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Prestigious Post

**Peter Zoller becomes
Lorentz professor in Leiden**

Each year a renowned theoretical physicist is offered the Lorentz chair at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. This year Austrian professor Peter Zoller was chosen for this special honour. In this context Peter Zoller gave a talk yesterday as part of the *Colloquium Ehrenfestii*, an event with a long tradition in Leiden, founded by Austrian physicist Paul Ehrenfest.

“It is a great distinction to be able to teach here, when the list of my predecessors reads like a “Who’s Who” of theoretical physics,” declared a very pleased Peter Zoller. Hendrik A. Lorentz, who gave the chair its name, was himself a famous physicist who developed the electromagnetic theory of light and the electron theory of matter as well as proposing a contraction-free theory of electricity, magnetism and light. Since 1955 the chair has been filled each year with a major representative of theoretical physics. No less than a fifth of Zoller’s predecessors went on to receive the Nobel Prize, an honour conferred on Lorentz as early as 1902.

Quantum information with atoms and ions

The *Colloquium Ehrenfestii* recalls another well-known theoretical physicist. Austrian Paul Ehrenfest succeeded Hendrik A. Lorentz in Leiden, where he developed his most important contribution to modern physics, the Ehrenfest theorem, named in his honour. It provides a universal link between quantum theory and classical physics. Ehrenfest introduced a regular debating event at his institute, where to this day physicists from around the globe discuss topical issues of physics. In his talk Innsbruck-based Peter Zoller, who only in March this year had been awarded the Max Planck Medal, summed up theories on quantum information processing with atoms and ions. The colloquium not only has a long tradition, it also includes a curious custom: if the presentation meets with the approval of the audience, the person who has given the talk is allowed to write their name on the wall. It is covered with hundreds of signatures including those of many great figures in physics.

World-famous scientist

Peter Zoller is a scientific director of the Institute for Quantum Optics and Quantum Information (IQOQI)



at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) and has a chair at the Institute for Theoretical Physics at the University of Innsbruck. In 1998 he received the Wittgenstein Prize of the Austrian Science Fund FWF, the highest Austrian accolade for scientists. In the same year he was awarded the Schrödinger Prize and the Max Born Prize of the Optical Society of America. In 2002 the federal state of Tyrol acknowledged Zoller's work by awarding him the *Tiroler Landespreis für Wissenschaft*.

Links:

Lorentz Institute for Theoretical Physics,
University of Leiden
<http://www.lorentz.leidenuniv.nl>

We are happy to provide pictures of Prof. Peter Zoller on request.

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