



Bio Sketch for Bernard Chazelle

What area of maths do you work in?

I work in algorithms and theoretical computer science. In the course of my work, the parts of classical math I rely upon the most are: geometry, combinatorics, graph theory, and algebra.

What areas of maths do you follow from a purely interest standpoint?

I try to stay informed about major advances in math: to mention some examples, Thomas Hales's proof of Kepler's conjecture (why packing oranges the way it's done in supermarkets is optimal); Andrew Wiles's proof of Fermat's Last Theorem (Andrew is a good friend who happens to live right across the street from my house). Perelman's proof of Poincaré's Conjecture: the biggest open problem in geometry. I don't know Perelman personally but I know enough about him to know he's a very interesting character.

What were your best and worst subjects at school?

I was good at math but I didn't like it very much and I didn't want to go into that field. To be honest I found it deadly boring. In retrospect this dislike showed good taste on my part. I wanted to be a musician but then I realized I was not good enough; I wanted to be a philosopher but then I realized I would have no food to eat; so I went into math begrudgingly - I guess for all the wrong reasons.

My worst subject? I always hated chemistry. There's a belief in my family that one of my great-great [add many "great"] great grand fathers invented the field (his name is Lavoisier). Not sure if it's true but it's a nice story, so I assume it's true. Plus it made me wonder how it would be that my worst, most hated subject would be a family thing.

When you decided you wanted to be a mathematician and why

I grew up in France. People go into math there because they have no choice (to get into the best schools one has to study math). Then I stayed there partly because I began to feel I could like that stuff and I thought I'd get to meet interesting people. Both turned out to be true. I absolutely love the math I do. I find math an extremely beautiful, almost artistic, field.

What training (degrees and subjects) you've done

Math & Engineering.

What do you do for fun?

I play music and I follow politics quite closely. I am a bit of a news junkie actually. The internet makes the addiction much easier to sustain.