
David's travels in the land of the mathematicians

VOICE ONE

In the beginning was the word
And the word was ribonucleic acid
And it was both a catalyst and a replicator
And the RNA begat RNA which begat RNA which begat
RNA.....
(and here it gets a bit tedious for a few billion years)
But eventually the RNA begat.....higher life-forms
The higher life-forms could be distinguished
from the primitive life-forms by their ability to distil Whiskey
IN UNISON: Distil Whiskey

VOICE TWO

The whiskey spoke unto David and said
"Languish not in the Botany Department
but rather go forth into the land of the mathematicians
and teach them phylogeny"
So David went forth amongst the mathematicians
And he came to the office of Hendy...
For 40 days and 40 nights there were chicken scratchings
And then Hendy spoke unto David and said
"No more shall ye divide and multiply,
but rather Conjugate in the manner of Hadamard."
IN UNISON: Hadamard conjugation

VOICE THREE

And David returned the math to his people
Not just the Hadamard conjugation,
but the Lentoplot, the Robinson Foulds distance,
the Branch and Bound search, and other tools of phylogenetic
analysis
And the biologists saw the math and they saw that it was good
That is until they tried it with real data
IN UNISON: Real Data

VOICE FOUR

So David went forth again unto the land of the mathematicians
And he came to the office of Steel
For 40 days and 40 nights there were chicken scratchings
And then Steel spoke unto David and said
"Here are the log-det and the covarion model,
but beware ye the deep divergences
for their Markov Properties dictate that noise will overwhelm
signal."
IN UNISON: Markov Properties

VOICE FIVE

And David returned the math to his people
The biologists saw the math and saw that it was good
But then - A voice cried out in the PLEB lab
"Have you considered hybridisation and lineage-sorting?"
And the spirit of Lockhart moved in the mathematicians
and they produced SplitsTree4
IN UNISON SplitsTree4

VOICE ONE AGAIN

And these collaborations continued unabated for many years
But eventually, David wearied of his travels in the land of the
mathematicians
And said -
IN UNISON:
"I just want the bloody tree finished, so I can get on with the
real questions!"



Singers (from the left): Simon Hills, Andrew Clarke, Abby Harrison, Gillian Gibb, and Barbara Holland.