fourier-transform-limited pulses (at both  $\omega_b$  and  $\omega_f$ ) from a backward OPO without  
 330 any additional spectral filtering, provided that the pump spectrum is also narrow.

### 331 3.2. Optical parametric amplifier bandwidth

To derive the OPA gain spectrum, we solve the coupled-wave equations in CW regime under the  
 undepleted pump approximation where we now consider imperfect phase-matching:

$$\frac{dA_b}{dz} = -i\kappa A_{p0} A_f^* \exp(i\Delta k z), \quad (63a)$$

$$\frac{dA_f}{dz} = i\kappa A_{p0} A_b^* \exp(i\Delta k z), \quad (63b)$$

where  $A_p(z) = A_p(0) = A_{p0}$  and  $\Delta k = k_p - k_f + k_b - K_G$ . We assume that there is no input  
 for the backward wave, i.e.  $A_b(L) = 0$ , and that there is an input for the forward wave. After  
 solving the system (63) under these assumptions, one obtains the expression of the output forward  
 amplitude

$$A_f(L) = A_f(0) \left(4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 + \Delta k^2\right)^{1/2} e^{i\Delta k L/2} \left/ \left\{ \left(4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 + \Delta k^2\right)^{1/2} \right. \right. \\ \left. \left. \times \cos \left[ \left(4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 + \Delta k^2\right)^{1/2} L/2 \right] + i\Delta k \sin \left[ \left(4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 + \Delta k^2\right)^{1/2} L/2 \right] \right\} \right. \quad (64)$$

332 The gain for the forward intensity,  $|A_f(L)|^2 / |A_f(0)|^2 = 1 + G_{\text{BWOPA}}$ , can be determined to be

$$G_{\text{BWOPA}} = \frac{\sin^2 \left[ (\pi/2) \left( I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} + \Delta k^2 L^2 / \pi^2 \right)^{1/2} \right] I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}}{\cos^2 \left[ (\pi/2) \left( I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} + \Delta k^2 L^2 / \pi^2 \right)^{1/2} \right] I_p / I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}} + \Delta k^2 L^2 / \pi^2}, \quad (65)$$

333 where the incident pump intensity  $I_p$  is normalized by the BWOPO threshold (19). For  $\Delta k = 0$ ,  
 334 one can notice that  $G_{\text{BWOPA}}$  tends to infinity when  $I_p \rightarrow I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ , which is consistent with the onset  
 335 of the parametric oscillation. On the other hand, as soon as  $\Delta k \neq 0$ , there is no value of the pump  
 336 intensity that makes the denominator in (65) equal to zero and it is thus not possible to reach  
 337 oscillation since

$$G_{\text{BWOPA}} \leq \frac{\pi^2}{\Delta k^2 L^2} \frac{I_p}{I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}}. \quad (66)$$

338 This feature is a *very* particular characteristic of the BWOPO that differs from the conventional  
 339 forward OPO where the small-signal gain can be larger than the cavity loss for phase-mismatched  
 340 interactions if the pump intensity is high enough.

341 When  $I_p$  approaches  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$  and for a small phase mismatch, (65) can be approximated by the  
 342 following expression:

$$G_{\text{BWOPA}} \simeq \frac{4}{\pi^2 \left(1 - \sqrt{I_p/I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}}\right)^2 + 4\Delta k^2 L^2/\pi^2}. \quad (67)$$

343 It is then straightforward to derive the phase-mismatch acceptance,  $\Delta k_{\text{BWOPA}}$ , at half maximum  
 344 of the BWOPA gain given by (67), which reads

$$\Delta k_{\text{BWOPA}} = \frac{\pi^2}{2L} \left(1 - \sqrt{I_p/I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}}\right). \quad (68)$$

345 The accuracy of above approximation is better than 10% for  $I_p > 0.35I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$ , compared to the  
 346 bandwidth derived by numerical calculation with (65).

As for threshold and efficiency, we can compare the backward OPA bandwidth with its forward  
 interaction analog. For this purpose, we consider the sub-threshold SROPO or cavity-enhanced  
 forward OPA (CE-FWOPA) with an equivalent mirror reflectivity  $R_{\text{SROPO}}$  given by (31) leading  
 to the same CW oscillation threshold as the BWOPO. The corresponding CE-FWOPA gain reads  
 (see Appendix):

$$G_{\text{CE-FWOPA}} = \sinh^2\left(\frac{\pi}{2}\right) \times \sinh^2\left[\frac{\pi}{2}\left(\frac{I_p}{I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} - \frac{\Delta k^2 L^2}{\pi^2}\right)^{1/2}\right] \frac{I_p}{I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} \left/ \left( \cosh^2\left(\frac{\pi}{2}\right) \left(\frac{I_p}{I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} - \frac{\Delta k^2 L^2}{\pi^2}\right)^{1/2} - \left\{ \cosh^2\left[\frac{\pi}{2}\left(\frac{I_p}{I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} - \frac{\Delta k^2 L^2}{\pi^2}\right)^{1/2}\right] \frac{I_p}{I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}} - \frac{\Delta k^2 L^2}{\pi^2} \right\}^2 \right) \right. \quad (69)$$

347 In same way as for the BWOPA gain, one can derive an approximate expansion of (69) for  $I_p$   
 348 close to  $I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}$  and for small phase mismatch:

$$G_{\text{CE-FWOPA}} \simeq \frac{4 \sinh^2(\pi/2)}{\left\{ \pi \left(1 - \sqrt{I_p/I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}}\right) + [\pi/2 - \tanh(\pi/2)] \Delta k^2 L^2/\pi^2 \right\}^2}. \quad (70)$$

349 The corresponding phase-mismatch acceptance at half maximum of  $G_{\text{CE-FWOPA}}$  is given by

$$\Delta k_{\text{CE-FWOPA}} = \frac{\pi}{L} \left[ \frac{2(\sqrt{2}-1)}{1 - (2/\pi) \tanh(\pi/2)} \right]^{1/2} \left(1 - \sqrt{I_p/I_{\text{th}}^{\text{CW}}}\right)^{1/2}. \quad (71)$$

350 To have an accuracy better than 10% compared to numerical calculation with (69) the pump  
 351 intensity must satisfy:  $I_p > 0.7I_{th}^{CW}$ .

352 Including the group index scaling factor provided by (62), the ratio of the two OPA bandwidths  
 353 (71) and (68), expressed in terms of frequency bandwidth is given by

$$\frac{\Delta\nu_{CE-FWOPA}}{\Delta\nu_{BWOPA}} = 0.9 \times \frac{2n_g/\Delta n_g}{\left(1 - \sqrt{I_p/I_{th}^{CW}}\right)^{1/2}}, \quad (72)$$

354 where the leading factor is numerically evaluated for the sake of readability. The analysis of (72)  
 355 thus reveals that the BWOPA bandwidth narrows faster than the one of the CE-FWOPA when  
 356 the pump intensity approaches the OPO threshold, i.e. the ratio of the two bandwidths tends to  
 357 infinity. This means that the very large reduction of the bandwidth that already occurs at low  
 358 gain is further increased when the pump intensity approaches the oscillation threshold. Fig. 8  
 359 illustrates these singular spectral properties for  $I_p = 0.95I_{th}^{CW}$  where one can notice that the gain  
 360 for the CE-FWOPA is basically flat over the full bandwidth of the BWOPA. These features are  
 361 confirmed in the following for pulsed parametric oscillation.

### 362 3.3. Pulsed OPO bandwidth

363 To extend our investigation of the spectral bandwidth to the case of pulsed OPOs, we carry out  
 364 FDTD numerical simulations for both the BWOPA and the conventional SROPO under the plane  
 365 wave approximation; i.e., we numerically solve system (1a)–(1c) for the BWOPA and system  
 366 (A1a)–(A1c) for the SROPO. The considered simulation parameters are detailed in Table 2. In  
 367 both case quasi-phase matching is assumed at the carrier frequencies. In the case of the BWOPA,  
 368 comparable results are obtained with identical group velocities for the three waves, which confirm  
 369 the relevance of the assumption made for the analytic analysis, i.e.  $2n_g \gg \Delta n_g$ .

370 For the conventional forward SROPO, since we consider  $\Delta n_g = 0.02$ , we have  $\Delta\nu_{FWDFG} =$   
 371  $2.1$  THz for a crystal length  $L = 7$  mm. We still consider a SROPO with an equivalent cavity  
 372 reflectivity given by (31) to have the same CW threshold. We also assume the shortest possible  
 373 cavity length for the SROPO with mirrors directly on the nonlinear medium ends, i.e. at  $z = 0$   
 374 and  $z = L$ .

375 In both cases, we consider a broadband noise ( $\Delta\nu_{noise} = 40$  THz) characterized by a random

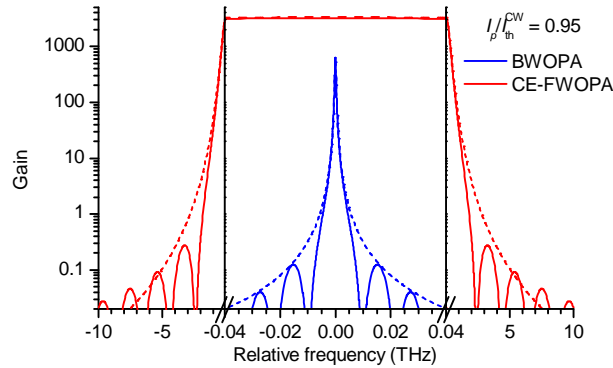


Fig. 8. Gain of the BWOPA and CE-FWOPA as functions of the relative frequency mismatch from perfect phase-matching (solid lines: formulas (65) and (69); dashed lines: approximated expressions (67) and (70)). For the calculation, we set  $I_p = 0.95 I_{th}^{CW}$ ,  $n_g = 1.9$ ,  $\Delta n_g = 0.02$ , and  $L = 7$  mm. Note the change in scale in the middle section of the  $x$ -axis.

376 electric field with a mean value of zero and an equivalent intensity of half a photon per time unit  
 377 and surface unit.

Table 2. **Parameters used for the numerical simulation of the backward OPO and forward singly resonant OPO.**

Parameter	BWOPO	SROPO
$n_{gf}, n_{gs}$	1.88	
$n_{gb}, n_{gi}$	1.90	
$n_{gp}$	1.92	
$L$	7 mm	
$R$	n.a.	0.16
$I_{th}^{CW}$	75 MW/cm <sup>2</sup>	
Pulse shape	Gaussian	
$\tau_p$ (FWHM)	5 ns	
$I_p^{peak} / I_{th}^{CW}$	3	

378 As shown in Fig. 9, the pulses emitted by the BWOPO exhibit smooth temporal profiles with  
 379 the emission of a narrow Fourier-transform limited spectrum for the forward wave. The spectrum  
 380 of the backward wave is similarly narrow. To investigate the stability of the output fluence and  
 381 spectrum, the simulation is carried out 50 times with the same parameters (only the initial random  
 382 noise changes from pulse to pulse). This leads to relative fluctuation of 0.4 % (standard deviation)  
 383 of the conversion efficiency of the BWOPO without any observable variations of the forward and  
 384 backward central wavelength and spectral linewidth. Whatever the spectral distribution of the  
 385 initial noise, only the forward and backward wavelengths at perfect phase matching oscillate. The  
 386 only observable variations concern the value of the peak spectral intensity. In the time domain,  
 387 this is reflected in variations of the pulse build-up time.

388 On the other hand, as seen in Fig. 10, the SROPO delivers pulses with strong temporal  
 389 modulations, whose features are consistent with bandwidth and group-velocity effects previously  
 390 reported in the literature [22]. These modulations display a periodic pattern with a period  
 391 corresponding to cavity round-trip time. The resulting signal spectrum is thus multimode with a  
 392 bandwidth of about 800 GHz. As expected, the build-up time of the SROPO is longer than that of  
 393 the one of the BWOPO.

394 The statistics over 50 pulses shows relative fluctuations of a 0.3 % (standard deviation) of  
 395 the conversion efficiency, which is comparable to the BWOPO. The most striking difference  
 396 compared to the BWOPO actually concerns the pulse to pulse variations of the spectrum. Indeed,  
 397 as expected for a SROPO [18], we observe large variations of the power partition between the  
 398 emitted modes, which are related to the spectral distribution of the initial noise.

399 This study confirms the very different spectral properties of the BWOPO and the SROPO.  
 400 While the pump pulse features are the same for the two OPOs and the nonlinear parameters are  
 401 identical, the BWOPO naturally emits a Fourier-transform-limited spectrum while the SROPO  
 402 delivers a broadband multimode spectrum. To obtain a Fourier-transform limited emission from  
 403 the SROPO, one should implement more complex cavity schemes with intracavity spectral filters  
 404 or based on injection seeding of a narrow-linewidth radiation [23]. On the other hand, the  
 405 BWOPO deliver a narrow linewidth without any cavity or additional spectral filter.

406 One should nevertheless keep in mind that our approach considers plane waves in an ideal

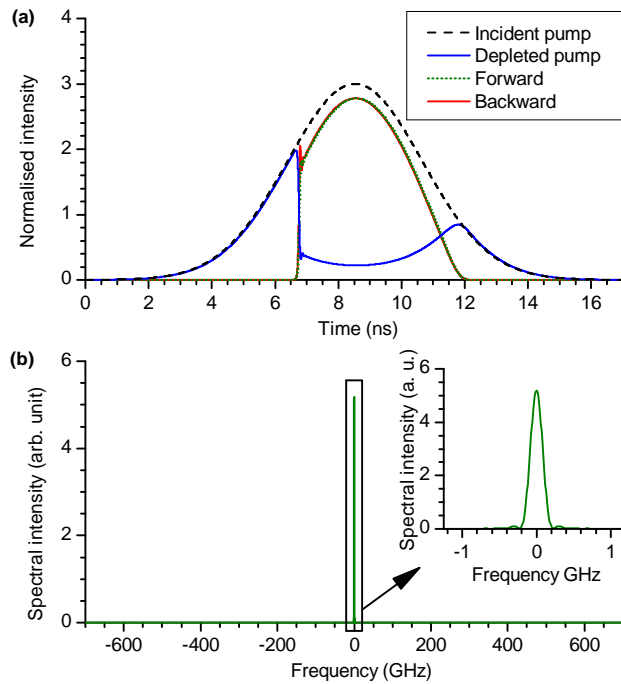


Fig. 9. (a) Temporal profiles of input pump, depleted pump, forward, and backward pulses of the BWOPO calculated by numerical simulation with parameters in Table 2; (b) corresponding spectrum of the forward wave.

407 QPM nonlinear medium with a monochromatic pump. It would be interesting to extend this  
 408 work by analyzing the effects of imperfect QPM period while it is expected that a large or  
 409 non-Fourier-transform-limited pump spectrum would mainly alter the spectrum of the forward  
 410 wave [4–6]. Another useful outlook would be to develop a more elaborate model to take into  
 411 account finite beam effects which might alter the BWOPO spectral and spatial profiles. Dedicated  
 412 experimental studies would also be essential to validate the theoretical results.

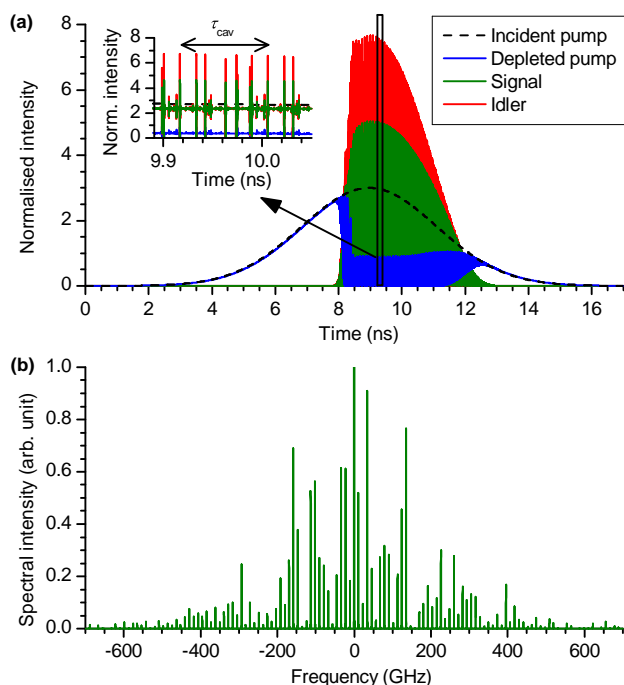


Fig. 10. (a) Temporal profiles of input pump, depleted pump, signal, and idler pulses of the SROPO calculated by numerical simulation with parameters in Table 2; (b) corresponding spectrum of the signal wave.

#### 413 4. Conclusion

414 In this paper we have presented the theoretical investigation of the BWOPO in CW and pulsed  
 415 regime. By exactly taking into account the parametric interaction between the three waves in the  
 416 nonlinear crystal, our approach has enabled to recover steady-state solutions which are consistent  
 417 with the literature. Then, we have developed an approach adapted to the description of the pulsed  
 418 BWOPO oscillation build-up. As the main outcome of this analysis, we have derived an analytic  
 419 expression of the BWOPO build-up time. Owing to this expression, we have been able to derive  
 420 a BWOPO analog of the Brosnan–Byer threshold fluence formula for the conventional SROPO.  
 421 These expressions have then been successfully compared with experimental threshold values  
 422 reported in the literature. We have also derived an approximate expression of the conversion  
 423 efficiency in pulsed regime. These expressions can be useful to design a pulsed BWOPO without  
 424 resorting to extensive numerical simulations. The developed formalism has also been exploited  
 425 to carry out informative comparisons between the BWOPO and the SROPO. In particular, we  
 426 show that a SROPO with a coupler reflectivity of about 16 % has the same CW oscillation as the  
 427 BWOPO based on a similar nonlinear material. This equivalent SROPO has however a build-up  
 428 time that is typically two times longer than the BWOPO.

429 We have also study the spectral properties of the BWOPO. A striking result is that the  
 430 BWOPO oscillation threshold can only be reached at perfect quasi-phase matching and that the  
 431 subthreshold gain bandwidth is typical several hundreds times narrower than for forward-wave  
 432 parametric amplification. Numerical simulations of the BWOPO and SROPO pumped by a  
 433 Fourier-transform-limited nanosecond Gaussian pump pulse have confirmed that the spectral  
 434 properties of both OPOs are very different. While the SROPO delivers a broadband multimode  
 435 spectrum, the BWOPO emission is naturally Fourier-transform limited. This unique features is

436 very promising to implement differential absorption lidar emitters based on BWOPOs for remote  
437 gas sensing.

## 438 **Appendix A: Build-up time and gain bandwidth of the SROPO**

### 439 *A.1. Single-pass FWOPA gain*

The coupled nonlinear equations for forward parametric interaction read [23]:

$$\frac{\partial A_i}{\partial z} + \frac{1}{v_{gi}} \frac{\partial A_i}{\partial t} = i\kappa A_p A_s^* \exp(i\Delta k z), \quad (\text{A1a})$$

$$\frac{\partial A_s}{\partial z} + \frac{1}{v_{gs}} \frac{\partial A_s}{\partial t} = i\kappa A_p A_i^* \exp(i\Delta k z), \quad (\text{A1b})$$

$$\frac{\partial A_p}{\partial z} + \frac{1}{v_{gp}} \frac{\partial A_p}{\partial t} = i\kappa A_i A_s \exp(-i\Delta k z), \quad (\text{A1c})$$

Considering monochromatic continuous waves and assuming that the pump wave is not depleted, i.e.  $A_p(z) = A_{p0}$ , the latter coupled equations reduce to

$$\frac{dA_i}{dz} = i\kappa A_{p0} A_s^* \exp(i\Delta k z), \quad (\text{A2a})$$

$$\frac{dA_s}{dz} = i\kappa A_{p0} A_i^* \exp(i\Delta k z). \quad (\text{A2b})$$

440 When there is no input for the idler wave, i.e.  $A_i(0) = 0$ , the gain for the signal intensity after  
441 a single pass in the FWOPA,  $|A_s(L)|^2 / |A_s(0)|^2 = 1 + G_{\text{FWOPA}}$ , can be determined by solving  
442 (A2a) and (A2b) to be

$$G_{\text{FWOPA}} = \frac{4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2}{4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 - \Delta k^2} \sinh^2 \left[ \left( 4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 - \Delta k^2 \right)^{1/2} L/2 \right], \quad (\text{A3})$$

### 443 *A.2. SROPO build-up time*

444 Let us consider a SROPO characterized by a cavity round-trip time,  $\tau_{\text{cav}}$ , and a coupler reflectivity,  
445  $R$ , while the other cavity loss are negligible. Considering that the pump is not depleted during the  
446 oscillation build-up time, the intracavity signal intensity temporal evolution can be approximated by

$$I_s(t) = I_s(0) \left[ R \cosh^2(\kappa |A_{p0}| L) \right]^{t/\tau_{\text{cav}}}, \quad (\text{A4})$$

447 where perfect phase matching was assumed in (A3). The above expression can be rewritten

$$I_s(t) = I_s(0) \exp(t/\tau_{\text{SROPO}}), \quad (\text{A5})$$

448 with

$$\tau_{\text{SROPO}} = \frac{\tau_{\text{cav}}}{\ln(R) + 2 \ln \left\{ \cosh \left[ \cosh^{-1} \left( \frac{1}{\sqrt{R}} \right) u_{p0} / u_{\text{th,SROPO}}^{\text{CW}} \right] \right\}} \quad (\text{A6})$$

449 and

$$u_{\text{th,SROPO}}^{\text{CW}} = \frac{1}{\kappa L} \cosh^{-1} \left( \frac{1}{\sqrt{R}} \right) \quad (\text{A7})$$

450 **A.3. Cavity-enhanced FWOPA gain spectrum**

451 We now consider the CE-FWOPA (or sub-threshold SROPO). Assuming that the signal frequency  
452 is a cavity eigenfrequency, the gain of the CE-FWOPA can be written

$$G_{\text{CE-FWOPA}} = \frac{(1 - R) G_{\text{FWOPA}}}{\left[1 - \sqrt{R(1 + G_{\text{FWOPA}})}\right]^2}. \quad (\text{A8})$$

such as the signal intensity incident on the cavity,  $I_s^{\text{in}}$ , is related to the output signal intensity,  $I_s^{\text{out}}$ ,  
by  $I_s^{\text{out}}/I_s^{\text{in}} = 1 + G_{\text{CE-FWOPA}}$ . Inserting (A3) in (A8), one obtains the following expression:

$$G_{\text{CE-FWOPA}} = (1 - R) 4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 \times \sinh^2 \left[ \left(4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 - \Delta k^2\right)^{1/2} L/2 \right] \left/ \left[ \left(4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 - \Delta k^2\right)^{1/2} - \sqrt{R} \left\{ 4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 \cosh^2 \left[ \left(4\kappa^2 |A_{p0}|^2 - \Delta k^2\right)^{1/2} L/2 \right] - \Delta k^2 \right\}^{1/2} \right]^2 \right. \quad (\text{A9})$$

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460 **Data Availability.** Data underlying the results presented in this paper are not publicly available at this  
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