SYNTHESIZING FLEXIBLE, COMPOSITE HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE FROM MUSIC DATASETS

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ABSTRACT

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Music is an innately hierarchical system, comprising multiple semantic levels informed by music theory. Such lev- 42 els include formal structure segmentation, disjoint motif 43 repetition, and harmonic and melodic contour. Histori- 44 cally, researchers in the music information retrieval com- 45 munity have focused on developing analyses for single lev- 46 els in this hierarchy. However, existing research has ad- 47 dressed neither (1) how to combine arbitrarily many levels of structure analyses into a single unified model and 49 (2) how to extract a representative such structure from a 50 corpus of music, rather than just a single piece. In this work, we propose a novel data structure called the semantic temporal graph that captures the semantic (i.e. hierarchical music theoretic) relationships between levels of the 54 hierarchy, as well as the temporal relationships between 55 adjacent-level analyses. Furthermore, given a corpus of such graphs derived from individual pieces, we introduce a method rooted in stochastic optimization to derive a representative centroid graph encoding the music dataset's 59 overall structure. We provide a qualitative evaluation of 60 the semantic temporal graph [where we.....], as well as a 61 quantitative evaluation of the centroid graph [where we...]. 62

1. INTRODUCTION

Music is both composed and comprehended with a hierarchical organization. Individual notes constitute the bottom of the hierarchy, followed by harmony, rhythmic patterns, motives, phrases, and finally large scale sections. Together, this hierarchy defines the overall structure of a piece [1].

Automatic identification of musical structure, also known as *music structure analysis* (MSA), continues to be a major interest to both musicologists and the MIR community. Research thus far has focused on the automatic contiguous segmentation (both flat and hierarchical) of musical form [1–13], which involves a boundary detection step followed by a segment labeling step, as well as motif detection [14–16], which looks for disjoint repeating musical patterns. More recently, researchers have

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also developed avenues for harmonic [17], functional harmonic [18], and melodic [19–21] contour extraction. The techniques used are diverse, ranging from matrix factorization to deep learning in both supervised and unsupervised settings. All of these tasks have been proposed in annual competitions of the Music Information Retrieval eXchange (MIREX) [22–25], which provides a standard format for their outputs.

To our knowledge, all existing MSA research addresses a single aspect of the compositional hierarchy, such as motif extraction, or melodic contour. There is currently no notion of how reconcile differing levels of the hierarchy into a single, unified model of structure, even though their amalgamation is central to a piece's compositional architecture and cohesive integrity. Indeed, Dai et al. have demonstrated empirically that the levels' contents are not formed in isolation, revealing significant interactions different structural levels [13]. In identifying the critical components necessary for integrating the hierarchical levels, we find that there are two central challenges: how to convey each level's semantic, music theoretic level in the hierarchy, and how to encapsulate the temporal relationships between the results of structural analyses at adjacent hierarchical levels.

Furthermore, prior MSA research has only addressed the problem of identifying structure in a single piece, and there is presently no methodology for describing the overall structure of a musical corpus, even across existing single-level analyses. The one exception is Oriol Nieto's proposed technique for merging multiple segment boundary annotations [1], but this is intended to be used with multiple boundary detection algorithms over a single piece to alleviate the problem of subjectivity, and does not address the problem of reconciling differing labels.

1.1 Contributions

To address the first gap, in Section 3, we develop the notion of a *semantic temporal graph* (STG), a *k*-partite directed acyclic graph (DAG) where semantic, music theoretic levels of the compositional hierarchy are represented as levels in the *k*-partite structure, nodes represent structure labels that are the results of the relevant analysis at each level, and edges between nodes of adjacent levels convey the temporal relationships between those structure labels. Each node has an associated time interval determined by the relevant MSA algorithm. A node must have one or two parents at the level above it: one if its associated time interval is a to-

tal subset of its parents, and two if its time interval begins 139 in one parent and ends in the other. In order to easily parse 140 the results of MSA algorithms into this data structure, the 141 standard MIREX format is adhered to.

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Importantly, the STG is incredibly flexible, and sup- 143 ports the representation of arbitrarily many layers and layer 144 types. Furthermore, the STG is totally decoupled from any 145 specific MSA algorithm or input format, meaning that the 146 chosen MSA algorithm for any level can be easily swapped 147 out, as long as its output adheres to the standard MIREX 148 format. This is crucial as single-level MSA algorithms 149 are constantly improving, and the STG must be adaptable 150 enough to accommodate this.

Finally, to address the second gap, in Section 4 we ex- 152 amine the problem of finding a *centroid*, or most represen- 153 tative, graph given a corpus of the k-partite semantic tem- 154 poral DAGs derived from individual pieces. We use the 155 label-aware graph edit distance as the similarity metric be- 156 tween two graphs. Given such a set of graphs G, we seek to 157 construct the STG g* that minimizes this distance from g* 158 to every graph in G. This is a constraint satisfaction problem, but one that is intractable to solve deterministically. 160 Thus, we must rely on approximation techniques, and utilize Markov Chain Monte Carlo methods, demonstrating 162 how to use the Metropolis Hastings algorithm to infer an 163 optimal solution and thus arrive at the centroid graph most 164 descriptive of the entire corpus by construction. 1

2. RELATED WORK

The majority of existing MSA algorithms focus on the contiguous formal segmentation task: boundary detection, followed by section labeling. Segmentation algorithms can ¹⁷¹ be flat or hierarchical (where each level is an increasingly 172 granular contiguous segmentation of the piece). Existing 173 approaches generally utilize matrix factorization, formal 174 grammars, or more recently, neural networks. Oriol Ni- 175 eto's Music Structure Analysis Framework (MSAF) toolkit 176 [1] features most of the state-of-the art matrix factoriza- 177 tion approaches for audio, including ordinal linear discrim- 178 inant analysis [8], convex nonnegative matrix factorization [5], checkerboard [2], spectral clustering [9], the Struc- 180 tural Features algorithm [3], 2D-Fourier Magnitude Coef- 181 ficients [6], and the Variable Markov Oracle [4]. These methods use variants of self-similarity matrices (SSMs) for $_{\mbox{\scriptsize 182}}$ boundary detection, which are symmetric matrices storing pair-wise comparisons between a given set of features. To 183 assign labels, various methods including Gaussian mixture models and nearest neighbor search are employed [1].

More recently, both supervised [26] and unsupervised [12, 27] deep learning approaches to segmentation have studied, as have graph- and grammar-based approaches. Hernandez-Olivan et al. use the graph-based G-PELT algorithm [10], while Dai et al. employ a graph-based approach informed by interactions between sections, melody, harmony and rhythm [13]. In the grammar realm, Finkensiep

et al. attempt a unified model of structure by using a minimal context-free grammar to combine repetition with formal prototypes in a tree-based approach, but they still only operate within the contiguous segmentation domain [11].

In the motif extraction domain, algorithms search for disjoint, repeating, and possibly overlapping patterns in a piece. They generally fall into three categories: string-based approaches (e.g. the Variable Markov Oracle [15]), where music data is represented as a one-dimensional pitch sequence and repeated patterns are detected with sub-string matching; geometry-based approaches (e.g. Hsiao et al's BPS-motif discovery algorithm [14]), where music data is represented as multidimensional point sets and *translatable subsets* identify repeating patterns; and feature-based (e.g. [16]) approaches, which learn features from music data, and retrieve patterns with clustering or classification of the features as repeated patterns.

Recent approaches in harmony identification are centered around neural networks, such as using multi-task learning with recurrent neural networks and long short term memory units to detect functional harmonic relationships in a piece [18], as well as developing transformer models to improve chord recognition through incorporating chord segmentation into the recognition process [17]. Until very recently, Justin Salamon's Melodia algorithm was the state of the art in melody extraction. It comprises sinusoid extraction, salience functions, contour creation, and melody selection, and automatically estimates the fundamental frequency corresponding to the pitch of the predominant melodic line of a piece of polyphonic music. Since then, approaches have shifted to neural networks, such as lightweight deep bidirectional LSTM models [20] and transformers [21].

To our knowledge, little work has been done in developing a unified model of structure for either a single piece or across a corpus. The closest we are aware of is Halley Young's *prototype graph*, a bipartite graph that represents musical form as a network of relationships between "prototype nodes" (specific musical elements) and the music they represent, as well as the music-theoretic relationships between musical spans and their respective nodes [28]. However, the prototype graph does not encode hierarchy, and it is limited to a single piece.

3. ABSTRACT REPRESENTATION

3.1 Semantic Temporal Graph

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We seek a unified model of musical structure that captures semantic, music theoretic levels of the compositional hierarchy, as well as the temporal relationships between them. The *semantic temporal graph*, or STG, is a novel data structure serving as a meta-representation of musical structure that unifies these objectives. The STG is *k*-partite directed acyclic graph (DAG). Each of the *k* layers encodes a level in the semantic hierarchy dictated by music theory. From top to bottom, the music theoretic hierarchy is formed by large scale form, motifs, rhythmic patterns, harmony, and finally melodies constituting spe-

¹ Source code for this project can be found at ¹⁹³ https://github.com/ilanashapiro/constraints_project 194

cific note events with a certain timbre quality, duration, 254 and pitch [1]. Individual levels themselves can form sub- 255 hierarchies of increasing granularity, as is commonly seen 256 with the segmentation algorithms corresponding to large 257 scale sections.

In the STG, nodes encode labels from the relevant MSA 259 algorithm. Each node also has an associated time interval 260 given by the algorithm. At each level, these intervals are 261 converted to indices by ordering their start times. Edges 262 encode temporal relationships between nodes of adjacent 263 levels. Specifically, for node n at level i, n must have either 264 one or two parents in level i-1: one if its associated time 265 interval is a total subset of its parent's, and two if its time 266 interval begins in one parent's, and ends in the other's.

3.2 Building the Graph

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In order to visualize the STG more clearly, we must first establish how it is built. In this paper, we build STGs that unify hierarchical formal segmentation and disjoint motif repetition, with plans in the near future to add layers for rhythm, harmony, and melody. In order to parse the results of any MSA algorithm into a format suitable for the STG, we must first consider the standard MIREX formats they adhere to.

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The structural segmentation task was most recently proposed in the 2017 MIREX competition [22]. It defines the following standard output format:

where \t denotes a tab and \n denotes the end of line. The ²⁷¹ < and > characters are not included. Thus, an example ²⁷² output file could look like:

```
227 0.000 5.223 A
228 5.223 15.101 B
229 15.101 20.334 A
```

Hierarchical segmentations will have multiple of these lists separated by a newline.

MIREX 2017 also dictates the standard output format for motif detection algorithms [23]. Ontimes (in seconds) 281 of notes in the pattern in the left-hand column, with their MIDI note numbers on the right. Each occurrence of a discovered pattern is given before moving on to the next pattern, and occurrences do not have to be of the same length. An example output would resemble:

```
239
    pattern1
     occurrence1
240
     7.00000, 45.00000
241
242
     11.00000, 60.00000
243
244
     occurrence2
     31.00000, 57.00000
245
246
     patternM
247
     occurrence1
248
     9.00000, 58.00000
250
251
     occurrencem
     100.00000, 62.00000
252
253
```

Given these standard MIREX formats, we must parse this data into a format suitable for the STG. Each "chunk" of the data, separated by a newline, forms a level in the STG, and each line in a chunk corresponds to a node. Consider Figure 1, which demonstrates the parsing process for a segmentation hierarchy with two levels. We start with the MIREX segmentation output in step 1. In step 2, we number each segmentation level (i.e. text chunk) and extract the segment label and time interval from each line. This gives us the preliminary node label $S\{$ segment label}L{segment level number}I{time interval}. Finally, in step 3, we transform each time interval into an index representing that line's position in the level, sorted by interval start time. In the case of segmentation, this matches the line order in the MIREX output. We now have the final segmentation node label S{segment label}L{segment

```
S1L1I(0.000, 2.786)
                                                           S1L1N1
0.000 2.786 1
                           S0L1I(2.786, 117.493)
2.786 117.493 0
                                                           S0L1N2
117.493 117.528 1
                           S1L1I(117.493, 117.528)
                                                            S1L1N3
                           S2L2I(0.000, 2.786)
                                                           S2L2N1
0.000 2.786 2
                           S0L2I(2.786, 23.545)
                                                           S0L2N2
2.786 23.545 0
                           S1L2I(23.545, 43.096)
                                                           S1L2N3
23,545 43,096 1
                           S0L2I(43.096, 49.691)
                                                           S0L2N4
43.096 49.691 0
                           S1L2I(49.691, 52.013)
                                                           S1L2N4
49.691
       52.013
               1
                           S0L2I(52.013, 82.895)
                                                           S0L2N4
52.013
       82.895
                           S1L2I(82.895, 117.493)
                                                           S1L2N4
82.895 117.493 1
                           S2L2I(117.493, 117.528)
117.493 117.528 2
                                                           S2L2N4
    Step 1
                                   Step 2
                                                            Step 3
```

Figure 1. Parsing Formal Segmentation

We repeat this process for motifs as in Figure 2. Motif analyses are single level, i.e. they do not output subhierarchies like segmentation can do. Consider the MIREX motif output in step 1. Each pattern (i.e. motif) occurrence's time interval is defined as the ontime of its first note to its last, and we extract pattern and occurrence numbers in step 2 to arrive at the preliminary node label **P**{pattern number}**O**{occurrence number}**I**{time interval}. We then order the preliminary labels by start time, as unlike in segmentation, pattern occurrences are not ordered chronologically in MIREX format. We then assign indices to this ordering to arrive at the final motif node label **P**{pattern number}**O**{occurrence number}**N**{chronologic occurrence index}. This is reflected in step 3, where occurrence 2 of pattern 1 is assigned index 3 instead of 2.

In all cases, the time interval is stored as node metadata, and determines what that node's parent(s) will be.

3.3 STG Examples

In the following examples, we use hierarchical spectral clustering from the MSAF toolkit for segmentation [1, 9], and Hsiao et al's BPS-motif discovery algorithm for motifs [14]. To better visualize the STG's structure, first consider the following subgraph taken from an STG generated for the first movement exposition of the piano transcription of Beethoven's Symphony No. 1, Op. 21 in Figure

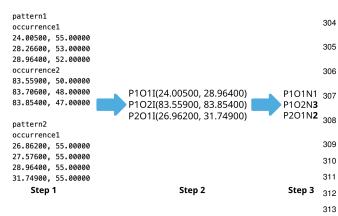


Figure 2. Parsing Motifs

3. ² The nodes are taken from levels 4 and 5 of the seg-₃₁₇ mentation sub-hierarchy. Node S3L5N2's time interval is ₃₁₈

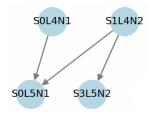


Figure 3. STG Subgraph Example

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a total subset of S1L4N2's, while S0L5N1's time interval $_{330}$ starts in S0L4N1's, but ends in S2L4N2's. The entire STG $_{331}$ generated for this piece, unifying hierarchical formal seg- $_{332}$ mentation with disjoint motif detection, is shown in Figure $_{333}$ 4. The segmentation nodes are easily visible, and the motif $_{334}$ nodes form the crowded bottom layer.

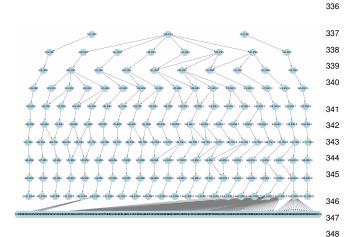


Figure 4. STG Subgraph Example

4. SYNTHESIS

4.1 Distance Metric

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4.2 Stochastic Optimization

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

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² MIDI file is from the LOP database, which can be found here: ³⁵³ https://qsdfo.github.io/LOP/database 354

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