The Virasoro algebra

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1 The Virasoro algebra

Let A be an algebra over \mathbb{C} . A *derivation* of A is a linear map $d: A \to A$ such that

 $d(a_1a_2) = d(a_1)a_2 + a_1d(a_2),$ for all $a_1, a_2 \in A$.

The vector space of derivations on A is a Lie algebra with bracket

$$[d_1, d_2] = d_1 d_2 - d_2 d_1$$

Let \mathfrak{g} be a Lie algebra. A *central extension* of \mathfrak{g} is a short exact sequence of Lie algebras

$$0 \longrightarrow \mathfrak{c} \longrightarrow \mathfrak{g}_1 \xrightarrow{\varphi_1} \mathfrak{g} \longrightarrow 0 \qquad \text{such that} \qquad \mathfrak{c} \subseteq Z(\mathfrak{g}_1),$$

the center of $\tilde{\mathfrak{g}}$. A morphism of central extensions is a Lie algebra homomorphism $\psi: \mathfrak{g}_1 \to \mathfrak{g}_2$ such that $\varphi_2 \psi = \varphi_1$. A universal central extension is a central extension $\tilde{\mathfrak{g}}$ such that there is a unique morphism from $\tilde{\mathfrak{g}}$ to every other central extension of \mathfrak{g} . The Schur multiplier is the kernel of the universal central extension of \mathfrak{g} . It classifies the projective representations of \mathfrak{g} . (at least this is right for GROUPS, see Steinberg). Isomorphism classes of one-dimensional central extensions are in bijection with elements $c \in H^2(\mathfrak{g}; \mathbb{F})$ via the formula

$$[x,y]^{\sim} = [x,y] + c(x,y)\mathbf{c}, \quad \text{for } x, y \in \mathfrak{g},$$

where **c** is a basis element of $Z(\tilde{\mathfrak{g}})$.

The Witt algebra is the Lie algebra of derivations of $\mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$. If $d: \mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}] \to \mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$ is a derivation then

$$d(1) = 0, \quad d(t^k) = kt^{k-1}d(t), \quad \text{for all } k \in \mathbb{Z},$$

and hence d is determined by the value d(t). Thus

W has basis
$$\{d_j \mid j \in \mathbb{Z}\},$$
 where $d_j = -t^{j+1}\frac{d}{dt},$

and

$$[d_n, d_m] = (n-m)d_{n+m}.$$

Note that $\mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$ is the complexification of the ring of smooth functions on the circle S^1 .

The Virasoro algebra is the universal central extension of W. It has basis

 $\{c, d_i \mid i \in \mathbb{Z}\}$ with $[c, d_i] = 0$, $[d_n, d_m] = (n - m)d_{n+m} + \delta_{n, -m} \frac{n^3 - n}{12}c$.

To try to prove this note that if

$$[d_n, d_m] = (n - m)d_{n+m} + c(n, m)z,$$

then

$$[d_n, d_m] = -[d_m, d_n] \qquad \text{forces} \qquad c(n, m) = -c(m, n),$$

and the Jacobi identity forces

$$c(n+m,\ell) + c(\ell+n,m) + c(m+\ell,n) = 0.$$

The Virasoro algebra has triangular structure and skew linear $(\theta(\xi x) = \overline{\xi}\theta(x))$, for $\xi \in \mathbb{C}$ and $x \in \text{Vir}$ Cartan involution given by

$$\begin{aligned} \operatorname{Vir}_{<0} &= \operatorname{span}\{d_i \mid i \in \mathbb{Z}_{<0}\}, & \theta \colon \operatorname{Vir} \longrightarrow \operatorname{Vir}\\ \operatorname{Vir}_0 &= \operatorname{span}\{c, d_0\}, & \text{with} & d_n & \longmapsto & d_{-n}\\ \operatorname{Vir}_{>0} &= \operatorname{span}\{d_i \mid i \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}\}, & c & \longmapsto & c \end{aligned}$$

Let U be the universal enveloping algebra of Vir. The action of $\mathfrak{h} = \operatorname{Vir}_0$ on $U_{<0}$ gives $U_{<0}$ a $\mathbb{Z}_{<0}$ grading such that

 U_{-n} has basis $\{d_{-\lambda} \mid \lambda \text{ is a partition of } n\}$ where $d_{PICTURE} = d_{-\lambda} = d_{-\lambda_1} \cdots d_{-\lambda_\ell}$, if $\lambda = (\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_\ell)$. This is the Poincaré-Birkhoff-Witt basis of $U_{<0}$.

1.1 The action on admissible $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$ modules

Because the Witt algebra is the space of derivations of $\mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$ the Witt algebra acts on the loop algebra $\mathfrak{g} \otimes \mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$, and the Virasoro algebra also acts on $\mathfrak{g} \otimes \mathbb{C}[t, t^{-1}]$ by

$$[\tilde{d}_k, t^{\otimes} x] = t^{k+1} \frac{d}{dt} (t^n \otimes x) = nt^{n+k} \otimes x$$

and c acting by 0?? We can "extend" this action to an action admissible $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$ modules.

Let h be the Coxeter number of \mathfrak{g} and let

$$T_k = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{j \in \mathbb{Z}} \sum_i u_i(-j)u^i(j+k) :$$

where the *normal ordering* is

$$: u_i(-j)u^i(j+k) := \begin{cases} u_i(-j)u^i(j+k), & \text{if } -j \le j+k, \\ u^i(j+k)u_i(-j), & \text{if } -j > j+k. \end{cases}$$

Proposition 1.1. If V is a restricted $\hat{\mathfrak{g}}$ -module of level ℓ and $\ell \neq -h$ then

$$d_k \longmapsto \frac{1}{\ell+h} T_k \qquad and \qquad z \longmapsto \frac{\ell}{\ell+h} \dim(\mathfrak{g})$$

define an action of Vir on V.

Let $\mathfrak{g} = \mathfrak{sl}_2$ and use the imbedding

$$\begin{array}{cccc} \iota \colon & \mathfrak{sl}_2 & \longrightarrow & \mathfrak{sl}_2 \oplus \mathfrak{sl}_2 \\ & x & \longmapsto & (x,x) \end{array}$$

to define an action of Vir on $L(\xi)\otimes L(m\xi+\frac{n}{2}\alpha)$ by

$$d_k \longmapsto \frac{1}{\ell+h} (T_k \otimes 1 + 1 \otimes T_k) - \frac{1}{\ell+h} \iota(T_k).$$

This action of Vir commutes with the action of $\hat{\mathfrak{sl}}_2'$. By a character computation

$$L(\xi) \otimes L(m\xi + \frac{n}{2}\alpha) \cong \bigoplus_{k \in I} L_{\hat{\mathfrak{sl}}_2}(\xi + \lambda - k\alpha) \otimes U_{m,n,k}, \qquad \text{as } (\hat{\mathfrak{sl}}_2', \text{Vir}) \text{ bimodules, and}$$

$$L(\xi) \otimes L(m\xi + \frac{n}{2}\alpha) \cong \bigoplus_{\substack{k \in I \\ j \ge k^2}} L_{\hat{\mathfrak{sl}}_2}(\xi + \lambda - k\alpha - j\delta) \otimes U^j_{m,n,k}, \quad \text{as } \hat{\mathfrak{sl}}_2 \text{ modules},$$

where

$$I = \{k \in \mathbb{Z} \mid \frac{n}{2} - \frac{m+1}{2} \le k \le \frac{n}{2}\}, \quad \text{and} \quad$$

$$\operatorname{char}(U_{m,n,k}) = \sum_{j \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}} \dim(U_{m,n,k}^j) q^j = (f_{m,n,k} - f_{m,n,n+1-k}) \prod_{j \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}} \frac{1}{1 - q^j},$$

with

$$f_{m,n,k} = \sum_{j \in \mathbb{Z}} q^{(m+2)(m+3)j^2 + (n+1+2k(m+2))j+k^2}$$

Then z acts on $U_{m,n,k}$ by the constant

$$c = 1 - \frac{6}{(m+2)(m+3)},$$

and d_0 acts on $U_{m,n,k}^j$ by the constant

$$\frac{n(n+2)}{4(m+2)} - \frac{(n-2k)(n-2k+2)}{4(m+3)} + j$$

and the minimum value of j for which $U_{m,n,k}^{j}\neq 0$ is

$$j = k^2$$
 when d_0 acts by $h_{r,s} = \frac{((m+3)r - (m+2)s)^2 - 1}{4(m+2)(m+3)}$

where

$$\begin{array}{ll} r=n+1, & s=n+1-2k, & \text{if } k\geq 0, \\ r=m-n+1, & s=m-n+2+2k, & \text{if } k<0. \end{array}$$

1.2 The Shapovalov determinant

Lemma 1.2. The highest power of h in $det(M(h, c)^{(h+n,c)})$ is

$$\sum_{\lambda \vdash n} \ell(\lambda), \quad \text{with coefficient} \quad \prod_{\lambda \vdash n} z_{2\lambda},$$

where, for a partition λ of n, $n!/z_{\lambda}$ is the cardinality of the conjugacy class of the symmetric group S_n labeled by λ .

Proof. Let us first analyze the entries $\langle d_{-\mu}v^+, d_{\lambda}v^+ \rangle$ in the matrix. Then

$$\langle d_{-\mu}v^+, d_{-\lambda}v^+ \rangle = \langle v^+, d_{mu}d_{-\lambda}v^+ \rangle = p_{0,0}(h.c),$$

where $p_{0,0}(d_0, z)$ is the polynomial in d_0 and z in the PBW basis expansion

$$d_{\mu}d_{-\lambda} = \sum_{\nu,\tau} d_{-\nu}p_{\nu,\tau}(d_0,z)d_{\tau}$$

This expansion is obtained by using the relations

$$\begin{aligned} d_k d_j &= d_j d_k + (k - j) d_{j+k}, & \text{if } j + k \neq 0, \\ d_k d_{-k} &= d_{-k} d_k + (2k d_0 + \frac{k^2 (k - 1)}{12} z), & \text{for } k > 0, \\ d_1 d_{-1} &= d_{-1} d_1 + 2 d_0, \\ d_0 d_{-k} &= d_{-k} d_0 + k d_{-k} = d_{-k} (d_0 + k), \\ z d_{-k} &= d_{-k} z, \end{aligned}$$

to put the d_i in increasing order. The first relation "combines" j and k into j + k. If $d_{-\nu}p_{\nu,\tau}(d_0, z)d_{\tau}$ is a term in the PBW expansion then the parts of $-\nu$ and τ are combinations of parts of μ and $-\lambda$ and the degree in d_0 of the polynomial $p_{\nu,\tau}(d_0, z)$ is the maximal number of 0 parts that can be obtained by combinations of the remaining parts of μ and $-\lambda$ (those that do not contribute to ν and $-\tau$).

Thus the degree (in d_0) of $p_{0,0}(d_0, z)$ is the maximal number of 0 parts that can be obtained by combinations of the parts of μ and $-\lambda$ and is at most $\ell(\mu)$ and at most $\ell(\lambda)$. Since both λ and μ are partitions of n, a term of degree $\ell(\lambda)$ is produced only when $\lambda = \mu$ and each part of λ is combined with a single part of $-\lambda$. Thus the maximal degree term in row λ of $A(h, c)^{(h+n,c)}$ appears in column λ , i.e. on the diagonal.

The identity

$$d_r d_{-r}^s = d_{-r}^s d_r + d_{-r}^{s-1} \left(2rsd_0 + 2r^2 \binom{s}{2} + s\left(\frac{r^3 - r}{12}\right)z \right),$$

is verified by induction on s, the induction step being

$$\begin{aligned} d_r d_{-r}^s &= d_{-r} d_r d_{-r}^{s-1} + \left(2r d_0 + \left(\frac{r^3 - r}{12}\right)z\right) d_{-r}^{s-1} \\ &= d_{-r} \left(d_{-r}^{s-1} d_r + d_{-r}^{s-2} \left(2r(s-1)s d_0 + 2r^2 \binom{s-1}{2} + (s-1)s \left(\frac{r^3 - r}{12}\right)z\right) \\ &+ d_{-r}^{s-1} \left(2r(d_0 + r(s-1)) + \left(\frac{r^3 - r}{12}\right)z\right) \\ &= d_{-r}^s d_r + d_{-r}^{s-1} \left(2rs d_0 + 2r^2 \binom{s}{2} + s \left(\frac{r^3 - r}{12}\right)z\right). \end{aligned}$$

Suppose that

$$d_r^k d_{-r}^s = d_{-r}^s d_r^k + d_{-r}^{s-1} p_1^{k,s} d_r^{k-1} + d_{-r}^2 p_2^{k,s} d_r^{k-2} + \dots + d_{-r}^{s-k} p_k^{k,s},$$

where $p_i^{k,s}$ are polynomials in d_0 and z. Then

$$\begin{aligned} d_r^{k+1}d_{-r}^s &= d_r \sum_{j=0}^k d_{-r}^{s-j} p_j^{k,s}(d_0,z) d_r^{k-j} \\ &= \sum_{j=0}^k d_{-r}^{s-j} d_r p_j^{k,s}(d_0,z) d_r^{k-j} + d_{-r}^{s-j-1} \Big(2r(s-j)d_0 + 2r^2 \binom{s-j}{2} + (s-j) \Big(\frac{r^3-r}{12} \Big) z \Big) p_j^{k,s}(d_0,z) d_r^{k-j} \\ &= \sum_{j=0}^k d_{-r}^{s-j} p_j^{k,s}(d_0-r,z) d_r^{k-j+1} + d_{-r}^{s-j-1} \Big(2r(s-j)d_0 + 2r^2 \binom{s-j}{2} + (s-j) \Big(\frac{r^3-r}{12} \Big) z \Big) p_j^{k,s}(d_0,z) d_r^{k-j}, \end{aligned}$$

from which it follows that

$$p_{\ell}^{k+1.s}(d_0, z) = p_{\ell}^{k,s}(d_0 - r.z) + \left(2r(s-\ell+1)d_0 + 2r^2\binom{s-\ell+1}{2} + (s-\ell+1)\left(\frac{r^3-r}{12}\right)z\right)p_{\ell+1}^{k,s}(d_0, z).$$

(I'm not quite sure if this calculation is exacled right, I need to do some checks for s = 2 and s = 3 to make sure). In particular,

$$p_{k+1}^{k+1,s} = \prod_{j=1}^{k+1} \left(2r(s-j)d_0 + 2r^2 \binom{s-j}{2} + (s-j)\left(\frac{r^3-r}{12}\right)z \right) = (2r)^{k+1}(k+1)!d_0^{k+1} + \text{lower degree terms in } d_0.$$

There is a bijection

$$\begin{array}{cccc} \{(\lambda,i) \mid \lambda \vdash n, 1 \leq i \leq \ell(\lambda)\} & \leftrightarrow & \{(\mu,(r^s)) \mid r^s = \emptyset, |\mu| + rs = n\} \\ & (\lambda,i) & \longrightarrow & (\lambda - (\lambda_i^{s_i}), (\lambda_i^{s_i})) \\ & (\mu \cup (r^s), j) & \longleftarrow & (\mu,(r^s)) \end{array} \qquad PICTURE$$

where $\lambda - (\lambda_i^{s_i})$ is the partition obtained by removing all rows of length λ_i which are in rows with number $\geq i$, s_i is the number of $j \geq i$ such that $\lambda_j = \lambda_i$ and j - 1 is the row number of the largest part $\leq r$ in the partition μ .

This bijection proves the identity

$$\sum_{\lambda \vdash n} \ell(\lambda) \sum_{\substack{(r^s) \neq \emptyset \\ n - rs \ge 0}} p(n - rs),$$

where p(k) is the number of partitions with k boxes.

Lemma 1.3. If k < n and $d_0 - h$ divides the determinant $\det(M_{+k})$ then $(d_0 - h)^{p(n-k)}$ divides the determinant $\det(M_{+n})$.

Lemma 1.4. $C_{rs}(h,c)$ divides the determinant det (M_{+rs}) .

Proof. First proof:

Second proof: Define a Vir action on the space of semi-infinite forms

$$\mathcal{H}(\alpha,\beta) = \operatorname{span}\{\dots \wedge f_{i_k} \wedge \dots \wedge f_{i_1} \mid \text{with } i_1 < i_2 < \dots \text{ and } i_k = -k \text{ for } k \text{ large}\},$$

by setting

$$d_n(f_j) = (j + \beta - (1 - n)\alpha)f_{j-n}$$

Then, for appropriate choice of α and β , the Vir module $\mathcal{H}(\alpha, \beta)$ becomes a highest weight module of highest weight (h, c). One can construct a number of highest weight vectors in $\mathcal{H}(\alpha, \beta)$, see ???.

1.3 Blocks

Given (h, c) the equation

$$\mu + \frac{1}{\mu} = \frac{13 - c}{6} \qquad \text{determines} \qquad \{\mu, 1/\mu\},$$

and for each choice of μ in this set,

$$y^2 = 4\mu \left(\frac{1-c}{24} - h\right)$$
 determines $\{y, -y\}$

giving 4 lines

$$s = \mu r + y,$$
 $s = \mu r - y,$ $s = \frac{1}{\mu}r - \frac{1}{\mu}y,$ $s = \frac{1}{\mu}r + \frac{1}{\mu}y.$

Conversely, given (μ, y) then

$$\frac{13-c}{6} = \mu + \frac{1}{\mu} \qquad \text{determines} \qquad c,$$

and

$$h = \frac{-y^2}{4\mu} + \frac{1-c}{24}$$
 determines h .

Define

$$\begin{aligned} C_{rs}(h,c) &= \frac{1}{4^2} (s - \mu r + y)(s - \mu r - y)(s - \frac{1}{\mu}r - \frac{1}{\mu}y)(s - \frac{1}{\mu}r + \frac{1}{\mu}y) \\ &= \frac{1}{4^2} ((s - \mu r)^2 - y^2)((s - \frac{1}{\mu}r)^2 - \frac{y^2}{\mu^2}) \\ &= \left((s - \mu r)\frac{(\frac{1}{\mu}s - r)}{4} - \frac{y^2}{4\mu} \right) \left((s - \frac{1}{\mu}r)\frac{(\mu s - r)}{4} - \frac{y^2}{4\mu} \right) \\ &= \left(\frac{\mu r^2 - 2rs + \frac{1}{\mu}s^2}{4} - \frac{y^2}{4\mu} \right) \left(\frac{\mu r^2 - 2rs + \mu s^2}{4} - \frac{y^2}{4\mu} \right) \\ &= \left(\frac{1}{4} (\mu r^2 + \frac{1}{\mu}s^2) - \frac{rs}{2} + h - \frac{1 - c}{24} \right) \left(\frac{1}{4} (\frac{1}{\mu}r^2 + \mu s^2) - \frac{rs}{2} + h - \frac{1 - c}{24} \right) \end{aligned}$$

 \mathbf{If}

$$x = \frac{1}{2}\sqrt{\frac{25-c}{1-c}}$$

then

$$(x - \frac{1}{2})(x + \frac{1}{2}) = x^2 - \frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{4}\left(\frac{25 - c}{1 - c}\right) - \frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{4}\left(\frac{25 - c - 1 + c}{1 - c}\right)$$
$$= \frac{1}{4}\left(\frac{24}{1 - c}\right) = \frac{6}{1 - c}$$

so that

$$\frac{1-c}{6} = \frac{1}{(x-\frac{1}{2})(x+\frac{1}{2})} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{13-c}{6} = 2 + \frac{1-c}{6} = 2 + \frac{1}{(x-\frac{1}{2})(x+\frac{1}{2})}.$$

Then the solutions to $\mu + 1/\mu = (13 - c)/6$ are

$$\mu = \frac{x + \frac{1}{2}}{x - \frac{1}{2}}$$
 and $\frac{1}{\mu} = \frac{x - \frac{1}{2}}{x + \frac{1}{2}}$,

since

$$\frac{x+\frac{1}{2}}{x-\frac{1}{2}} + \frac{x-\frac{1}{2}}{x+\frac{1}{2}} = \frac{x^2-x+\frac{1}{4}+x^2+x+\frac{1}{4}}{(x-\frac{1}{2})(x+\frac{1}{2})} = \frac{2x^2+\frac{1}{2}}{x^2-\frac{1}{4}} = \frac{2x^2-\frac{1}{2}+1}{x^2-\frac{1}{4}} = 2 + \frac{1}{(x-\frac{1}{2})(x+\frac{1}{2})}.$$

Then

$$\begin{split} \frac{1-c}{24} &- \frac{1}{4} \left(\mu r^2 + \frac{1}{\mu} s^2 \right) + \frac{rs}{2} \\ &= \frac{1-c}{24} - \frac{1}{4} \left(\frac{x + \frac{1}{2}}{x - \frac{1}{2}} r^2 + \frac{x - \frac{1}{2}}{x + \frac{1}{2}} s^2 \right) + \frac{rs}{2} \\ &= \frac{1-c}{24} - \frac{1}{4} \left(\frac{(x^2 + x + \frac{1}{4})r^2 + (x^2 - x + \frac{1}{4})s^2}{(x - \frac{1}{2})(x + \frac{1}{2})} \right) + \frac{rs}{2} \\ &= \frac{1-c}{24} - \frac{1}{4} \left(\frac{2x^2 + \frac{1}{2}}{(x - \frac{1}{2})(x + \frac{1}{2})} (r^2 + s^2) + \frac{x}{(x - \frac{1}{2})(x + \frac{1}{2})} (r^2 - s^2) \right) + \frac{rs}{2} \\ &= \frac{1-c}{24} - \frac{1}{4} \left(\left(\frac{13-c}{6} \right) (r^2 + s^2) + \frac{1}{2} \sqrt{\frac{25-c}{1-c}} \left(\frac{1-c}{6} \right) (r^2 - s^2) \right) + \frac{rs}{2} \\ &= \frac{1-c}{24} - \frac{1}{4} \left(\left(\frac{13-c}{6} \right) (r^2 + s^2) + \frac{1}{12} \sqrt{(25-c)(1-c)} (r^2 - s^2) \right) + \frac{rs}{2} \end{split}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1-c}{24} &-\frac{1}{4} \left(\mu r^2 + \frac{1}{\mu} s^2 \right) + \frac{rs}{2} \\ &= \frac{1-c}{24} - \frac{1}{4} \frac{(s-\mu r)^2}{\mu} \\ &= \frac{1-c}{24} - \frac{1}{4} \left(s - \frac{x+\frac{1}{2}}{x-\frac{1}{2}} r \right)^2 \frac{x-\frac{1}{2}}{x+\frac{1}{2}} \\ &= \frac{1}{4} \left(\frac{1}{(x-\frac{1}{2})(x+\frac{1}{2})} - \frac{((x-\frac{1}{2})s - (x+\frac{1}{2})r)^2}{(x-\frac{1}{2})(x+\frac{1}{2})} \right) \\ &= \frac{((x+\frac{1}{2})r - (x-\frac{1}{2})s)^2 - 1}{-4(x-\frac{1}{2})(x+\frac{1}{2})} \end{aligned}$$

Now put $m + \frac{5}{2} = x$ so that $x + \frac{1}{2} = m + 3$ and $x - \frac{1}{2} = m + 2$.

Theorem 1.5.

$$\det(A_{-n}) = \prod_{1 \le r \le s \le n} \left((2r)^s s! \right)^{p(n-rs) - p(n-r(s+1))} \prod_{\substack{r, s \in \mathbb{Z}_{\ge 0} \\ rs \le n}} (h - h_{rs})^{p(n-rs)},$$

where

$$h_{rs} = \frac{1}{48} \Big((13-c)(r^2+s^2) + \sqrt{(c-1)(c-25)}(r^2-s^2) - 24rs - 2 + 2c).$$

Then

$$C_{r,s}(h,c) = \begin{cases} (h - h_{rs})(h - h_{sr}), & \text{if } r \neq s, \\ h - h_{rr}, & \text{if } r = s. \end{cases}$$

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