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Contents

xi	<i>Conference Committee</i>
xiii	<i>Introduction</i>

NOVEL ULTRAFAST LASER SOURCES AND TECHNIQUES

- 660602 **Laser space propulsion overview (Invited Paper)** [6606-01]
C. Phipps, Photonic Associates, LLC (USA); J. Luke, W. Helgeson, NMT/Institute for Engineering and Research Applications (USA)
- 660603 **Ultrafast x-ray source using liquid metal target** [6606-02]
A. B. Savel'ev, M. V. Kurilova, D. S. Uryupina, R. V. Volkov, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State Univ. (Russia)
- 660604 **Optical frequency stabilization in infrared region using improved dual feed-back loop** [6606-03]
B. Růžička, O. Číp, J. Lazar, Institute of Scientific Instruments (Czech Republic)
- 660605 **Mode locking operation of Yb:YAG/YAG laser: nonlinear mirror technique** [6606-04]
T. Dascalu, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); T. Taira, Institute for Molecular Science (Japan)
- 660606 **Narrow-linewidth high-power semiconductor laser with external feedback** [6606-05]
Z. Buchta, J. Rychnovský, Institute of Scientific Instruments (Czech Republic) and Brno Univ. of Technology (Czech Republic); J. Lazar, Institute of Scientific Instruments (Czech Republic)
- 660607 **Design and fabrication of fiber Bragg gratings for vertical cavity surface emitting laser diodes** [6606-06]
B. Mikel, R. Helán, Institute of Scientific Instruments (Czech Republic) and Univ. of Technology Brno (Czech Republic); O. Číp, Institute of Scientific Instruments (Czech Republic)

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The CID number appears on each page of the manuscript. The complete citation is used on the first page, and an abbreviated version on subsequent pages.

- 660608 **Training of self-pumped phase-conjugate mirrors based on photorefractive nonlinearity** [6606-07]
K. V. Rudenko, V. V. Shuvalov, M. Vahdani Mogaddam, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State Univ. (Russia)
- 660609 **Multi-channel laser system with phase locking by holographic gain gratings and small diameter deep hole drilling** [6606-08]
A. V. Fedin, A. V. Gavrilov, S. N. Smetanin, S. A. Solokhin, Kovrov State Technological Academy (Russia)
- 66060A **Passively Q-switched diode pumped CW Nd:GdVO₄-Cr⁴⁺:YAG and Nd:YAG-CR⁴⁺:YAG laser** [6606-09]
C. Petre, T. Dascalu, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania)
- 66060B **Measurement of iodine purity in absorption cells for laser frequency stabilization** [6606-10]
J. Hrabina, Institute of Scientific Instruments (Czech Republic) and Brno Univ. of Technology (Czech Republic); F. Petrů, P. Jedlička, O. Číp, J. Lazar, Institute of Scientific Instruments (Czech Republic)
- 66060C **Damage tests for 355 nm laser mirror by using a new variable spot size optical system (VariSpot)** [6606-11]
C. Fenic, L. Neagu, C. Viespe, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); G. Honciuc, OPTICOAT (Romania); G. Nemes, ASTIGMAT (USA)
- 66060D **Bandpass filter for photonic crystal microcircuits** [6606-12]
L. Bogdan, P. Sterian, Bucharest Polytechnic Univ. (Romania)
- 66060E **Spatial optical solitons in photonic crystals (1D) with cubic nonlinearity** [6606-13]
S. Donțu, V. Babin, D. Savastru, S. Micloș, E. Ristici, C. Radu, M. I. Rusu, National Institute of R&D for Optoelectronics INOE (Romania)

LASER NANOTECHNOLOGIES

- 66060F **Nanosecond UV laser-induced nanoablation of diamond surface (Invited Paper)** [6606-14]
V. V. Kononenko, M. S. Komlenok, V. I. Konov, S. M. Pimenov, Natural Sciences Ctr. of General Physics Institute (Russia)
- 66060G **Femtosecond laser induced surface instability resulting in self-organized nanostructures (Invited Paper)** [6606-15]
J. Reif, F. Costache, O. Varlamova, S. Eckert, Brandenburgische Technische Univ. Cottbus (Germany) and IHP/BTU JointLab. (Germany)
- 66060H **Ablated nano-particles residing in air: characterization, elimination, and role in pulsed microdrilling (Invited Paper)** [6606-16]
S. M. Klimentov, V. I. Konov, P. A. Pivovarov, S. V. Garnov, T. V. Kononenko, Prokhorov General Physics Institute (Russia); F. Dausinger, Institut für Strahlwerkzeuge (Germany)
- 66060I **Cluster size prediction in pulsed laser deposited films (Invited Paper)** [6606-17]
A. Bailini, P. M. Ossi, Politecnico di Milano (Italy)

- 66060J **Carbon nanostructures by gas-phase laser pyrolysis** [6606-18]
R. Alexandrescu, F. Dumitrache, L. Gavrilă Florescu, I. Morjan, E. Popovici, M. Scarisoreanu, I. Sandu, I. Soare, I. Voicu, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania)
- 66060K **Structural and magnetic properties of nanosized iron-polyoxocarbosilane core-shell composites prepared by laser pyrolysis** [6606-19]
R. Alexandrescu, I. Morjan, F. Dumitrache, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); J. Pola, Institute of Chemical Process Fundamentals (Czech Republic); V. Vorlicek, M. Marysko, Institute of Physics (Czech Republic); L. Gavrilă, M. Scarisoreanu, I. Voicu, I. Sandu, C. Fleaca, E. Popovici, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); G. Prodan, Ovidius Univ. of Constanta (Romania)
- 66060L **Synthesis and characterization of Eu³⁺ -doped orthosilicates (Y₂SiO₅) nanocrystalline powders** [6606-20]
A. M. Chinie, S. Georgescu, C. Stoicescu, A. S. Stefan, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); M. Bercu, E. Borca, Univ. of Bucharest (Romania)
- 66060M **Dynamics and spectroscopy of the laser plume and generation of nanoparticles** [6606-21]
V. V. Osipov, V. I. Solomonov, V. V. Platonov, O. A. Snigireva, V. V. Lisenkov, M. G. Ivanov, Institute of Electrophysics (Russia)
- 66060N **Surface charge of silicon nanoparticles in colloidal state** [6606-22]
A. Karpo, S. Korovin, A. Orlov, Natural Science Ctr. of General Physics Institute (Russia)
- 66060O **Surface plasmon resonance in protein covered gold nanoparticles** [6606-23]
V. I. Krasovskii, V. A. Karavanskii, A. N. Orlov, I. A. Nagovitsyn, V. V. Savranskii, G. K. Chudinova, NSC GPI (Russia)

LASER SYNTHESIS, STRUCTURING, AND PROCESSING

- 66060P **The role of defects in the laser desorption of ions from fused silica at 157 nm (Invited Paper)** [6606-24]
S. R. John, J. Lerass, S. C. Langford, J. T. Dickinson, Washington State Univ. (USA)
- 66060Q **Fast and reversible phase-structure modifications of glass-ceramic materials under CO₂-laser action (Invited Paper)** [6606-25]
V. P. Veiko, G. K. Kostyuk, N. V. Nikonorov, A. N. Rachinskaya, E. B. Yakovlev, D. V. Orlov, St. Petersburg State Univ. of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics (Russia)
- 66060R **Applications of laser direct-write for embedding microelectronics (Invited Paper)** [6606-26]
A. Piqué, N. A. Charipar, H. Kim, R. C. Y. Auyeung, Naval Research Lab. (USA); S. A. Mathews, The Catholic Univ. of America (USA)
- 66060S **Hot plasma diagnostics during femtosecond laser ablation in a cavity (Invited Paper)** [6606-27]
V. M. Gordienko, I. A. Makarov, E. V. Rakov, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State Univ. (Russia)
- 66060T **Deposition of semiconductor thin films with narrow band gap based on iron oxides by using laser radiation (LCVD and RPLD) (Invited Paper)** [6606-28]
A. P. Caricato, Univ. of Lecce (Italy); Y. V. Kudryavsev, Institute for Metal Physics (Ukraine); A. Luches, Univ. of Lecce (Italy); S. A. Mulyenko, Institute for Metal Physics (Ukraine)

- 66060U **Laser diagnostics of hydrodynamic processes and spatio-temporal instabilities on the substance surface (Invited Paper)** [6606-29]
D. V. Abramov, Vladimir State Univ. (Russia); S. M. Arakelyan, State Research Ctr. of Russian Federation Astrofizika (Russia); A. F. Calkin, Vladimir State Univ. (Russia); L. D. Kvacheva, Nesmeyanov Institute of Organoelement Compounds (Russia); I. I. Klimovskii, Institute for High Energy Densities (Russia); M. A. Kononov, Ctr. for Natural Science Research, General Physics Institute (Russia); L. A. Mikhailitsyn, Nesmeyanov Institute of Organoelement Compounds (Russia); A. O. Kucherik, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (Russia); V. G. Prokoshev, Vladimir State Univ. (Russia); V. V. Savranskii, Ctr. for Natural Science Research, General Physics Institute (Russia)
- 66060V **Excimer laser micromachining (Invited Paper)** [6606-30]
K. E. Lapshin, A. Z. Obidin, S. K. Vartapetov, Physics Instrumentation Ctr. of General Physics Institute (Russia)
- 66060W **Non-destructive speckle interferometry diagnosis method for art conservation** [6606-31]
V. Tornari, Y. Orphanos, Institute of Electronic Structure and Laser, Foundation for Research and Technology (Greece); R. Dabu, C. Blănaru, A. Stratan, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); D. Ursu, S. C. PROOPTICA S. A. (Romania)
- 66060X **Systematic investigation of high-order harmonics from silver and indium ablation** [6606-32]
T. Ozaki, L. Elouga Bom, J.-C. Kieffer, INRS-EMT, Univ. du Québec (Canada); R. A. Ganeev, Akadempriboir Scientific Association (Uzbekistan); M. Suzuki, H. Kuroda, ISSP, Univ. of Tokyo (Japan)
- 66060Y **Ablation efficiency at high repetition rate of short laser pulses** [6606-33]
P. A. Pivovarov, S. M. Klimentov, V. I. Konov, Prokhorov General Physics Institute (Russia); F. Dausinger, Insitute für Strahlwerkzeuge (Germany)
- 66060Z **Modeling of new effects at the interaction between very intense laser beams and atoms, molecules, and materials** [6606-34]
A. Popa, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania)
- 660610 **Ultrafast pump-probe interferometry of femtosecond laser microplasma of multiple ionized gases** [6606-35]
V. V. Bukin, S. V. Garnov, A. A. Malyutin, D. K. Sytchev, N. S. Vorobiev, A.M. Prokhorov General Physics Institute (Russia)
- 660611 **Optical feedback effects on microchip laser dynamics used for determining the characteristics of the materials** [6606-36]
I.-A. Paun, Univ. Politehnica of Bucharest (Romania)
- 660612 **SNR improvement of digital speckle pattern interferograms** [6606-37]
F. Garoi, A. Sima, D. Apostol, V. Damian, P. C. Logofătu, V. Nascov, I. Iordache, L. Serghei, M. Bojan, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania)
- 660613 **Plane deformation state determination by digital speckle correlation** [6606-38]
V. Nascov, D. Apostol, F. Garoi, A. Sima, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania)

- 660614 **Spatial optical periodic structures in quadratically nonlinear media** [6606-39]
O. V. Borovkova, A. P. Sukhorukov, D. A. Chuprakov, Moscow State Univ. (Russia)
- 660615 **Novel double pulsed laser method for synthesis of carbon nitride films** [6606-40]
Yu. Ya. Kuzyakov, V. N. Lednev, N. B. Zorov, R. D. Voronina, V. M. Gordienko,
M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State Univ. (Russia)
- 660616 **Comparison of artificial neural network and multilinear regression analysis models in estimation of pulp flow speed from low coherence Doppler flowmetry measurement data** [6606-41]
M. Hannula, E. Alarousu, T. Prykäri, R. Myllylä, Univ. of Oulu (Finland)
- 660617 **Processing of synthetic and natural diamond dies with AO Q-switched Nd:YAG laser** [6606-42]
C. Fenic, C. Blanaru, O. Pacala, A. Stratan, R. Dabu, M. Zamfirescu, L. Rusen, L. Neagu,
National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); G. Voicu, DIMET srl
(Romania)
- 660618 **Qualitative characterization of $\text{YBa}_2\text{Cu}_3\text{O}_{7-x}$ films using low spectral resolution Raman spectroscopy** [6606-43]
M. Branescu, National Institute of Materials Physics (Romania); I. Morjan, F. Dumitrache,
I. Sandu, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania)
- 660619 **Thin films of NdFeB deposited by PLD technique** [6606-44]
C. Constantinescu, N. Scarisoreanu, A. Moldovan, M. Dinescu, National Institute for Laser,
Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); M. Miron, SPINTEC, DRFMC, CEA-Bât (France);
L. Petrescu, Politehnica Univ. of Bucharest (Romania)

LASERS IN MEDICINE AND BIOLOGY

- 66061A **Progress in the en-face optical coherence tomography applied to eye imaging (Invited Paper)** [6606-45]
A. Gh. Podoleanu, A. Bradu, G. M. Dobre, R. Cernat, Univ. of Kent at Canterbury (United
Kingdom); R. B. Rosen, P. Garcia, New York Eye and Ear Infirmary (USA); J. A. Rogers,
M. Hathaway, J. Pedro, Ophthalmic Technologies Inc. (Canada); D. Merino, C. Dainty,
National Univ. of Ireland, Galway (Ireland)
- 66061B **Laser rapid prototyping for tissue engineering and regeneration (Invited Paper)** [6606-46]
V. K. Popov, E. N. Antonov, V. N. Bagratashvili, A. V. Evseev, V. Ya. Panchenko, Institute of
Laser and Information Technologies (Russia); J. J. A. Barry, S. M. Howdle, Univ. of
Nottingham (United Kingdom)
- 66061C **Novel oral laser applications (Invited Paper)** [6606-47]
A. Yousif, M. Strassl, Vienna Univ. of Technology (Austria); F. Beer, Vienna Medical Univ.
(Austria); L. Verhagen, L.A.M. Verhagen & R.G.H. Waanders Tandheelkundig Centrum
(Netherlands); M. Wittschier, Zahnarztpraxis Dr. Wittschier (Germany); E. Wintner, Vienna
Univ. of Technology (Austria)
- 66061D **Mobility and intermolecular interaction of blood serum proteins in the solutions containing the ions with different ionic radii** [6606-48]
G. P. Petrova, Yu. M. Petrusevich, A. V. Boiko, D. I. Ten, N. V. Sokol, D. V. Mathushenko,
S. S. Koshel, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State Univ. (Russia)

- 66061E **Silicon nanocrystals as efficient photosensitizer of singlet oxygen for biomedical applications** [6606-49]
V. Yu. Timoshenko, L. A. Osminkina, A. S. Vorontsov, Yu. V. Ryabchikov, M. B. Gongalsky, A. I. Efimova, E. A. Konstantinova, T. Yu. Bazylenko, P. K. Kashkarov, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State Univ. (Russia); A. A. Kudriavtsev, Institute of Theoretical and Experimental Biophysics (Russia)
- 66061F **2D and 3D printing of biomolecules employing femtosecond lasers** [6606-50]
M. Farsari, Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas (Greece); V. Dinca, Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas (Greece) and National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); M. Dinescu, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); T. S. Drakakis, C. Fotakis, Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas (Greece)
- 66061G **Laser effect in photodynamic therapy of tumors** [6606-51]
R.-M. Ion, Valahia Univ. (Romania) and National Institute for Chemical and Petrochemical Research (Romania); D.-V. Brezoi, Valahia Univ. (Romania); M. Neagu, G. Manda, C. Constantin, Victor Babes National Institute (Romania)
- 66061H **Static and dynamic light scattering studies of collagen solutions** [6606-52]
A. V. Boiko, G. P. Petrova, Y. M. Petrusevich, I. A. Perfil'eva, Moscow State Univ. (Russia); V. I. Shcheslavskiy, Univ. of Southampton (United Kingdom)
- 66061I **Four energy levels device for skin punching** [6606-53]
D. Savastru, E. Ristici, M. Mustata, S. Miclos, M. I. Rusu, C. Radu, V. Savu, National Institute of R&D for Optoelectronics INOE (Romania)
- 66061J **Changing optical properties of blood serum proteins in case of oncological diseases** [6606-54]
G. P. Petrova, Yu. M. Petrusevich, A. V. Boiko, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State Univ. (Russia); A. V. Ivanov, E. A. Papish, N.N. Blochin Russian Cancer Research Ctr. (Russia); V. P. Khlapov, K. V. Fedorova, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State Univ. (Russia)
- 66061K **Study of hydroxyl carbonate apatite formation on bioactive glass coated dental ceramics by confocal laser scanning microscopy (CLSM)** [6606-55]
G. A. Stanciu, B. Savu, I. Sandulescu, Univ. Politehnica, Bucharest (Romania); K. Paraskevopoulos, P. Koidis, Aristotle Univ. of Thessaloniki (Greece)
- 66061L **Neural network analysis of pulp flow speed in low coherence Doppler flowmetry measurement** [6606-56]
M. Hannula, E. Alarousu, T. Prykäri, R. Myllylä, Univ. of Oulu (Finland)
- 66061M **Acousto-optic laser beam deflection for compensation of hand tremor** [6606-57]
R. Cernat, C. E. Matei, L. Olteanu, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); C. N. Riviere, Carnegie Mellon Univ. (USA); D. C. Dumitraş, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania)
- 66061N **Behavior of pulsed laser deposited hydroxyapatite thin films under simulated biological conditions** [6606-58]
S. Grigorescu, F. Sima, E. Axente, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania); F. Feugeas, INSA Strasbourg (France); I. N. Mihailescu, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania)

- 66061O **Blue laser system for photo-dynamic therapy** [6606-59]
R. Dabu, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania);
B. Carstocea, Univ. of Medicine and Pharmacy Carol Davila (Romania); C. Blanaru,
O. Pacala, A. Stratan, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics (Romania);
D. Ursu, F. Stegaru, S. C. PROOPTICA S. A. (Romania)
- 66061P **Stability of Henyey-Greenstein phase function and fast multiple-scattering path-integration**
[6606-60]
V. M. Petnikova, V. V. Shuvalov, E. V. Tret'akov, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State Univ.
(Russia)

Author Index

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Introduction

Following the tradition of annual ALT (Advanced Laser Technologies) International Conferences devoted to fundamental and engineering aspects of the rapidly growing laser industrial applications, the 14th ALT Conference was held in Brasov, Romania, 8-12 September 2006. The primary aim of these conferences, organized successively in different countries [Russia (two times), Germany, Czech Republic (two times), Greece, France, Italy (two times), Switzerland, UK, China, and Romania (two times)] is to share and promote the progress achieved in laser technologies, as well as, to exchange experiences and to strengthen the collaboration between East and West research teams and individuals.

The ALT'06 was focused on recent achievements and actual problems in research and development of novel ultrafast laser sources and techniques, laser nanotechnologies, laser synthesis, structuring and processing as well as laser technologies used in medicine and biology. It was organized jointly by the National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics, Bucharest, the Transilvania University of Brasov, and the General Physics Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow.

Participants were from 18 countries, not only from Russia (the traditional ALT organizing country), Romania (the host country), Finland (the next organizer of ALT'07), but also from Austria, Switzerland, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Canada, Singapore, UK, and USA. More than 150 attendees have participated in ALT'06, and this fact confirms once again the importance and high scientific level of this serial scientific forum.

Organization of ALT'06 was possible only through the actions and support of several domestic and international organizations. We shall mention the Department of Lasers, National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics, Bucharest-Magurele, the Transilvania University of Brasov, the General Physics Institute, Moscow, and the Center of Laser Technology and Material Science at GPI, Moscow. Thanks should be addressed to the cosponsoring institutions for their important advice and contributions to the success of this Conference: the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, the SPIE Russia Chapter, Russian Ministry of Industry, Science and Technology, Russian Foundation for Basic Research, and Schaefer Italy SRL.

The ALT'06 Scientific Committee selected for presentation 117 papers. Forty invited lectures on topics of general interest were scheduled in plenary sessions, 23 papers were presented in two oral parallel sessions, while the other 56 papers were presented as posters. The editors selected 60 papers to be published, which give an overview of the newest and most important results in laser technologies and fundamentals of laser physics.

In addition to the interesting scientific program, the conference participants had also the possibility to discover part of the beautiful landscapes of Brasov, Poiana Brasov, Sinaia and Bran, and to visit Peles and "Dracula" Castles.

Perfect and efficient work of the Organizing Committees led by Prof. Corneliu Bazil Cizmas in Brasov and Dr. Vladimir I. Pustavoy in Moscow and the support from Transilvania University of Brasov were among the key factors that ensured the success of this conference. We would like to express our thanks to them, to the secretariat, and to many colleagues and persons on the various committees for their collaboration and hard work.

Our acknowledgements are also due to all of the participants for their outstanding contribution to the success of the conference. We do hope that every participant attending the ALT'06 enjoyed the scientific climate and the time spent during this event. We believe that the short time spent together provided an opportunity to renew friendships or to start new ones.

Dan C. Dumitras
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