

# An ultra low power CMOS pA/V transconductor and its application to wavelet filters

Peterson R. Agostinho · Sandro A. P. Haddad ·  
Jader A. De Lima · Wouter A. Serdijn

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**Abstract** Two compact ultra low-power CMOS triode transconductor topologies denoted VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$  are proposed. In both circuits, input transistors are kept in the triode region to benefit from the lowest  $g_m/I_D$  ratio. This allows achieving a small-signal transconductance  $g_m$  down to hundreds of pA/V, making such transconductors attractive for the synthesis of  $g_m$ -C filters with cut-off frequencies in the range of Hz and sub-Hz. The  $g_m$  value is adjusted by a well defined aspect-ratio (W/L) and drain-source voltage  $V_{DS}$ , the latter a replica of the tuning voltage  $V_{TUNE}$  imposed as drain-source voltage of input devices. VLPT- $g_m$  reaches a minimum  $g_m$  of 1 nA/V, whereas Delta- $g_m$  exhibits a  $g_m$  as low as 400 pA/V. Input-referred noise spectral density is typically  $12.33 \mu\text{V}/\text{Hz}^{1/2}$  @ 1 Hz and  $93.75 \mu\text{V}/\text{Hz}^{1/2}$  @ 1 Hz for VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$ , respectively. In addition, setting their  $g_m$  equal to 1 nA/V and arranging them as first-order lossy integrators, Delta- $g_m$  presents higher bandwidth with respect to VLPT- $g_m$ . Cut-off frequencies are 1.33 kHz and 24 kHz for VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$  integrators, respectively. Finally, as an application example, both transconductors were used as building blocks to realize a 6th-order wavelet  $g_m$ -C filter. For both approaches, THD was kept below 1% for

signal swings up to 200 mV<sub>pp</sub>. The design complies with a 1.5 V supply and a 0.35  $\mu\text{m}$  CMOS process and features an overall power consumption of 51 and 114 nW, respectively for VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$  filters.

**Keywords** Low-frequency filters · CMOS transconductors ·  $g_m$ -C filter · Wavelet filter

## 1 Introduction

In the field of medical electronics, active filters with large time constants are often required to attain very low cutoff-frequencies, in Hz and sub-Hz ranges. Since passive filters demand bulky capacitors and/or resistors to implement such time constants, they are rarely employed. Owing to their low-voltage low-power (LVLP) compatibility,  $g_m$ -C structures are a natural choice to perform the desired filtering characteristic, as long as very-low values of small-signal transconductance  $g_m$ , typically a few nA/V or less, can be achieved.

Previous works on LVLP CMOS techniques for obtaining a very-low transconductance essentially combine different strategies such as voltage attenuation, source degeneration and current splitting [1–4]. The intrinsic input-voltage attenuating properties of floating-gate and bulk-driven techniques are exploited in [1]. The former solution demands nonetheless a double-poly fabrication process, whereas the latter implies a finite input-impedance transconductor and lack of precision, as the bulk transconductance  $g_{mb}$  is very process-dependent. In the source-degeneration scheme presented in [2], a triode-biased transistor acts as a simple voltage-controlled resistor. Matching is a crucial problem in current splitting, since a large number of unity-cell transistors compose the current

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P. R. Agostinho  
Electrical Engineering Department, Technological Institute  
of Aeronautics, Sao Jose dos Campos, SP, Brazil

P. R. Agostinho · S. A. P. Haddad · W. A. Serdijn  
Electronics Research Laboratory, Faculty of Electrical  
Engineering, Delft University of Technology, Delft,  
The Netherlands

S. A. P. Haddad · J. A. De Lima (✉)  
Brazil Semiconductor Technology Center, Freescale  
Semiconductor, 13069-380 Campinas, SP, Brazil  
e-mail: jader.delima@freescale.com

mirrors to implement very-high division factors. In [3], a downscaling factor of 40,000 is proposed, and in order to have all devices operating in strong-inversion for an improved mirroring, a bias current of 15  $\mu\text{A}$  is required. Because the final current of around 400 pA is well above leakage current levels, a more predictable transconductance is obtained, at the expense of power consumption. Conversely, a smaller division factor of 784 and a lower bias current are defined in [4], reducing the final current to only a few pA, which implies a less accurate transconductance.

Even though working either in weak, moderate or strong inversion, the transconductor input-transistor is always kept in saturation in the above-mentioned techniques. However, the lowest  $g_m/I_D$  ratio is obtained in strong-inversion triode-region (SI-TR), as discussed in Sect. 2. Although this feature compromises the use of triode-transconductors in very-high frequency  $g_m$ -C filters, it turns out attractive when operation in the lower end of the frequency spectrum is devised. In [5], a low- $g_m$  pseudo-differential transconductor based on a four-quadrant multiplication scheme is presented, in which the drain voltage of a triode-operating transistor follows the incoming signal. Nevertheless, because triode operation needs to be sustained, the input-signal swing is rather limited. Moreover, this solution only applies to balanced structures. Although triode-transconductors, in which the signal is directly connected to the input-transistor gate, have been successfully employed in high-frequency  $g_m$ -C filters [6, 7], its potential for very-low frequency filter designing has been scarcely exploited in the open literature [8].

This paper presents two compact topologies for ultra low-power transconductors, as improvements of the basic concept introduced in [9]. These approaches are named VLPT- $g_m$  (Very Low-Power Triode transconductor) and Delta- $g_m$  that features values of  $g_m$  in the range of few nA/V and hundreds of pA/V, respectively. Subsequently, an implementation of the wavelet transform with a Gaussian wavelet (*gaussI*) in an ultra low-power environment, based on the proposed transconductors, is considered. Low-power analog realization of the continuous wavelet transform enables its application in vivo, e.g. in pacemakers and IECG recorders.

Thus far, analog implementation of the continuous low-frequency wavelet transform by means of a so-called wavelet filter has employed both bipolar and CMOS Dynamic-Translinear (DT) circuits [10], which become difficult to integrate when designing very low-frequency filters. As an example, for  $g_m = 1$  nA/V, VLPT- $g_m$  needs to be biased with a quiescent current  $I_Q$  of around 300 pA. To achieve the same time constant, while keeping the bias current value, the DTL circuit would require an increase of 12.6 times in capacitor values, unacceptably enlarging the

die size. Alternatively, to maintain the same capacitor, it would be necessary to decrease  $I_Q$  to 25 pA. However, an accurate current source with such an ultra-low value is not attainable on practice due to leakage mechanisms and process spread. Moreover, the resulting DTL filter would be overly noisy.

The paper is organized as follows: Sect. 2 describes both LVLP triode transconductors circuits. Design and implementation of the wavelet filter are discussed in Sect. 3. Simulation data that validate the circuit performance and its tuning capability are presented in Sect. 4. Conclusions and final remarks are summarized in Sect. 5.

## 2 Transconductors description

### 2.1 Why strong-inversion triode-region?

The  $g_m/I_D$  ratio is listed in Table 1, for distinct MOSFET regions: SI-TR, weak-inversion saturation (WI-S) and strong-inversion saturation (SI-S). The gate-overdrive voltage is  $V_{GO} = V_{GS} - V_{TO}$ , where  $V_{TO}$  is the threshold voltage.  $U_T$  and  $n$  are the thermal voltage and the weak-inversion slope factor, respectively. As it can be noted, for a source-grounded device and  $V_{DS}$  small, the lowest  $g_m/I_D$  occurs for SI-TR operation, as  $V_{GO}$  can be set much higher than  $nU_T$ .

### 2.2 VLPT- $g_m$ Transconductor

The schematic of VLPT- $g_m$  transconductor is shown in Fig. 1. With respect to the circuit presented in [9], a common-gate stage  $M_{3A}$ - $M_{3B}$  is introduced into the loop of the auxiliary voltage amplifier. The transconductor input-referred equivalent noise and output swing remain practically the same. However, there is a significant improvement in the auxiliary amplifier open-loop gain, and consequently, on the transconductor output resistance. Denoting  $A_{L1}$  and  $A_{L2}$  as the auxiliary amplifier open-loop gain voltage in the original circuit in [9] and VLPT- $g_m$ , respectively, one has

$$A_{L1} \cong g_{m2}r_{ds2} \quad (1)$$

$$A_{L2} \cong g_{m2}r_{ds2}g_{m3}r_{ds3} \quad (2)$$

Input transistors  $M_{1A}$ - $M_{1B}$  have their drain voltages regulated by an auxiliary amplifier that comprises  $M_{2A}$ - $M_{2B}$ ,  $M_{3A}$ - $M_{3B}$ ,  $M_{4A}$ - $M_{4B}$  and bias current sources  $M_{7A}$ -

**Table 1** MOSFET  $g_m/I_D$  ratio in different operation regions

	WI-S	SI-TR	SI-S
$\frac{g_m}{I_D}$	$\frac{1}{nU_T}$	$\frac{1}{V_{GO} - \frac{nV_{DS}}{2}}$	$\frac{2}{V_{GO} - nV_s}$

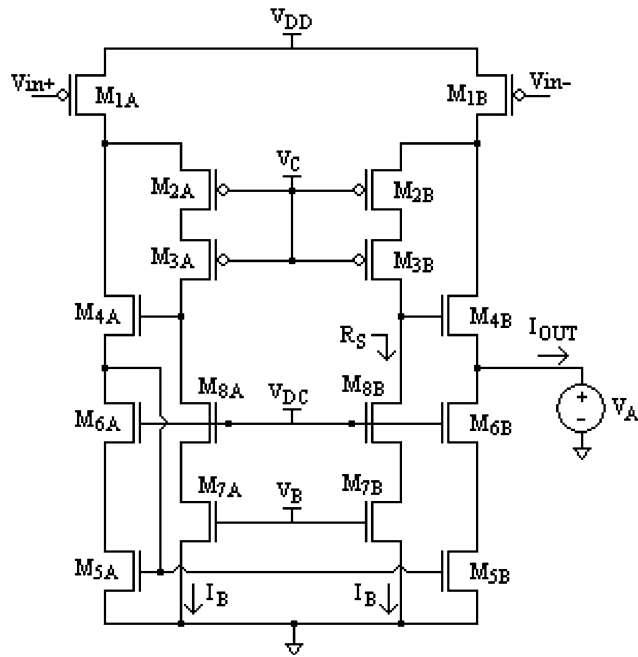


Fig. 1 Triode-transconductor VLPT-g<sub>m</sub>

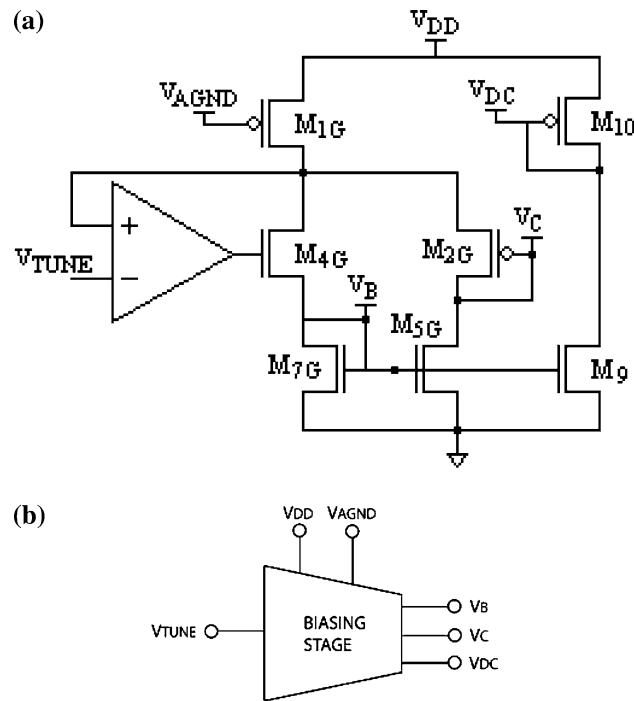


Fig. 2 Transconductor bias generator: (a) circuit diagram and (b) the corresponding symbol

$M_{7B}$  and  $M_{8A}$ - $M_{8B}$ . Internal voltages  $V_B$ ,  $V_C$  and  $V_{DC}$  are derived from the bias circuitry depicted in Fig. 2. The bias generator is structurally alike VLPT-g<sub>m</sub>, so that the external voltage  $V_{TUNE}$  is reflected to the drain of  $M_{1A}$ - $M_{1B}$ . A low-voltage cascaded current mirror comprising  $M_{5A}$ - $M_{5B}$  and  $M_{6A}$ - $M_{6B}$  provides a single-ended output. Even though

a common-drain configuration  $M_{4B}$  is seen from the output node, the transconductor still exhibits a high output resistance, as the loop-gain around  $M_{2B}$ ,  $M_{3B}$  and  $M_{4B}$  is very large. Current sources  $M_{7B}$  and  $M_{8B}$  are biased in weak inversion and provide a resistance  $R_S$ , seen from the drain terminal of  $M_{8B}$ , in the order of  $10^{11}\Omega$ , so that an output resistance  $R_{OUT}$  of similar magnitude is obtained for the transconductor.

The gate-voltage of  $M_{2A}$ - $M_{2B}$  is set to  $V_C = V_{TUNE} - V_{GS2}$ , whereas  $V_B$  imposes a bias current  $I_B$  through  $M_{7A}$ - $M_{7B}$ . Both voltages  $V_B$  and  $V_C$  are generated on-chip. Referring  $V_{TUNE}$  to  $V_{DD}$ , for  $\beta_1 = (W/L)_1 \mu_p C_{ox}$ , the transconductance of VLPT-g<sub>m</sub> circuit becomes

$$g_{m\_VLPT} = g_{m1} = \beta_1 V_{TUNE} \tag{3}$$

### 2.3 Delta-g<sub>m</sub> Transconductor

The circuit diagram of Delta-g<sub>m</sub> transconductor is displayed in Fig. 3. With respect to VLPT-g<sub>m</sub> approach, an extra pair of cross-coupled transistors  $M_{1C}$  and  $M_{1D}$  is added to the differential-pair. Other techniques employing composite differential pairs in the transconductor input-stage to meet very-low frequency responses can be found in literature [1, 2, 11]. A mismatch on transistor sizes is properly imposed between ( $M_{1A}$ ,  $M_{1B}$ ) and ( $M_{1C}$ ,  $M_{1D}$ ), so that their aspect-ratios are related as  $(W/L)_{A-B} = (1 + \Delta)(W/L)_{C-D}$ , where  $0 \leq \Delta \leq 1$ . Assuming a balanced small-signal input voltage  $V_{in}$  applied onto  $V_{in+}$  and  $V_{in-}$  terminals, the output current yields

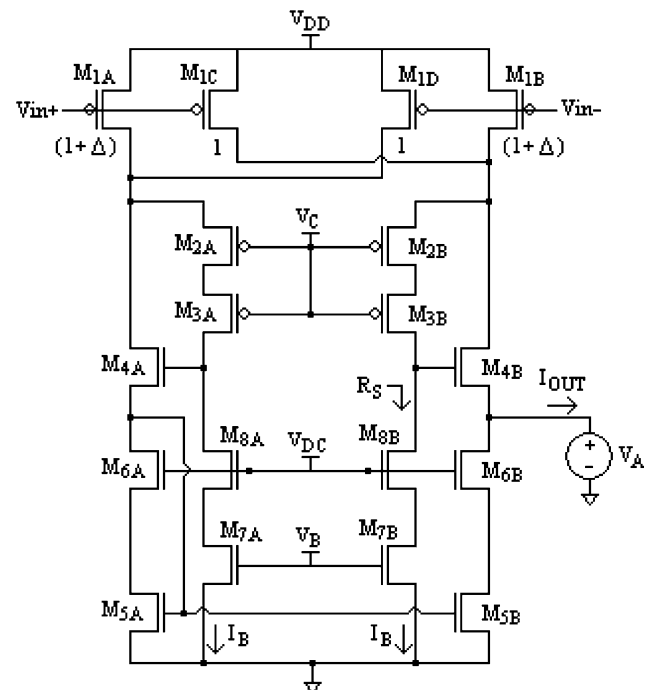


Fig. 3 Delta-g<sub>m</sub> transconductor

$$i_{OUT} = (i_{1B} + i_{1D}) - (i_{1A} + i_{1C}) \tag{4}$$

where  $i_{1A}$ ,  $i_{1B}$ ,  $i_{1C}$  and  $i_{1D}$  are small-signal currents flowing through  $M_{1A}$ ,  $M_{1B}$ ,  $M_{1C}$  and  $M_{1D}$ , respectively. Considering  $M_{1A}$  and  $M_{1B}$  to be ideally matched, as well as  $M_{1C}$  and  $M_{1D}$ , one has

$$i_{OUT} = \frac{V_{in}}{2} g_{m1D} \Delta + \frac{V_{in}}{2} g_{m1C} \tag{5}$$

$$i_{OUT} = \Delta g_{m1C,D} V_{IN} \tag{6}$$

and therefore

$$g_{m\_Delta} = \Delta g_{m1C,D} = \Delta \beta_{1C,D} V_{TUNE} \tag{7}$$

so that  $g_{m\_Delta}$  corresponds to a fraction of  $g_{m\_VLPT}$ . As a consequence, a Delta- $g_m$  transconductor represents a better alternative as compared to a VLPT- $g_m$  counterpart to attain ultra-low  $g_m$  values.

### 3 Wavelet filter design

Wavelet literally means small wave. Wavelet analysis is performed using a prototype function called the wavelet base, which decomposes a signal into components appearing at different scales (or resolutions). A wavelet filter performs a wavelet transform when its impulse response corresponds with the desired wavelet base [10]. There are several types of well-defined wavelet bases, for instance, Gaussian, Morlet and Daubechies. Depending on the application (and the properties of the wavelet transform), one may be preferred over others.

Unfortunately, a linear differential equation having a pre-defined desired impulse response does not always exist. Hence, one is obliged to use a suitable approximation method, the topic of the next section. In this paper, only the Gaussian wavelet filter will be presented, but several wavelet bases can also be approximated using the proposed approach [10].

There are several techniques that are frequently used to achieve the best approximation possible. Nonetheless, one of the most important aspects of an analog filter synthesis is that the approximating function must lead to a physically realizable network which is dynamically stable.

#### 3.1 $L_2$ approximation

As mentioned in [10], approximation methods should be applied to obtain the required transfer function of a wavelet filter’s impulse response. A method which has proven to be successful is provided by the Padé approximation of the Laplace transform of the impulse response  $h(t)$  of the filter [10]. Another alternative to find a suitable wavelet base approximation can be provided by the theory of  $L_2$  approximation [12].

The advantage of the  $L_2$  method over the Padé approximation is that the  $L_2$  approximation offers a more

global approximation, i.e., not concentrating on one particular point (in the Laplace domain). Also, the fit can be performed directly in the time domain, yielding good control and easy interpretation of the optimization criteria. The  $L_2$  approximation technique is based on minimizing the least-mean-square-error. In this scheme the error integral, which is the difference between the wavelet function  $\psi(t)$  and its approximation  $h(t)$ , is defined by

$$\epsilon_{L2} = \int_0^\infty (\psi(t) - h(t))^2 dt \tag{8}$$

In order to derive the  $L_2$  approximation, we first express the impulse response (in the time domain) of a general filter. After that, the error  $\epsilon_{L2}$  is minimized with respect to the poles and zeros of the wavelet filter. For the generic situation of stable systems with distinct poles,  $h(t)$  may typically have the following form [12]

$$\begin{aligned} h(t) &= \sum_{i=1}^n A_i e^{P_i t} \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^k c_i e^{P_i t} + c_{k+1} e^{P_{k+1} t} \sin(p_{k+2} t) \\ &\quad + c_{k+2} e^{P_{k+1} t} \cos(p_{k+2} t) + \dots + c_{n-1} e^{P_{n-1} t} \sin(p_n t) \\ &\quad + c_n e^{P_{n-1} t} \cos(p_n t) \end{aligned} \tag{9}$$

where  $A_i$  and  $P_i$  can be real or complex numbers;  $c_i$  and  $p_i$  are real numbers, representing the impulse response function  $h(t)$  as a linear combination of damped exponentials and exponentially damped harmonics.  $k$  corresponds to the number of real poles and  $n$  is the order of the filter.

Then, given the explicit form of a wavelet base  $\psi(t)$  and the approximated impulse response  $h(t)$ , the  $L_2$ -norm of the difference  $\psi(t)-h(t)$  can now be minimized in a straightforward way using standard numerical optimization techniques and software. The most direct way to find the minimum of Eq. 9 is by computation of all partial derivatives of  $\epsilon_{L2}$  with respect to  $A_i$  and  $P_i$  and setting them equal to zero, namely

$$\frac{\partial \epsilon_{L2}}{\partial A_i}, \frac{\partial \epsilon_{L2}}{\partial P_i} = 0 \quad \text{for } i = 1 \dots n \tag{10}$$

The wavelet base approximation using the proposed  $L_2$  approach is given in Fig. 4, where the first derivative of a Gaussian wavelet base (*gauss1*) has been approximated using the corresponding 6th-order transfer function

$$H(s) = \frac{0.16s^4 - 8.32s^3 + 6.64s^2 - 139s}{s^6 + 5.9s^5 + 30.5s^4 + 83.1s^3 + 163s^2 + 176s + 93.3} \tag{11}$$

#### 3.2 State-space filter implementation

To meet low-power low-voltage requirements, the state-space description of the filter has been optimized with

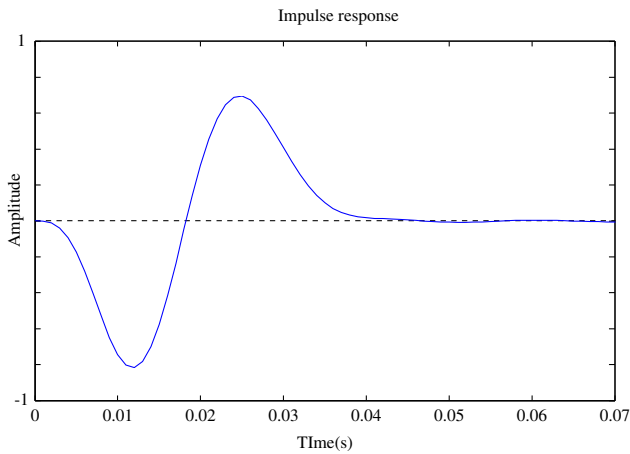


Fig. 4  $L_2$  approximation of the first derivative of Gaussian

respect to dynamic range, sparsity and sensitivity [10]. The filter design that follows is based on an orthonormal ladder structure and employs the Delta- $g_m$  transconductor described in the previous section as the basic building block of the filter diagram in Fig. 5. In order to obtain the corresponding  $g_m$ -C filter realization, one first needs to map the state-space coefficients on respective  $g_m$  values. From Eq. 3, one can vary the value of  $g_m$  by either changing  $(W/L)_1$  or the drain-source voltage ( $V_{TUNE}$ ) of transistor  $M_1$ . Nevertheless, owing to additional bias stages required to determine different filter coefficients, the realization of several  $V_{TUNE}$  generators would increase the power consumption by a factor of  $(n - 1)P_{Bias}$ , where  $n$  is the number of implemented coefficients and  $P_{Bias}$

represents the power consumption of the bias stage. Therefore, the option of adjusting  $g_m$  by re-sizing  $(W/L)_1$  was adopted.

### 4 Simulation results

As a proof of concept, a wavelet Gm-C filter was simulated using parameters of a standard 0.35  $\mu m$  CMOS IC fabrication process and Bsim3v3 models. Two different filter versions, based on VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$  circuits, have been designed to operate from a 1.5-V supply voltage  $V_{DD}$ , to which tuning voltage  $V_{TUNE}$  is referred. For a typical  $g_m$  of 4 nA/V, transistor sizing and bias currents are listed in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

To implement the different coefficients of the state-space representation, the width of input transistors  $M_{1A}$  and  $M_{1B}$  was properly adjusted, whereas keeping  $V_{TUNE}$  fixed to 20 mV. Figure 5 shows the block diagram of the wavelet filter and the value of  $g_m$  for each transconductor. Analysis of  $g_m$  with respect to input voltage and tuning was also realized for both VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$ . For a 1 k $\Omega$ -load at the transconductor output, fixing  $V_{in}^+$  to a bias voltage and sweeping  $V_{in}^-$ , the  $g_m$  dependence on tuning for  $10\text{ mV} \leq V_{TUNE} \leq 50\text{ mV}$  is plotted in Fig. 6, where  $V_{in} = V_{in}^+ - V_{in}^-$ . Transconductance spans from 1 to 5 nA/V and remains almost constant in the triode region for the same  $V_{TUNE}$ , whereas linearly scaling with this voltage.

The transconductor frequency response as an integrator is also analyzed. For an integrating capacitor of 20 pF and

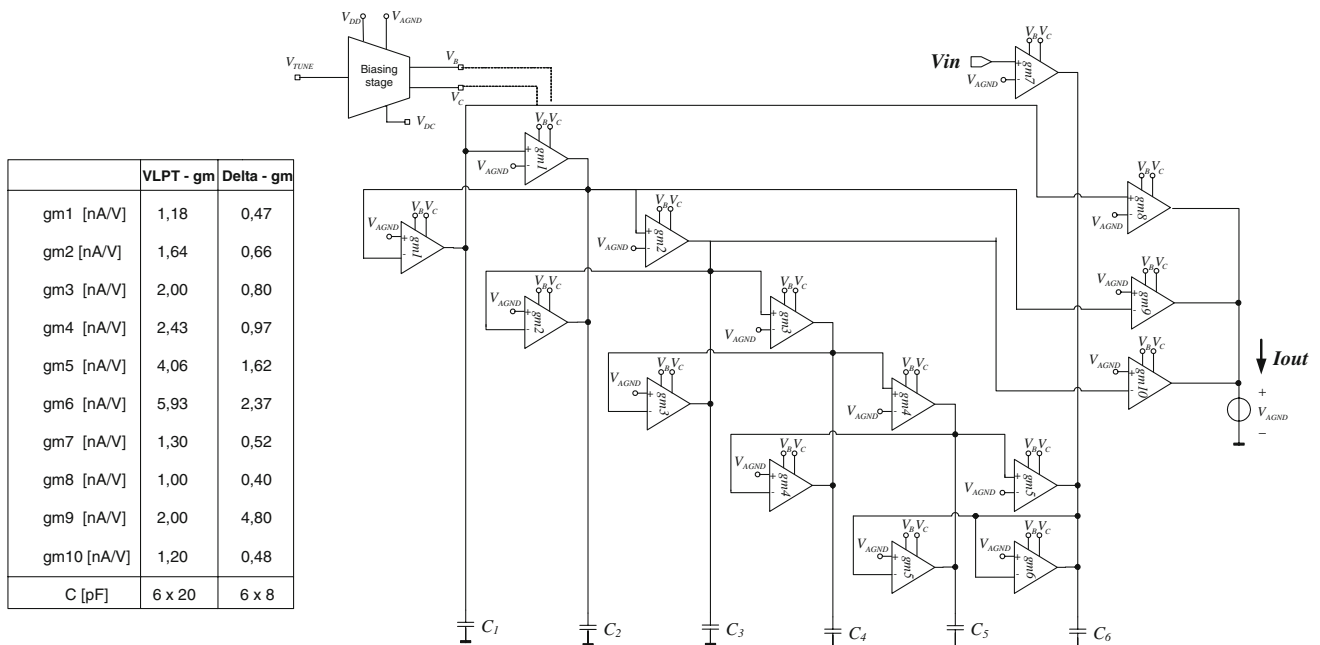


Fig. 5 Block diagram of 6th-order Gauss1 wavelet filter

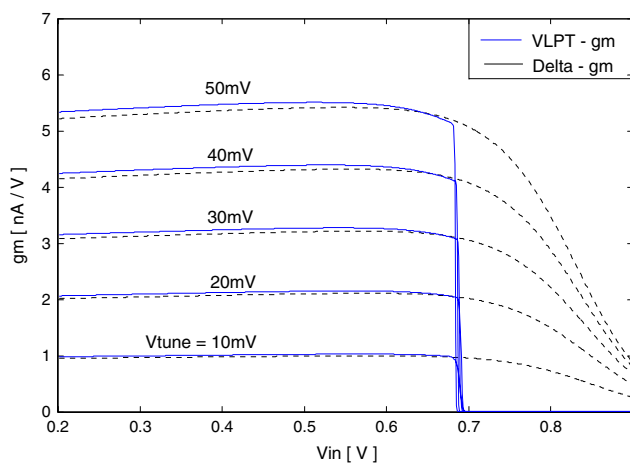


**Table 2** Transconductor transistor sizing for  $g_m = 4 \text{ nA/V}$ 

	W/L ( $\mu\text{m}/\mu\text{m}$ ) VLPT- $g_m$	W/L ( $\mu\text{m}/\mu\text{m}$ ) Delta- $g_m$
$M_{1A}, M_{1B}$	0.6/200	0.6/100
$M_{1C}, M_{1D}$	–	0.84/100
$M_{2A}, M_{2B}$	9.75/100	9.75/100
$M_{3A}, M_{3B}$	6/1	6/1
$M_{4A}, M_{4B}$	55/3	55/3
$M_{5A}, M_{5B}$	4/2	4/2
$M_{6A}, M_{6B}$	3/2	3/2
$M_{7A}, M_{7B}$	38/40	38/40
$M_{8A}, M_{8B}$	2/1	2/1

**Table 3** Transconductor bias currents for  $g_m = 4 \text{ nA/V}$ 

	VLPT- $g_m$	Delta- $g_m$
$I_{M_{1A}}$	1.7 nA	4.3 nA
$I_{M_{2A}}$	500 pA	500 pA
$I_{M_{4A}}$	1.2 nA	3.8 nA

**Fig. 6** Small-signal transconductance  $g_m$  as function of  $V_{in}$  and  $V_{TUNE}$ 

$V_{TUNE} = 50 \text{ mV}$ , for VLPT- $g_m$ , a transconductance of  $6.58 \text{ nA/V}$ , a DC gain of  $46.64 \text{ dB}$ , a unity-gain frequency of  $52.4 \text{ Hz}$  and a phase error of  $1.6^\circ$  is found. For Delta- $g_m$ , the respective values are  $1.86 \text{ nA/V}$ ,  $33.4 \text{ dB}$ ,  $14.8 \text{ Hz}$  and  $1.06^\circ$ . Figure 7 displays the input-referred noise spectral density for VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$  as function of  $V_{TUNE}$ . For  $V_{TUNE} = 50 \text{ mV}$ , these are  $12.33 \mu\text{V}/\text{Hz}^{1/2}$  @  $1 \text{ Hz}$  and  $93.75 \mu\text{V}/\text{Hz}^{1/2}$  @  $1 \text{ Hz}$ , for VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$ , respectively. As expected, due to its higher intrinsic transconductance, VLPT- $g_m$  presents a lower noise figure than its counterpart Delta- $g_m$ .

To finally implement the Wavelet Transform, one should be able to scale and shift in time (and, consequently

in frequency) the *gauss1* impulse response. As seen in Fig. 8, by changing the values of  $V_{TUNE}$  accordingly, different (dyadic) scales were implemented, while preserving the shape of the impulse response waveform. Figure 9 illustrates the frequency response of the same 4 dyadic scales with center frequencies ranging from 14 to 120 Hz for  $V_{TUNE}$  varying from 10 to 80 mV, for a wavelet filter implemented with ideal transconductors, VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$ , respectively. Figure 10 shows the total harmonic distortion (THD) of VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$  as a function of  $V_{TUNE}$ . As it can be observed, distortion is represented by  $\text{THD} < -46 \text{ dB}$  over the range of  $10 \text{ mV} < V_{TUNE} < 80 \text{ mV}$ .

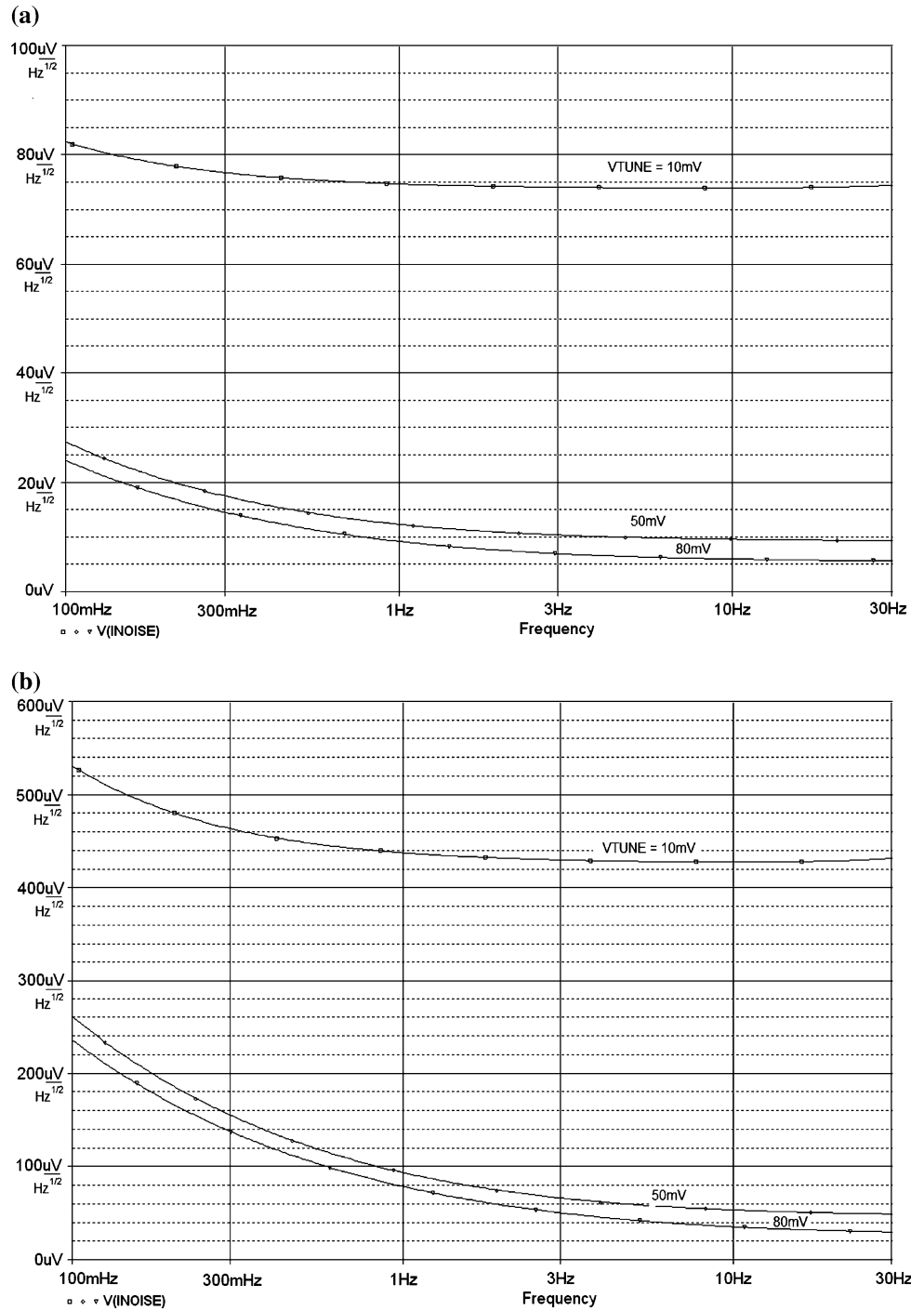
Monte Carlo analyses were also carried out to verify the dependence of  $g_m$  on mismatch and process parameters. A spread of 5% on both (W/L) and  $V_{T0}$  in input transistors revealed a maximum variation of 2.6% in the transconductance value for VLPT- $g_m$ . Figure 11 shows the variation of  $g_m$  as function of  $\Delta$  in Delta- $g_m$ . One can clearly observe the trade-off between the absolute value of  $g_m$  and its precision. Offering a good compromise, a Delta- $g_m$  transconductor with  $\Delta = 0.4$  was selected to implement the wavelet filter.

Simulation results are summarized in Table 4. The total power consumption of Delta- $g_m$  filter equals  $114 \text{ nW}$ , which is approximately twice the amount consumed by the same filter made up of VLPT- $g_m$  transconductors. The input-referred noise is  $156 \mu\text{V}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$  @  $1 \text{ Hz}$  and  $119 \mu\text{V}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$  @  $100 \text{ Hz}$  for VLPT- $g_m$  filter, whereas  $642 \mu\text{V}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$  @  $1 \text{ Hz}$  and  $460 \mu\text{V}/\sqrt{\text{Hz}}$  @  $100 \text{ Hz}$  for Delta- $g_m$  filter. Both topologies present similar data for output resistance ( $10^{10} - 10^{11} \Omega$ ) and harmonic distortion ( $\text{THD} < 40 \text{ dB}$  @  $V_{in} = 200 \text{ mV}_{pp}$ ). With respect to VLPT- $g_m$ , major advantages of Delta- $g_m$  are its lower transconductance and larger bandwidth. For example, for  $\Delta = 0.15$  ( $g_m$  variation around 5%), a minimum transconductance of  $150 \text{ pA/V}$  is achieved. For  $\Delta = 0.4$  and  $g_m = 1 \text{ nA/V}$ , the cut-off frequency is  $1.33$  and  $24 \text{ kHz}$  for VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$ , respectively. Such an improvement in frequency response is due to the possibly smaller transistor sizes in Delta- $g_m$  transconductors.

## 5 Conclusion

Two compact CMOS transconductors suitable for ultra-low power  $g_m$ -C filters operating in the Hz and sub-Hz range have been proposed. Their input transistors are kept in the triode-region to benefit from the lowest  $g_m/I_D$  ratio. To validate the circuit principle, these transconductors were employed as building blocks on a 6th-order  $L_2$  approximated *gauss1* wavelet  $g_m$ -C filter.

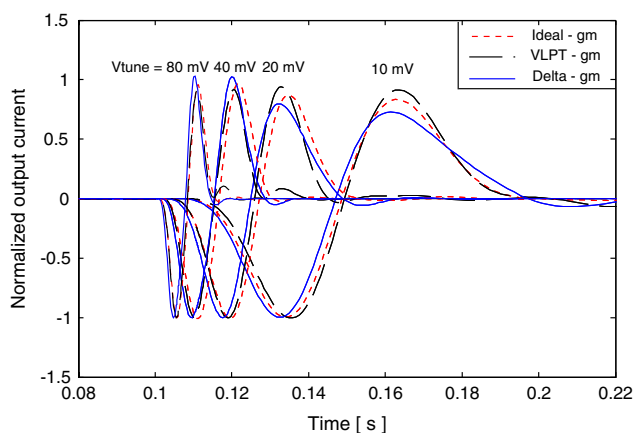
**Fig. 7** Input-referred noise spectral density for **(a)** VLPT- $g_m$  and **(b)** Delta- $g_m$



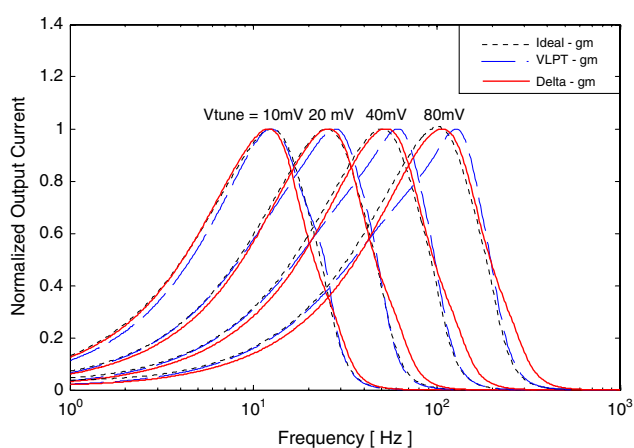
The design was done anticipating realization in a standard  $0.35\ \mu\text{m}$  n-well CMOS process and operation from a supply voltage  $V_{DD}$  of 1.5 V. Simulation data of electrical performance were obtained with Bsim3v3 models. For the VLPT- $g_m$  filter, the transconductance ranges from 1 to 12 nA/V. Its overall power consumption equals 51 nW, for a total capacitance of 120 pF. For the Delta- $g_m$  filter, the transconductance spans from 400 pA/V to 4.8 nA/V, with a power consumption of 114 nW, for a total capacitance of 48 pF. For

$V_{TUNE} = 50\ \text{mV}$ , input-referred noise spectral density were  $12.33\ \mu\text{V}/\text{Hz}^{1/2}$  @ 1 Hz and  $93.75\ \mu\text{V}/\text{Hz}^{1/2}$  @ 1 Hz, for VLPT- $g_m$  and Delta- $g_m$ , respectively. In both circuits, THD was kept below 1% for signal swings up to  $200\ \text{mV}_{pp}$ .

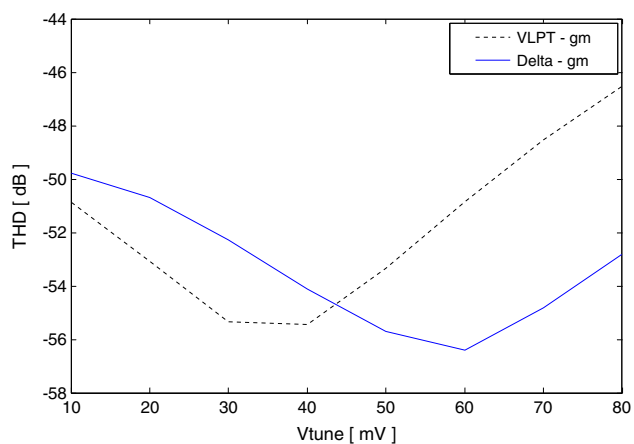
The simulated impulse response of 6th-order wavelet filter differs only slightly from the ideal 6th-order impulse response for both topologies. From this, one may conclude that the coefficients have been implemented successfully. Owing to their ultra low-power consumption and



**Fig. 8** Simulated impulse responses of the wavelet filter

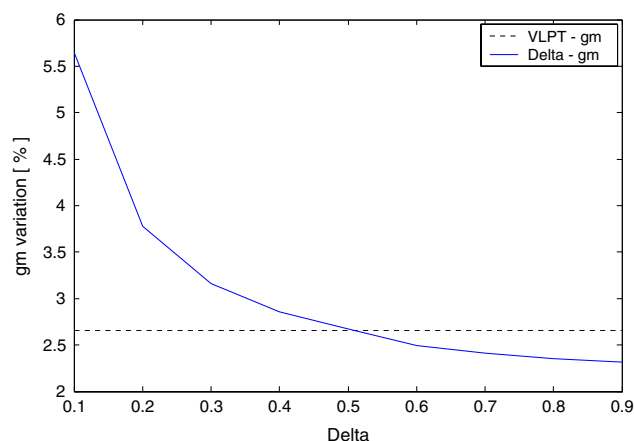


**Fig. 9** Simulated frequency responses (magnitude) of the wavelet filter



**Fig. 10** Wavelet filter THD values obtained for distinct values of  $V_{TUNE}$

compactness, the wavelet filter based on the proposed triode-transconductors becomes an attractive option to process very-low frequency signals in battery-operated systems, such as those required in biomedical devices.



**Fig. 11** Simulation (Monte Carlo analysis) result showing the variation of  $g_m$  as a function of  $\Delta$  for the Delta- $g_m$ , compared with the variation of  $g_m$  for the VLPT- $g_m$

**Table 4** Summary of simulated results

	VLPT- $g_m$	Delta- $g_m$
Filter power (nW)	51	114
$g_m$ bandwidth (kHz), $\Delta = 0.4$	1.33	24
Input eq. noise @ 1 Hz ( $\mu V/\sqrt{Hz}$ )	156	642
Input eq. noise @ 100 Hz ( $\mu V/\sqrt{Hz}$ )	119	460
Minimum $g_m$ (nA/V)	$\cong 1$	$\cong 0.15$
$R_{out}$ @ $g_m = 2$ nA/V ( $\Omega$ )	$1 \times 10^{11}$	$4 \times 10^{10}$
$g_m$ variation (%), $\Delta = 0.4$	2.7	2.9
$g_m$ variation (%), $\Delta = 0.15$	2.7	5
THD (dB), $V_{TUNE} = 20$ mV, $V_{IN} = 150$ mV <sub>pp</sub>	-53	-51
THD (dB), $V_{TUNE} = 80$ mV, $V_{IN} = 150$ mV <sub>pp</sub>	-47	-53

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**Peterson R. Agostinho** was born in Taubaté, Brazil, on January 22, 1980. He received his B.S. Degree in Electrical Engineering from the State University of São Paulo (UNESP), Brazil, in 2003, and the M.S. degree from University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil, in 2006. In July 2006 he joined Technological Institute of Aeronautics to developing his Ph.D. program. He is currently involved in the development of high performance analog circuits for aerospace applications.



**Sandro A. P. Haddad** was born in Anapolis, Brazil, on February 8, 1977. He received his B.S. Degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Brasilia (UnB), Brazil, in 2000, with honors. He was awarded the best-graduated student of the year, from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, UnB. In February 2001, he joined the Electronics Research laboratory, Delft University of Technology (TUDelft), The Netherlands,

where he started research towards his Ph.D. degree. His project was part of BioSens (Biomedical Signal Processing Platform for Low-Power Real-Time Sensing of Cardiac Signals). His research interests included low-voltage, ultra low-power analog electronics and biomedical systems, and high-frequency analog integrated circuits for UWB communications. He received his Ph.D. degree in December 2006, with the thesis entitled “Ultra Low-Power Biomedical Signal

Processing – An Analog Wavelet Filter Approach for Pacemakers”. In January 2007 he joined Freescale Semiconductor as Analog IC Designer.



**Jader A. De Lima** obtained both B.S. ('77) and M.S. ('80) degrees in Electrical Engineering from Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil, and his Ph.D. degree ('84) in Electrical Engineering from Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Brazil. Research Assistant at the University of Edinburgh, U.K., from 1986 to 1989. He joined then Motorola (EDO), in Geneva, Switzerland and FASELEC/Philips in Zurich, Switzerland. From

1992 to 1995 he was a design leader at the Microcontroller Group of Thomson Consumer Electronic Components, in Grenoble, France. He was an Associate Professor at Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP), in Brazil, from 1994 to 2004. Currently, he is a Design Manager at Freescale Semiconductor, in Campinas, Brazil. His main interests are low-voltage low-power analogue design, power management, continuous-time filters and biomedical instrumentation.



**Wouter A. Serdijn** was born in Zoetermeer ('Sweet Lake City'), the Netherlands, in 1966. He started his course at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering at the Delft University of Technology in 1984, and received his 'ingenieurs' (M.Sc.) degree in 1989. Subsequently, he joined the Electronics Research Laboratory of the same university where he received his Ph.D. in 1994. His research interests include low-voltage, ultra-low-power, high-

frequency and dynamic-translinear analog integrated circuits along with circuits for RF and UWB wireless communications, cochlear implants, portable, wearable, implantable and injectable ExG recorders and pacemakers. Dr. Serdijn is co-editor and co-author of the books *Power Aware Architecting for Data Dominated Applications* (Springer, 2007), *Adaptive Low-Power Circuits for Wireless Communications* (Springer, 2006), *Research Perspectives on Dynamic Translinear and Log-Domain Circuits* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston, 2000), *Dynamic Translinear and Log-Domain Circuits* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston, 1998) and *Low-Voltage Low-Power Analog Integrated Circuits* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston, 1995). He authored and co-authored more than 200 publications and presentations. He teaches *Analog Electronics*, *Analog Signal Processing*, *Micropower Analog IC Design* and *Electronic Design Techniques*. In 2001 and 2004, he received the EE Best Teacher Award.