

# Solving Schubert Problems with Littlewood-Richardson Homotopies

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joint work with Frank Sottile and Ravi Vakil

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# Outline

- 1 Numerical Schubert Calculus
  - Schubert varieties and Schubert problems
  - homotopies for enumerative geometry
- 2 The Moving Flag in Littlewood-Richardson Homotopies
  - specialization and generalization
  - encoding the moves by black checkers
- 3 2 Lines meeting 4 given general Lines in 3-space
  - checker games encode moving flag and coordinates for solutions
  - coordinate transformations and moving coordinates in homotopy
- 4 Localization Patterns and Checker Movements

# Schubert Varieties

A Schubert variety is defined by an  $n$ -dimensional flag  $F$ :

$$F = [\mathbf{f}_1 \mathbf{f}_2 \cdots \mathbf{f}_n] \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n} \quad \langle \mathbf{f}_1 \rangle \subset \langle \mathbf{f}_1, \mathbf{f}_2 \rangle \subset \cdots \subset \langle \mathbf{f}_1, \mathbf{f}_2, \dots, \mathbf{f}_n \rangle$$

and a  $k$ -dimensional bracket  $\omega \in \mathbb{N}^k$ ,  $1 \leq \omega_1 < \omega_2 < \cdots < \omega_k \leq n$ :

$$\Omega_\omega(F) = \left\{ X \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times k} \mid \dim(X \cap \langle \mathbf{f}_1, \dots, \mathbf{f}_{\omega_i} \rangle) = i, i = 1, 2, \dots, k \right\}.$$

For example: for  $F \in \mathbb{C}^{6 \times 6}$ ,  $\Omega_{[2 \ 4 \ 6]}(F)$  contains

$$X = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ x_{21} & 1 & 0 \\ x_{31} & x_{32} & 1 \\ x_{41} & x_{42} & x_{43} \\ 0 & x_{52} & x_{53} \\ 0 & 0 & x_{63} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\dim(X \cap \langle \mathbf{f}_1, \mathbf{f}_2 \rangle) = 1$$

$$\dim(X \cap \langle \mathbf{f}_1, \mathbf{f}_2, \mathbf{f}_3, \mathbf{f}_4 \rangle) = 2$$

$$\dim(X \cap \langle \mathbf{f}_1, \mathbf{f}_2, \mathbf{f}_3, \mathbf{f}_4, \mathbf{f}_5, \mathbf{f}_6 \rangle) = 3$$

expressed via conditions on minors  $\rightarrow$   
system of 13 polynomials in 9 variables

# Schubert Problems

A triple intersection  $[2\ 4\ 6]^3 = [2\ 4\ 6][2\ 4\ 6][2\ 4\ 6]$  means

$$\Omega_{[2\ 4\ 6]}(I) \cap \Omega_{[2\ 4\ 6]}(M) \cap \Omega_{[2\ 4\ 6]}(F)$$

where  $I$  : the identity matrix represents the standard flag,  
 $M$  : a matrix represents the moving flag,  
 $F$  : another matrix represents the fixed flag.

The Littlewood-Richardson rule computes the number of solutions:

$$\begin{aligned} [2\ 4\ 6]^3 &= ([2\ 4\ 6][2\ 4\ 6])[2\ 4\ 6] \\ &= ([2\ 3\ 4] + 2[1\ 3\ 5] + [1\ 2\ 6])[2\ 4\ 6] \\ &= [2\ 3\ 4][2\ 4\ 6] + 2[1\ 3\ 5][2\ 4\ 6] + [1\ 2\ 6][2\ 4\ 6] \\ &= 0 + 2[1\ 2\ 3] + 0 \end{aligned}$$

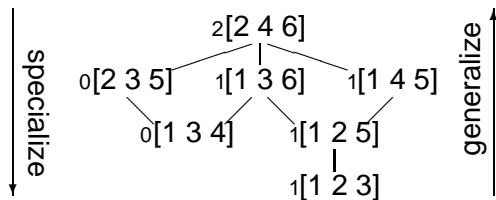
→ there are 2 isolated 3-planes in  $\Omega_{[2\ 4\ 6]}(I) \cap \Omega_{[2\ 4\ 6]}(M) \cap \Omega_{[2\ 4\ 6]}(F)$ .

# poset to resolve general problems

Resolving  $[2\ 4\ 6][2\ 5\ 6]^3$ :

$$\begin{aligned}[2\ 4\ 6][2\ 5\ 6]^3 &= (1[2\ 3\ 5] + 1[1\ 4\ 5] + 1[1\ 3\ 6])[2\ 5\ 6]^2 \\ &= (2[1\ 3\ 4] + 2[1\ 2\ 5])[2\ 5\ 6] \\ &= 2[1\ 2\ 3].\end{aligned}$$

Using a poset:



# a Geometric Littlewood-Richardson Rule

William Fulton: *Young Tableau. With Applications to Representation Theory and Geometry*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.

The first geometric proof and interpretation was given by Ravi Vakil: *a geometric Littlewood-Richardson rule*. Ann of Math, 2006.

A combinatorial checker game for the Littlewood-Richardson coefficients implies that we can

- count (enumerate) the solutions to Schubert problems,
- compute these solutions via explicit deformations.

→ Littlewood-Richardson homotopies

Motivation: experimental study of reality conjectures

<http://www.math.tamu.edu/~secant>

Christopher Hillar, Luis Garcia-Puente, Abraham Martin del Campo, James Ruffo, Zach Teitler, Stephen L. Johnson, Frank Sottile: *Experimentation at the Frontiers of Reality in Schubert Calculus*. Contemporary Math. AMS 2010.

# Homotopies for Enumerative Geometry

- **B. Huber, F. Sottile, and B. Sturmfels:** Numerical Schubert calculus. *J. of Symbolic Computation*, 26(6):767–788, 1998.
- **J. Verschelde:** Numerical evidence for a conjecture in real algebraic geometry. *Experimental Mathematics* 9(2): 183–196, 2000.
- **B. Huber and J. Verschelde:** Pieri homotopies for problems in enumerative geometry applied to pole placement in linear systems control. *SIAM J. Control Optim.* 38(4):1265–1287, 2000.
- **F. Sottile and B. Sturmfels:** A sagbi basis for the quantum Grassmannian. *J. Pure and Appl. Algebra* 158(2-3): 347–366, 2001.
- **T.Y. Li, X. Wang, and M. Wu:** Numerical Schubert calculus by the Pieri homotopy algorithm. *SIAM J. Numer. Anal.* 20(2):578–600, 2002.
- **J. Verschelde and Y. Wang:** Computing dynamic output feedback laws. *IEEE Trans. Automat. Control.* 49(8):1393–1397, 2004.
- **A. Leykin and F. Sottile:** Galois group of Schubert problems via homotopy continuation. *Math. Comp.* 78(267): 1749–1765, 2009.

# Degenerating the moving Flag

- Given  $I$  : the identity matrix represents the standard flag,  
 $M$  : a matrix represents the moving flag,  
 $F$  : another matrix represents the fixed flag,

we consider a triple intersection for some bracket  $\omega$ :

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{general problem:} & \Omega_\omega(I) \cap \Omega_\omega(M) \cap \Omega_\omega(F) & \\ \begin{array}{c} \updownarrow \\ \text{red} \end{array} & \text{degeneration} \begin{array}{c} \updownarrow \\ \text{green} \end{array} & \text{generalization} \\ \text{degenerate problem:} & \Omega_\omega(I) \cap \Omega_\omega(I) \cap \Omega_\omega(F) & \end{array}$$

The degeneration  $M \rightarrow I$  allows to satisfy the intersection condition by solving some linear systems.

Littlewood-Richardson homotopies generalize  $I$  to  $M$  via invertible transformations involving a parameter  $t$ .



# Generalizing the moving Flag

first three moves for  $n = 4$ , random  $\gamma_{ij} \in \mathbb{C}$

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \gamma_{31}t & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \gamma_{31}t & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \gamma_{31} & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \gamma_{21}t & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \gamma_{21}t & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & \gamma_{31} & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \gamma_{21} & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & \gamma_{31} & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11}t & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11}t & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ \gamma_{21} & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ \gamma_{31} & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

# Generalizing the moving Flag

last three moves for  $n = 4$ , random  $\gamma_{ij} \in \mathbb{C}$

$$\begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11} & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ \gamma_{21} & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ \gamma_{31} & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \gamma_{22}t & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11} & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ \gamma_{21} & 0 & \gamma_{22}t & 1 \\ \gamma_{31} & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11} & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ \gamma_{21} & 0 & \gamma_{22} & 1 \\ \gamma_{31} & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \gamma_{21}t & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11} & \gamma_{21}t & 1 & 0 \\ \gamma_{21} & \gamma_{22} & 0 & 1 \\ \gamma_{31} & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

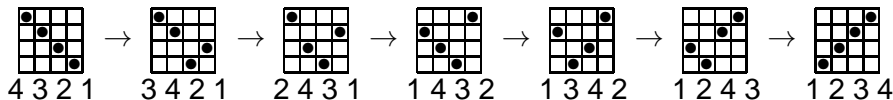
$$\begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11} & \gamma_{21} & 1 & 0 \\ \gamma_{21} & \gamma_{22} & 0 & 1 \\ \gamma_{31} & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \gamma_{13}t & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11} & \gamma_{21} & \gamma_{13}t & 1 \\ \gamma_{21} & \gamma_{22} & 1 & 0 \\ \gamma_{31} & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

# Encoding the Moves

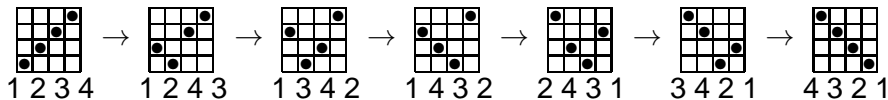
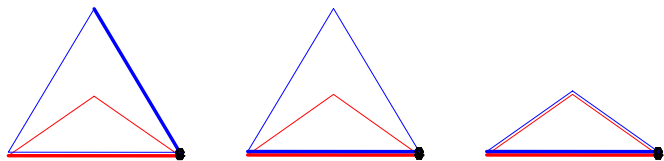
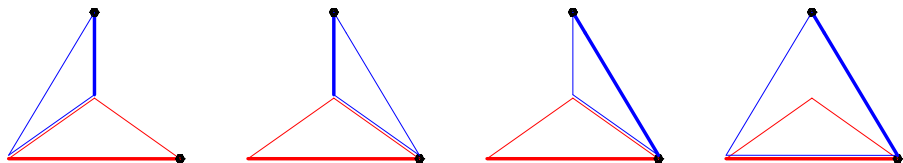
bubble sort on  $n n - 1 \cdots 2 1$

$$I \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \gamma_{31} & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \gamma_{21} & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & \gamma_{31} & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11} & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ \gamma_{21} & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ \gamma_{31} & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11} & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ \gamma_{21} & 0 & \gamma_{22} & 1 \\ \gamma_{31} & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11} & \gamma_{21} & 1 & 0 \\ \gamma_{21} & \gamma_{22} & 0 & 1 \\ \gamma_{31} & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{11} & \gamma_{21} & \gamma_{13} & 1 \\ \gamma_{21} & \gamma_{22} & 1 & 0 \\ \gamma_{31} & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$



# Specialization in $\mathbb{P}^3$



# Littlewood-Richardson Homotopies

Degeneration of general flag from  $M$  to  $I$  in  $\binom{n}{2}$  moves.

Three flag intersection condition  $\Omega_\omega(I) \cap \Omega_\omega(M) \cap \Omega_\omega(F)$  is at the special position for  $M = I$  reduced to the equations imposed on

$$X \in \Omega_\omega(F) : P(X) = 0.$$

Generalizing the moving flag  $M$  leads to homotopies of the form

$$P(M(t)X) = 0, \quad t \in [0, 1].$$

The solution  $k$ -plane  $X$  is represented in this moving basis  $M(t)$  in suitable local coordinates, via a localization pattern.

# The Problem of Four General Lines

Classical problem in projective 3-space  $\mathbb{P}^3$ :

**Given four general lines in  $\mathbb{P}^3$  (no triplet is coplanar),  
find all lines that meet those four given lines nontrivially.**

Identify  $\mathbb{P}^3$  with  $\mathbb{C}^4$  with natural basis  $(\mathbf{e}_1, \mathbf{e}_2, \mathbf{e}_3, \mathbf{e}_4)$ .

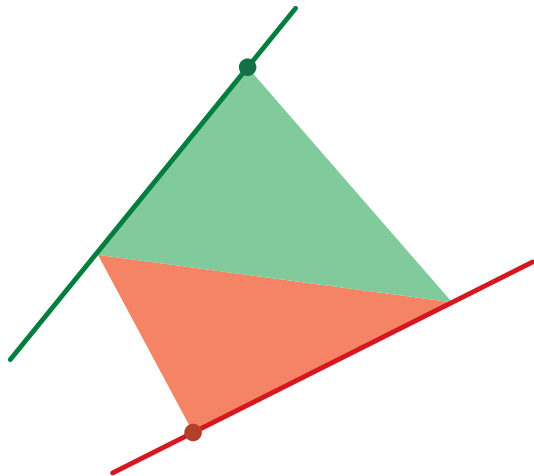
Let  $L_1 = \text{span}(\mathbf{e}_1, \mathbf{e}_2)$  and  $L_2 = \text{span}(\mathbf{e}_3, \mathbf{e}_4)$ , consider

$$X = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ x_{2,1} & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \\ 0 & x_{4,2} \end{bmatrix} \quad P(X) = \begin{cases} \det([X|L_3]) = 0 \\ \det([X|L_4]) = 0 \end{cases}$$

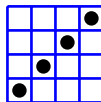
where  $X$  meets  $L_1$  and  $L_2$  by its pattern.

Specializing  $L_2$  to coincide with  $L_1$  makes  $X$  change pattern  
so  $P(X) = \mathbf{0}$  becomes a linear system.

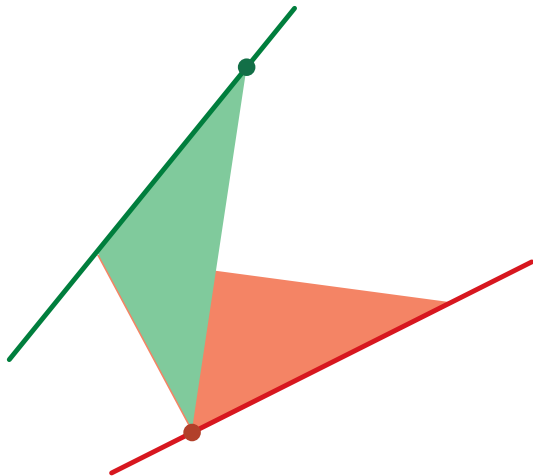
# Specializing Moving Flag to Fixed Flag – stage 0



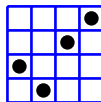
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1 1 1 0  
1 1 0 0  
1 0 0 0



# Specializing Moving Flag to Fixed Flag – stage 1

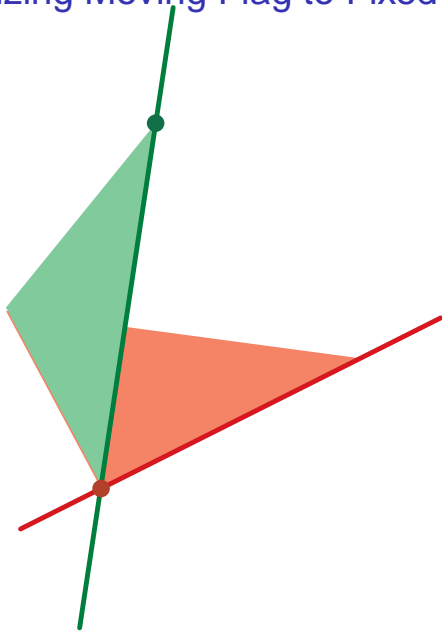


1 1 1 0  
1 1 0 1  
1 1 0 0  
1 0 0 0

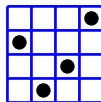




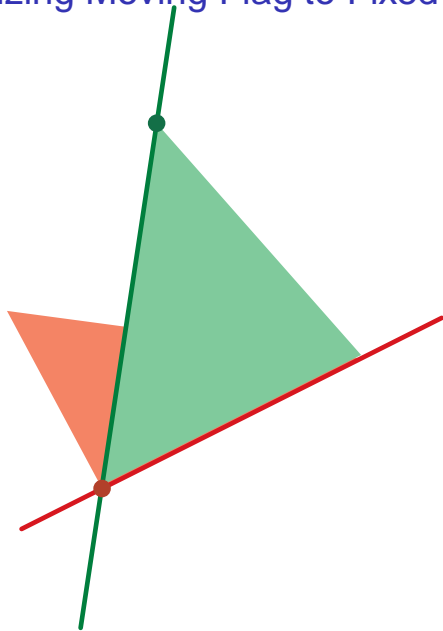
# Specializing Moving Flag to Fixed Flag – stage 2



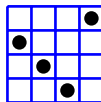
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1 0 1 1  
1 0 1 0  
1 0 0 0



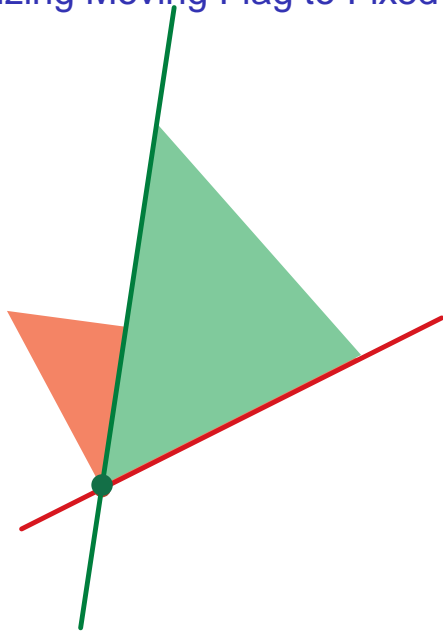
# Specializing Moving Flag to Fixed Flag – stage 3



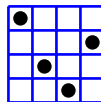
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1 0 0 1  
1 0 0 0



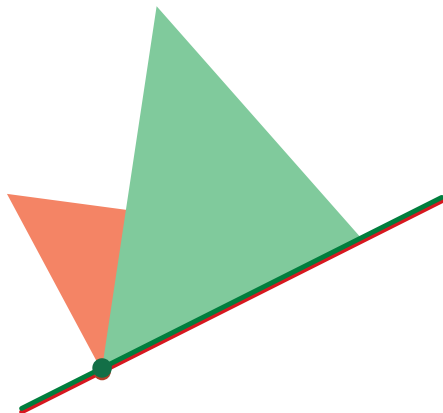
# Specializing Moving Flag to Fixed Flag – stage 4



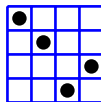
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0 1 1 0  
0 1 0 1  
0 1 0 0



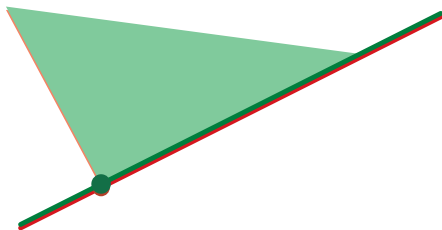
# Specializing Moving Flag to Fixed Flag – stage 5



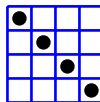
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0 1 0 0  
0 0 1 1  
0 0 1 0



# Specializing Moving Flag to Fixed Flag – stage 6



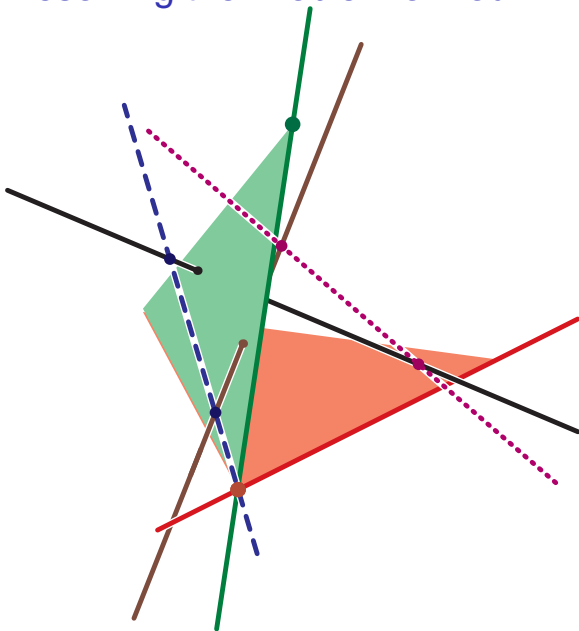
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0 0 0 1



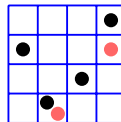
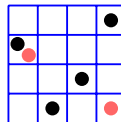




# Resolving the Problem of Four Lines – stage 2



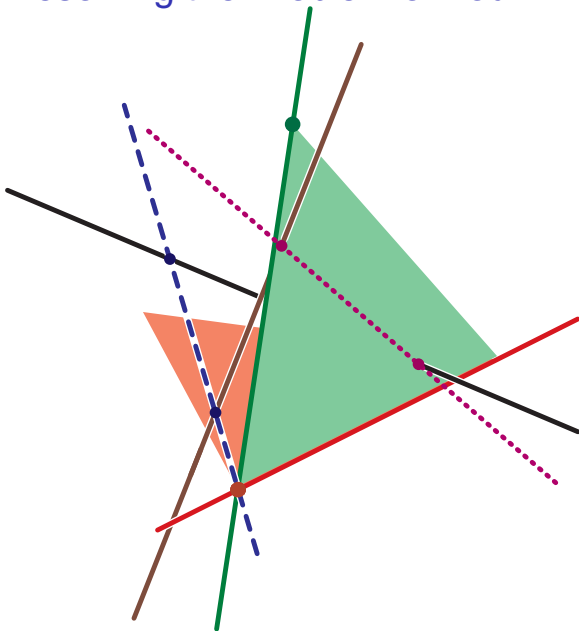
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1 0  
0 \*  
0 1



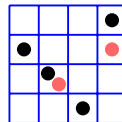
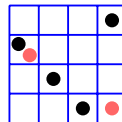
\* 0  
1 \*  
0 0  
0 1



# Resolving the Problem of Four Lines – stage 3

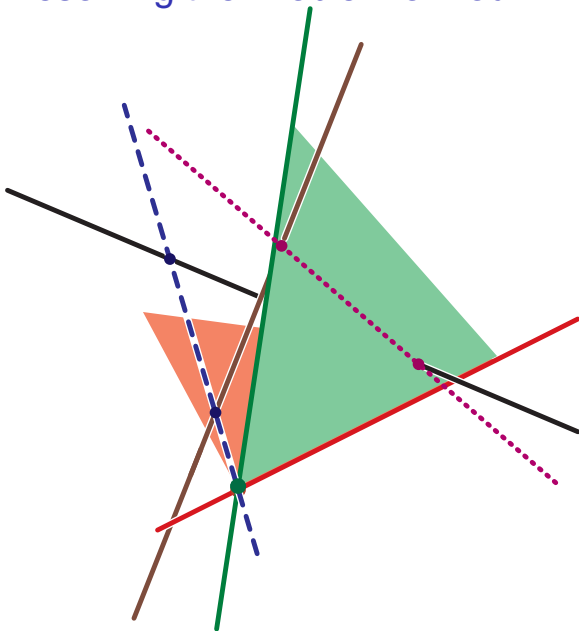


0 \*  
1 0  
0 \*  
0 1

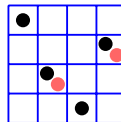
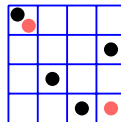


\* 0  
1 \*  
0 1  
0 0

# Resolving the Problem of Four Lines – stage 4

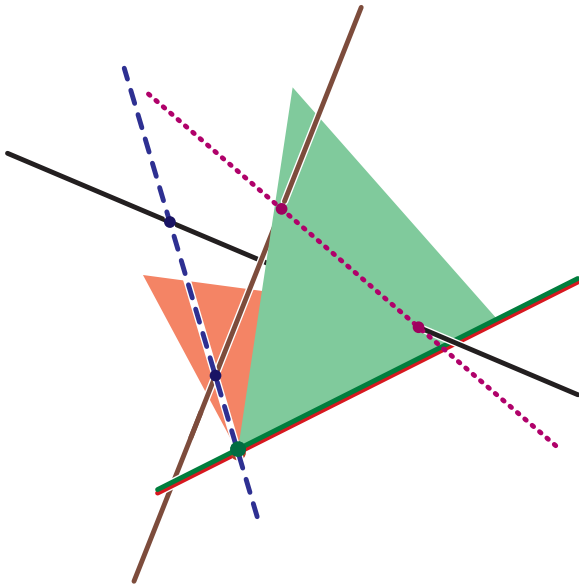


1 0  
0 \*  
0 \*  
0 1

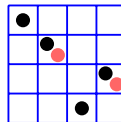
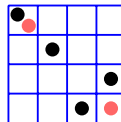


\* \*  
1 0  
0 1  
0 0

# Resolving the Problem of Four Lines – stage 5

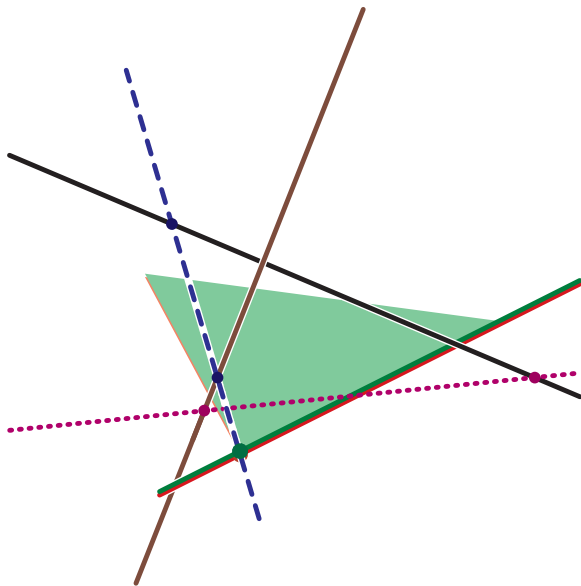


1 0  
0 \*  
0 \*  
0 1

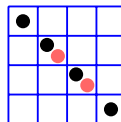
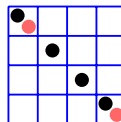


\* \*  
1 0  
0 1  
0 0

# Resolving the Problem of Four Lines – stage 6



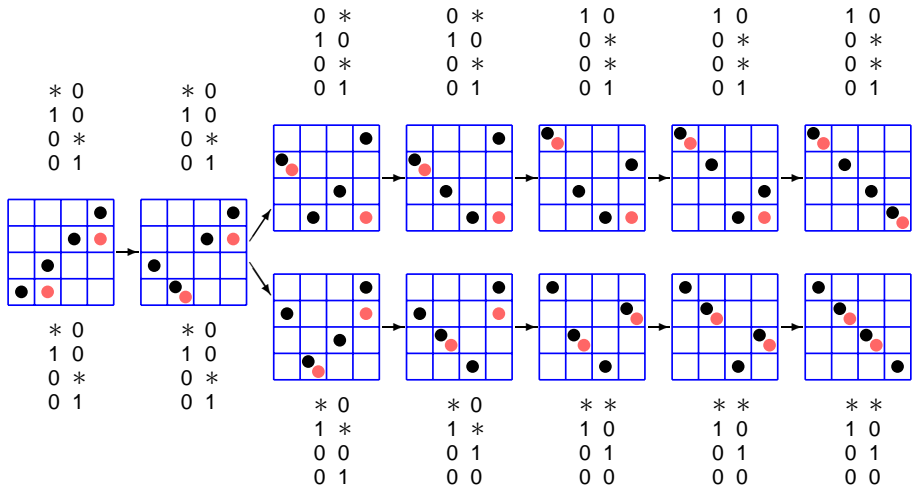
1 0  
0 \*  
0 \*  
0 1



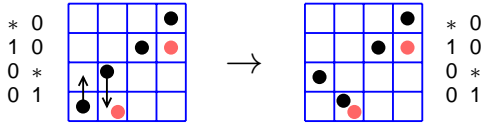
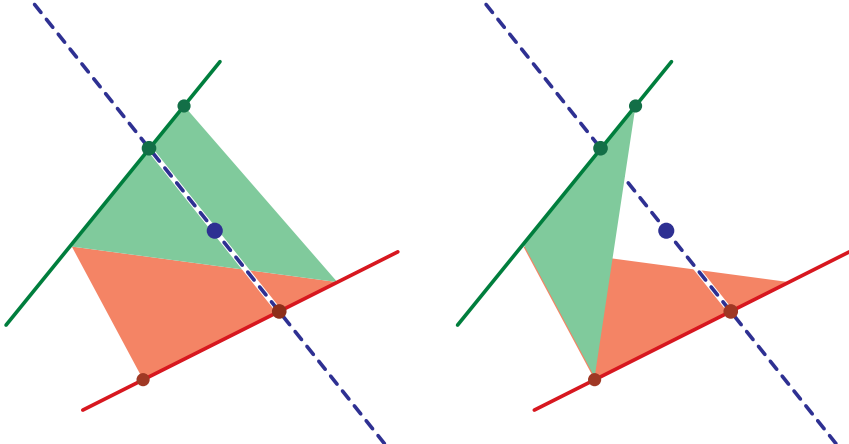
\* \*  
1 0  
0 1  
0 0

# Checker Games

resolving  $[2\ 4][2\ 4][2\ 4][2\ 4]$



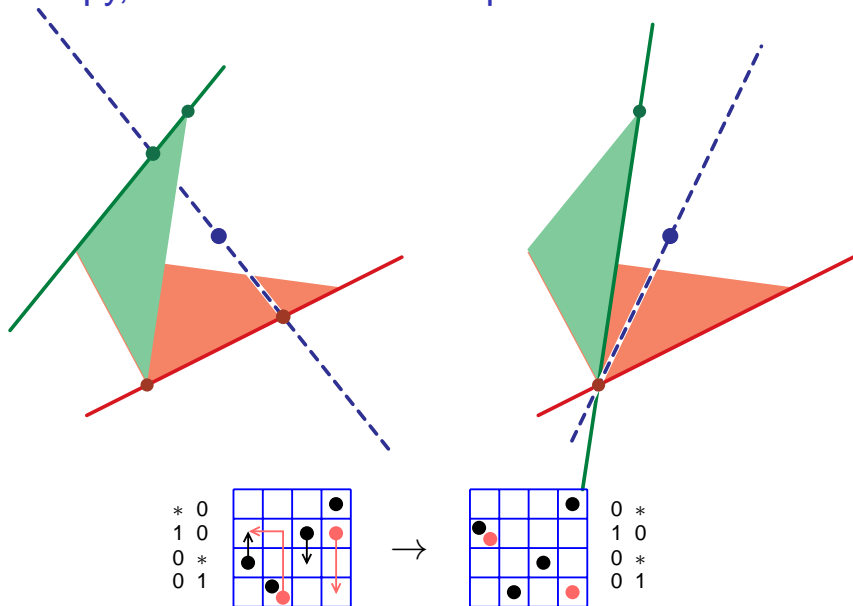
# no homotopy, only change of coordinates



## corresponding coordinate transformation

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & -1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x_{11} & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \\ 0 & x_{32} \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} x_{11} & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \\ 0 & x_{32}-1 \end{bmatrix}$$
$$\equiv \begin{bmatrix} x_{11} & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1/(x_{32}-1) \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

# homotopy, as red checkers swap rows





## homotopy as red checkers swap

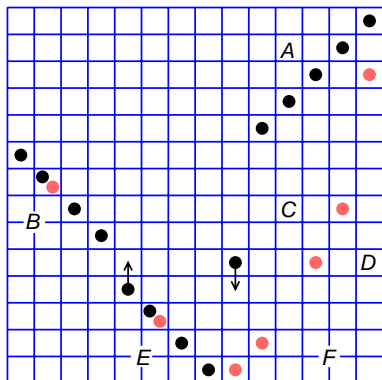
Similar to the case of a line meeting two lines and a fixed point, we use a homotopy:

$$X(t) = \begin{bmatrix} x_{12}t & x_{12} \\ x_{32} & 0 \\ x_{32}t & x_{32} \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

At  $t = 0$ ,  $X(0)$  fits the pattern.

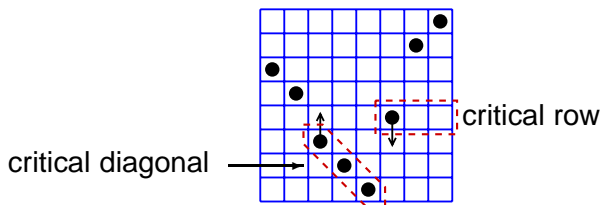
At  $t = 1$ , a coordinate change makes  $X(1)$  to fit the pattern.

# Localization Patterns



$$\begin{bmatrix}
 X_{1,1} & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
 X_{2,1} & \cdot & X_{2,3} & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
 1 & \cdot & X_{3,3} & X_{3,4} & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
 \cdot & \cdot & X_{4,3} & X_{4,4} & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
 \cdot & \cdot & X_{5,3} & X_{5,4} & \cdot & X_{5,6} & \cdot \\
 \cdot & X_{6,2} & X_{6,3} & X_{6,4} & X_{6,5} & X_{6,6} & X_{6,7} \\
 \cdot & 1 & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\
 \cdot & \cdot & 1 & X_{8,4} & X_{8,5} & X_{8,6} & X_{8,7} \\
 \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & X_{9,4} & X_{9,5} & X_{9,6} & X_{9,7} \\
 \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 1 & \cdot & X_{10,6} & X_{10,7} \\
 \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & X_{11,5} & X_{11,6} & X_{11,7} \\
 \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 1 & \cdot & \cdot \\
 \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 1 & X_{13,7} \\
 \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 1
 \end{bmatrix}$$





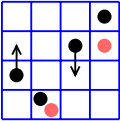
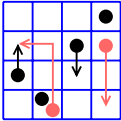




# Rising and Falling Checkers



To resolve  $\Omega_\omega(F) \cap \Omega_\tau(M)$ , 9 cases to consider:

- 1 Where is the top red checker in the critical diagonal?
  - (a) In the rising checker's square.
  - (b) Elsewhere in the critical diagonal.
  - (c) There is no red checker in the critical diagonal.
- 2 Where is the red checker in the critical row?
  - ( $\alpha$ ) In the descending checker's square.
  - ( $\beta$ ) Elsewhere in the critical row.
  - ( $\gamma$ ) There is no red checker in the critical row.

# Movement of Red Checkers

|     | $\alpha$  | $\beta$  | $\gamma$   |
|-----|---|--|--|
| $a$ |  |   |  |
| $b$ |  |  or  |  |
| $c$ |  |   |  |

# An Implementation in PHCpack

Since v2.3.46 Littlewood-Richardson homotopies are in PHCpack,  
at <http://www.math.uic.edu/~jan/download.html>

phc -e option #4 allows to resolve intersection conditions,

e.g.: in  $\mathbb{C}^{10}$  :  $[6\ 8\ 10]^7 = 720[1\ 2\ 3]$ ,

in  $\mathbb{C}^{11}$  :  $[7\ 9\ 11]^8 = 3598[1\ 2\ 3]$ ,

in  $\mathbb{C}^{12}$  :  $[9\ 11\ 12][8\ 11\ 12]^{13} = 860574[1\ 2\ 3]$ , etc...

Solving small Schubert problems on a Mac OS X 2.2 Ghz:

- $[2\ 4]^4 = 2$  takes 5 milliseconds,
- $[2\ 4\ 6]^3 = 2$  takes 169 milliseconds,
- $[2\ 5\ 8]^2[4\ 6\ 8] = 2$  takes 2.556 seconds,
- $[2\ 4\ 6\ 8]^2[2\ 5\ 7\ 8] = 3$  takes 8.595 seconds.