

a visual score

MUL395 Visual Projection for Music
Chris McLay - 29402811, Semester 1 2005

supervised by
Ingrid Richardson & Serge Tampalini



MURDOCH
UNIVERSITY
PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

what I am trying to do...

- * apply my knowledge and experience of projection in theatre to the presentation and performance of live instrumental music music. In particular:
- * highlighting the lack of a specific written text associated with musical performance, and as a consequence the lack of a specific text for the music's audience
- * experimenting with visual material that enhances the experience of the performance without disrupting the integrity of the music, or providing a dominant narrative for the audience

which means what?

- * listening to “good” music is a personal and emotional experience
- * the same piece of music means different things, and sets up different responses in individual listeners
- * presenting a visual accompaniment to a live performance can easily change and over-ride that personal experience
- * this project is an attempt to create a visual score which engages and enhances the listening experience without signifying anything specific for an individual listener

the problem

- * the problem with trying to signify nothing is that it is not actually possible...
- * all you can do is try to signify as little as possible
- * therefore how do we create a visual score from a piece of music, which relates to and engages with the music, but signifies as little as possible?
- * how do we create a visual score which does not interfere with the listener's personal experience of the music?

research & a way around

- * experiencing Steve Reich's "Pendulum Music" and reading about Benoit Mandelbrot's discovery of fractal imagery opened my mind to more process driven methods of creating "art", and opposed to the more inspirational and interpretative methods of which I am more familiar and comfortable

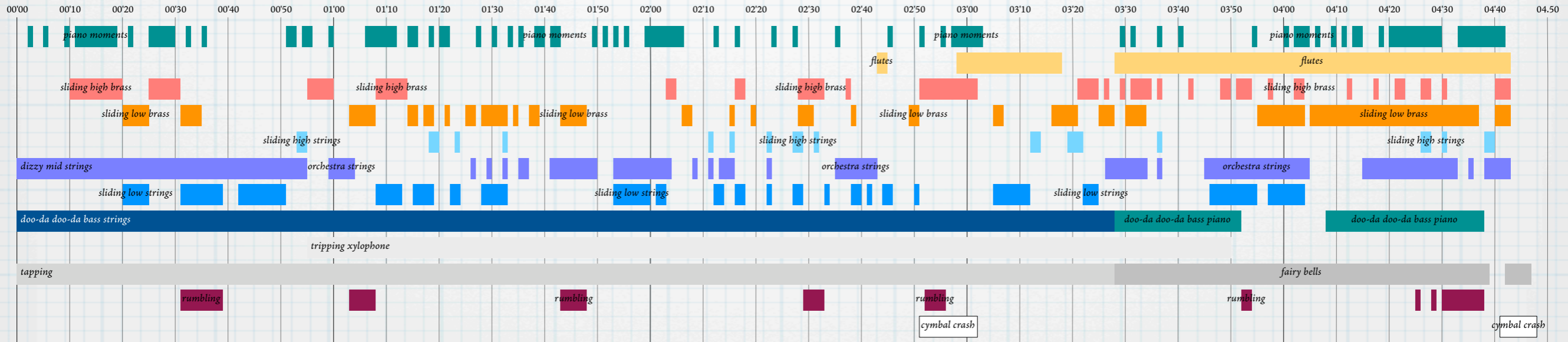
my process

1. break down the music into layers or themes
2. design a visual object or representation for each theme
3. decide how that object will respond to the music and interact with other objects
4. capture or render each object
5. compose, combine and animate all objects into a singular score

the music

- * **Replica, by Ryuichi Sakamoto**
- * **Performed by Ryuichi Sakamoto and The Orchestra, from the album Cinemage (1999)**

the layers



the first visual score

- * to test the accuracy of my layers score I watched it scroll past on my screen and listened to the music, using a red line to mark the time on my score
- * this very simple animation came very close to fulfilling my goals



Replica, by Ryuichi Sakamoto

why does this work?

- * after watching other people engage in the music through this visual I surmised the visual worked because viewers were:
 - * recognising the related visual and musical layers;
 - * anticipating the music by seeing what is coming up; and,
 - * experiencing a sense of progress through the music associated with watching the time scale go past.

how can I use this?

- * recognition was something I had hoped would happen and could reproduce in future
- * a sense of time passing and progress seems important and again something I could reproduce
- * the anticipation was not going to be so easy to recreate as visual objects would only come on when the associated music did
- * was this going to break my methodology already?

Replica, by Ryuichi Sakamoto

did it break?

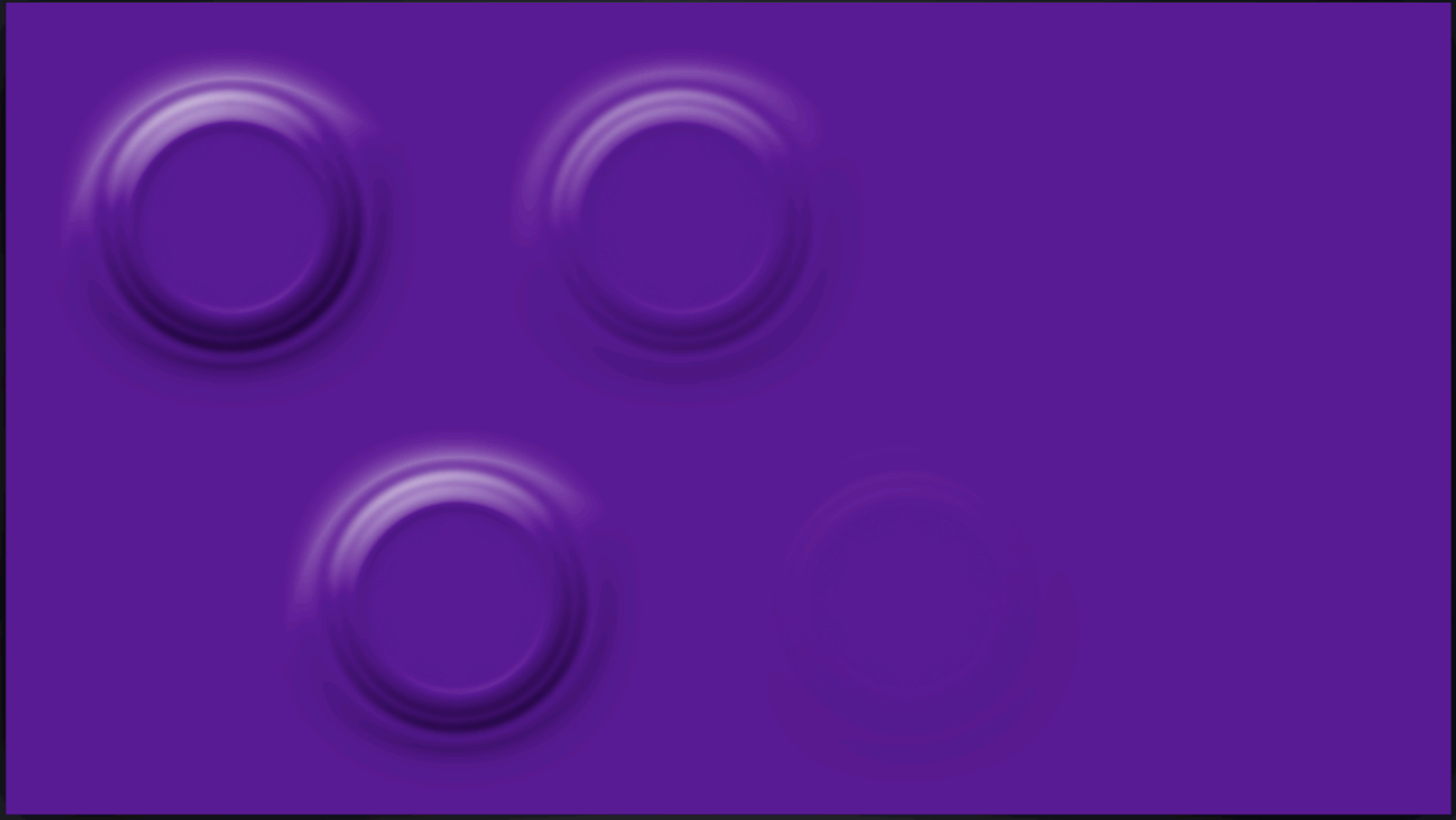
- * recognition is still present and in some ways better
- * a sense of time passing and progress is still present
- * the anticipation has been lost, but it does not appear to be critical to the success of the visual score
- * it could however be a useful technique for some objects

Layer Concepts Storyboard

MUL395 Visual Projection for Music
Chris McLay - 29402811, Semester 1 2005



MURDOCH
UNIVERSITY
PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

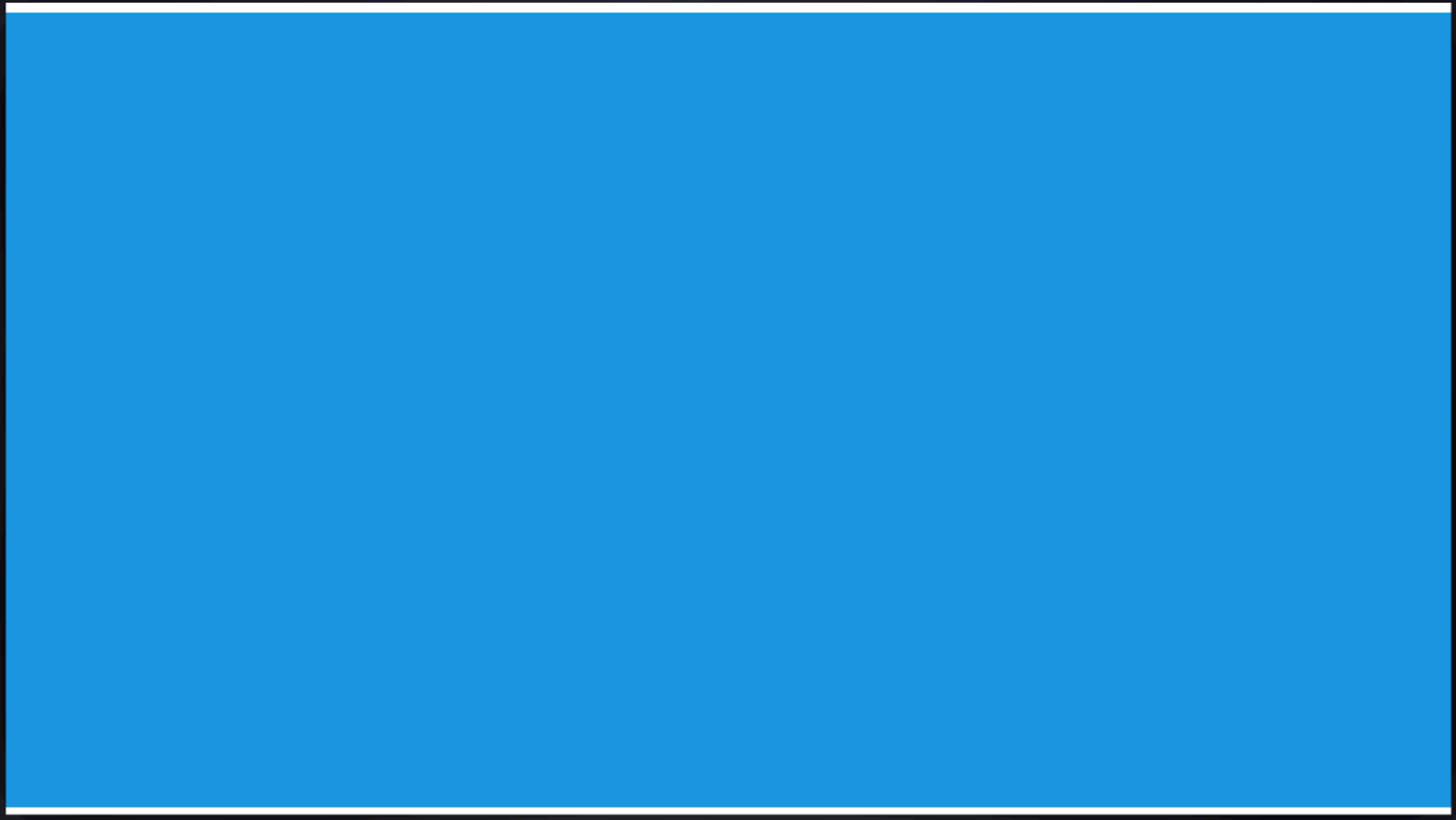


doo-da doo-da bass

Part

discs push up and fall away with each beat
background layer; discs push up higher with intensity

Time



<i>tapping</i>	Part
white lines top and bottom of screen flash for each tap	Time



dizzy strings

Part

three dizzily spinning balls
foreground layer; fly around the screen with variation in layer

Time



<i>piano moments</i>	Part
piano is incidental - I'd like to flash up photo's, but that is sort of against the idea - I think visuals would simply add to the noise for this one?	Time



<i>sliding high brass</i>	Part
travelling white line (right to left) constant speed; foreground layer; opacity varies with intensity	Time



sliding low brass

Part

warm orange glow from sides
middle ground layer; increases in size and opacity with intensity

Time

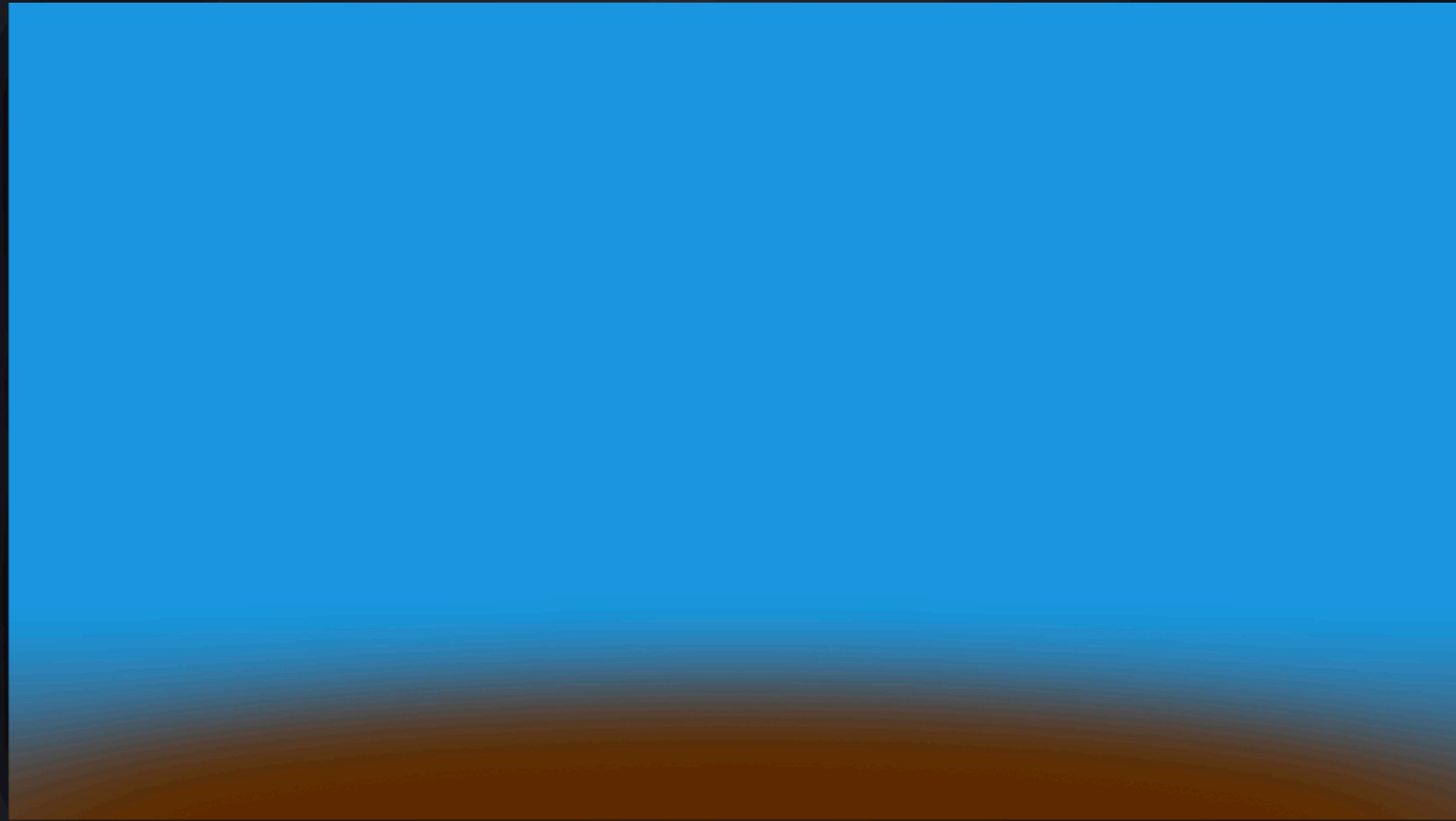


low strings

Part

darkness opening up screen
middle ground layer; opens wider with intensity and moves left to right with
variation

Time



rumbling

Part

brown/dark gradient, growing up from bottom
background layer; grows up with intensity

Time



sliding high strings

Part

lens flare with slow left to right travel
foreground layer; brightness increases with intensity

Time



tripping xylophone

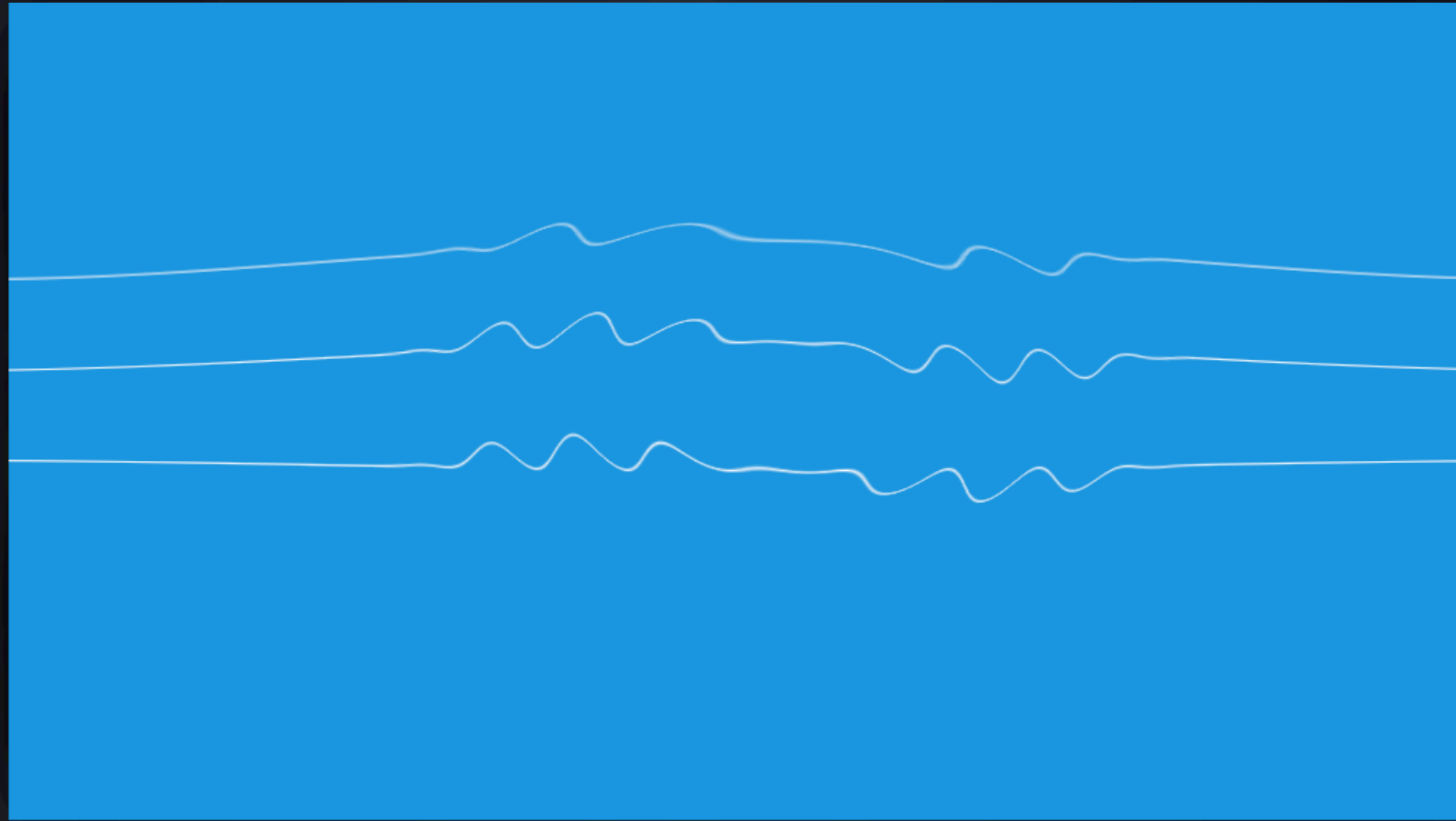
Part

leap frogging balls in time with the beats;
foreground layer; position improves with prominence

Time



<i>flutes</i>	Part
balls move up and down in time; foreground layer; number and prominence increase with intensity	Time



orchestra strings

Part

three strings travel across and ripple in the middle
Foreground layer; appears and increased rippling with intensity

Time

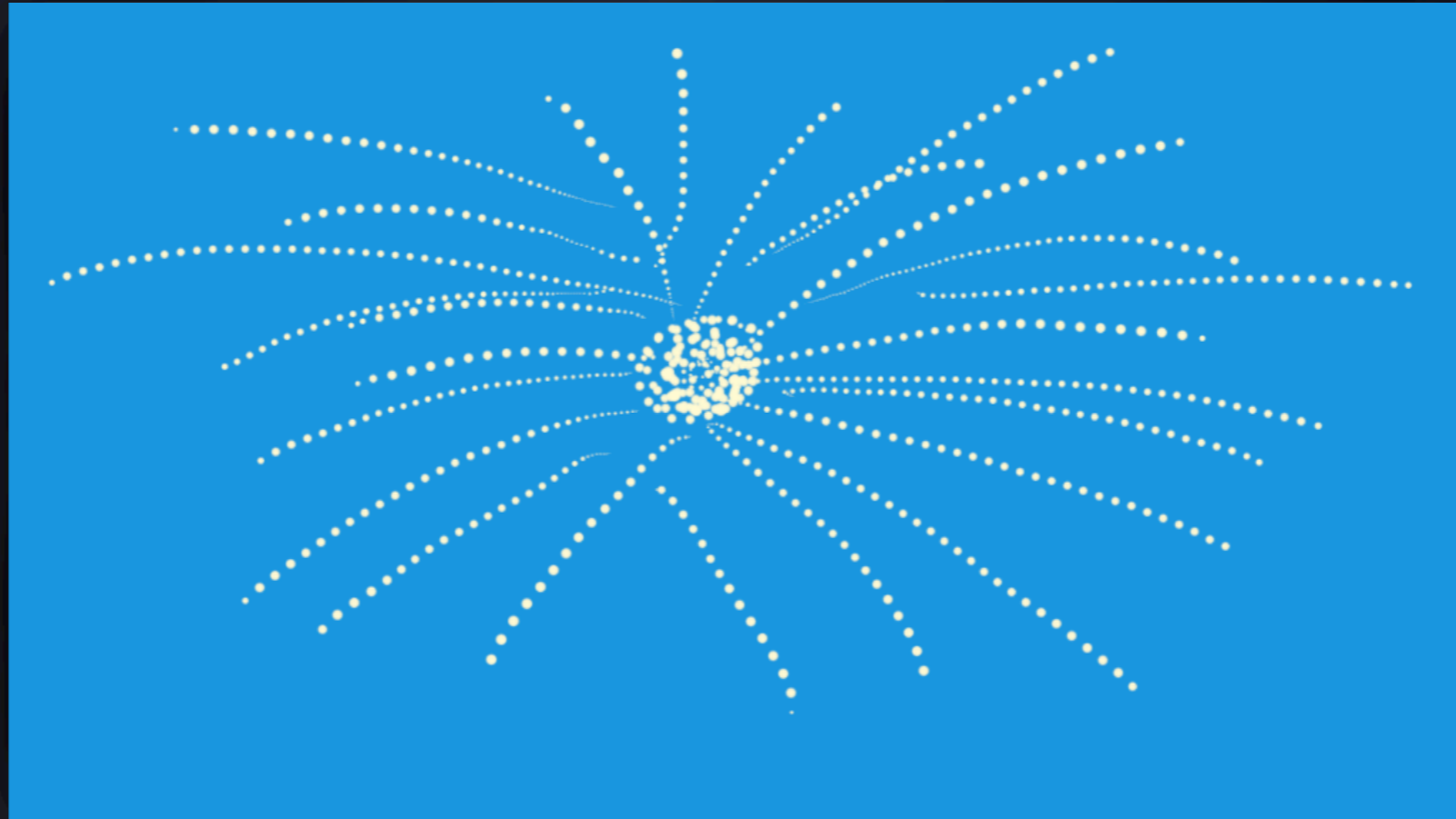


fairy bells

Part

trails of glowing "bells" that fall in time with the layer foreground layer; more or less bells fall with the intensity of the layer

Time



cymbal crash

Part

small glowing lights build up in the middle, and explode out on cue
foreground layer; builds more lights with intensity

Time

the visual score

* please make yourself comfortable...

what worked?

- * people recognise different parts and representations
- * it appears to makes people listen harder to the music
- * people appear to engage their attention more fully
- * doesn't give a narrative or add a meaning to the music
- * it appears to be difficult to recall specifics about the vision in relation to the musical score

what didn't work?

- * time to create the layers chart was ridiculous
- * the diversity of the layers can be very noisy and distracting
- * has a fairly "child like" feel to the visual score which does not go with the music

future thoughts

- * live performance would be great
 - * live audio triggers for different parts
 - * “playing” some parts through midi triggers
- * refine the visual score to be more unified; or
 - * define a more unified look or colour scheme before creating the visual objects for each layer?
- * more work on each object
 - * perhaps to develop a library of objects
- * research into other forms of music notation

thank you...

