A Simple Music/Voice Separation Method based on the Extraction of the Repeating Musical Structure

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Introduction

Repetition “is the basis of music as an art” (Schenker, 1954). This is especially true for popular songs, generally characterized by an underlying repeating musical structure over which the singer performs varying lyrics. Based on this simple observation, we propose to extract the repeating musical background from the non-repeating musical foreground. The basic idea is to identify the periodically repeating audio segments, compare them to a repeating segment model, and extract the energy corresponding to the repeating patterns. The result is a simple but effective music/voice separation system.

Method

Step 1: Identify the repeating period of the structure
- Compute the “beat spectrum” \( b \) from the spectrogram \( V \).

\[
B(i, j) = \frac{1}{m - j + 1} \sum_{k=1}^{m-j+1} V(i,k)^2 V(i,k+j-1)^2
\]

(1)

\[
b(j) = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} B(i,j)}
\]

for \( i = 1 \ldots n \) and \( j = 1 \ldots m \).
- Identify the peak with the largest magnitude and longest period \( p \).

Step 2: Compute the repeating segment model
- Segment the spectrogram \( V \) at period rate \( p \).
- Compute the repeating model \( \tilde{V} \) as the mean of the segments in \( V \).

\[
\tilde{V}(i,l) = \left( \prod_{k=1}^{p} V(i,l+k-1,p) \right)^{1/p}
\]

(2)

Step 3: Build the repeating binary time-frequency mask
- Compute the mean-scaled spectrogram \( \bar{V} \) using the model \( \tilde{V} \).

\[
\bar{V}(i,l+k-1,p) = \log \left( \frac{V(i,l+k-1,p)}{\tilde{V}(i,l)} \right)
\]

(3)

- Build the binary time-frequency mask \( M \) by assigning time-frequency bins in \( \bar{V} \) below a tolerance factor \( t \) to the repeating structure.

\[
M(i,j) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \bar{V}(i,j) \leq t \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}
\]

(4)

Evaluation

- Dataset: MIR-1K Dataset\(^1\)
- 1000 song clips, recorded at 16 kHz, from 4 to 13 sec
- clips from 110 karaoke Chinese pop songs performed by amateurs
- includes manual annotations of the pitch contours, indices of the vocal/non-vocal frames, and indices and types for unvoiced frames

Competing method: Hsu et al.’s music/voice separation\(^2\)
- Vocals separation using pitch-based inference (best automatic version)
- + detection and separation of unvoiced vocal frames
- + spectral subtraction method to enhance voiced vocals separation

- Mixing process and separation measure (see Bars):
  - 3 sets of mixtures: 3 voice-to-music mixing ratios (-5, 0, 5 dB)
  - Global Normalized Signal-to-Noise Ratio (GNSDR) for each set

- Potential enhancements for our system (see Box plots):
  - Use of an optimal period \( p \)
  - Use of an optimal tolerance \( t \)
  - Use of the index information of the vocal frames

Evaluation on a dataset of 1,000 song clips showed that this method can be successfully applied for music/voice separation. Unlike other music/voice separation approaches, this method does not depend on particular features, rely on complex frameworks, or require prior training. Because it is only based on self-similarity, it has the advantage of being simple, fast, blind, and thus completely automatable.

Conclusion

We have proposed a novel and promising separation method based on the extraction of the repeating patterns in the musical structure. Evaluation on a dataset of 1,000 song clips showed that this method can be successfully applied for music/voice separation. Unlike other music/voice separation approaches, this method does not depend on particular features, rely on complex frameworks, or require prior training. Because it is only based on self-similarity, it has the advantage of being simple, fast, blind, and thus completely automatable.

\( ^1 \)http://sites.google.com/site/avoiceaudiod separation/mir-1k

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