



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Maldacena, Polchinski and Vafa Win 2008 Dirac Medal

Trieste, Italy, 8 August 2008 - On the occasion of the birthday of P.A.M. Dirac, the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) takes pleasure in announcing that the 2008 Dirac Medal and Prize will be awarded to:

Professor J.M. Maldacena
(Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton)

Professor J. Polchinski
(KITP, UC Santa Barbara)

Professor C. Vafa
(Harvard University)

Professors Maldacena, Polchinski and Vafa are being honored for their fundamental contributions to superstring theory. Their studies range from early work on orbifold compactifications, physics and mathematics of mirror symmetry, D-branes and black hole physics, as well as gauge theory-gravity correspondence. Their contributions in uncovering the strong-weak dualities between seemingly different string theories have enabled us to learn about regimes of quantum field theory which are not accessible to perturbative analysis. These profound achievements have helped us to address outstanding questions like confinement of quarks and QCD mass spectrum from a new perspective and have found applications in practical calculations in the fluid dynamics of quark gluon plasma.

The dualities have also led string theorists to conjecture that the five different superstring theories in ten space-time dimensions are manifestations of one underlying theory, yet undiscovered, which has been named the M-theory.

The Dirac Medal, established by the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in 1985, is one of the world's most prestigious prizes in physics. Recipients receive a cash award and medal. They also present a lecture at the ICTP in Trieste, Italy, at an official ceremony held at a later date. Winners of the Nobel Prize, Fields Medal and Wolf Foundation Prize are not eligible for the Dirac Medal.

The announcement of the Dirac Medal is made each year on 8 August, the birth date of the great 20th century physicist Paul A.M. Dirac, who won the Nobel Prize in 1933. Dirac was a close associate and friend of ICTP from the Centre's first days in the early 1960s until his death in 1984.

For additional information about the Dirac Medal and a complete list of previous winners, see <http://prizes.ictp.it/Dirac>

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