Improving Angular Deflection Sensitivity of a Torsion Pendulum by an Electrostatic Spring

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Abstract. An electrostatic torsion pendulum aiming at improving angular deflection sensitivity without increasing torque noise floor is presented. Theoretical analysis shows that this scheme could be used to relax requirement of angular deflection measurement, and is useful for gravitational experiments with much higher precision requirement.

1. Introduction

Torsion pendulum plays a paramount role in the field of precision measurement and gravitational experiments due to its high-precision sensitivity (ref. Hueller & al. (2002)). The basic detectable torque resolution is limited by the mechanical thermal noise and electrical or optical noise of the angular measurement system. For some high precision experiments, commercial angular deflection transducers could not satisfy basic requirement. An electrostatic torsion pendulum which can greatly increase angular deflection sensitivity without degrade original SNR is presented.

2. Electrostatic torsion pendulum and its potential sensitivity

The electrostatic pendulum is made up of the typical pendulum and two pairs of electrodes, as shown in Fig 1. The motion equation of the electrostatic torsion pendulum, which is set in a high vacuum chamber can be given by

$$I \ddot{\theta} + k_m (1 + i \phi) \theta = \tau_{th} + \tau_e + \tau_{e,n}.$$

where \(I\) is the inertial momentum, \(\theta\) is the motion angle of the test mass, \(k_m\) is the elastic coefficient of the fiber, \(\phi\) is the structure loss angle, \(\tau_{th}\) presents mechanical thermal noise, \(\tau_e\) and \(\tau_{e,n}\) represent the electrostatic torque and its fluctuation induced by the applied voltage noise on the electrodes, respectively.

The power spectrum of the minimum detectable response torque is given by

$$\tau_{min,e}^2 = \frac{4k_{th}Tk_{m}\phi}{\omega} + \theta_{eq}^2 \left[ (k_m - k_e - I_\omega \phi)^2 + (k_m \phi)^2 \right] + \tau_{e,n}^2,$$

where \(\theta_{eq}\) represents angular deflection measurement level. The coupling between of the additional electrostatic electrode and the pendulum contributes a negative stiffness \(k_e\) which will increase the angular deflection sensitivity. As a result, it can loose requirement of angular deflection measurement.
3. Example analysis

The torsion pendulum adopted by Washington University to study the charge effect of a proof mass (ref. Pollack & al. (2010)) is used as an example.

Assuming angular deflection measurement noise is $5 \times 10^{-8} (1 + 10^{-2/f})$ rad/Hz$^{1/2}$, the power spectrum density of the torsion pendulum system is shown in Figure 2. If the requirement of torque detection is $5 \times 10^{-15}$ Nm/Hz$^{1/2}$ above 0.1 mHz, the requirement of the angular deflection measurement can be relaxed about two orders, as shown in Figure 3.

4. Conclusion

The electrostatic spring can relax the requirement of the angular deflection measurement of a torsion pendulum, which is very important for the much higher precise torsion pendulum experiments, for instance, to investigate the residual disturbances of a proof mass for LISA and advanced LISA projects.

References

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