

# Light-ray operators and detector algebra

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**SAGEX**

Scattering Amplitudes:  
from Geometry to Experiment



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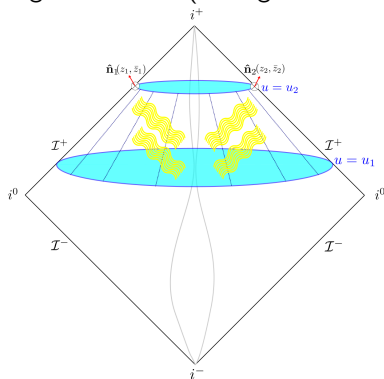
- 1 Introduction to the problem: Motivation and examples
- 2 Light-ray operators and detectors
- 3 Conclusion

# Why light-ray operators?

- Interesting **non-local operators** which arise naturally by integrating Einstein equations at null infinity along the light-cone time ("charge densities")

# Why light-ray operators?

- Interesting **non-local operators** which arise naturally by integrating Einstein equations at null infinity along the light-cone time ("charge densities")
- Phenomenologically relevant for gravitational physics: similarly to jets in QCD physics, one can define a notion of **localized detector**, which is collecting quanta of radiation in a direction  $\hat{n}$



# Definition of light-ray operators in QFT

We interpret physically the insertion of our light-ray operators as an **insertion of a physical detector** on the boundary of Minkowski space and we consider only **hard modes contributions**.

In **flat-null coordinates**, our family of light-ray operators is defined by

$$\mathcal{E}(\hat{n}) = \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} du \lim_{r \rightarrow \infty} r^2 T_{uu}(u, r, z_{\hat{n}}, \bar{z}_{\hat{n}}),$$

$$\mathcal{K}(\hat{n}) = \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} du u \lim_{r \rightarrow \infty} r^2 T_{uu}(u, r, z_{\hat{n}}, \bar{z}_{\hat{n}}),$$

$$\mathcal{N}_z(\hat{n}) = \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} du \lim_{r \rightarrow \infty} r^2 T_{uz}(u, r, z_{\hat{n}}, \bar{z}_{\hat{n}}),$$

$$\mathcal{N}_{\bar{z}}(\hat{n}) = \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} du \lim_{r \rightarrow \infty} r^2 T_{u\bar{z}}(u, r, z_{\hat{n}}, \bar{z}_{\hat{n}}).$$

We will collectively denote these operators by  $L(\hat{n}) = \{\mathcal{E}(\hat{n}), \mathcal{K}(\hat{n}), \mathcal{N}_z(\hat{n}), \mathcal{N}_{\bar{z}}(\hat{n})\}$ .

# Saddle-point evaluation of detector light-ray operators

- Use the Hilbert stress tensor

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- Evaluate the light-ray operators by taking the **saddle point estimate** of the **mode expansion** of **on-shell quantum fields**, which is justified at large  $r$ . Using

$$x^\mu = \frac{r}{2} \left( 1 + z\bar{z} + \frac{u}{r}, z + \bar{z}, -i(z - \bar{z}), 1 - z\bar{z} - \frac{u}{r} \right),$$
$$p^\mu = \frac{\omega_p}{2} (1 + w\bar{w}, w + \bar{w}, -i(w - \bar{w}), 1 - w\bar{w}).$$

we have

$$ip \cdot x = -i\frac{\omega_p u}{2} - i\frac{\omega_p r}{2} |z - w|^2 \rightarrow \text{localize at } (z, \bar{z}) = (w, \bar{w})$$

# Scalar light-ray detector operators (1)

In the simplest case of a **self-interacting massless real scalar without derivative interactions**

$$T_{uu}^{\text{scalar}}(x) = (\partial_u \phi)(\partial_u \phi), \quad T_{uz}^{\text{scalar}}(x) = (\partial_u \phi)(\partial_z \phi), \quad T_{u\bar{z}}^{\text{scalar}}(x) = (\partial_u \phi)(\partial_{\bar{z}} \phi).$$



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where

$$\phi(u, \hat{n}) = \frac{i}{(8\pi^2)r} \int_0^{+\infty} d\omega_p \left[ b(\omega_p, z_{\hat{n}}, \bar{z}_{\hat{n}}) e^{i\frac{\omega_p u}{2}} - b^\dagger(\omega_p, z_{\hat{n}}, \bar{z}_{\hat{n}}) e^{-i\frac{\omega_p u}{2}} \right],$$
$$\partial_z \phi(u, \hat{n}) = \frac{i}{(8\pi^2)r} \int_0^{+\infty} d\omega_p \left[ \partial_{z_{\hat{n}}} b(\omega_p, z_{\hat{n}}, \bar{z}_{\hat{n}}) e^{i\frac{\omega_p u}{2}} - \partial_{z_{\hat{n}}} b^\dagger(\omega_p, z_{\hat{n}}, \bar{z}_{\hat{n}}) e^{-i\frac{\omega_p u}{2}} \right].$$

# Scalar light-ray detector operators (2)

- The explicit structure of the scalar light-ray operators is

$$\mathcal{E}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}) = \int \widetilde{d^3p} \omega_p : b^\dagger(\omega_p \hat{n}) b(\omega_p \hat{n}) : \delta^2(z_{\hat{n}} - z_{\hat{p}}),$$

$$\mathcal{K}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}) = (-i) \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} \frac{d\omega_-}{2(2\pi)^3} \delta^{(1)}(\omega_-) \int_{\max\{-\omega_-, \omega_-\}}^{+\infty} d\omega_+ ((\omega_+)^2 - (\omega_-)^2) \\ \times : \left[ b^\dagger((\omega_+ + \omega_-)\hat{n}) b((\omega_+ - \omega_-)\hat{n}) + h.c. \right] :,$$

$$\mathcal{N}_{z,\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}) = i \int \widetilde{d^3p} \delta^2(z_{\hat{n}} - z_{\hat{p}}) : \left[ b^\dagger(\omega_p \hat{n}) \overset{\leftrightarrow}{\partial}_{z_{\hat{n}}} b(\omega_p \hat{n}) \right] : .$$

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- Note: the action of  $\mathcal{E}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n})$  on an [on-shell state](#) is

$$\mathcal{E}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}) |p_1 \dots p_n\rangle = \sum_{i=1}^n (\omega_i) \delta^2(z_{\hat{n}} - z_{\hat{p}_i}) |p_1 \dots p_n\rangle .$$

Connection with [energy event shapes](#)!

# Scalar light-ray detector algebra

The scalar light-ray algebra is

$$[\mathcal{E}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_1), \mathcal{E}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2)] = 0,$$

$$[\mathcal{K}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_1), \mathcal{K}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2)] = 0,$$

$$[\mathcal{K}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_1), \mathcal{E}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2)] = -2i\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})\mathcal{E}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2),$$

$$[\mathcal{N}_{z,\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_1), \mathcal{E}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2)] = -2i\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})\partial_z\mathcal{E}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2) \\ + 2i\partial_z\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})\mathcal{E}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2),$$

$$[\mathcal{N}_{z,\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_1), \mathcal{K}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2)] = -2i\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})\partial_z\mathcal{K}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2) \\ + 2i\partial_z\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})\mathcal{K}_{\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2),$$

$$[\mathcal{N}_{z,\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_1), \mathcal{N}_{\bar{z},\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2)] \\ = +2i\partial_{z_{\hat{n}_1}}\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})\mathcal{N}_{\bar{z},\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2) - 2i\partial_{\bar{z}_{\hat{n}_2}}\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})\mathcal{N}_{z,\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2) \\ - 2i\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})(\partial_{z_{\hat{n}_2}}\mathcal{N}_{\bar{z},\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2) - \partial_{\bar{z}_{\hat{n}_2}}\mathcal{N}_{z,\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2)).$$

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$$\begin{aligned} &[\mathcal{N}_{z,\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_1), \mathcal{N}_{\bar{z},\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2)] \\ &= +2i\partial_{z_{\hat{n}_1}}\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})\mathcal{N}_{\bar{z},\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2) - 2i\partial_{\bar{z}_{\hat{n}_2}}\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})\mathcal{N}_{z,\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2) \\ &\quad - 2i\delta^2(z_{\hat{n}_1} - z_{\hat{n}_2})(\partial_{z_{\hat{n}_2}}\mathcal{N}_{\bar{z},\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2) - \partial_{\bar{z}_{\hat{n}_2}}\mathcal{N}_{z,\text{scalar}}(\hat{n}_2)). \end{aligned}$$

Consistent with **complexified Cordova-Shao algebra**!

# Yang mills (spin 1) light-ray operators

The light-ray spin 1 family is given by

$$\mathcal{E}_{\text{gluon}}(\hat{n}) = \int \widetilde{d^3 p} \omega_p \delta^2(z_{\hat{n}} - z_{\hat{p}}) \sum_{\sigma=\pm} : [a_{\sigma}^{\dagger a}(\omega_p \hat{n}) a_{\sigma}^a(\omega_p \hat{n})] :,$$

$$\mathcal{K}_{\text{gluon}}(\hat{n}) = (-i) \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} \frac{d\omega_-}{2(2\pi)^3} \delta^{(1)}(\omega_-) \int_{\max\{-\omega_-, \omega_-\}}^{+\infty} d\omega_+ ((\omega_+)^2 - (\omega_-)^2) \\ \times \sum_{\sigma=\pm} : [a_{\sigma}^{\dagger a}((\omega_+ + \omega_-)\hat{n}) a_{\sigma}^a((\omega_+ - \omega_-)\hat{n})] :,$$

$$\mathcal{N}_{z, \text{gluon}}^{\text{orb}}(\hat{n}) = i \int \widetilde{d^3 p} \delta^2(z_{\hat{n}} - z_{\hat{p}}) \sum_{\sigma=\pm} : [a_{\sigma}^{\dagger a}(\omega_p \hat{n}) \overset{\leftrightarrow}{\partial}_{z_{\hat{n}}} a_{\sigma}^a(\omega_p \hat{n})] :,$$

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Consistent with the point particle structure of the stress tensor!

# Linearized gravity light-ray operators

The light-ray definition in linearized gravity comes from [Einstein equations solved near null infinity](#) and in the [PSZ convention](#) are

$$\mathcal{E}_{\text{GR}}(\hat{n}) = \int \widetilde{d^3p} \omega_p \delta^2(z_{\hat{n}} - z_{\hat{p}}) \sum_{\sigma=\pm} : \left[ a_{\sigma}^{\dagger}(\omega_p \hat{n}) a_{\sigma}(\omega_p \hat{n}) \right] :,$$

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[Curious fact](#): the [orbital-spin](#) algebra seems problematic!

# Summary

- By interpreting light-ray operators as **localized detectors**, we have provided explicit expressions for the **hard mode contributions** as operators acting on **on-shell particle states**
- The algebra we found is **consistent** with the **complexified Cordova-Shao algebra**, but more analysis is needed on the orbital-spin contribution
- We have defined **gravitational energy event shapes** from the saddle point estimate of the gravitational ANEC operator at infinity  $\mathcal{E}_{\text{GR}}(\hat{n})$