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## The Shape of Song (2001)

What does music look like? The Shape of Song is an attempt to answer this seemingly paradoxical question.

[View Shape of Song online.](#)

Related academic paper:

[Arc Diagrams: Visualizing Structure in Strings](#), InfoVis 2002.



At *Generator.x*, Oslo, 2005  
photo: Marius Watz



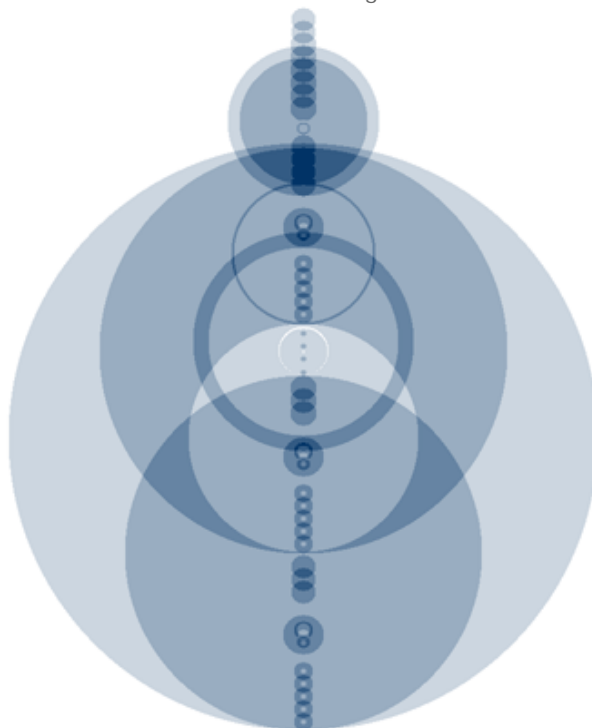
The Shape of Song began as a quest to "see" musical form. I created a visualization method called an *arc diagram* that highlighted repeated sections of music--or of any sequence--with translucent arcs. (Read a [simple](#) or [complicated](#) explanation if you like.)

The resulting images reflect the full range of musical forms, from the deep structure of Bach to the crystalline beauty of Philip Glass. The image above, for instance, is a view of Madonna's *Like a Virgin*.

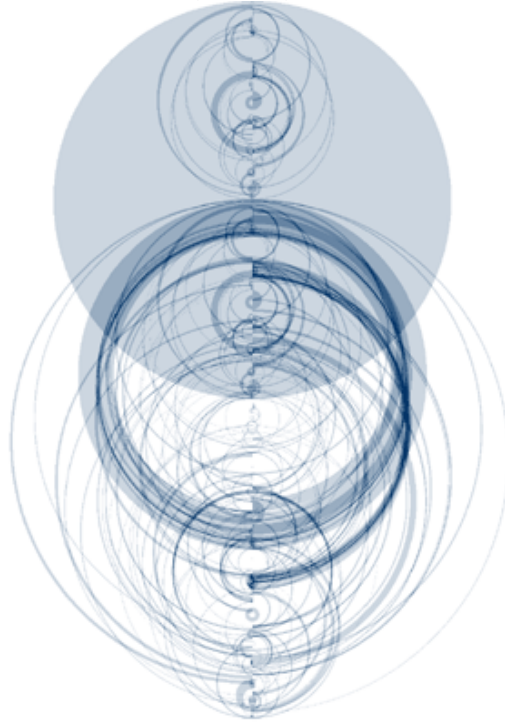
The method has since inspired many variations, as can be seen in the [visualcomplexity.com catalog of arc diagrams](#).

Below I show more of the many forms that this visualization can take. In these images time runs downwards, rather than left to right. Some of these may be available as prints, if you are interested.

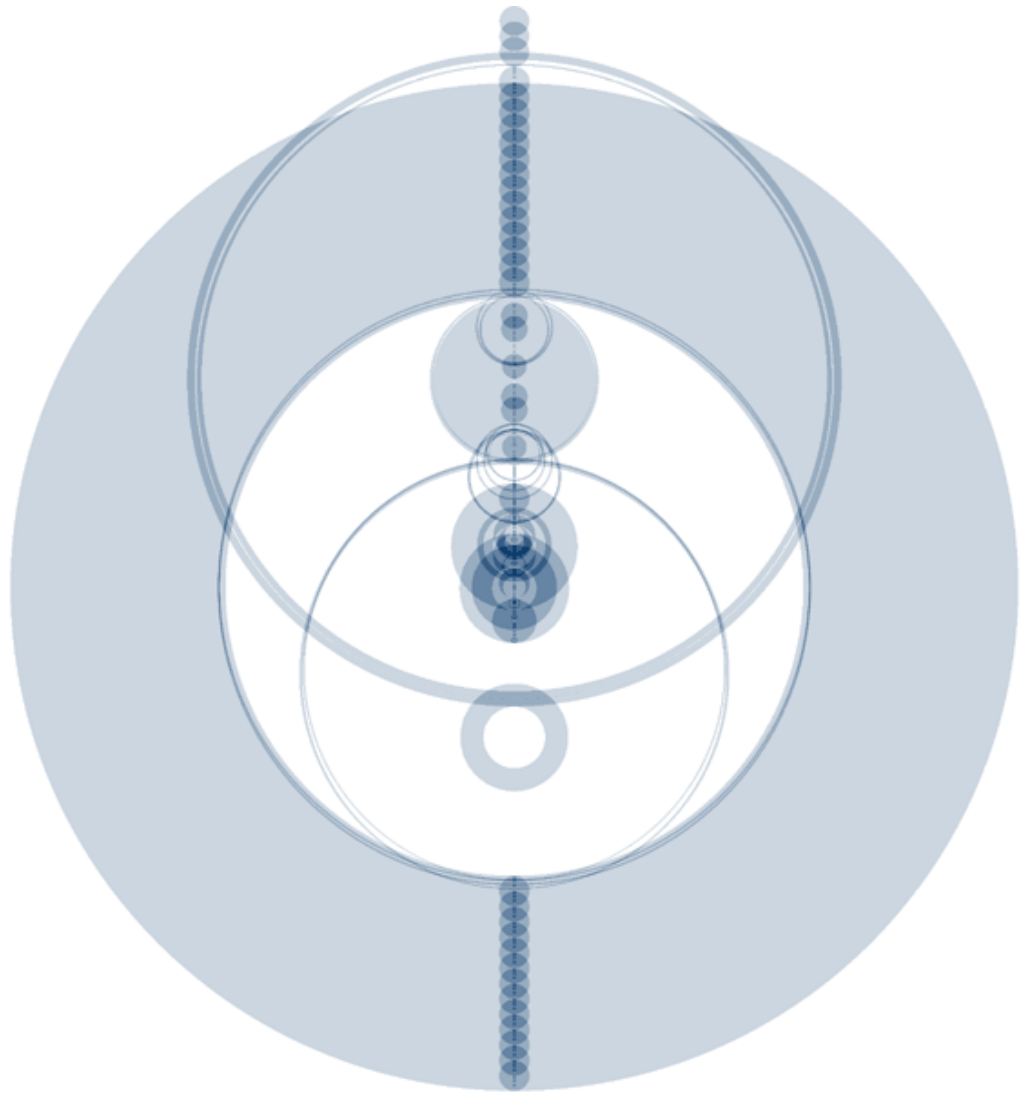
As She Was / Talking Heads:



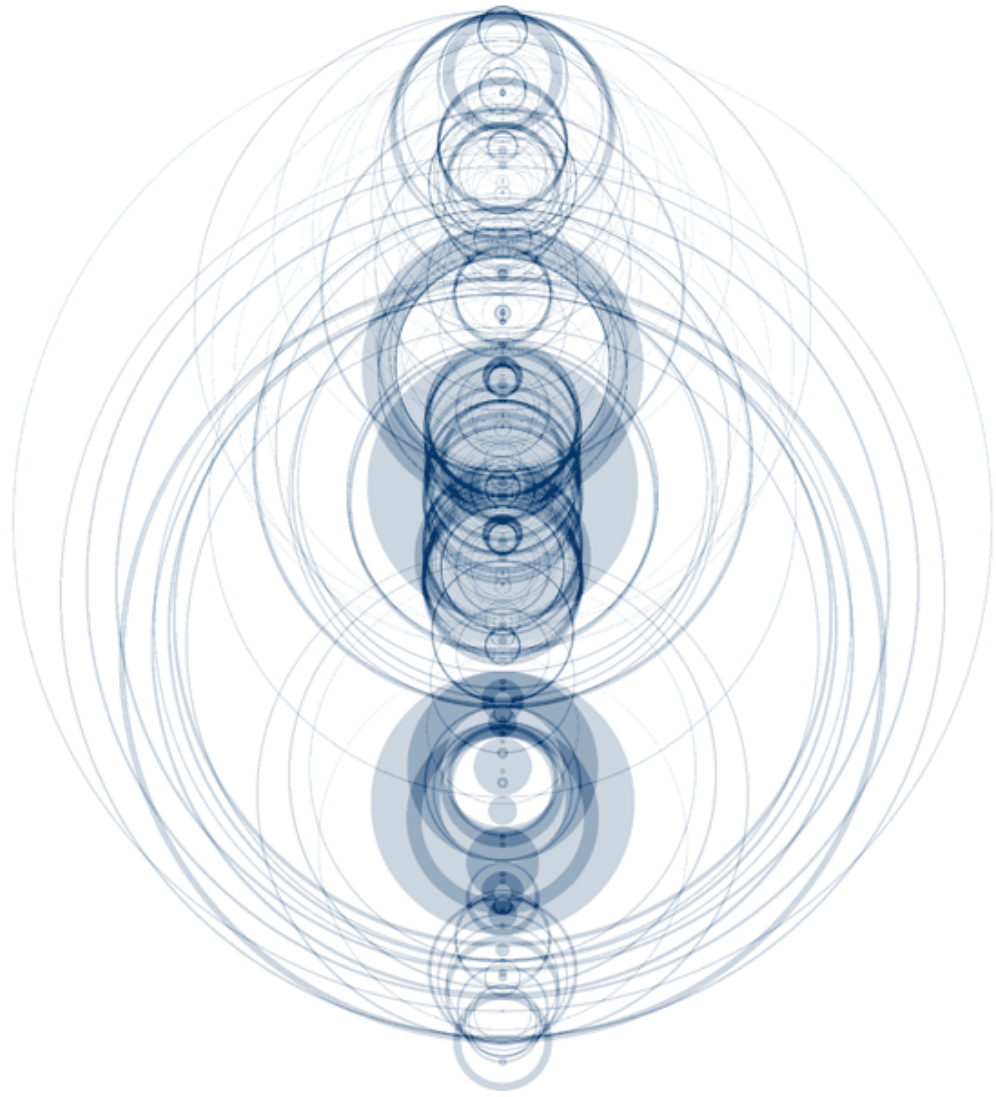
Jupiter Symphony / Mozart:



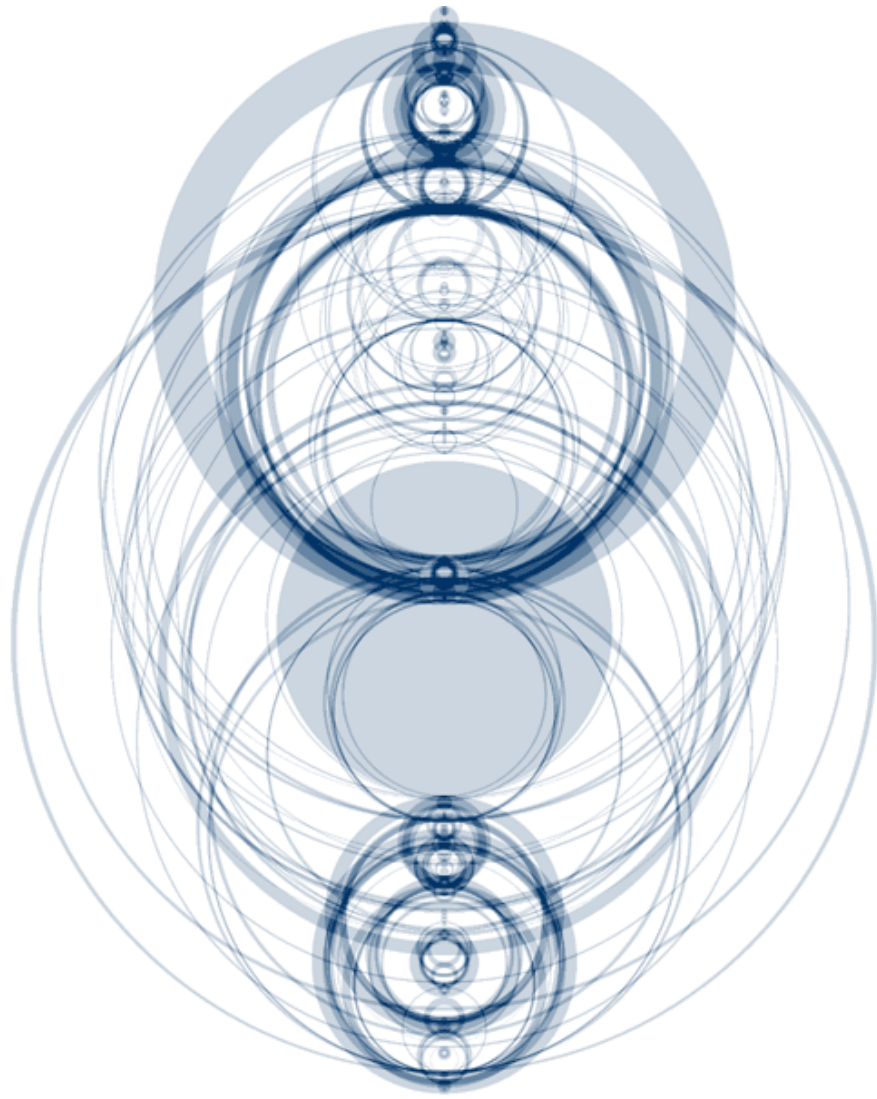
Koyaanisqatsi / Glass:



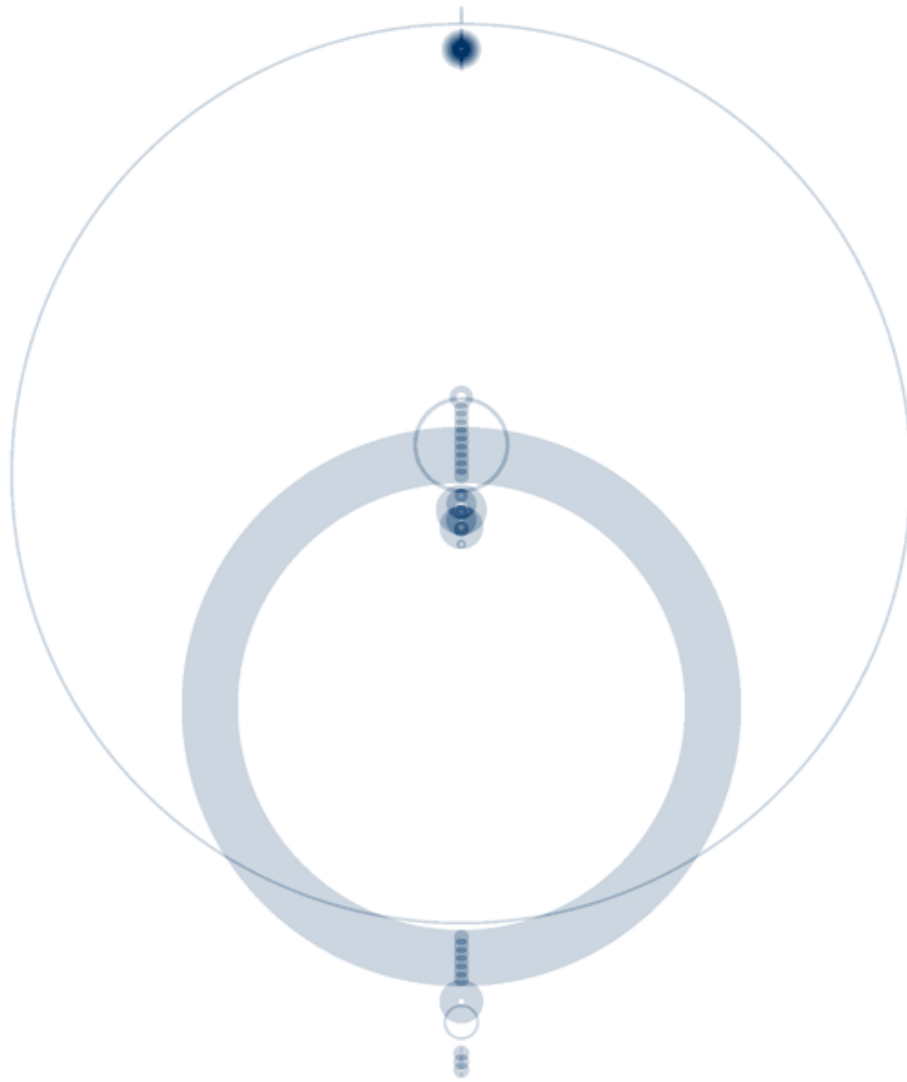
Moonlight Sonata / Beethoven:



Four Seasons / Autumn / Vivaldi:



Four Seasons / Summer / Vivaldi:



A collection of many more!

