

Calaveras in Linear Algebra Math 28, Fall 2012

A calavera is a poem written for the Day of the Dead but intended to humorously criticize the living. Below are the four “calaveras” turned in to the Math 28 class in Fall 2012. I list them below in alphabetical order:

1 Rachel Berger

CAVALERA FOR AN ORTHOGONALLY PROJECTED VECTOR

The fate that befell vector $[-1, 1]$
Is too terrible to recall.
The numbers which defined her are gone,
Her elements, zeros all.

In life she lay upon a noble line,
Was blessed with magnitude, direction, good health,
Now projected onto $[1, 1]$, here she lies,
A shadow of her former self.

2 Joe Boninger

You may think my life is carefree
As a matrix element,
But ye, it is with heavy heart
I read you my lament.

In my youth I was a seven
But now I'm five - those days are done.
And someday I may be reduced
To just a leading one.

Matrix death will come for me;
My life is not eternal,
And I will fade to nothingness
When multiplied by the kernel.

3 Hanyu Chwe

Hanyu wrote his “calavera” in Spanish, so I translated each line:

Aquí tenemos una combinación lineal-

Here we have a linear combination-

“Solo necesitamos tres vectores”, dice la profesora cerebral.

“We only need three vectors”, says the cerebral professor.

La muerte camina entre de líneas del papel blanco.

Death walks between the lines of the white paper.

Ella no tiene la guadaa o la capucha negra

She has no scythe or black hood

Muerte es el lápiz del estudiante

Death is the student’s pencil

que destruye la vida De un vector redundante.

that destroys the redundant vector.

4 Jessica Jowdy

Day of the Dead Linear Algebra Poem

Here reside the remains of Hector
Whose one wish was to transform
Into something beyond a lowly vector
And take \mathbb{R}^n by storm

Much to his incredible despair,
All of the bases he could not span.
To the mathematics world did he declare,
"I will transform! I know I can!"

But upon glancing into the mirror
And seeing his repulsive reflection
His misguided actions became clearer
And what he truly needed was affection.

As he searched for a counterpart
To add to his one-dimensional life
He found no suitable heart
That he could call his wife.

In his attempt to cling to another
He caught hold of the zero vector,
And his life was soon reduced to nothing
Except for a tragic story about poor Hector.