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THE  $1/N$  CORRECTION TO THE  $D3$ -BRANE DESCRIPTION OF CIRCULAR WILSON LOOPS*E. I. Buchbinder**School of Physics, The University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, WA 6009, Australia.**E-mail: evgeny.buchbinder@uwa.edu.au*

We consider the one-loop correction to the probe  $D3$ -brane action in  $AdS_5 \times S^5$  expanded around the classical Drukker-Fiol solution ending on a circle at the boundary. It is given by the logarithm of the one-loop partition function of an Abelian  $\mathcal{N} = 4$  vector multiplet in  $AdS_2 \times S^2$  geometry. This one-loop correction is expected to describe the subleading  $1/N$  term in the expectation value of circular Wilson loop in the totally symmetric rank  $k$  representation in  $\mathcal{N} = 4$ ,  $SU(N)$  supersymmetric Yang-Mills theory at strong coupling. We also discuss a comparison with the matrix model.

**Keywords:** *The AdS/CFT correspondence, Wilson loops, D-branes, matrix models, the heat kernel technique.*

**1 Introduction**

According to the AdS/CFT correspondence [1]  $\mathcal{N} = 4$ ,  $SU(N)$  supersymmetric Yang-Mills theory admits a dual description as string theory on the  $AdS_5 \times S^5$  background. The correspondence provides a string theory interpretation of various field theory phenomena and gives a way to perform computations in gauge theory in the regime of strong coupling where the standard field theoretic methods break down. However, since the AdS/CFT remains a conjecture finding its non-trivial checks is an important problem.

Supersymmetric circular Wilson loops represent a good lab for high precision tests of the AdS/CFT correspondence. The reason is that they admit a matrix model solution for any representation  $\mathcal{R}$  as well as for any  $N$  and for any 't Hooft coupling  $\lambda$  [2, 3]

$$\langle W_{\mathcal{R}} \rangle = \frac{1}{Z} \int dM \frac{1}{N} \text{Tr}_{\mathcal{R}} e^M e^{-\frac{2N}{\lambda} \text{tr} M^2}, \quad (1)$$

where  $M$  is an Hermitian matrix. Recently, a general solution (though rather inexplicit and hard to use) to (1) was found in [4] to all order in  $N$  and  $\lambda$ . Hence, any string calculation of  $\langle W_{\mathcal{R}} \rangle$  can be compared with the matrix model result. Such a comparison is not based on any symmetry and represents a highly non-trivial test of the AdS/CFT correspondence.

In this paper, we will concentrate on circular Wilson loops in the symmetric representation. If in the large  $N$  limit the number of boxes  $k$  in the Young tableau is small comparing to  $N$  then at strong coupling such a Wilson loop is described by  $k$  coincident circular strings in  $AdS_5 \times S^5$ . The case  $k = 1$  corresponds to the Wilson loop in the fundamental representation  $\square$  and is described by a single string [5–7]. The situation becomes different when  $k$  gets of order  $N$ . It was argued in [8–13] that as the number of boxes in the Young tableau becomes of order  $N$  the Wilson loop is effectively described by  $D$ -branes rather than by

strings. In particular, the Wilson loop in the symmetric representation is now described by a probe  $D3$ -brane in  $AdS_5 \times S^5$ .

The classical solution corresponding to a probe  $D3$ -brane ending on a circle on the boundary was found by Drukker and Fiol in [8]. The investigation of the semiclassical quantization near the Drukker-Fiol solution was initiated in [14, 15]. The action for the quadratic fluctuations was found to be that of an Abelian  $\mathcal{N} = 4$  multiplet in  $AdS_2 \times S^2$ . In this paper we discuss the 1-loop effective action for these quadratic fluctuations following [16]. Essentially, we compute the 1-loop effective action on  $AdS_2 \times S^2$  using the heat kernel technique and the  $\zeta$ -function regularization. At the end we comment on a comparison with the matrix model.

**2 Circular Wilson loops in the fundamental representation**

Let us review the string theory description of circular Wilson loops in the fundamental representation. In the large  $N$  limit, semiclassically they are described by a solution to the Nambu-Goto action in the  $AdS_5 \times S^5$  target space ending on a circle [5–7]. The solution sits in  $AdS_3$  and in conformal gauge it is of the form

$$z = \tanh \tau, \quad x_1 = \frac{\cos \sigma}{\cosh \tau}, \quad x_2 = \frac{\sin \sigma}{\cosh \tau}. \quad (2)$$

Here  $(z, x_1, x_2)$  are the Poincare coordinates in  $AdS_3$  ( $z$  is the radial coordinate),  $\tau \in (0, \infty)$ ,  $\sigma \in [0, 2\pi]$ . The induced worldsheet is  $AdS_2$ . To compute  $\langle W_{\square} \rangle$  semiclassically at large  $\lambda$  we compute the Nambu-Goto action on this solution to get

$$\ln \langle W_{\square} \rangle = -\frac{\sqrt{\lambda}}{2\pi} \mathcal{A}(AdS_2) = \sqrt{\lambda}, \quad (3)$$

where  $\mathcal{A}(AdS_2)$  is the regularized volume of  $AdS_2$ ,  $\mathcal{A}(AdS_2) = -2\pi$ . Expanding the Nambu-Goto action around this solution gives the following structure of the 1-loop correction [17]

$$\langle W_{\square} \rangle_{1-loop} = \frac{\text{Det}^{8/2}[-\nabla^2 + 1 + R/4]}{\text{Det}^{3/2}[-\nabla^2 + 2]\text{Det}^{3/2}[-\nabla^2]}. \quad (4)$$

That is to find the 1-loop correction we have to study the 1-loop effective action of the following fields propagating on  $AdS_2$ : 5 scalars with  $m^2 = 0$ , 3 scalars with  $m^2 = 2$  and 8 Majorana fermions with  $m^2 = 1$ . The 1-loop effective action in (4) was computed using the methods of quantum field theory in curved space [16] and by the Gelfand-Yaglom method [18, 19]. Both methods give

$$\ln \langle W_{\square} \rangle_{1-loop} = -\frac{1}{2} \ln(2\pi). \quad (5)$$

Let us compare these results with the matrix model. The matrix integral (1) for the representation  $\square$  in the limit of large  $N$  and large  $\lambda$  gives

$$\ln \langle W_{\square} \rangle = \sqrt{\lambda} + \frac{1}{2} \ln \frac{2}{\pi} + \dots \quad (6)$$

Comparing (6) with (3) and (5) we see that the leading terms  $\sqrt{\lambda}$  agree but the subleading terms do not

$$-\frac{1}{2} \ln(2\pi) \neq \frac{1}{2} \ln \frac{2}{\pi}. \quad (7)$$

Surprisingly, the resolution of this disagreement is currently unknown. It suggests that the string partition function (4) is missing a factor of  $2 = e^{\ln 2}$  which presumably should come from a proper division of the 1-loop determinant of the longitudinal modes by the ghost determinant.

Now let us briefly discuss the simplest higher representation  $\square^k$ ,  $k \ll N$ . At the level of the matrix integral (1) the modification is very simple:  $\lambda \rightarrow k^2 \lambda$ . At the level of string theory we modify the classical solution (2) as  $\tau \rightarrow k\tau, \sigma \rightarrow k\sigma$ . Semiclassically,  $\ln \langle W_{\square^k} \rangle = k\sqrt{\lambda}$ . However, finding the 1-loop effective action becomes a very difficult problem. The reason is that the induced metric now has a conical singularity at the origin with deficit angle  $2\pi(1 - k)$  and we have to study quantum field theory on a singular space.

### 3 Wilson loops as $D$ -branes

Now we will discuss the case when the number of boxes  $k$  becomes of order  $N$ . In this case the number of strings becomes large and Drukker and Fiol [8] proposed that the appropriate description is given in terms of  $D3$ -branes. Let us parametrize  $AdS_5$  as follows

$$ds^2 = \frac{L^2}{\sin^2 \eta} [d\eta^2 + \cos^2 \eta d\psi^2 + d\rho^2 + \sinh^2 \rho ds_{S^2}], \quad (8)$$

where  $L$  is the radius of  $AdS_5$  and  $ds_{S^2}$  is the metric on the unit 2-sphere. The circular Wilson loop is then given by the following solution of the Born-Infeld action

$$\sin \eta = \kappa^{-1} \sinh \rho, \quad F_{\psi\rho} = \frac{i\kappa\sqrt{\lambda}}{2\pi \sinh^2 \rho}, \quad \kappa = \frac{k\sqrt{\lambda}}{4N}. \quad (9)$$

Note that the solution involves a non-trivial electric field propagating on the  $D3$ -brane worldvolume. Near the boundary  $\eta = 0$  we also have  $\rho = 0$  and, hence, from (8) we see that the solution at the boundary is parametrized by an angular variable  $\psi$  which means that the  $D3$ -brane ends on a circle. The induced metric  $g_{ab}$  on the  $D3$ -brane is that of  $AdS_2 \times S^2$  where

$$R_{AdS_2} = L\sqrt{1 + \kappa^2}, \quad R_{S^2} = L\kappa. \quad (10)$$

The vev of the Wilson loop was found to be

$$\ln \langle W \rangle = 2N[\kappa\sqrt{1 + \kappa^2} + \text{arcsinh} \kappa]. \quad (11)$$

The above discussion shows that the description in terms of  $D3$ -branes is valid in the limit of large  $k, N$  and  $\lambda$  but fixed  $\kappa$ . Note that in the limit  $k \ll N$ , that is  $\kappa \ll 1$  we obtain  $\ln \langle W \rangle \rightarrow k\sqrt{\lambda}$  which is the action of  $k$  strings.

Originally it was proposed in [8] that a probe  $D3$ -brane describes Wilson loops in the representation  $\square^k$  when  $k$  becomes large. However, it was later argued in [9] that  $D3$ -branes describe Wilson loops in the symmetric representation  $Sym_k$ . Indeed, let us take  $N$   $D3$ -branes and intersect them with some other branes in a supersymmetric way so that the intersection is 1-dimensional. It was shown in [9] that there are only 2 such possibilities: a  $D3 - D3$  system or a  $D3 - D5$  system. The action describing the intersecting branes is given by  $S_{\mathcal{N}=4} + S_{defect}$ , where  $S_{\mathcal{N}=4}$  is the action of  $\mathcal{N} = 4$ ,  $SU(N)$  supersymmetric Yang-Mills theory supported on the stack of the original  $N$   $D3$ -branes and  $S_{defect}$  is the defect action supported on the intersection. We can integrate the defect degrees of freedom which can be interpreted as an insertion of a Wilson loop in some representation into the path integral. In [9] it was shown that the  $D3 - D3$ -system corresponds to inserting a Wilson loop in the symmetric representation and the  $D3 - D5$ -system corresponds to inserting the Wilson loop in the antisymmetric representation. When we go to strong coupling limit we replace the stack of  $N$   $D3$ -branes with the  $AdS_5 \times S^5$  geometry and the remaining brane becomes a probe. From this viewpoint, a probe  $D3$ -brane should describe Wilson loops in the symmetric representation. At the semiclassical limit the matrix integral (1) for both  $\square^k$  and  $Sym_k$  representations give the same answer (11) [8, 10]. However, at the subleading

level we should expect to see the difference. Note that the leading semiclassical contributions scales as  $N$ , hence, the higher order corrections will go as powers of  $1/N$ .

#### 4 The 1-loop correction to the D3-brane effective action

Expansion of the D3-action around the Drukker-Fiol solution was performed in [14,15]. The result reads

$$\begin{aligned} S_B &= \int d^4\sigma \sqrt{M} \left[ \frac{1}{2} G^{ab} \partial_a \Phi^I \partial_b \Phi^I + \frac{1}{4} f_{ab} f^{ab} \right], \\ S_F &= \int d^4\sigma \sqrt{M} \bar{\Theta}^A (i G^{ab} \Gamma_a \nabla_b) \Theta^A, \end{aligned} \quad (12)$$

where  $S_B$  and  $S_F$  are the actions for the bosonic and fermionic fluctuations respectively. In (12)  $\Phi^I$  are the 6 scalar fluctuations,  $f_{ab}$  are the fluctuations of the Abelian gauge field and  $\Theta^A$  are the 4 Majorana spinors. Except for the  $\sqrt{M}$  the action is defined using the background metric  $G_{ab}$

$$\begin{aligned} G_{ab} &= g_{ab} + (2\pi\alpha')^2 g^{cd} F_{ac} F_{bd}, \\ G_{ab} d\sigma^a d\sigma^b &= L^2 \kappa^2 (ds_{AdS_2}^2 + ds_{S^2}^2), \\ R_{AdS_s} &= R_{S^2} = L\kappa. \end{aligned} \quad (13)$$

Finally, the matrix  $M$  is given by

$$M_{ab} = g_{ab} + (2\pi\alpha')^2 F_{ab}. \quad (14)$$

The metric  $G_{ab}$  is called the open string metric [20] and it is related to  $M$  as follows  $G^{ab} = M^{(ab)}$ . Furthermore, we have a relation

$$\sqrt{M} = c\sqrt{G}, \quad c = \frac{\sqrt{1 + \kappa^2}}{\kappa}. \quad (15)$$

To summarize, we find that

$$S_B + S_F = c S_{N=4}^{Abelian}(AdS_2 \times S^2), \quad (16)$$

that is the action of the quadratic fluctuations is, up to the prefactor  $c$ , the action of an Abelian  $\mathcal{N} = 4$  multiplet on  $AdS_2 \times S^2$  where both  $AdS_2$  and  $S^2$  have the same radius  $L\kappa$ . The prefactor  $c$ , however, is important as it depends on  $\kappa$ . It also means that the fluctuations have a non-trivial norm given by

$$\|\Phi\|^2 = \int d^4\sigma \sqrt{M} \Phi^I \Phi^I = c \int d^4\sigma \sqrt{G} \Phi^I \Phi^I \quad (17)$$

and similarly for the vector and spinor fluctuations.

Now let us explicitly compute the 1-loop effective action

$$\Gamma_1 = \Gamma_v + 6\Gamma_s + 4\Gamma_f, \quad \ln\langle W \rangle_{1-loop} = -\Gamma_1, \quad (18)$$

where we have contributions from a vector, 6 scalars and 4 Majorana fermions. Let us first ignore the

prefactor  $c$  and discuss the effective action on just  $AdS_2 \times S^2$  where both  $AdS_2$  and  $S^2$  have the same radius  $a$ . We can study the effective action using the heat kernel  $K(s)$ :

$$\begin{aligned} K(s) &= \int d^4\sigma \sum_n e^{-\lambda_n s} f_n^*(\sigma) f_n(\sigma) \\ &= \text{Vol} \cdot \sum_n e^{-\lambda_n s} f_n^*(\sigma) f_n(\sigma), \end{aligned} \quad (19)$$

where  $\{f_n(\sigma)\}$  is a full set of orthonormal functions with eigenvalues  $\lambda_n$ , Vol is the regularized volume of  $AdS_2 \times S^2$  and in the last equality we used the fact that on a homogeneous space the integrand does not depend on the point. The 1-loop effective action is then given by

$$\Gamma_1 = -\frac{1}{2} \int_{\epsilon/a^2}^{\infty} \frac{ds}{s} K(s), \quad (20)$$

where  $\epsilon$  is a UV cut-off. Note that since  $AdS_2 \times S^2$  is conformally flat the dependence on the radius  $a$  appears only via the combination  $a^2/\epsilon$ . Let us expand the heat kernel for small  $s$  which corresponds to concentrating on the UV divergences. In 4 dimensions the expansion is of the form

$$K(s) = \text{Vol} \cdot \left[ \frac{b_0}{s^2} + \frac{b_2}{s} + b_4 + \mathcal{O}(s) \right]. \quad (21)$$

In the present case the coefficient  $b_0 = 0$  because we have equal number of bosonic and fermionic degrees of freedom. The coefficient  $b_2 = 0$  because we the total curvature of  $AdS_2$  and  $S^2$  vanishes. The coefficient  $b_4$  has the following general structure (see [21] for a review)

$$\begin{aligned} b_4 &= \frac{\tilde{b}}{(360(4\pi)^2)} [2G^{ab} D_a D_b R \\ &\quad + 5R^2 - 2R_{ab}^2 + 2R_{abcd}^2], \end{aligned} \quad (22)$$

where  $\tilde{b}$  equals 1 for a scalar, 11/2 for a Majorana fermion and 62 for a vector. In the present case we obtain

$$\text{Vol} \cdot b_4 = -1. \quad (23)$$

This means that the 1-loop effective action is given by

$$\Gamma_1 = -\text{Vol} \cdot \frac{b_4}{2} \ln \frac{a^2}{\epsilon} + \Gamma_{fin} = \frac{1}{2} \ln \frac{a^2}{\epsilon} + \Gamma_{fin}, \quad (24)$$

where  $\Gamma_{fin}$  is finite and independent of the radius  $a$ .

The term  $\Gamma_{fin}$  can be computed using the  $\zeta$ -function regularization [16]

$$\begin{aligned} \zeta(s) &= \frac{1}{\Gamma(s)} \int_0^{\infty} dt t^{s-1} K(t), \\ \Gamma_1 &= -\frac{1}{2} \zeta(0) \ln \frac{a^2}{\epsilon} - \frac{1}{2} \zeta'(0). \end{aligned} \quad (25)$$

With the proper zero mode treatment one can show that  $\zeta(0) = \text{Vol} \cdot b_4 = -1$ . Explicit calculations presented in [16] give

$$\begin{aligned} \zeta'(0) &= \frac{45 - 158 \ln 2 - 160 \ln \pi}{120} + 4 \ln A \\ &- 30\zeta'_R(-3)J_1 + J_2. \end{aligned} \quad (26)$$

Here  $A$  is the Glaisher's constant  $\ln A = \frac{1}{12} - \zeta'_R(-1)$  and  $J_{1,2}$  are given by

$$\begin{aligned} J_{1,2} &= 32 \int_0^\infty \frac{dv v}{e^{2\pi v} \pm 1} \mathcal{H}_{1,2}(v), \\ \mathcal{H}_1 &= iv \frac{\Gamma(-iv + 1/2)}{\Gamma(iv + 1/2)} \\ &+ \psi^{(-2)}(-iv + 1/2) + \psi^{(-2)}(iv + 1/2), \\ \mathcal{H}_2 &= iv \frac{\Gamma(-iv)}{\Gamma(iv)} + \psi^{(-2)}(-iv) + \psi^{(-2)}(iv), \end{aligned} \quad (27)$$

where  $\psi^{(-2)}$  is the poly-gamma function. We were not able to evaluate the integrals  $J_{1,2}$  analytically but it is straightforward to evaluate them numerically.

Finally, let us take into account the contribution from the prefactor  $c$  in (16). Let us consider

$$\text{Det}(c \cdot \Delta) = \text{Det}(c) \cdot \text{Det}(\Delta) = e^{\text{Tr} \ln c + \text{Tr} \ln \Delta}. \quad (28)$$

We are interested in the first factor

$$\text{Tr} \ln c = \ln c \cdot \text{Tr} \Delta 1 = \ln c \cdot \text{Vol} \cdot \sum_n f_n^*(\sigma) f_n(\sigma), \quad (29)$$

where we represented the trace of the unit operator in terms of a complete set of eigenfunctions of the corresponding differential operator. Comparing with (19) we notice that

$$(\text{Tr} \Delta 1)_{reg} = K(s) \Big|_{s \rightarrow 0} = \text{Vol} \cdot b_4, \quad (30)$$

where we recalled that  $b_0 = b_2 = 0$  after we sum over the bosonic and fermionic degrees of freedom. Thus, the full 1-loop contribution is

$$\Gamma_1 = \frac{1}{2} \ln \left( \frac{a^2}{\epsilon} \frac{1}{c} \right) + \Gamma_{fin}. \quad (31)$$

Recalling that  $a = L\kappa, c = \frac{\sqrt{1+\kappa^2}}{\kappa}$  we obtain

$$\Gamma_1 = \frac{1}{2} \ln \frac{L^2}{\epsilon} + \frac{1}{2} \ln \frac{\kappa^3}{\sqrt{1+\kappa^2}} + \Gamma_{fin}. \quad (32)$$

Note that the result is not UV finite and, hence, is not well-defined. This is not surprising since the Born–Infeld action is only the effective action for massless

open string modes. However, we observe that the second term in (32) is cut-off independent. Thus, we propose that it is robust and survives the proper embedding in string theory. That is up to a possible  $\kappa$ -independent constant the  $1/N$  correction to the Wilson loop reads

$$\ln \langle W \rangle_{1-loop} = -\frac{1}{2} \ln \frac{\kappa^3}{\sqrt{1+\kappa^2}}. \quad (33)$$

Let us compare it with the matrix model results. First, let us compare with the matrix integral for the representation  $\square^k$ . The matrix model result in this case is [22]

$$\ln \langle W_{\square^k} \rangle = -\frac{1}{2} \ln [\kappa^3 \sqrt{1+\kappa^2}] \quad (34)$$

which is not the same as (33). Hence, we showed explicitly that  $D3$ -branes do not describe Wilson loops in the tensor product of  $k$  fundamental representation as was originally proposed by Drukker and Fiol in [8]. Note, however, that (33) and (34) agree in the limit of small  $\kappa$ . This fact can be explained as follows. The dimensions of the representations  $\square^k$  and  $Sym_k$ ,

$$d_{\square^k} = N^k, \quad d_{Sym_k} = \frac{(N+k-1)!}{k!(N-1)!}, \quad (35)$$

in the limit of large  $N$  and small  $k/N$  satisfy

$$\ln d_{\square^k} = \ln d_{Sym_k} = k \ln N. \quad (36)$$

Due to this equality it is natural to expect that

$$\ln \langle W_{\square^k} \rangle = \ln \langle W_{Sym_k} \rangle \quad (37)$$

in this limit.

Finally, let us compare (33) with the matrix integral for the representation  $Sym_k$ . The matrix model calculation of the subleading correction in the limit of large  $N, \lambda$  and fixed  $\kappa$  for this representation was recently performed in [23] and gave exactly the same result as (33). This can be viewed as a confirmation that  $D3$ -branes indeed describe Wilson loops in the symmetric representation and as a highly non-trivial check of the AdS/CFT correspondence.

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### 1/N ПОПРАВКА К D3-БРАННОМУ ОПИСАНИЮ КРУГОВЫХ ПЕТЕЛЬ ВИЛЬСОНА

Мы рассматриваем однопетлевую поправку к действию пробной D3-браны в  $AdS_5 \times S^5$ , разложенному около классического решения Друккера-Фиола, заканчивающегося на окружности на границе. Она дается логарифмом однопетлевой статистической суммы Абелева  $\mathcal{N} = 4$  векторного мультиплетта в геометрии  $AdS_2 \times S^2$ . Эта однопетлевая поправка описывает  $1/N$  слагаемое в вакуумном среднем петли Вильсона, имеющей форму окружности, в симметричном представлении в  $\mathcal{N} = 4$ ,  $SU(N)$  теории Янга-Миллса в пределе сильной связи. Мы также обсуждаем сравнение с матричной моделью.

**Ключевые слова:** *AdS/CFT соответствие, петли Вильсона, D-браны, матричные модели, ядро теплопроводности.*

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