Technical Analysis for Music-to-Dance Synthesis

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1 Introduction

Automatic dance choreography from music is a challenging problem in machine learning research, which has attracted the fastly growing interests in recent years. Most relevant area to this task is human motion prediction [12], which is a challenging task in computer vision. It suffers from the high spatial-temporal complexity, *i.e.*, human motions are highly diverse in the space and have the temporal dependency property in the time dimension. Early works in this area try to tackle this task by the hidden markov models [9], Gaussian processes [16, 17] and restricted boltzmann machines [14], while recent works leverage recurrent neural networks (RNNs) [3, 7, 4] to model the spatial-temporal dependency among human motions. However, the longest motion sequences produced by these works can only last several seconds under 30 frame per seconds (FPS), which is far from the requirement that a formal dance should last one minute at least.

Although the music-to-dance synthesis is an interesting research topic that can exhibit the higher-level machine intelligence, it is still extremely hard for researchers to design the efficient models that can generate long-term smooth and realistic dances from music due to the following challenges:

(1) Lack of the high-quality music-dance paired training data. Most existing works leverage the human pose estimation models like OpenPose [1] to extract motion sequences from real dance videos. While these extracted motions usually contain lots of noise keyjoints due to imperfect detection and vary a lot in the shape of human skeletons;

(2) The generated dance motion sequences need to keep the consistency with the input music in terms of style, rhythm, beat and etc;

(3) The synthesized dance motions should be realistic as much as possible, *i.e.*, the produced motions should conform to the 2D or 3D spatial structure of human skeletons;

(4) Dance poses are complex and diverse in the space. The pose at the certain time-step would have the highly-diverse subsequent poses, *i.e.*, the successive motions have the randomness property while the transitions between them need to be naturally smooth too;

(5) Dance is a long-term sequence composed of human motions with the spatio-temporal structure. Thus, generating dances also faces the **exposure bias issue**[1] [11, 5, 20, 6, 18, 13, 15, 19] known in natural language generation (NLG), referring to the train-test discrepancy of autoregressive models. This issue would quickly accumulate prediction errors at inference and thus make the generated motion sequences quickly converge to the mean poses, *i.e.*, "freezing motions". Moreover, it becomes much more severe in the long sequence generation of real-valued vectors in continuous space (each motion is represented by a dozen of 2D or 3D keyjoints), compared to NLG (sequence generation of symbols in discrete space). This is one of most crucial challenges in the music-to-dance synthesis and human motion prediction.

2 Paper Analysis for Dancing to Music

This paper [8] published in NeurIPS 2019 makes the primary attempt on this direction. They propose a decomposition-to-composition method to address the dance generation with music under

[1]After communicating with some researchers in the computer vision community, we found few of them knew the exposure bias problem in the sequence generation due to the knowledge bias.

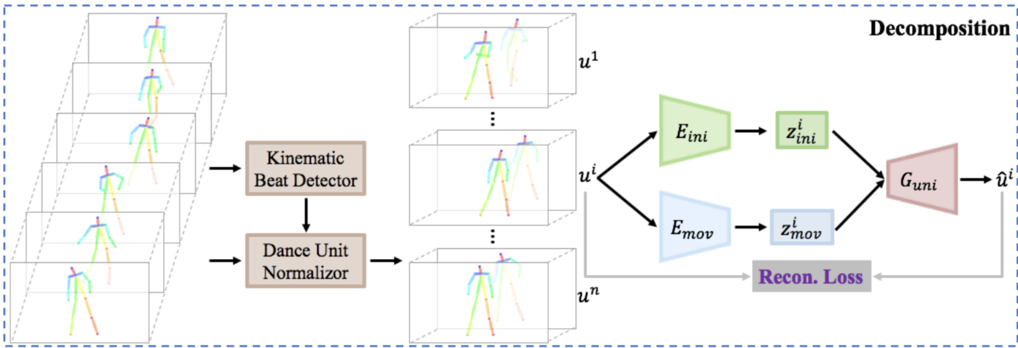

Figure 1: The flowchart of decomposition stage.

the GAN framework. Their method first decomposes the whole dance motion sequence into small dance units and generates them individually. Then these units are composed by using the last dance motion of current unit to initialize the first dance motion of the next unit. Hence, this work simplifies the problem by the proposed decomposition-to-composition framework, and avoid to directly handle the severe exposure bias issue in the long-term generation since each unit has only 32 dance movements.

2.1 Decomposition Stage

Figure 1 shows the decomposition process which consists of two steps: (1) The dance motion sequences in the dataset are divided into the small dance units by a developed kinematic beat detector; (2) Learning a model to generate the motions in each unit.

In the music information retrieval (MIR) community, the beat tracking [2] is usually utilized to detect the music beats and related detection methods have already been well developed. Popular libraries for audio and music analysis in MIR include Librosa [10], Essentia[2] and etc. While different from music beat detection, there are few works studied on detecting dance motion beats in existing literature. This paper proposes to find the cutting position by detecting whether its motion has the sudden deceleration at current time-step. Concretely, they compute the motion magnitude and ange of each keyjoint between neighboring motions, and track the magnitude and angle trajectories to spot when a dramatic decrease in the motion magnitude or a substantial change in the motion angle happens. Besides, another intuitive commonsense is that human dancers usually step on music beats during dancing but do not step on every music beat. In other words, the kinematic beats must be aligned to music beats but do not need to be aligned with every music beat. Figure 2 demonstrates the alignment between music beats and kinematic beats from their paper, which is consistent with our intuition. Hence, this work divides the whole dance motion sequence into small dance units with the same number of motions.

The next step is to learn a generation model to generate the motion sequence for each unit. This work proposes a dance unit variational auto-encoder (DU-VAE) to disentangle the dance unit into two latent spaces, namely an initial movement space $\mathcal{Z}_{ini}$ and a normal movement space $\mathcal{Z}_{mov}$. Then the reconstruction loss and KL loss can be calculated as follows:

$$
\begin{aligned}
L^u_{\text{recon}} &= E[\|G_{uni}(z_{ini}, z_{mov}) - u\|_1], \\
L^u_{\text{KL}} &= E[\text{KL}(\mathcal{Z}_{ini}\|N(0,\text{I}))] + E[\text{KL}(\mathcal{Z}_{mov}\|N(0,\text{I}))],
\end{aligned}
\tag{1}
$$

They claim that this design can facilitate the long-term sequential generation since the last dance motion of current unit could be used to initialize the generation of next unit.

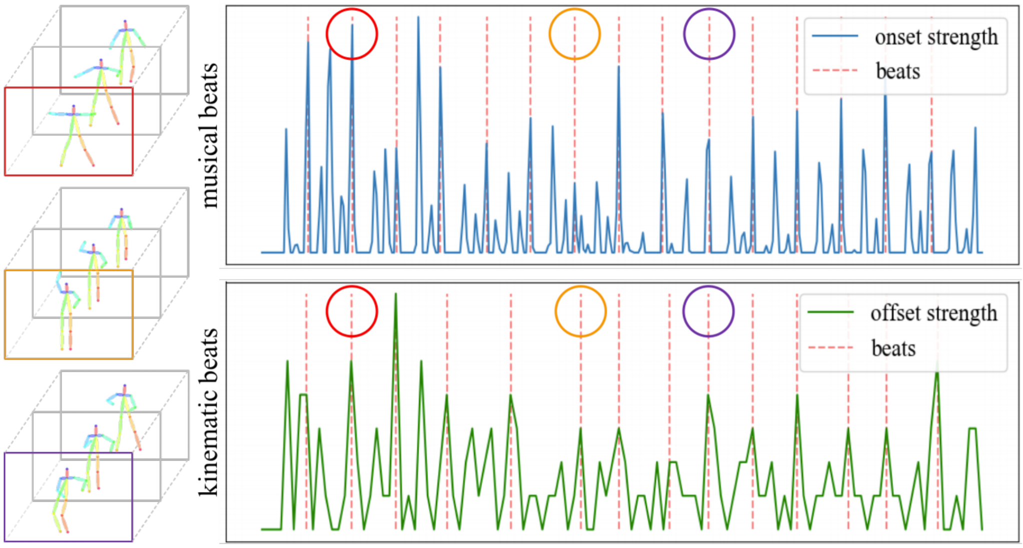

Figure 2: The extracted music beats and kinematic beats from a piece of dance. The dash lines denote the positions where the beats occur.

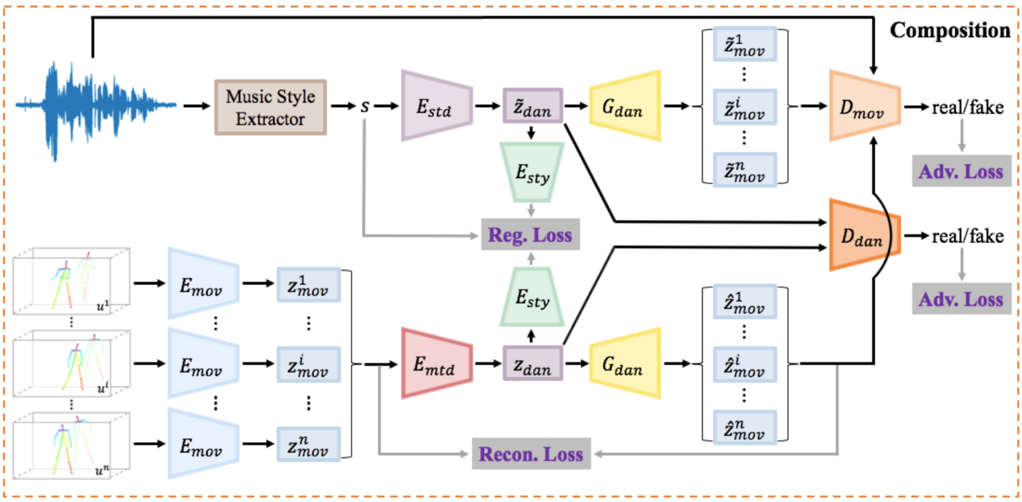

Figure 3: The flowchart of composition stage.

2.2 Composition Stage

For composition stage shown in Figure 3, this paper proposes a music-to-movement GAN (MM-GAN) to model the music-conditioned dance motions generation. Based on the movement space $\mathcal{Z}_{mov}$ learned in decomposition stage, it introduces a movement-to-dance encoder E_{mtd}: $\{z^i_{mov}\} \rightarrow z_{dan}$ to compress $\{z^i_{mov}\}$ into a latent variable z_{dan} of dance, and a generator G_{dan} to reconstruct z_{dan} back to $\{\hat{z}^i_{mov}\}$. Thus, the reconstruct loss can be formualted as follow:

$$L^m_{\text{recon}} = E[\big\|\{\hat{z}^i_{mov}\} - \{z^i_{mov}\}\big\|_1]. \tag{2}$$

For the music part, this paper only utilizes the style information s which is extracted by a pre-trained music style classifier, *i.e.*, the probability vector of the classifier. Then it introduces a style-to-dance encoder E_{std}: $(s, \epsilon) \rightarrow \tilde{z}_{dan}$ to encode s into another dance latent space $\tilde{z}_{dan}$, where ϵ is a Gaussian noise. After that, $\tilde{z}_{dan}$ is reconstruct back to $\{\tilde{z}^i_{mov}\}$ by the same generator G_{dan}. To ensure the match of generated movements and given music, a discriminator D_{mov} is introduced to judge the real or fake for inputs and the adversarial loss is defined as:

$$L^m_{\text{adv}} = E[\log D_{mov}(\{\hat{z}^i_{mov}\}, a) + \log(1 - D_{mov}(\{\tilde{z}^i_{mov}\}, a))], \tag{3}$$

[2] http://essentia.upf.edu/

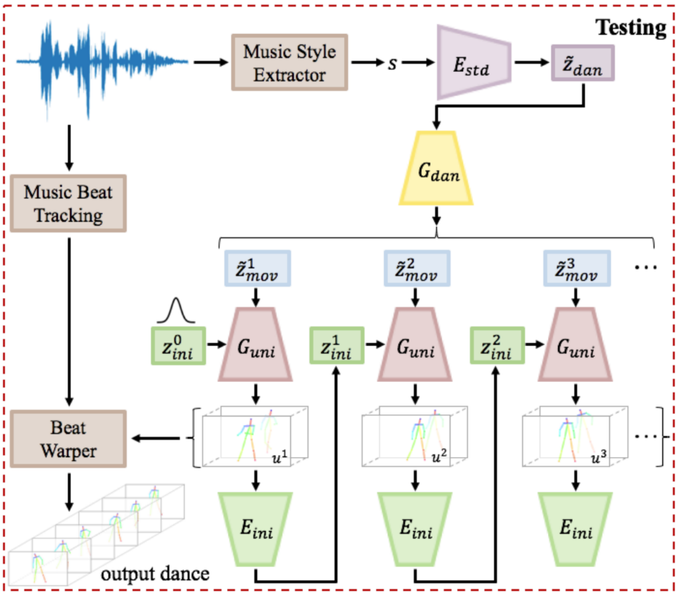

Figure 4: The flowchart of inference time.

where a is the style feature of music. Compared to directly enforcing the alignment of dance movements generated from music and real dance movements (equivalent to AE), utilizing a discriminator to judge the real or fake for given inputs is a much looser objective that allow the generated dances to have a certain diversity when ensuring the match of generated movements and given music.

Note that even though removing the auto-endcoder (AE) in dance part, we can still train the model. However, introducing such an AE has two advantages: (1) The reconstruction loss in Eq. 2 can be used to enhance the ability of G_{dan} since z_{dan} is a relatively simple distribution, and thus the majority of information has been compressed into the generator; (2) It can align the two latent variables in z_{dan} space from music and dance respectively following:

$$\begin{aligned} L^d_{\text{adv}} &= E[\log D_{dan}(z_{dan}) + \log(1 - D_{dan}(\tilde{z}_{dan}))], \\ L^d_{\text{KL}} &= E[\text{KL}(\mathcal{Z}_{dan} \| N(0, \text{I}))]. \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

Considering the style consistency regularization defined as:

$$L^s_{\text{recon}} = E[\|E_{sty}(z_{dan}) - s\|_1 + \|E_{sty}(\tilde{z}_{dan}) - s\|_1]. \tag{5}$$

The final training objectives of MM-GAN is given by:

$$L_{\text{comp}} = L^m_{\text{recon}} + \lambda^s_{\text{recon}} L^s_{\text{recon}} + \lambda^m_{\text{adv}} L^m_{\text{adv}} + \lambda^d_{\text{adv}} L^d_{\text{adv}} + \lambda^d_{\text{KL}} L^d_{\text{KL}}, \tag{6}$$

2.3 Inference

When the training is finished, the framework can now follow Figure 4 to do the generation for a given music. Specifically, it first encodes extracted music style feature s into the learned latent dance space $\tilde{z}_{dan}$ and utilize the generator G_{dan} learned in composition stage to generate the latent movement sequence $\{\tilde{z}^i_{mov}\}$. Then, another generator G_{uni} learned in decomposition stage is applied to generating the short motion sequences for each dance unit in an autoregressive fashion as follows:

$$u^i = G_{uni}(z^{i-1}_{ini}, z^i_{mov}), \qquad z^i_{ini} = E_{ini}(u^i(-1)), \tag{7}$$

where z^0_{ini} is initialized by sampling from a standard normal distribution.

2.4 Summary

This paper proposes a decomposition-to-composition framework to simplify the problem of long-term dance generation with music, and thus avoid directly facing the severe exposure bias problem in long-term motion sequence generation. However, in practice, we found the dance motion sequences generated by their method can only last 20 to 30 seconds at most. Besides, the way of composing small dance units into a full motion sequence prevents their approach from producing the naturally smooth dance sequences. Since the concatenation positions of neighboring dance units have the obvious motion jumps during the experiments. Although this work tries to tackle the music-to-dance synthesis task under GAN framework, it still fail to directly handle the exposure bias issue in the long-term dance generation with music.

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