

Optical Interferometry and Mira Variable Stars

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Abstract

This thesis describes the development of a red tip/tilt and fringe detection system at the Sydney University Stellar Interferometer (SUSI), modelling the instrumental performance and effects of seeing at SUSI, making observations of Mira variable stars and finally modelling the atmospheres of Mira variables with physically self-consistent models. The new SUSI tip/tilt system is based around a CCD detector and has been successfully used to both track the majority of tip/tilt power in median seeing at an R magnitude of 4.5, and to provide seeing measures for post processing. The new fringe-detection system rapidly scans 33 to 140 μm in delay and detects the fringes using two avalanche-photodiodes. It has been used to acquire fringe data, provide user feedback and to track the fringe group-delay position. The system visibility (fringe visibility for a point source) and throughput were found to be consistent with models of the SUSI optical beam train. Observations were made of a variety of sources, including the Mira variables R Car and RR Sco, which were observed in two orthogonal polarization states. These measurements were the first successful use of Optical Interferometric Polarimetry (OIP), and enabled scattered light to be separated from bright photospheric flux. Dust scattering was found to originate from a thin shell 2-3 continuum radii from these stars, with an optical depth of 0.1 to 0.2 at 900 nm. Physical model of Mira variables including dust formation were developed, providing consistent explanations for these results as well as many other photometric and interferometric observations.

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Declaration of Originality

This work describes work carried out in the Astronomy group at the University of Sydney, between July 2002 and September 2005. Except where otherwise acknowledged, the work presented in this thesis is my own. Note that in the Chapters on SUSI hardware (Chapters 2 to 4) most of the initial design, purchase and initial of optics had been done by others (John Chow, John Davis, John O'Byrne). Bodie Seneta had done some preliminary work on interfacing a basic linux graphical user interface to the tip/tilt camera. My primary involvement was characterising the optical components and interfacing them with the electronic and computer hardware. Important changes to the initial optical configuration are outlined explicitly. Significant contributions from other people in Chapters 9, 10 and 11 are outlined at the beginning of those chapters.

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Publications

Chapters 7, 9, 10, 11 and Appendix B (partially based on previous work) are all almost exact reproductions of papers published in or submitted to refereed journals:

- Ireland, M. J., Scholz, M., Tuthill, P. G., and Wood, P. R., December 2004, Pulsation of M-type Mira variables with moderately different mass: search for observable mass effects, *MNRAS*, **355**, 444–450.
- Ireland, M. J., Scholz, M., and Wood, P. R., July 2004, On the observability of geometric pulsation of M-type Mira variables, *MNRAS*, **352**, 318–324.
- Ireland, M. J., Tuthill, P. G., Bedding, T. R., Robertson, J. G., and Jacob, A. P., May 2004, Multiwavelength diameters of nearby Miras and semiregular variables, *MNRAS*, **350**, 365–374.
- Ireland, M. J., Tuthill, P. G., Davis, J., and Tango, W., July 2005, Dust scattering in the Miras R Car and RR Sco resolved by optical interferometric polarimetry, *MNRAS*, **361**, 337–344.
- Ireland, M. J., and Scholz, M., 2005, Observable Effects of Dust Formation in Dynamic Atmospheres of M-type Mira Variables, *MNRAS*, submitted

In addition, the following publications in conference proceedings partially resulted from work done in this thesis:

- Ireland, M., Tuthill, P., Robertson, G., Bedding, T., Jacob, A., Monnier, J., and Danchi, W., 2004, Interferometry of pulsating red giants from 0.65 to 3.5 microns, in *ASP Conf. Ser. 310: IAU Colloq. 193: Variable Stars in the Local Group*, p. 327.
- Peter G. Tuthill, John Davis, Michael Ireland, Julian North, John O’Byrne, J. Gordon Robertson, William J. Tango, 2004, SUSI: recent technology and science, in *Proceedings of the SPIE Vol 5491*, ed W. Traub, 499

Contents

1	Introduction to Optical Interferometry	1
1.1	Interferometric Observables	1
1.1.1	Fringe Visibility	2
1.1.2	The Van Cittert-Zernike Theorem	4
1.1.3	Observables with Atmospheric and Random Noise	4
1.2	Kolmogorov Turbulence and Interferometry	5
1.3	The Sydney University Stellar Interferometer	7
2	Tip/tilt using a CCD camera	11
2.1	System Overview	11
2.2	Beam injection optics	13
2.3	Centroid estimation using a CCD	15
2.3.1	CCD Readout Issues	15
2.3.2	Centroiding Algorithms	17
2.3.3	Optimising Signal-to-Noise	19
2.4	Servo loop	20
2.4.1	Tip/Tilt Mirror and Amplifier Model	20
2.4.2	Proportional, Integrating, Differentiating (PID) Servo	21
2.5	Software Implementation	22
2.6	System Performance	27
2.6.1	Internal Tests	27
2.6.2	Performance on the sky	28
3	Fringe Detection and Tracking	31
3.1	Red Table Hardware	31
3.1.1	Optics	31
3.1.2	Scanning Mirror	34
3.1.3	Detectors and Electronics	35
3.2	Fringe Detection	36
3.2.1	Fringe Power Detection and De-Modulation	36
3.2.2	Calculated Visibilities	40
3.3	Fringe Tracking Servo Loop	41
3.4	Software Implementation	43
3.5	System Performance	46

4	Optical Aberrations and Modelling	49
4.1	Light Propagation Calculations	50
4.2	Large Beam-Reducing Telescope Aberrations	52
4.2.1	Measurements using four parallel pencil-beams	52
4.2.2	Measurements using a Twyman-Green Interferometer	57
4.3	Other Focusing Mirrors	60
4.4	Reflectivity and Scattering Measurements	62
4.5	Expected System Performance	66
4.5.1	Expected Throughput	66
4.5.2	Effects of Aberrations and Seeing	68
4.6	Actual system performance	72
4.7	Possible Improvements	73
5	Visibility Calibration and Data Analysis	75
5.1	Basic Algorithms	75
5.1.1	Definitions and Symbols	75
5.1.2	Fringe Position Estimators	76
5.1.3	V^2 Estimators	77
5.1.4	The Effect of a Non-Zero Bandwidth	79
5.1.5	t_0 and Other Seeing Estimators	80
5.1.6	Performance on Simulated Data	81
5.2	Seeing Corrections	82
5.2.1	Visibility Variance Correction	83
5.2.2	Scintillation Correction	86
5.2.3	Multi-parameter Seeing Correction	89
5.3	Example Data	92
5.3.1	l Car	92
5.3.2	α Vir	94
6	Introduction to Miras	99
6.1	Post-Main Sequence Evolution of Low Mass Stars	99
6.2	Large-Amplitude Pulsation	101
6.3	Dust Formation and Mass Loss	102
6.4	Observable Properties of Mira Variables	102
6.5	Important Unanswered Questions	103
7	Dust Scattering in Miras R Car and RR Sco	105
7.1	Introduction	106
7.2	Observations	108
7.3	Results and Model fitting	111
7.4	Discussion	116
7.5	Conclusion	119

8	Mira Models	121
8.1	FORTRAN Code History and Modeling Assumptions	121
8.1.1	The Wood Pulsation Code	121
8.1.2	The Schmid-Burgk/Scholz/Tsuji Radiative Transfer Code . . .	125
8.1.3	The Scholz/Takeda/Brett Spectrum and CLV Computation Code	126
8.2	IDL Spectrum and CLV Computation Code	127
8.3	The TiO-band depth problem	130
8.3.1	General Comments about Model Extension	132
8.3.2	Equation of State Effects	133
8.3.3	Effects of the JOLA	133
8.3.4	Non-LTE effects	136
9	Geometric Pulsation of Mira Variables	139
9.1	Introduction	140
9.2	Models	141
9.3	Light curves	143
9.4	Optical-depth diameters	146
9.5	Interferometric diameters	148
9.6	Conclusion	154
10	Mira Variables with Different Mass	157
10.1	Introduction	158
10.2	Models	159
10.3	Light curves	163
10.4	Interferometric Diameters	167
10.5	Discussion	170
10.6	Conclusions	172
11	Dust Formation in Mira Variables	173
11.1	Introduction	174
11.2	Simple Dust Models	175
11.3	Modelling Details and Results	178
11.4	Observable Dust Effects	182
11.5	Conclusion	187
12	Conclusions	189
A	Light Propagation	193
B	Multi-wavelength Diameters of Miras	195
B.1	Introduction	196
B.2	Observations and Data Reduction	196
B.2.1	Coherent Averaging	199
B.3	Results and Discussion	200
B.3.1	Rejection of Uniform Disk Model	200

B.3.2	Wavelength Dependent Diameters	203
B.3.3	Asymmetrical Targets	213
B.4	Conclusion	216

List of Figures

1.1	Young’s double slit experiment.	2
1.2	A schematic pupil-plane interferometer.	3
1.3	SUSI optical layout	8
1.4	Red table optical layout.	9
2.1	The beam injection optics for the tip/tilt system.	13
2.2	The vertical ‘flip’ mirror	14
2.3	The pixel arrangement of the SITe 502A CCD	16
2.4	Modelled centroid estimation uncertainties	19
2.5	Modelled tip/tilt mirror motion	21
2.6	Modelled tip/tilt servo errors	22
2.7	The original tip/tilt GUI	23
2.8	The software and hardware components of the tip/tilt system.	25
2.9	The user interface for the <code>wobble2</code> tip/tilt server.	26
2.10	The new GUI for the tip/tilt system.	26
2.11	Residual image motion in servo tests	27
2.12	Tip/tilt power spectrum for stellar observations	29
3.1	Throughput of red table filters	33
3.2	Fringe envelope window function	39
3.3	Modelled fringe tracking servo error for $t_0 = 10$ ms	42
3.4	Same as Figure 3.3 for a t_0 of 5 ms.	43
3.5	The software and hardware components of the fringe detection and tracking system.	44
3.6	The user interface for the <code>fringecon</code> server.	45
3.7	The fringe detection GUI, showing the damped fringe envelope display for internal fringes.	45
3.8	Fringe tracking performance on τ Sco	47
4.1	The set-up for the large BRT pencil-beam experiment	54
4.2	Illustration of the measurement of laser pencil beam spots	54
4.3	The set-up for the large BRT Twyman-Green interferometer aberration experiment	59
4.4	An example set of Twyman-Green fringes from the large BRT aberration experiment	60
4.5	‘S’-shaped fringes from the small-BRTs	61

4.6	Images through the small BRT	62
4.7	Simulated ‘S’ shaped fringe and small BRT image	62
4.8	The setup for reflectivity and scattering measurements	63
4.9	The radial profile of very small angle scattered flux	64
4.10	Scattered laser light from one of the 80 mm mirrors	65
4.11	Simulated pupil illumination and images in autocollimation through the entire SUSI optical train.	70
4.12	Same as Figure 4.11 with a defocus introduced into at the large BRT	71
5.1	Smoothed fringe envelopes for observations of HR 5264	77
5.2	An integrated power spectrum for observations of HR 5264	78
5.3	Simulated square visibility plotted against normalised variance	83
5.4	Histograms of the difference between normalised variance calculated from Keck observations of CIT 6 and its calibrator	85
5.5	Calibrated Keck aperture-masking experiment with and without a seeing correction	86
5.6	η^2 as a function of normalised variance for SUSI data	87
5.7	l Car and calibrators without a seeing correction.	93
5.8	l Car and calibrators with a seeing correction.	93
5.9	Limb-darkened diameters for l Car plotted against pulsation phase.	94
5.10	Binned square object visibilities as a function of baseline for α Vir	95
6.1	Evolution of a solar mass star with solar metallicity	100
7.1	An example power spectrum	112
7.2	Fits to R Car and RR Sco visibilities in two polarizations	113
7.3	An example of the geometry for which the polarized intensity was calculated	114
7.4	An example mid-IR spectrum (solid line) for a 1100 K thin-shell model	118
8.1	An illustration of two different model paths in the (P, V) -plane taken by a gas parcel on reaching a shock front	123
8.2	The geometry used to calculate the radiative transfer for a ray trav- eling through the spherical atmosphere	128
8.3	Spectra for the M22 model calculated by four different methods	130
8.4	Spectra for the M22 model on a log scale calculated using three dif- ferent methods	131
8.5	Model luminosity for the M22 model as a function of radius	135
8.6	The ratio of model spectra for the M22 model to a spectrum of R Cha	136
9.1	Luminosity (top panel), radii of selected mass zones (middle) and the velocity of the 5th mass zone from the centre (bottom) of the P model series (see HSW98) showing the selected phase points.	142
9.2	Light curves for the model series in J and K bands, with observations overplotted	143
9.3	Light curves for the model series	146

9.4	Phase variation of filter radii in 7 near-continuum bandpasses	147
9.5	Fit diameters using a 1-point $V=0.3$ fitting procedure	148
9.6	Same as Figure 9.5, but with fit diameters using a 2-point $V=0.3$ and $V=0.1$ fitting procedure.	149
9.7	Same as Figure 9.5, but with fit diameters using a least squares fitting procedure.	150
9.8	A comparison of our COAST-type broad-bandpass fit diameters with ideal narrow-bandpass fit diameters	151
9.9	A comparison of COAST-type bandpass diameters measured for R Leo to model predictions	152
10.1	Luminosity, radii of selected mass zones and the velocity of the 5th mass zone for the M model series	160
10.2	Luminosity for many cycles of the M model series and P model series	161
10.3	Light curves for the P and M model series in J and K bands	165
10.4	Light curves for the P and M model series in the L band	165
10.5	Radii from single-point $V=0.3$ uniform disk fits to the M model series in 7 near-continuum bandpasses	167
10.6	Radii from single-point $V=0.3$ uniform disk fits to both the P and M model series in the 905 nm bandpass	168
10.7	Radii of single-point $V=0.3$ uniform disk fits as in Figure 10.6 for the K bandpass	168
10.8	Height of the first maxima in the visibility curve for the J band for both the P and M series, which is a measure of the limb-darkening in this bandpass.	169
11.1	Model dust formation radii plotted against phase	180
11.2	Gas temperature for the M22 model with different dust types	181
11.3	Total optical depths at 1.04 μm as a function of phase for the four dust types.	182
11.4	Model spectra for B dust between 8 and 13 microns for different M series models	185
11.5	Visibility data used in Weiner et al. (2003), with one-parameter model fits	186
B.1	A square-visibility curve for R Leo in a single wavelength channel	201
B.2	L_2 Pup at 820 nm	202
B.3	R Dor at 847 nm	203
B.4	FWHM of best-fitting Gaussian disk model as a function of observing wavelength for γ Cru	204
B.5	Same as Figure B.4, but for σ Cet	205
B.6	Same as Figure B.4, but for R Hya	206
B.7	Same as Figure B.4, but for R Car.	207
B.8	Same as Figure B.4, but for R Leo	208
B.9	Same as Figure B.8, but for a hole mask	208
B.10	Same as Figure B.4, but for R Dor	209

B.11 Same as Figure B.4, but for W Hya	210
B.12 Same as Figure B.4, but for L ₂ Pup	211
B.13 Linear size vs. wavelength for all stars in the sample	212
B.14 MEM reconstructed brightness profiles of R Dor at a position angle of 175°	212
B.15 The same as Figure B.14, but at a position angle of 260°.	213
B.16 The ratio of point source to disk flux for the model of R Dor described in the text	214
B.17 MEM reconstructed brightness profiles of R Leo at a position angle of 276°	215
B.18 MEM reconstructed brightness profiles of L ₂ Pup at a position angle of 178°	215

Common Acronyms and Symbols

I_1, I_2	Total intensities of two beams
c_x	x -axis centroid
T_s	Sweep (scan) time
t_s	Sample time
\mathbf{B}	Baseline vector
$\boldsymbol{\alpha}$	Image-plane vector
\mathbf{u}	Spatial-frequency vector
r_0	Fried's coherence length
t_0	Atmospheric coherence time
λ	Wavelength
V	Fringe visibility
Q	Object visibility
η	System visibility
I_λ	Monochromatic specific intensity
J_λ	Mean intensity
H_λ	Eddington Flux
M_\odot	Solar mass
CGS	Centimetre-Gram-Second units
RMS	Root Mean Square
FWHM	Full-Width Half-Maximum
Var()	Variance
BRT	Beam-Reducing Telescope
LDC	Longitudinal Dispersion Corrector
OPLC	Optical Path Length Compensator
CCD	Charge-Coupled Device
APD	Avalanche Photo-Diode
SUSI	Sydney University Stellar Interferometer
NSII	Narrabri Stellar Intensity Interferometer
OS	Opacity Sampling
OPDF	Opacity Distribution Function
JOLA	Just-Overlapping Line Approximation

