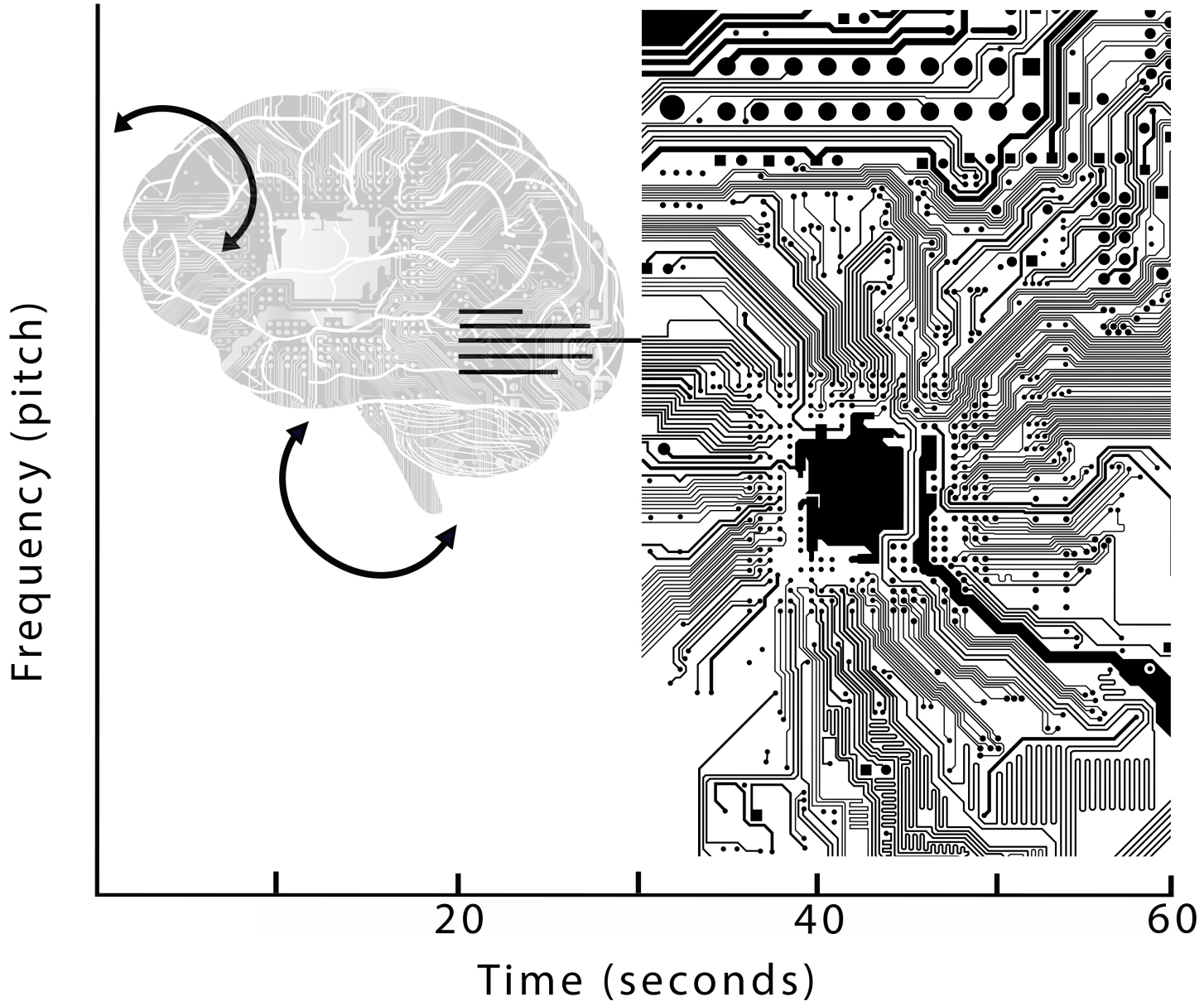
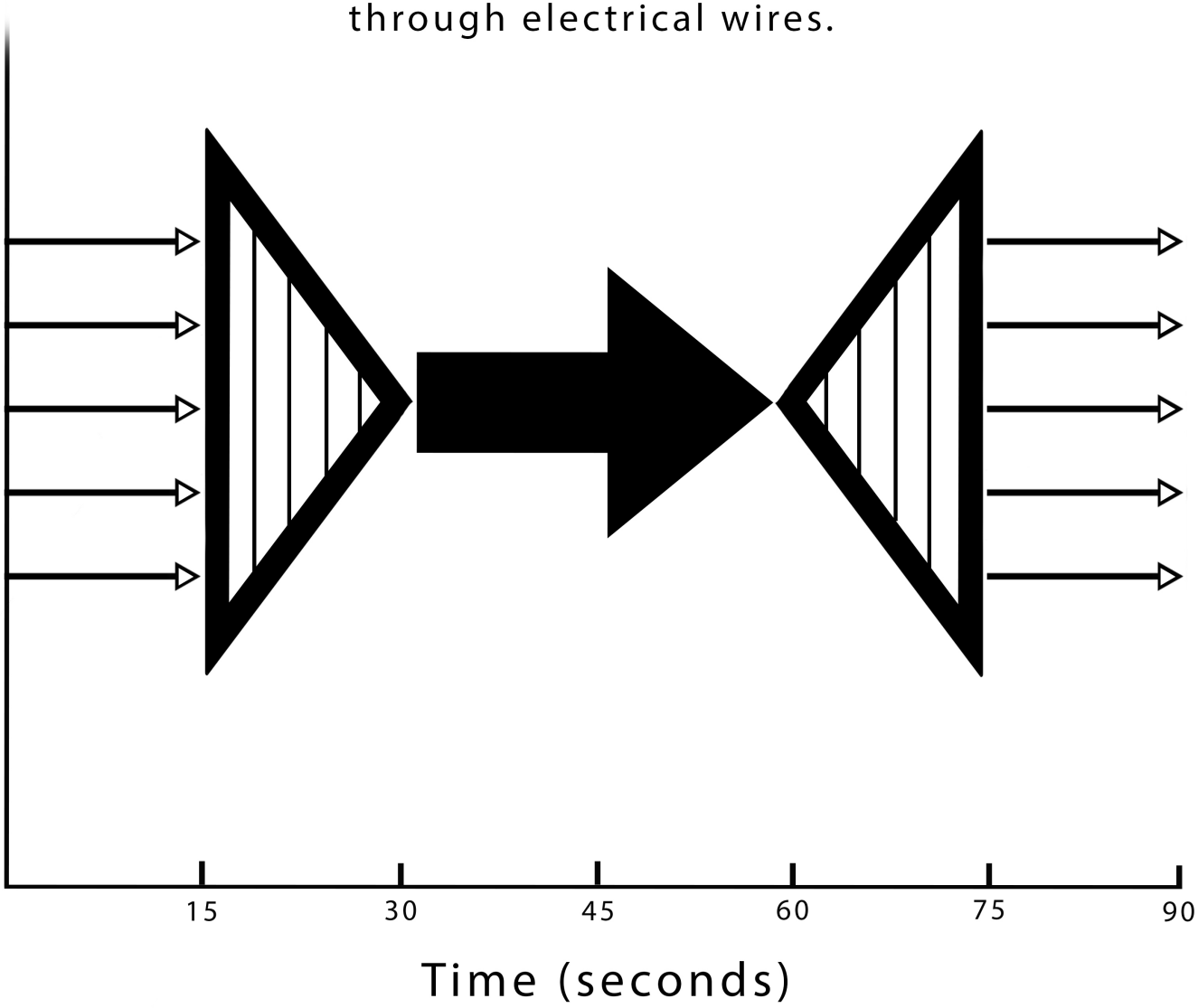
A. THE PUSH OF A BUTTON

Many parallels may be drawn between the circuitry in our bodies and electronics



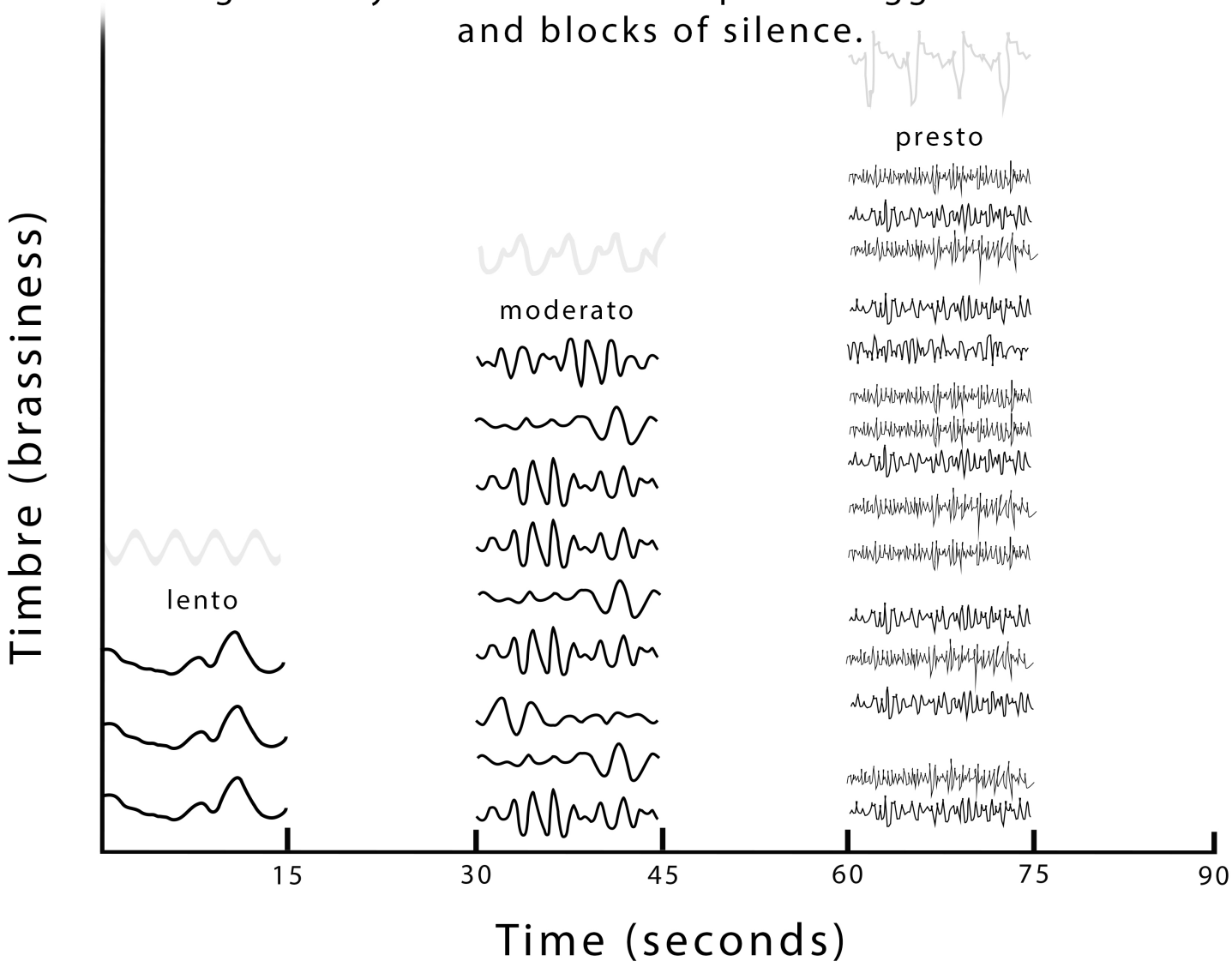
B. MULTIPLEXING

Multiplexing combines multiple signals over a shared medium. George Squire invented this in 1910, as the technical basis for Muzak, which allowed music to be transmitted directly into homes, businesses & elevators through electrical wires.



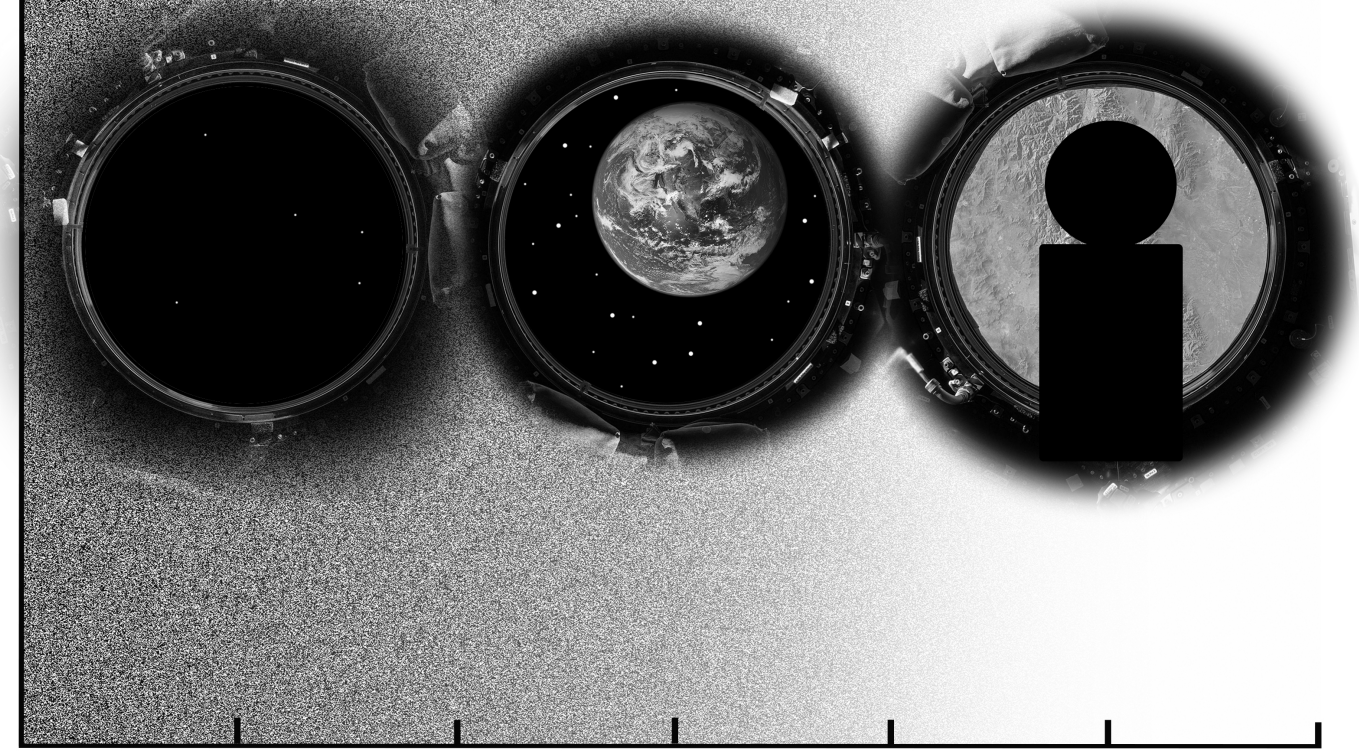
C. STIMULUS PROGRESSION

The Muzak company began to produce music with the goal of increasing workers'productivity. This program was composed of 15 minute blocks, alternating between music that gradually increased in tempo and aggressive timbre and blocks of silence.



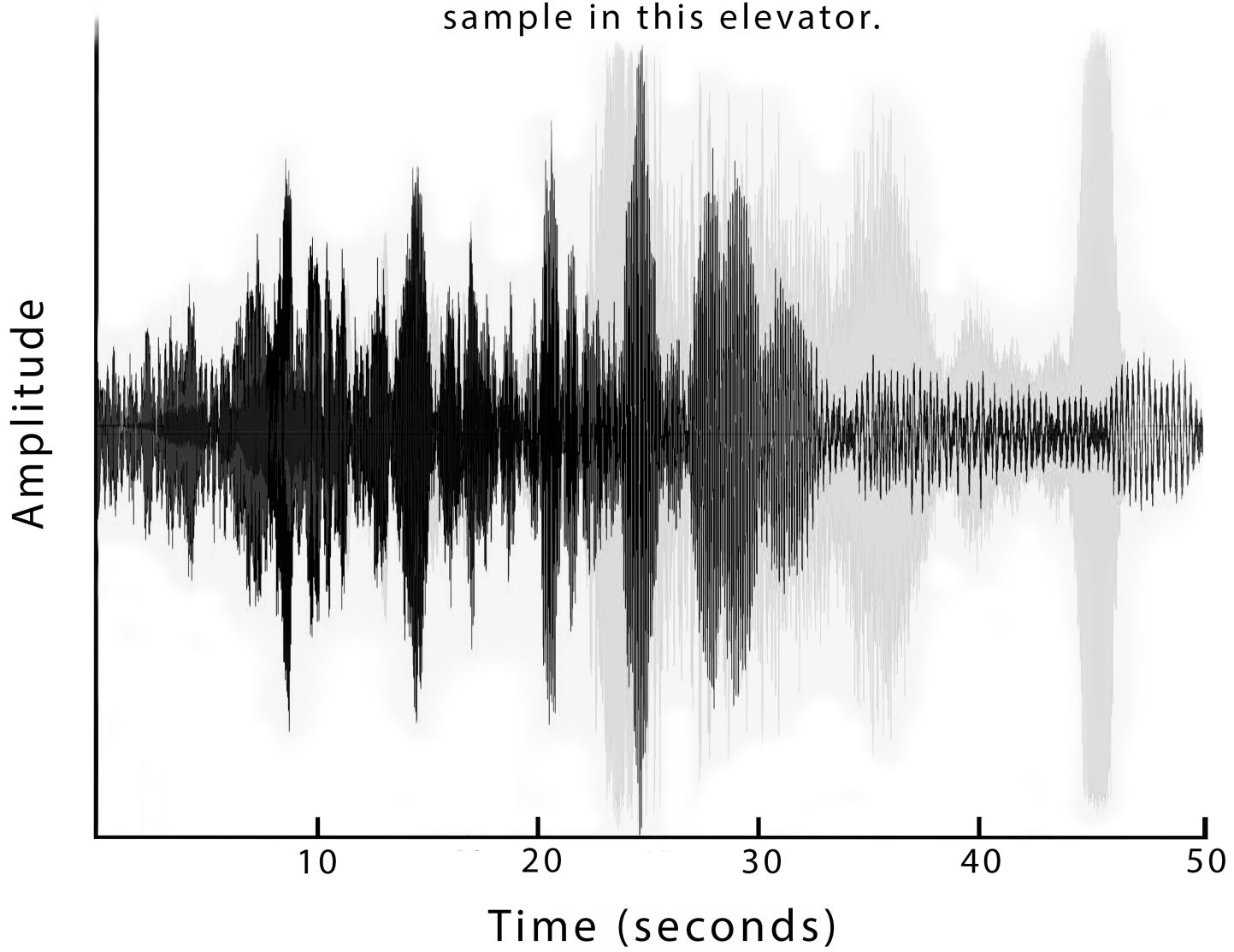
D. LOOKING DOWN

In the 1960's, NASA used Muzak onboard its spacecraft to focus, soothe and occupy astronauts as they hurtled through space. This background music helped to connect them with their concept of home, which they had become mere observers of.



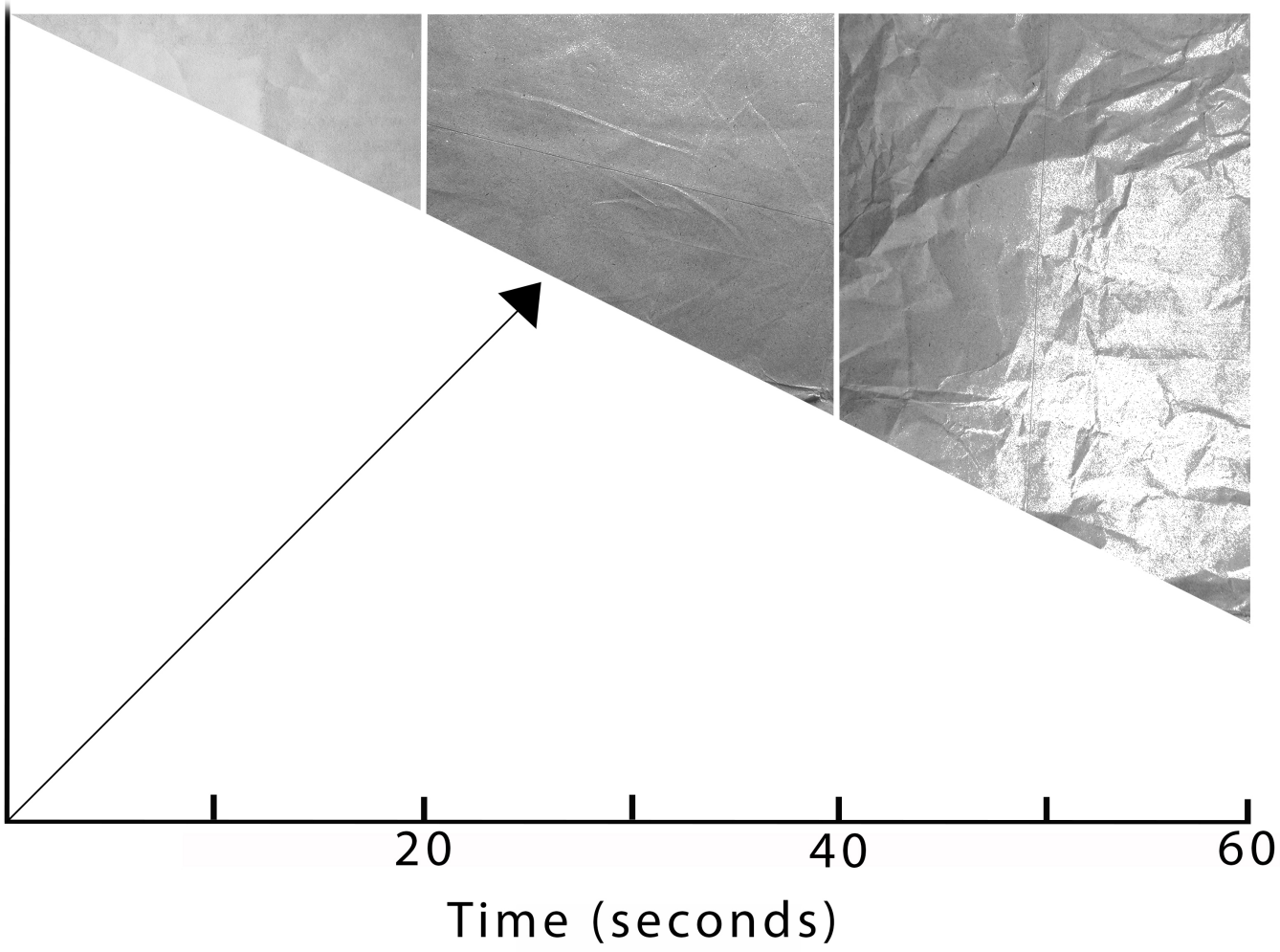
E. RECONVOLUTION

Convolution reverb takes a sample from a real acoustic space and combines it with your chosen audio signal to digitally simulate the reverb of that space. Below compares the signals before and after convolution from a sample in this elevator.



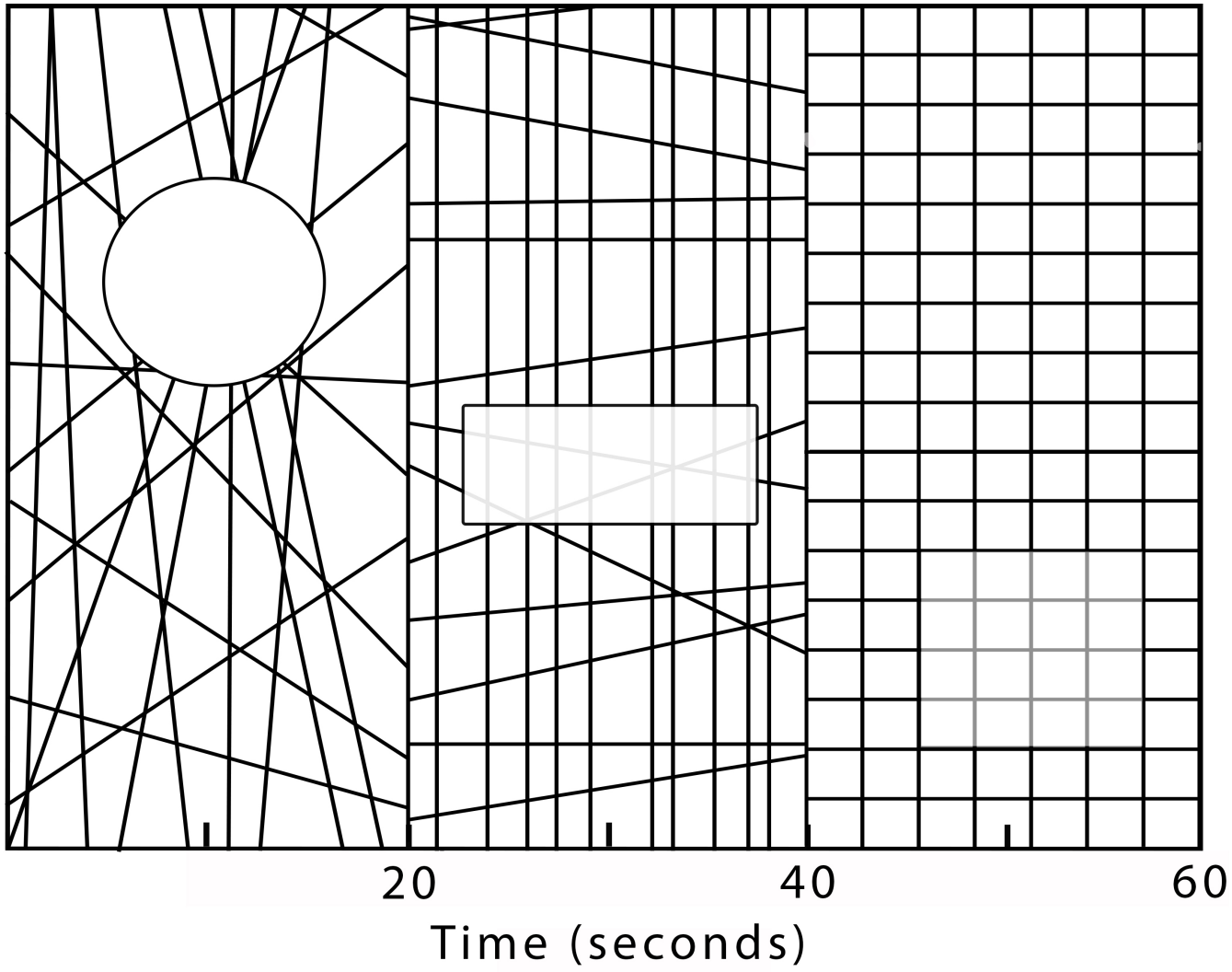
F. CEREBRAL BACKDROP

The term “furniture music,” coined by Erik Satie in 1917, is one of the first records of music composed specifically as a “cerebral backdrop,” rather than the focal point. John Cage forged its revival in the 1960’s with a focus on atmosphere and texture over traditional form and movement. Today’s elevator music parallels this through its background role.



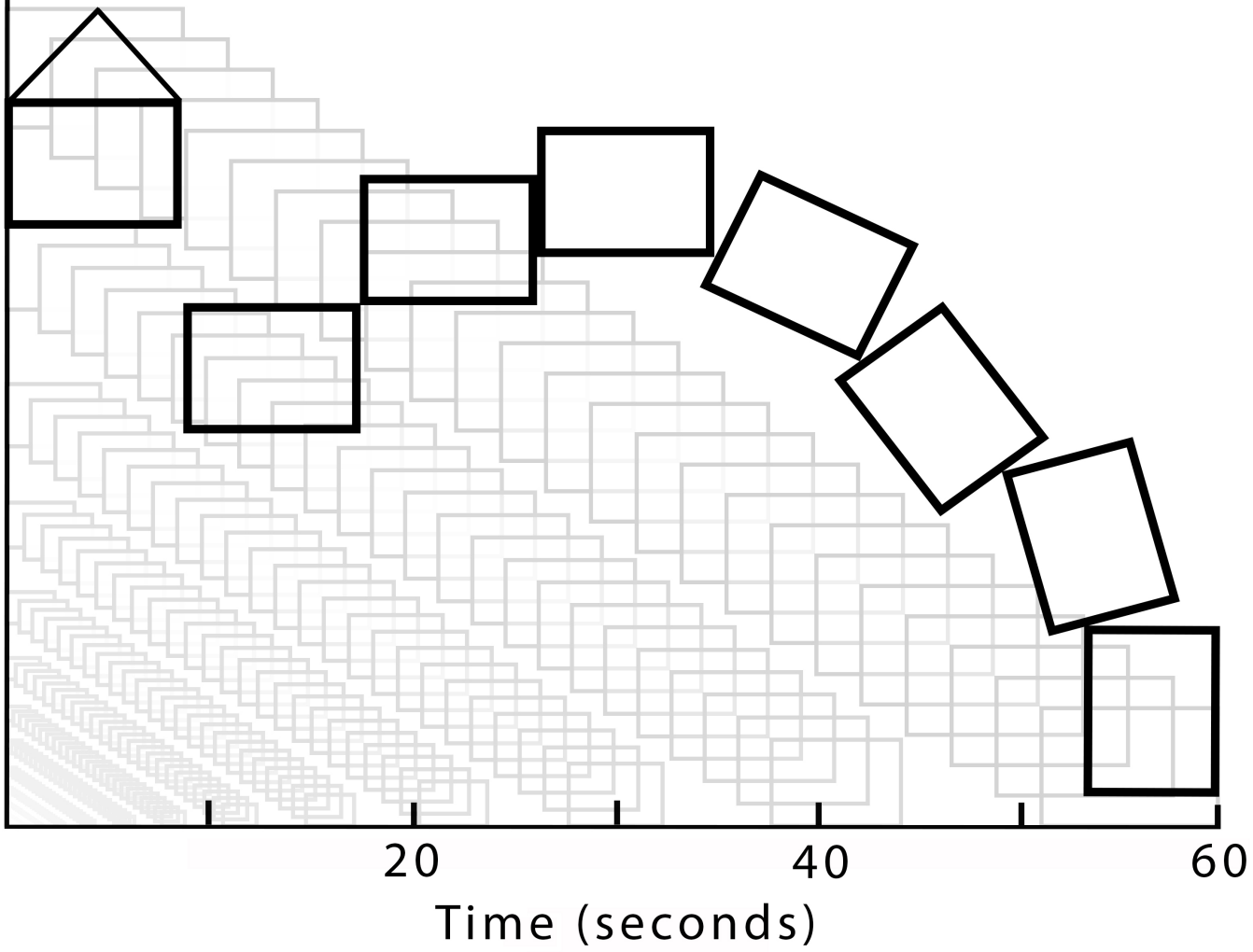
G. ACOUSTIC WALLPAPER

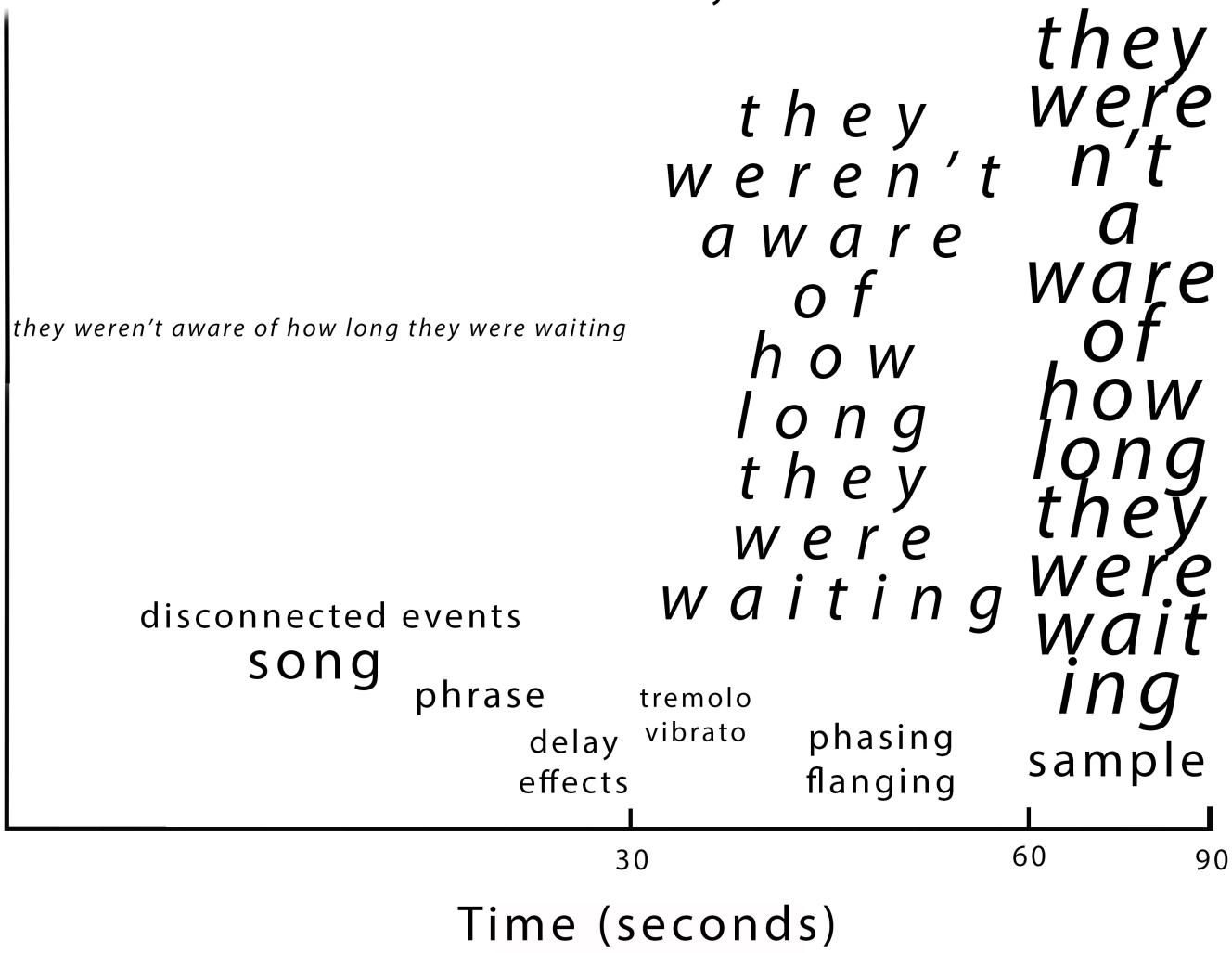
In the 1990's, the Pipedown Campaign began in the UK, advocating for the removal of background music in public spaces, classifying it as noise pollution that reduced music to a marketing tool. How much do our environments shape us? Influence us? Control us?



H. CASCADING DOMICILES

Muzak historian Joseph Lanza described elevators as "floating domiciles of disequilibrium," suggesting that elevator music was introduced to calm its guests. A signature technique of this music is cascading strings. This dreamy echo of never ending strings simulates the reverb heard in a cathedral.



I. TIME PERCEPTION

Elevator historian Patrick Carrajat believes that elevator music was creatd primarily as a tool of distraction. Making elevators faster would be prohibitively expensive, so they needed a cheaper method of slowing time down. Are smart phones and screens the elevator music of today?