

Multimodal analysis of expressive gesture in music and dance performances

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Abstract. This paper presents ongoing research on the modelling of expressive gesture in multimodal interaction and on the development of multimodal interactive systems explicitly taking into account the role of non-verbal expressive gesture in the communication process. In this perspective, a particular focus is on dance and music as first-class conveyors of expressive and emotional content. Research outputs include (i) computational models of expressive gesture, (ii) validation by means of continuous ratings on spectators exposed to real artistic stimuli, and (iii) novel hardware and software components for the EyeWeb open platform (www.eyeweb.it), such as the recently developed Expressive Gesture Processing Library. The paper starts with a definition of expressive gesture. A unifying framework for the analysis of expressive gesture is then proposed. Finally, two experiments on expressive gesture in dance and music are discussed. This research work has been supported by the EU IST project MEGA (Multisensory Expressive Gesture Applications, www.mega-project.org) and the EU MOSART TMR Network.

1. Introduction

Expressive gesture is a key concept in our research (Casurri et al., 2001). This paper tries to face it and introduces two experiments aiming at understanding the non-verbal mechanisms of expressive/emotional communication.

Several definitions of gesture exist in the literature. The most common use of the term is with respect to natural gesture, which is defined as a support to verbal communication. For Cassel and colleagues (1990) "A natural gesture means the types of gestures spontaneously generated by a person telling a story, speaking in public, or holding a conversation". McNeill (1992) in his well-known taxonomy divides the natural gestures generated during a discourse in four different categories: iconic, metaphoric, deictic, and beats. In a wider perspective Kurtzboch and Hulstijn (1990) define gesture as "a movement of the body that conveys information". A survey and a discussion of existing definitions of gesture can be found in (Cadoré and Wanderley, 2000).

In artistic contexts and in particular in the field of performing arts, gesture is often not intended to denote things or to support speech as in the traditional framework of natural gesture, but the information it contains and conveys is related to the

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Table of Contents Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In

1. Understanding the eBook Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In User Reviews and Ratings
 - Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In Free and Paid eBooks
 - Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In Public Domain eBooks
 - Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In eBook Subscription Services
 - Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In Budget-Friendly Options

6. Navigating Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In eBook Formats
 - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In Compatibility with Devices
 - Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Interactive Elements Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
8. Staying Engaged with Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Setting Reading Goals Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Chapter 4 Multimodal Analysis Of Expressive Gesture In
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements

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