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# Preface

Writing the last two pages of this thesis, I realize that this is the close of a pleasant and interesting period of four years of research. I conducted this research at the Centre of Mathematics and Computer Science (CWI) in Amsterdam between 2000 and 2004 and it has been financially supported by the Kortedeweg-de Vries (KdV) institute of the University of Amsterdam. I am fully aware that I could not have completed this thesis without the support and advice of a number of people, to whom I am very grateful.

First, I would like to thank my promoter Piet Hemker for the fantastic cooperation in the course of the project. Not only his expert knowledge in numerical analysis has proved invaluable, but also his ability to explain complicated mathematical problems in a clear and simple way. The hours of sparring left a deep impression on me and they form the basis for the contents of this thesis.

I was also very fortunate to be able to cooperate with my supervisor Walter Hoffmann. His inexhaustible enthusiasm for this research and his superior advice, especially in the field of the linear algebra, have contributed significantly to the realization of this thesis. Moreover, I want to extend my gratitude to him for his great support both in the research project and in the difficulties of daily life.

I further thankfully acknowledge Barry Koren. If he did not introduce me at the CWI, I would not have worked on this thesis. Moreover, he always showed a keen interest in the progress of the research.

The inspiring working atmosphere and the many friendly colleagues made my stay at the CWI a pleasant and fruitful one. In particular I enjoyed the in depth discussions with my roommate Anton Kuut, which kept us both sharp in our research project. Moreover I enjoyed the pleasant company of Domenico La-

haye and David Echeverria, while the 'philosophical' conversations with Michel Mandjes will be hard to forget.

During my research period I had to take care of a part of the Introduction in Numerical Analysis course at the KdV institute, supervised by Pia Pfluger. In view of her experience and knowledge in this field, she provided valuable help in giving this course and she made it a pleasant distraction from my investigations.

Finally, I could never have worked on this research with such inspiration and freedom without the understanding and support of my parents, my sister and most of all my Maaike.

Amsterdam, October 2004.