



The Professor's Song

Author(s): Tom Lehrer

Source: *The American Mathematical Monthly*, Vol. 81, No. 7 (Aug. - Sep., 1974), p. 745

Published by: Mathematical Association of America

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2319562>

Accessed: 11-05-2016 16:02 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Mathematical Association of America is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Mathematical Monthly*

using uniform continuity. In fact, this theorem comes out naturally in a program leading to the fundamental theorem of calculus.

The author S. A. Naimpally was partially supported by an operating grant from N. R. C. (Canada) and a research grant from the President of Lakehead University.

DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY, THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO, P7B 5E1, CANADA.
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN, 48823,
U. S. A.
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY, THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO, P7B 5E1, CANADA.

THE PROFESSOR'S SONG

Words by Tom Lehrer — Tune: "If You Give Me Your Attention"
from *Princess Ida* (Gilbert and Sullivan)

If you give me your attention, I will tell you what I am.
I'm a brilliant math'matician — also something of a ham.
I have tried for numerous degrees, in fact I've one of each;
Of course that makes me eminently qualified to teach.
I understand the subject matter thoroughly, it's true,
And I can't see why it isn't all as obvious to *you*.
Each lecture is a masterpiece, meticulously planned,
Yet everybody tells me that I'm hard to understand,
And I can't think why.

My diagrams are models of true art, you must agree,
And my handwriting is famous for its legibility.
Take a word like "minimum" (to choose a random word), (*)
For anyone to say he cannot read that, is absurd.
The anecdotes I tell get more amusing every year,
Though frankly, what they go to prove is sometimes less than clear,
And all my explanations are quite lucid, I am sure,
Yet everybody tells me that my lectures are obscure,
And I can't think why.

Consider, for example, just the force of gravity:
It's inversely proportional to something — let me see —
It's r^3 — no, r^2 — no, it's just r , I'll bet —
The sign in front is plus — or is it minus, I forget —
Well, anyway, there *is* a force, of that there is no doubt.
All these formulas are trivial if you only think them out.
Yet students tell me, "I have memorized the whole year through
Ev'rything you've told us, but the problems I can't do."
And I can't think why!

(*) This was performed at a blackboard, and the professor wrote: 