PHY 103: Standing Waves and Harmonics

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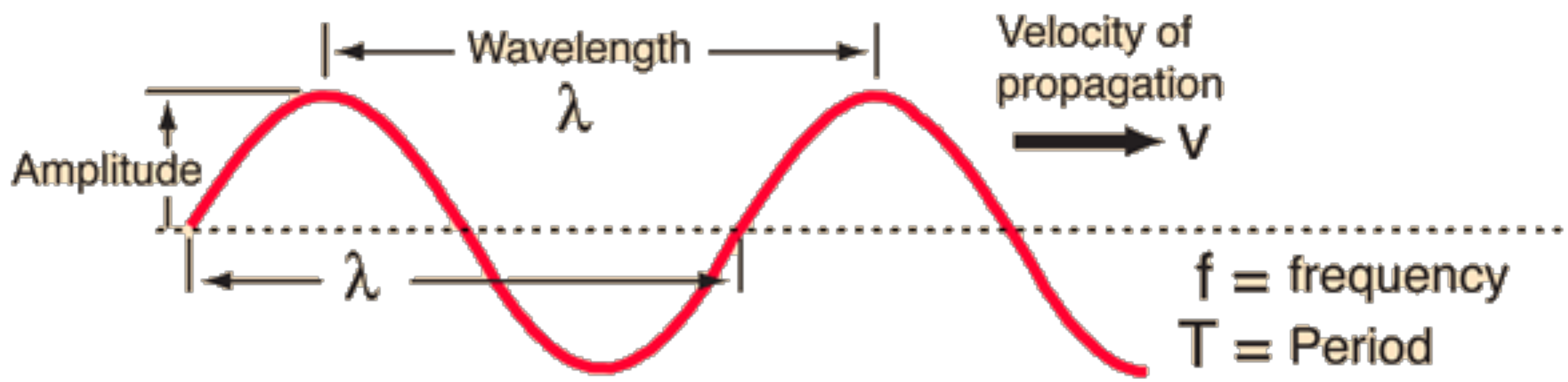
Properties of Waves



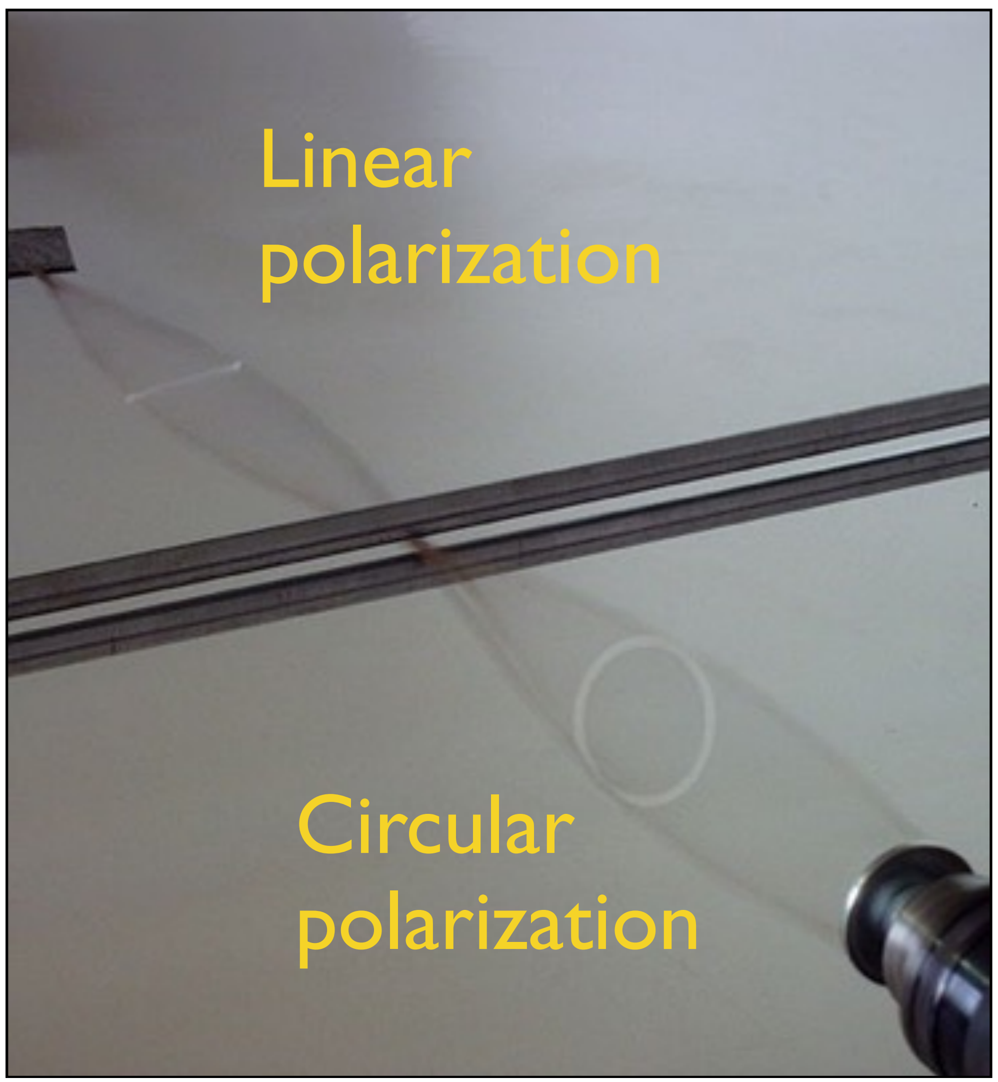
- Wavelength: λ, length to repeat peak-peak (trough-trough)
- Period: τ, time to repeat one cycle of the wave (seconds)
- Phase: position within the wave cycle (a.k.a. *phase shift* or *offset*)
- Frequency: $f = 1/\tau$, units of 1/sec (Hertz). Also: $\omega = 2\pi f = 2\pi/\tau$
- Wavenumber: $k = 2\pi/\lambda$, in units of 1/meter ("spatial frequency")
- Velocity: $v = \lambda f$, in units of length/time
- Amplitude: A. Energy: $E \sim (\text{Amplitude})^2$

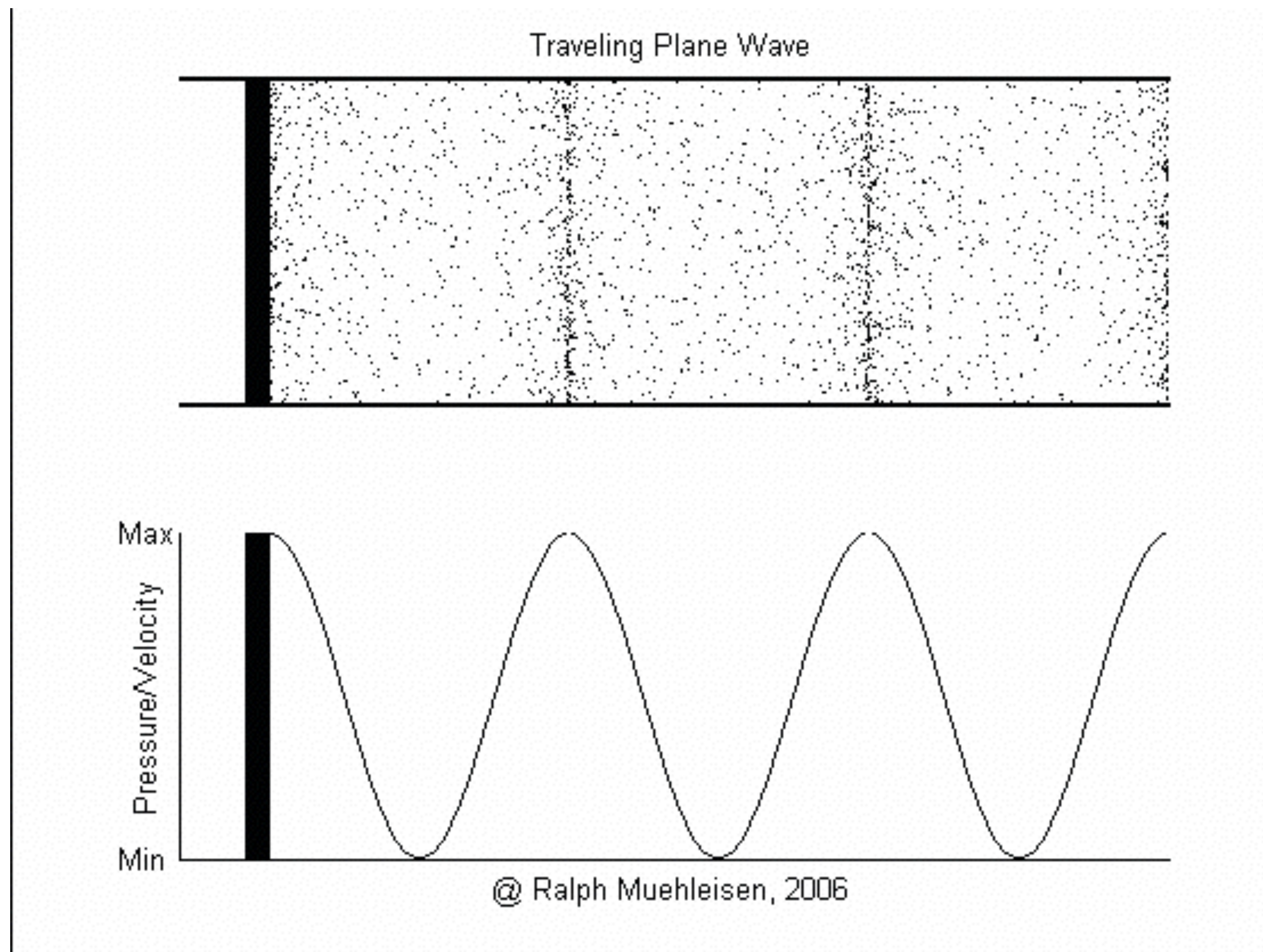
Behavior of Waves

- Behavior typical of waves:
  - Reflection: a wave strikes a surface and bounces off
  - Refraction: when a wave changes direction after passing between two media of different densities
  - Diffraction: the bending and spreading of waves around an obstacle, often creating an *interference* pattern
  - Polarization: the orientation of the oscillation of transverse waves
- Polarization is not important in acoustics. Why is that?

Transverse & Longitudinal Waves

- Sound waves are longitudinal pressure waves; oscillation occurs *along* the direction of propagation





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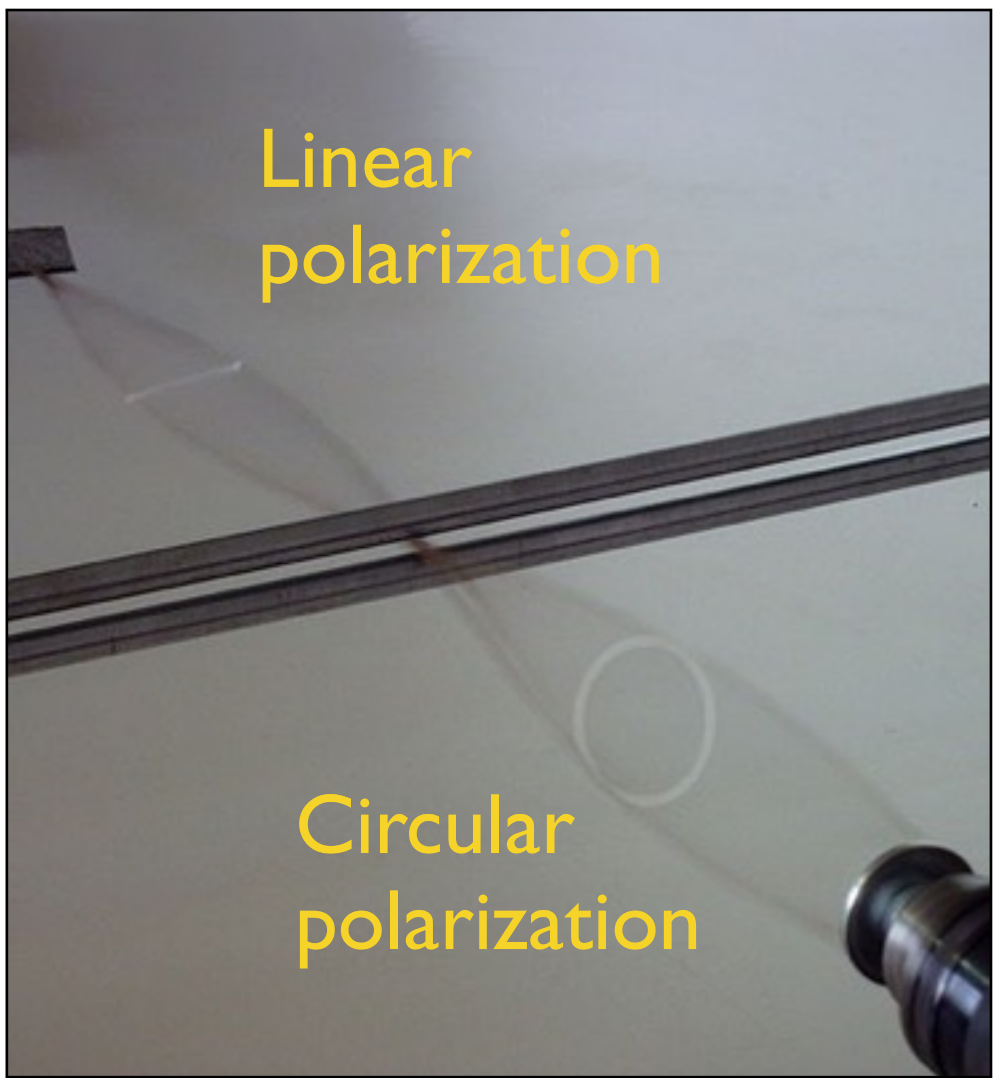

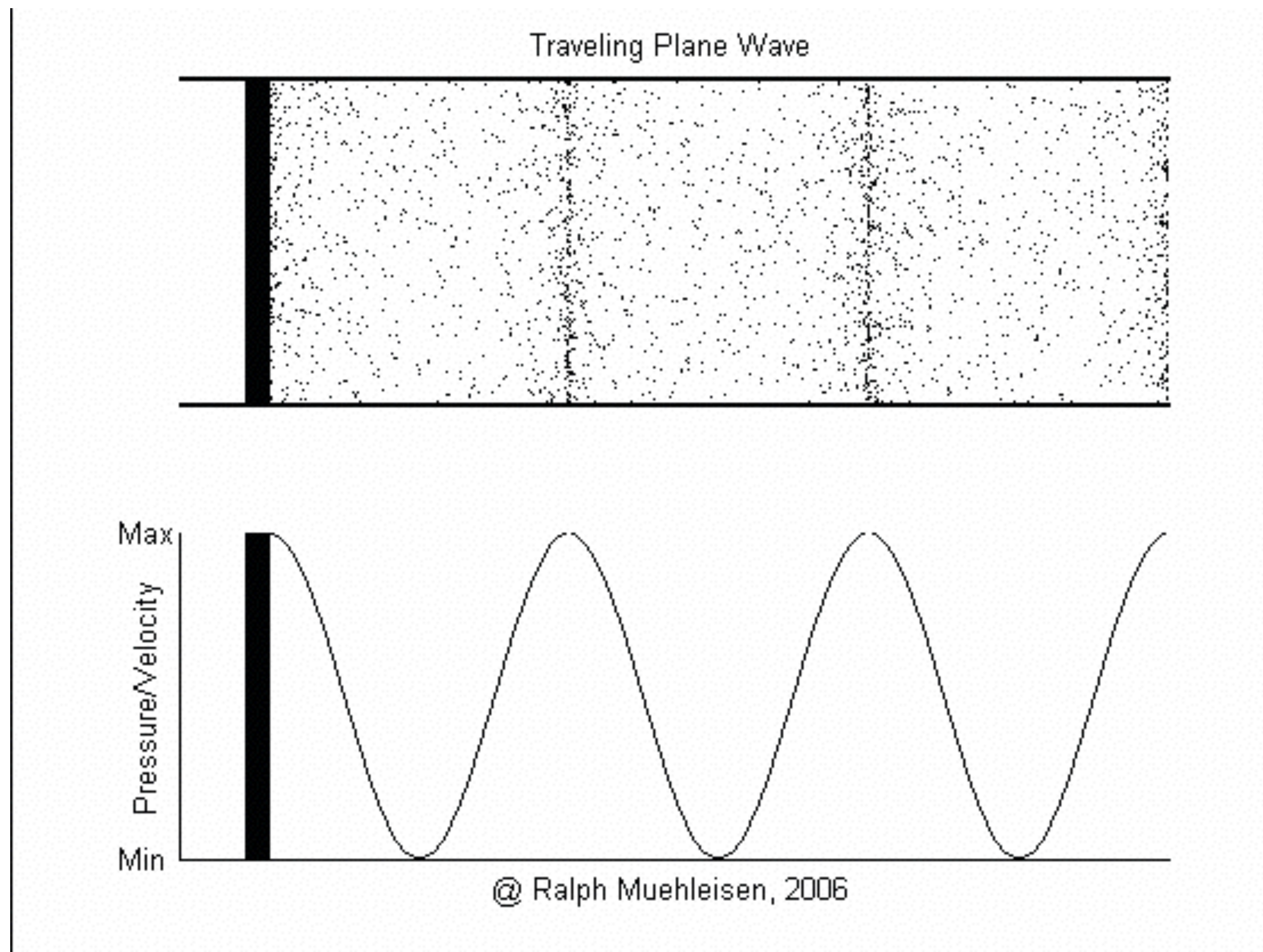

Waves on a String

- Suppose we have a rope of length *L*, and *L* is so long that, for now, we don't worry about the ends flopping around
- We shake and vibrate the rope, sending pulses traveling down its length

- What are the properties of the wave on this rope? It's speed, its wavelength, etc.?

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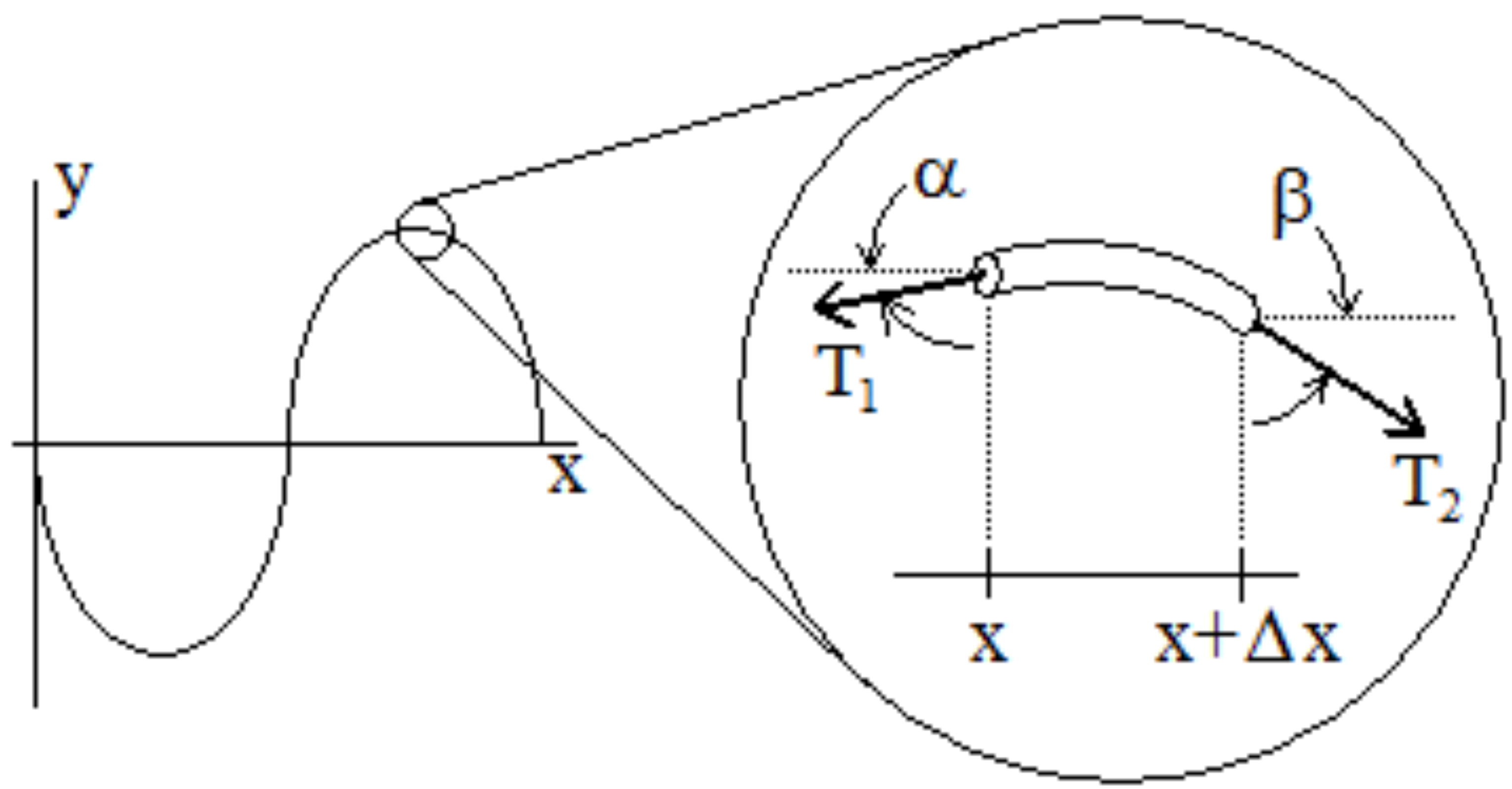
Waves on a String

- Imagine a little piece of the string. It's under tension, i.e., it feels pulling forces T_1 and T_2 at each end that try to move the piece up or down

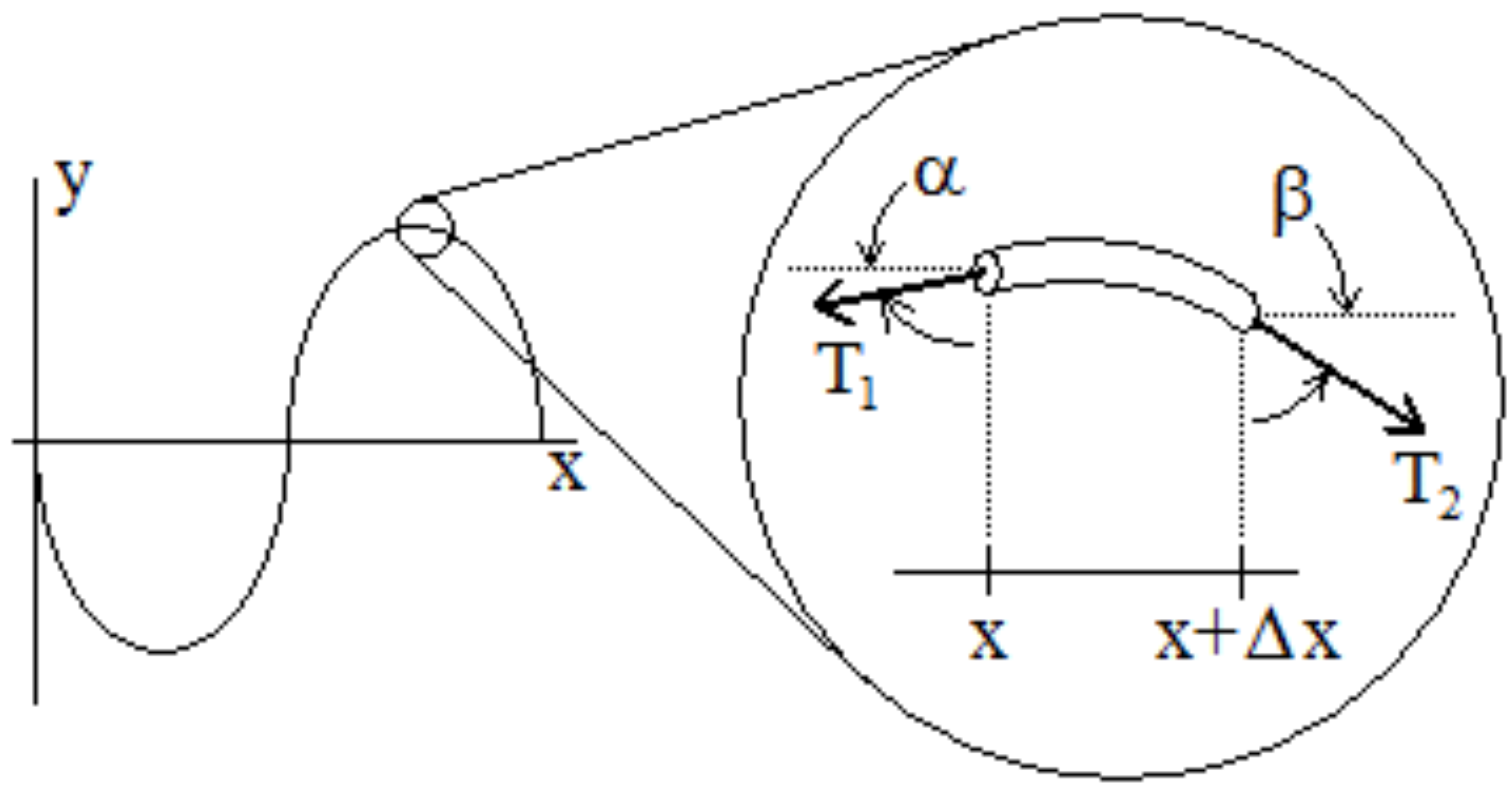


$$\sum F_y = m_{\text{piece}} a_y = -T_{2y} - T_{1y}$$
$$= -T_2 \sin\beta - T_1 \sin\alpha$$

Newton's 2nd Law: force on piece of rope with mass m_{piece}

Waves on a String

- We also need to sum forces in the *x* direction:

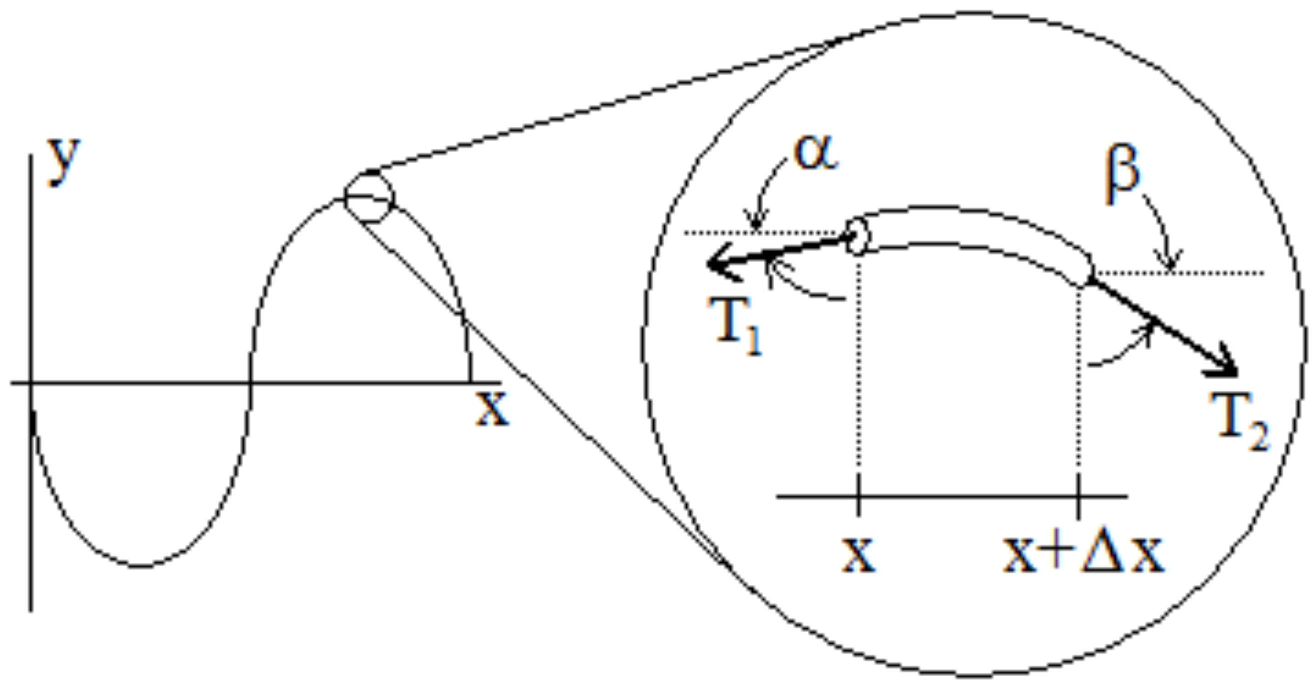


$$\sum F_x = m_{\text{piece}} a_x = T_{2x} - T_{1x}$$
$$= T_2 \cos\beta - T_1 \cos\alpha$$
$$\approx T - T$$
$$= 0$$

Forces along *x* direction sum to zero; the piece of rope doesn't move side-to-side

Waves on a String

- Suppose the density of the rope (also known as the "mass per unit length") is $\rho = m_{total}/L$
- The length of the piece of rope is Δx, so $m_{piece} = \rho\Delta x$



$$\sum F_y = m_{piece} a_y = \rho\Delta x \cdot \frac{dv_y}{dt} = \rho\Delta x \cdot \frac{d^2 y}{dt^2} = -T_2 \sin\beta - T_1 \sin\alpha$$

The Wave Equation

- With a few more substitutions (see overflow slides) Newton's second law reduces to the expression

$$\frac{d^2y}{dx^2} = \frac{\rho}{T} \cdot \frac{d^2y}{dt^2} = \frac{1}{v^2}\frac{d^2y}{dt^2}, \qquad \text{where } \; v = \sqrt{\frac{T}{\rho}}$$

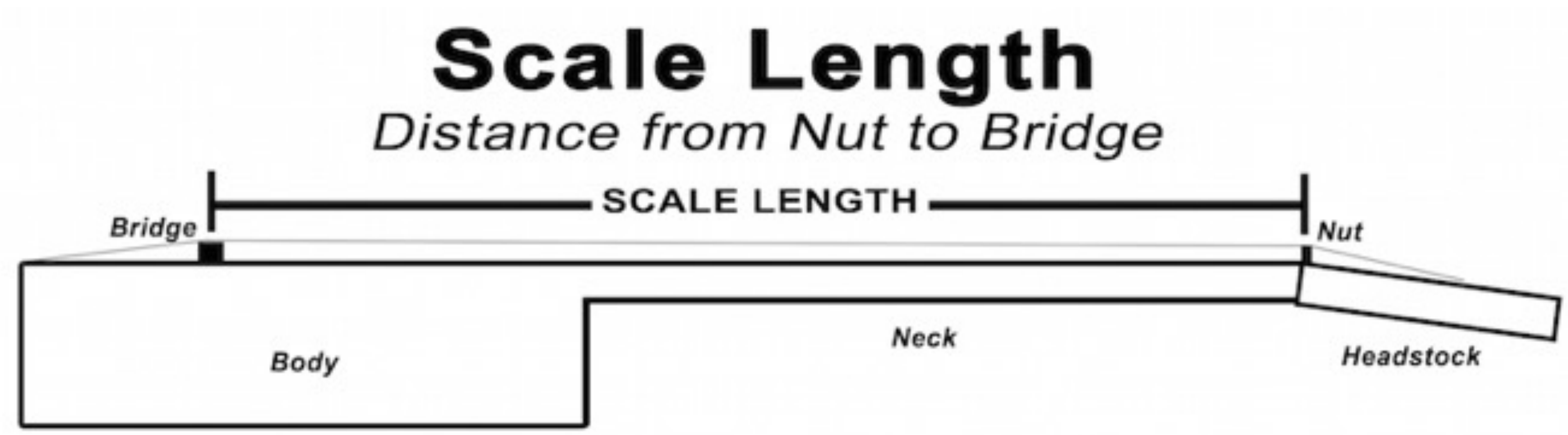
- This is the wave equation that describes the motion of the piece of rope vs. time *t* and position *x*. It has two solutions:

$$\begin{aligned} y(x,t) &= A\sin(kx \pm \omega t) \\ &= A\sin\frac{2\pi}{\lambda}(x \pm vt), \qquad \text{where } v = \lambda f = \sqrt{\frac{T}{\rho}} \end{aligned}$$

- These are traveling waves moving to the left or right!

A Vibrating String

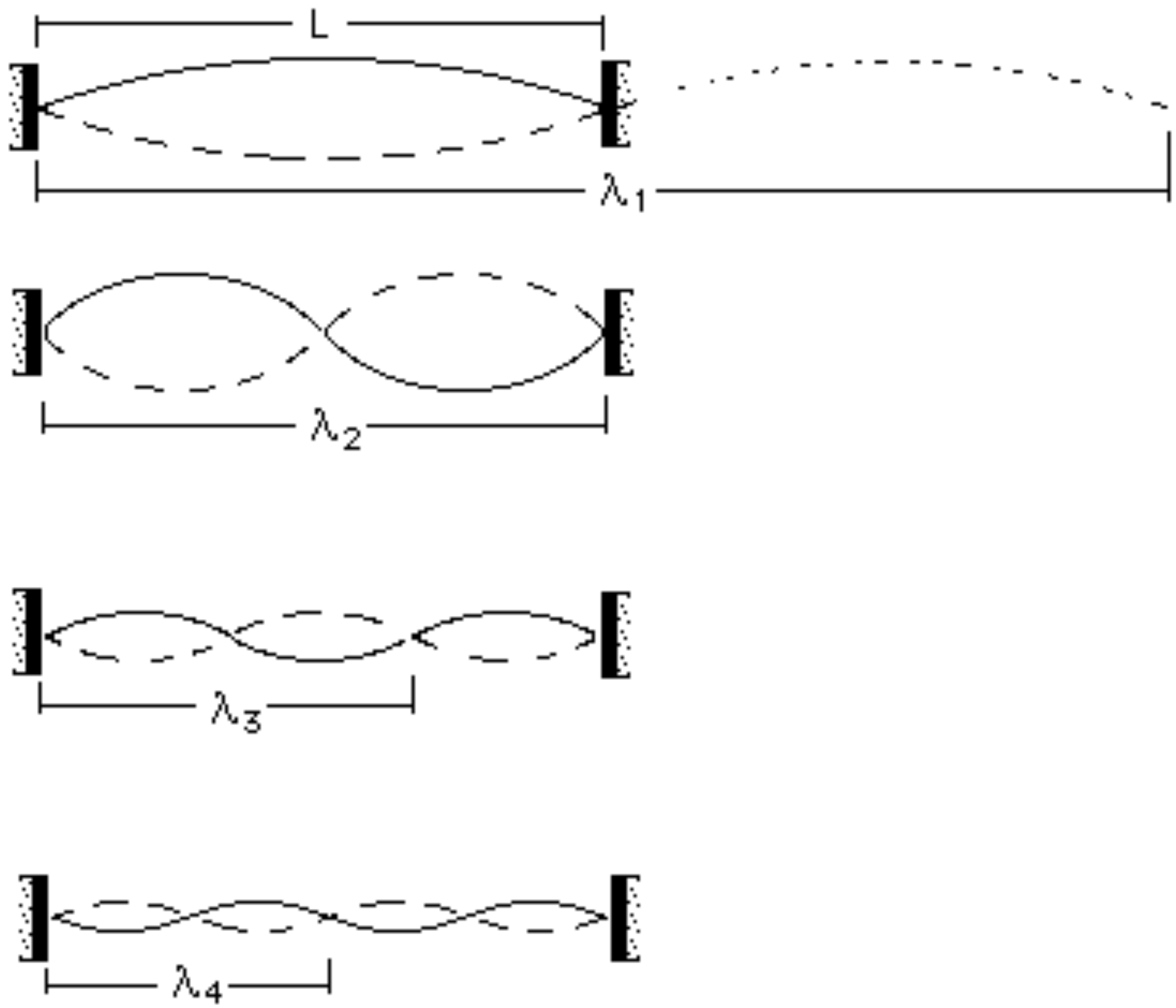
- In a musical instrument with a vibrating string, the endpoints are fixed so that they don't vibrate
- Example: a guitar string is fixed at the nut and bridge and will not vibrate at those points



- What does the wave on the string look like in this case?

The Plucked String

- If the string is fixed at both ends, it's going to look something like this when you pluck it:



$L = \lambda_1/2$

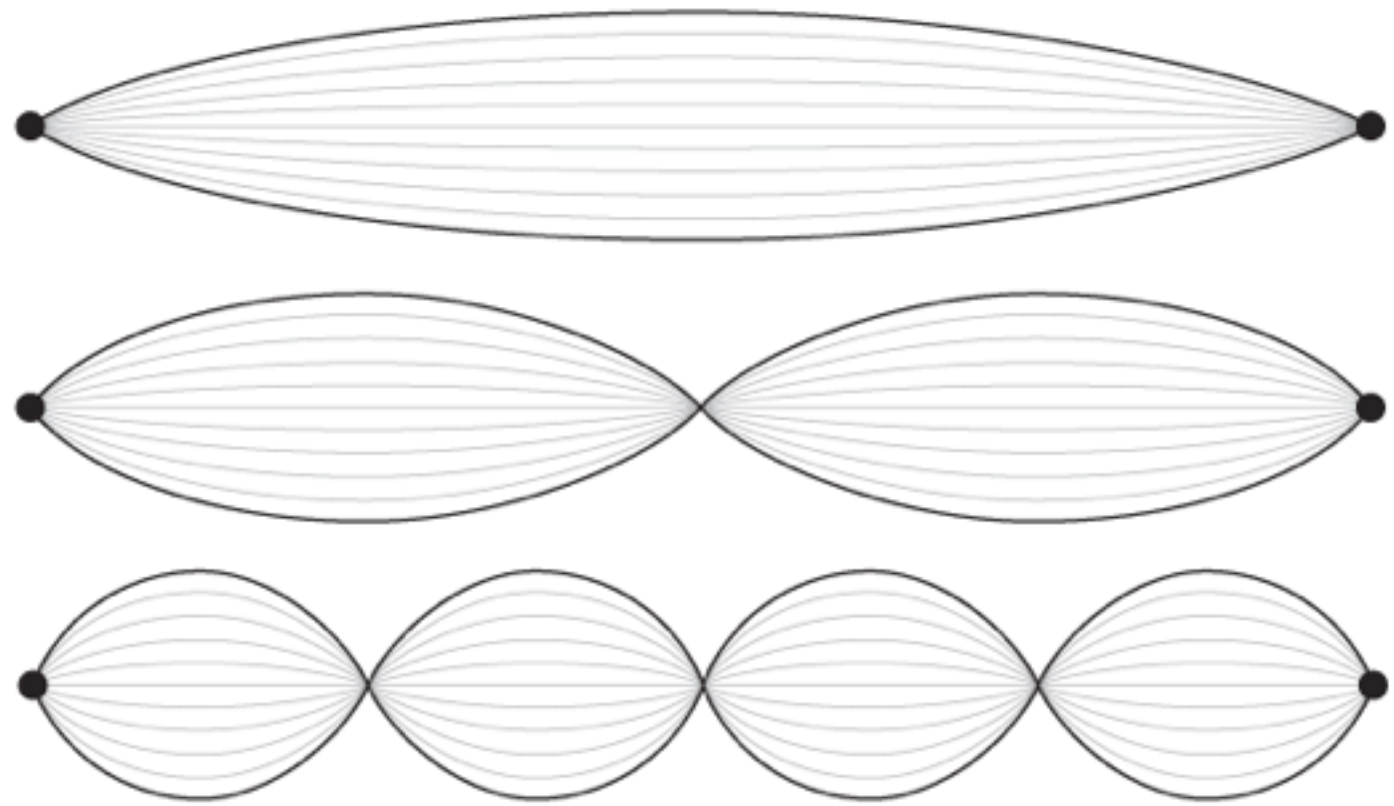
$L = \lambda_2$

$L = 3\lambda_3/2$

$L = 2\lambda_4$

Standing Waves

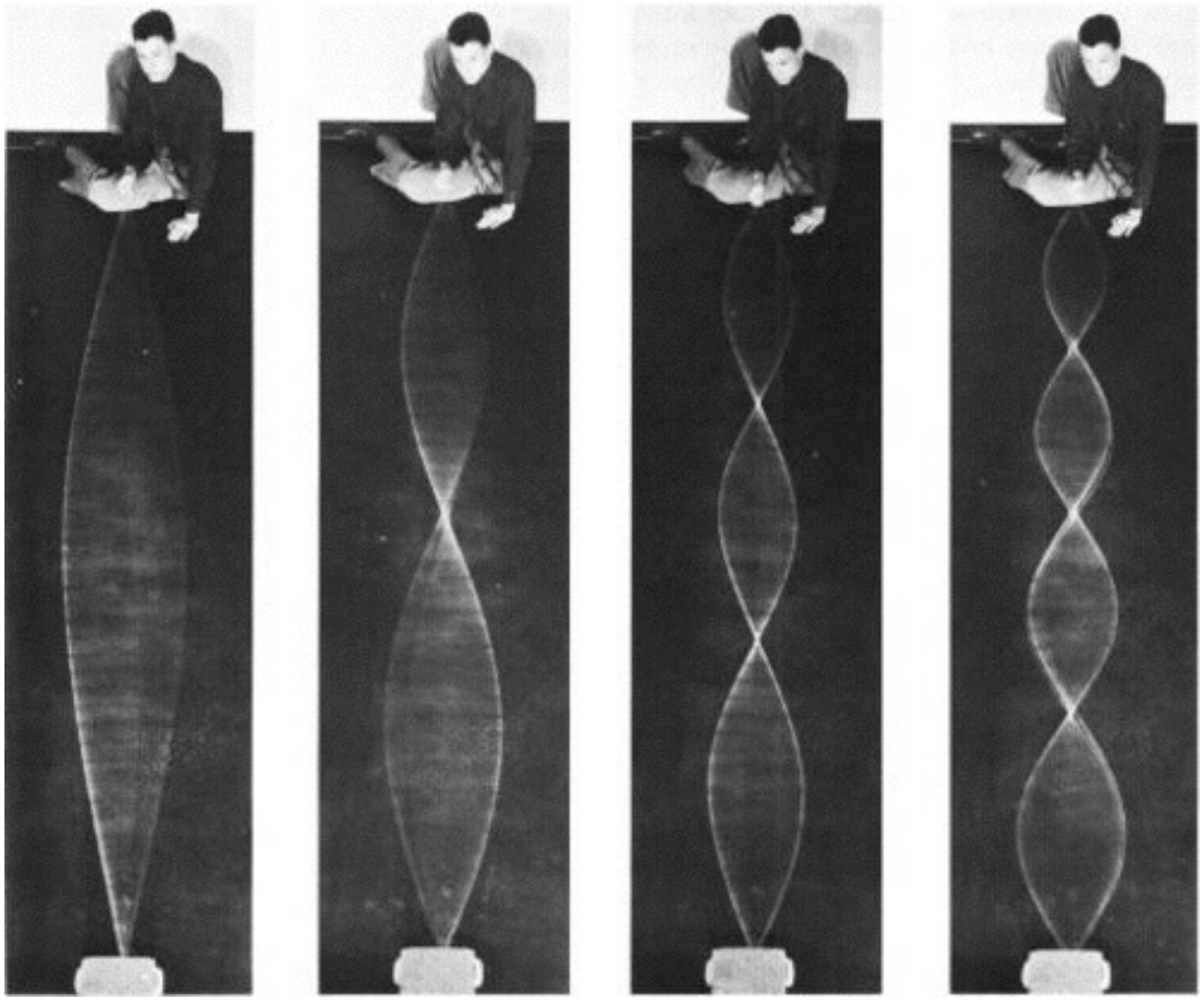
- These patterns are called standing waves



- You can construct a standing wave from a superimposed combination of traveling waves moving in both directions
- So our earlier conclusions ($v = \lambda f = \sqrt{T/\rho}$) are still valid and can be used to describe the fixed string!

Producing Standing Waves

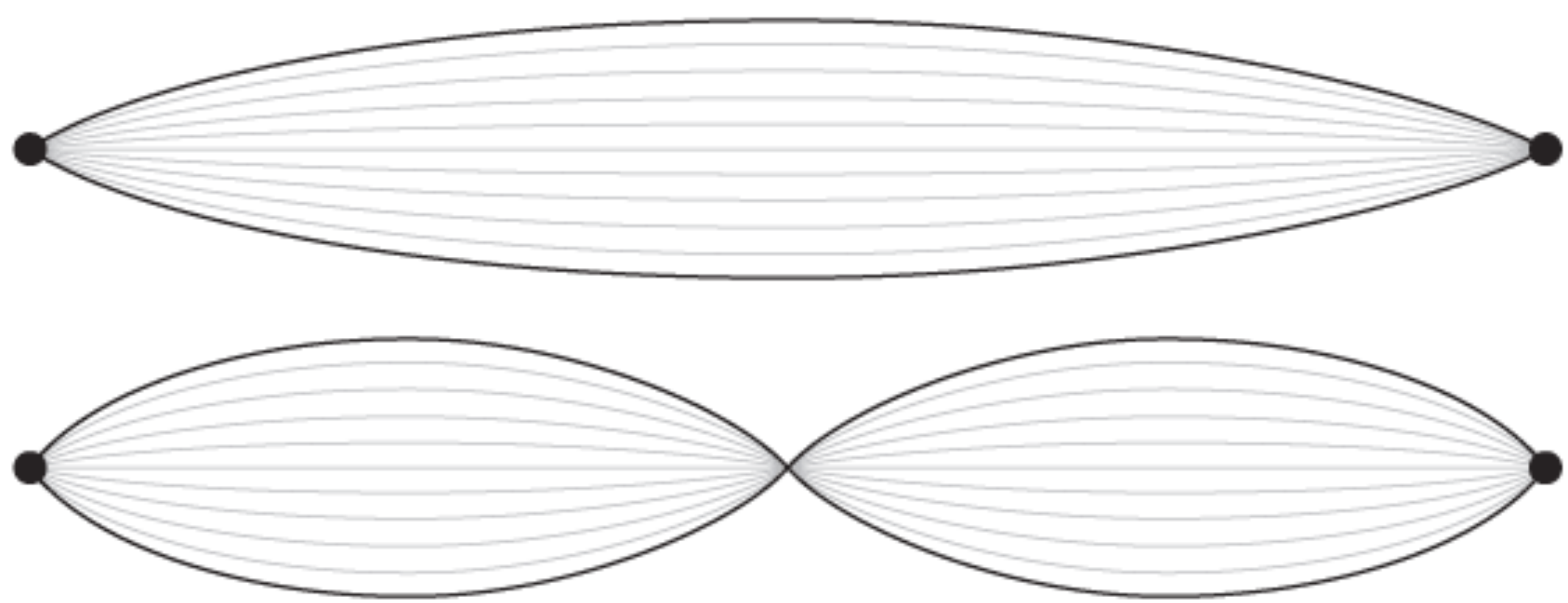
- We can create large standing waves in a string by driving it with an oscillating motor



(c) UC Davis

Terminology

- Nodes: points where the string is fixed (or held) and cannot vibrate
- Antinodes: points of strongest vibration/oscillation along the length of the string



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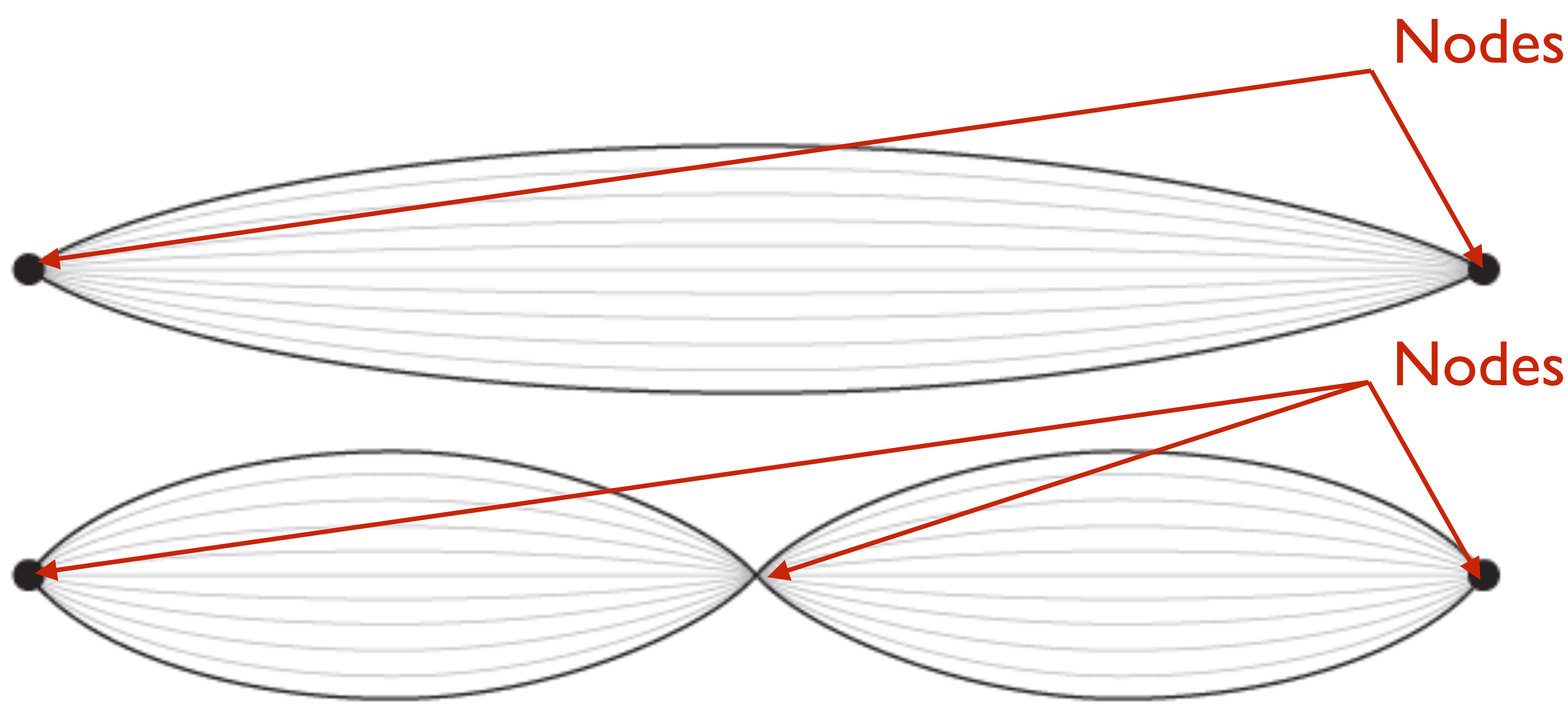

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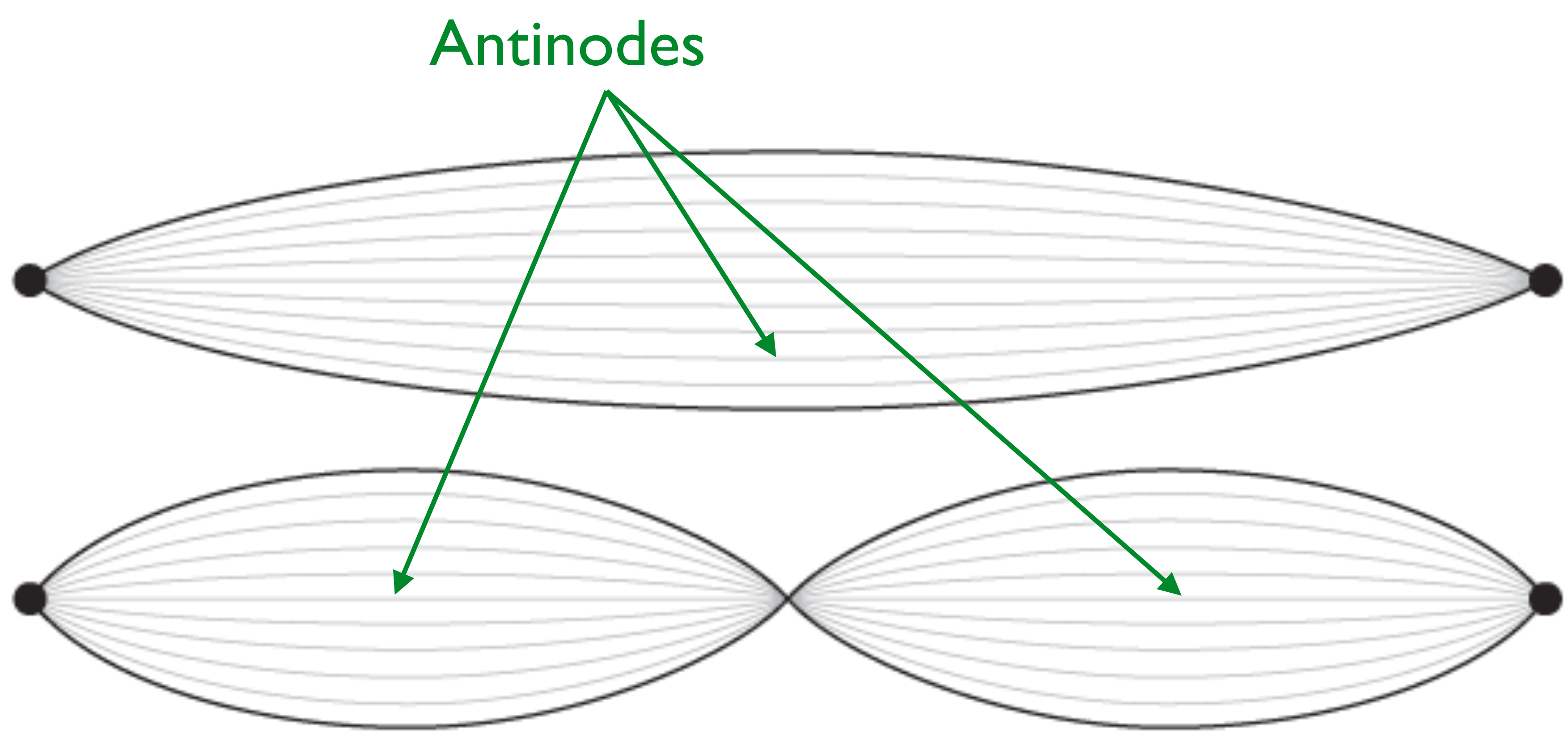
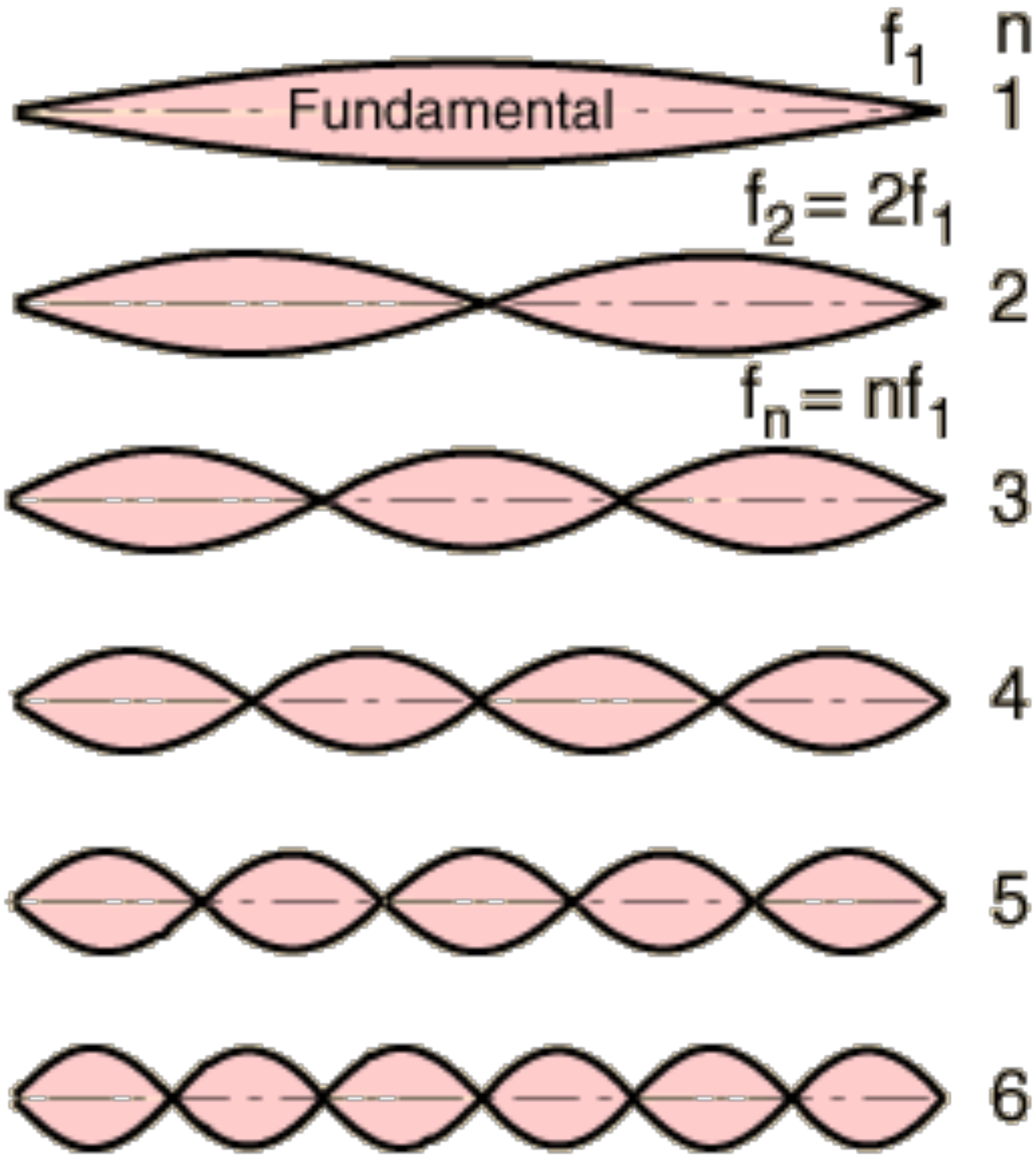


Harmonics/Overtones



$L = \lambda/2$ $f_1 = v / \lambda = v/2L$

$L = \lambda$ $f_2 = v/L = 2f_1$

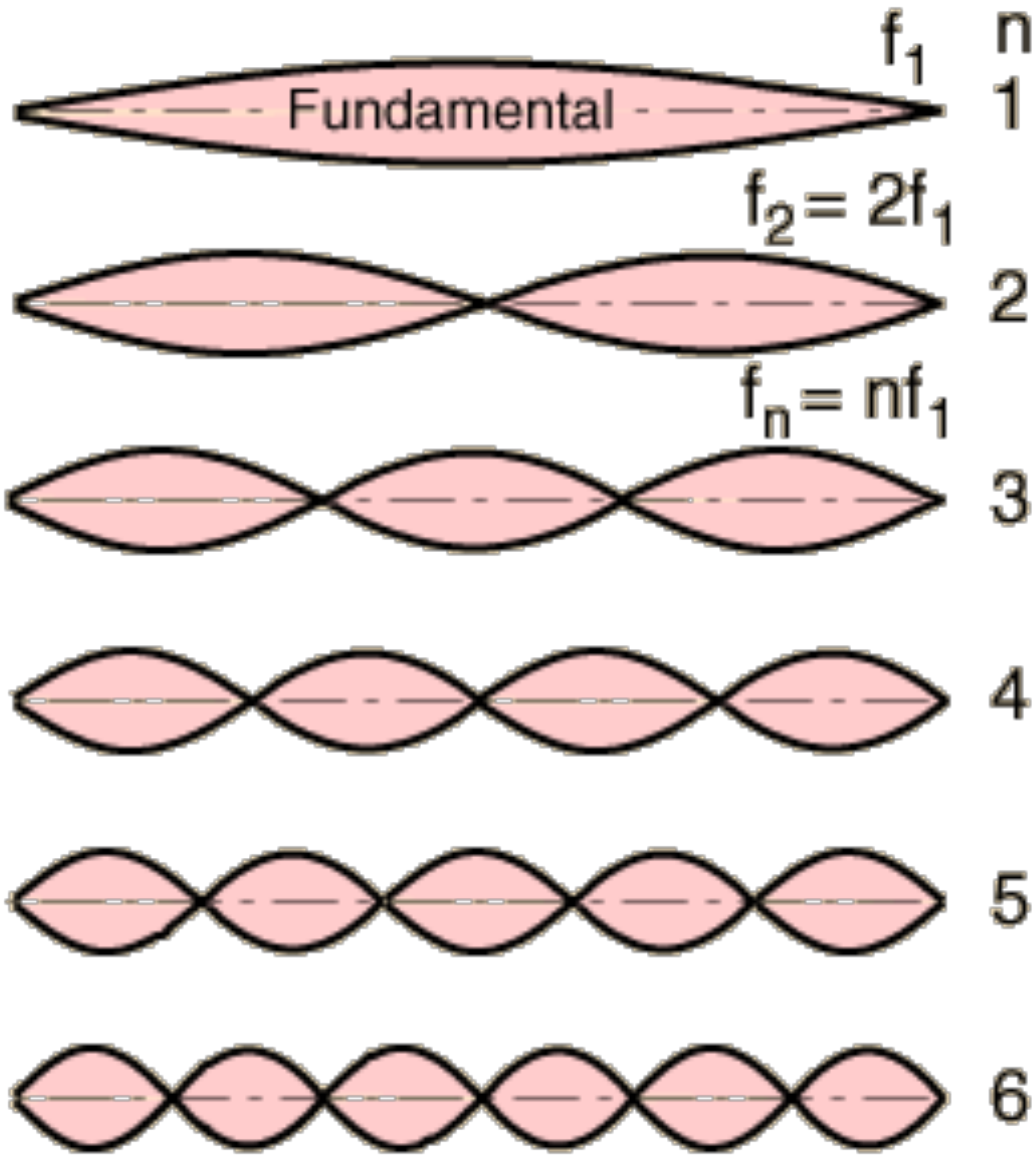
$L = 3\lambda/2$ $f_3 = 3v/2L = 3f_1$

$L = 2\lambda$ $f_4 = 2v/L = 4f_1$

$L = 5\lambda/2$ $f_5 = 5v/2L = 5f_1$

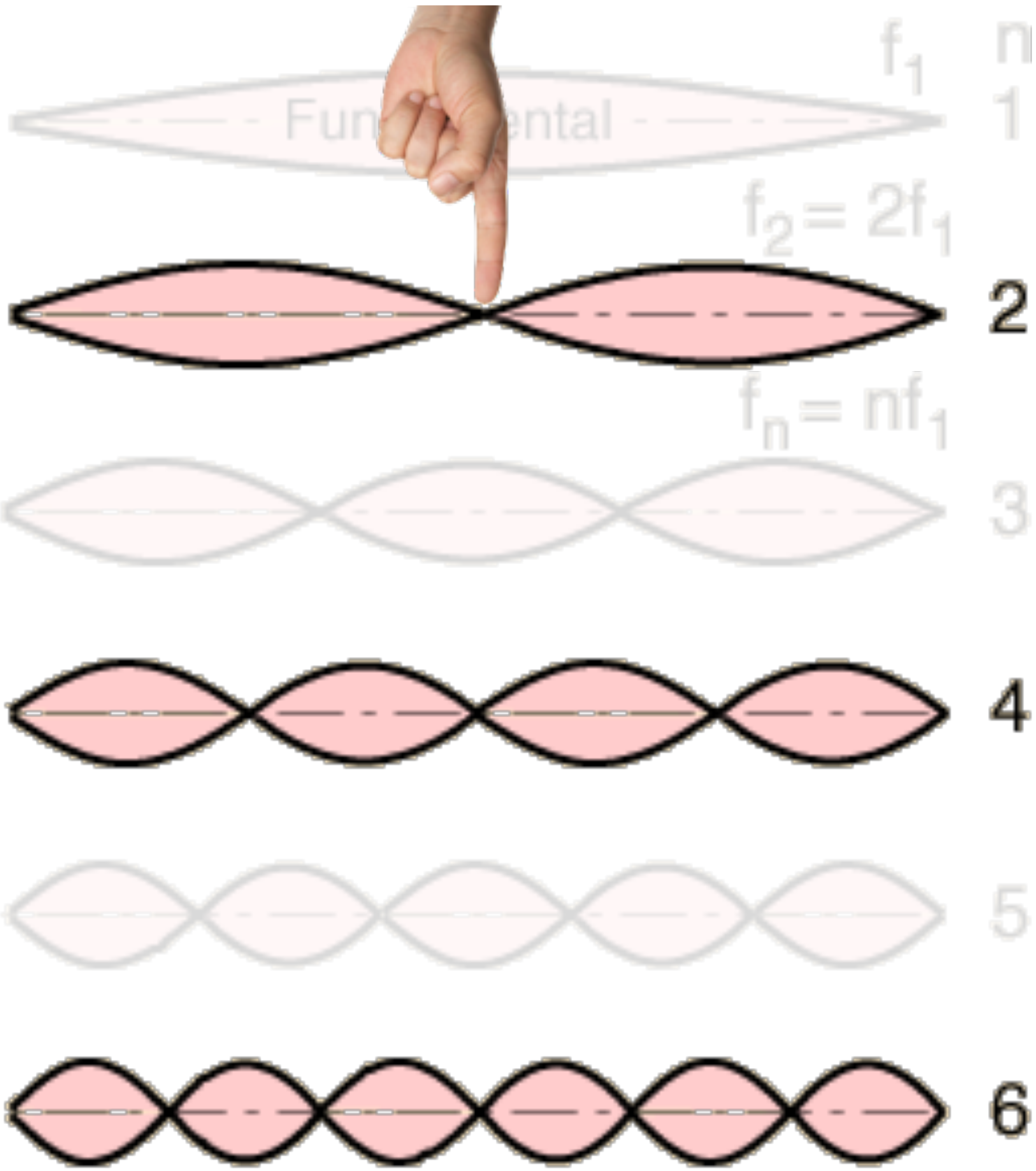
$L = 3\lambda$ $f_6 = 3v/L = 6f_1$

Harmonics/Overtones



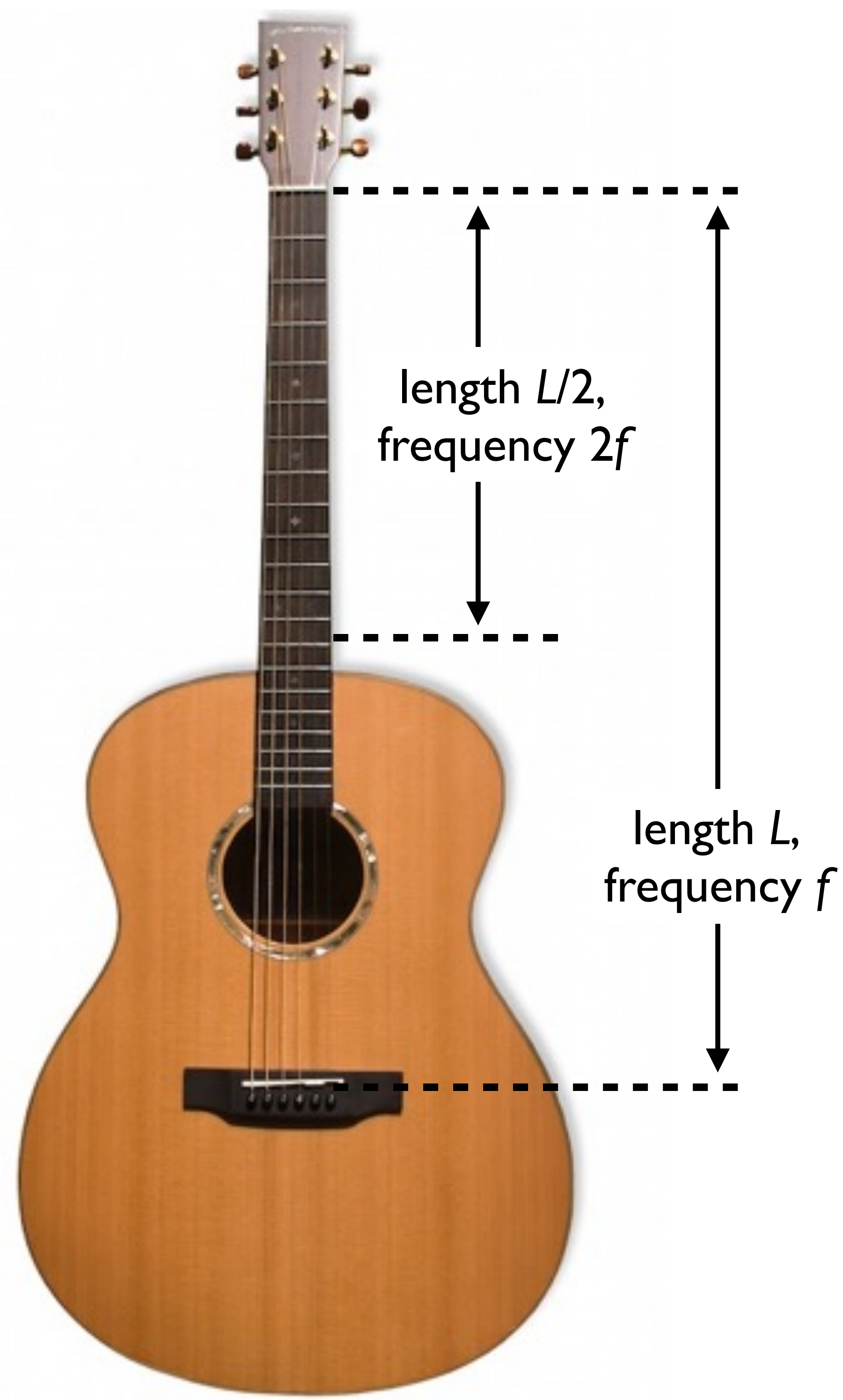
- An open string will vibrate in its fundamental mode *and* overtones at the same time
- True not just for strings, but all vibrating objects
- We will demonstrate the presence of overtones by making a spectrogram of a plucked string

Harmonics/Overtones



- If a string is touched at its midpoint, it can only vibrate at frequencies with a node at the midpoint
- The odd-integer harmonics (including the fundamental frequency) are suppressed
- Question: what will the note sound like?

Notes and String Length



- Mathematical relationship between string length and pitch
- When you halve the string, the pitch goes up by one octave
- Cutting the string in half means the frequency goes up by 2
- One octave = doubling of the frequency of the note
- Let's try it out with a couple of monochords…

Simple Harp

- Music Maker "lap harp" for teaching music to children
- Very simple layout with 9 identical strings
- Question: does the string length drop by half as we go up in octaves? Let's measure it…

Simple Harp

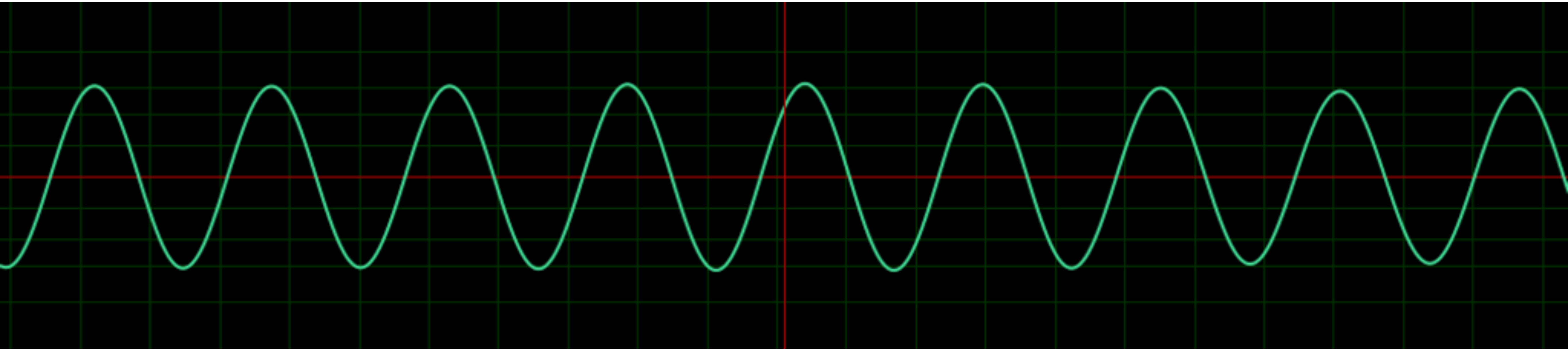
- Music Maker "lap harp" for teaching music to children
- Very simple layout with 9 identical strings
- Question: does the string length drop by half as we go up in octaves? Let's measure it…
- Remember: $f_1 = v/\lambda_1 = \sqrt{(T/\rho)}/2L$
- String tension (and density) matter as well as length!

Piano Strings

- Instrument makers take advantage of the dependence of f on T and ρ as well as L
- About 20T of tension (all strings combined) in a grand piano
- Note: the bass strings are much thicker and denser than the treble strings
- Otherwise, the frame would need to be 100s of feet long

Playing the Harp

- If we pluck **G4**, what do you expect to observe?



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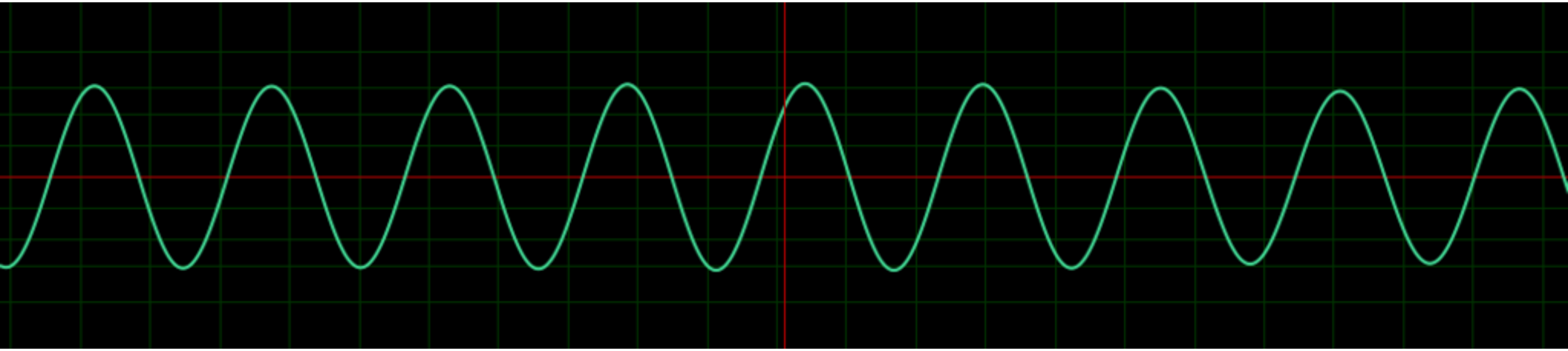
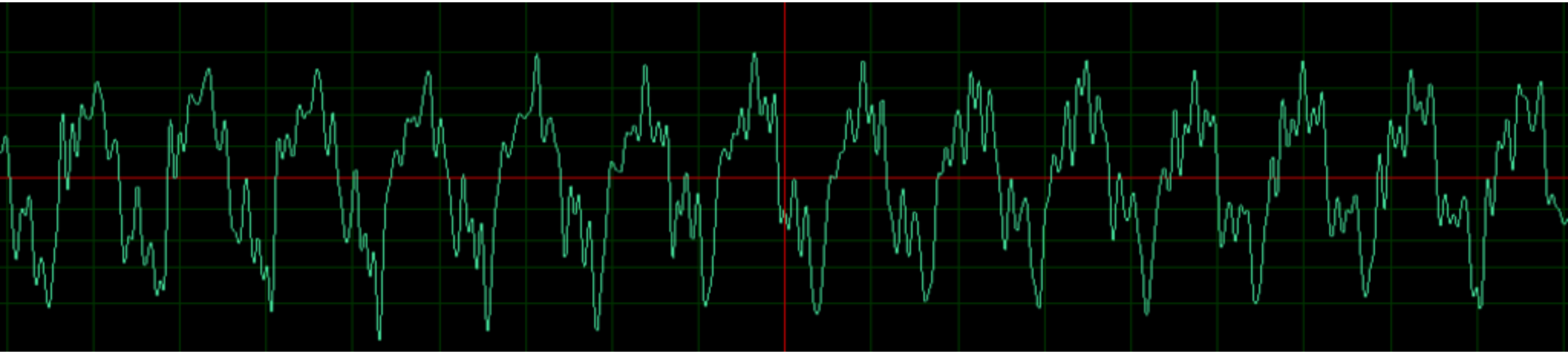
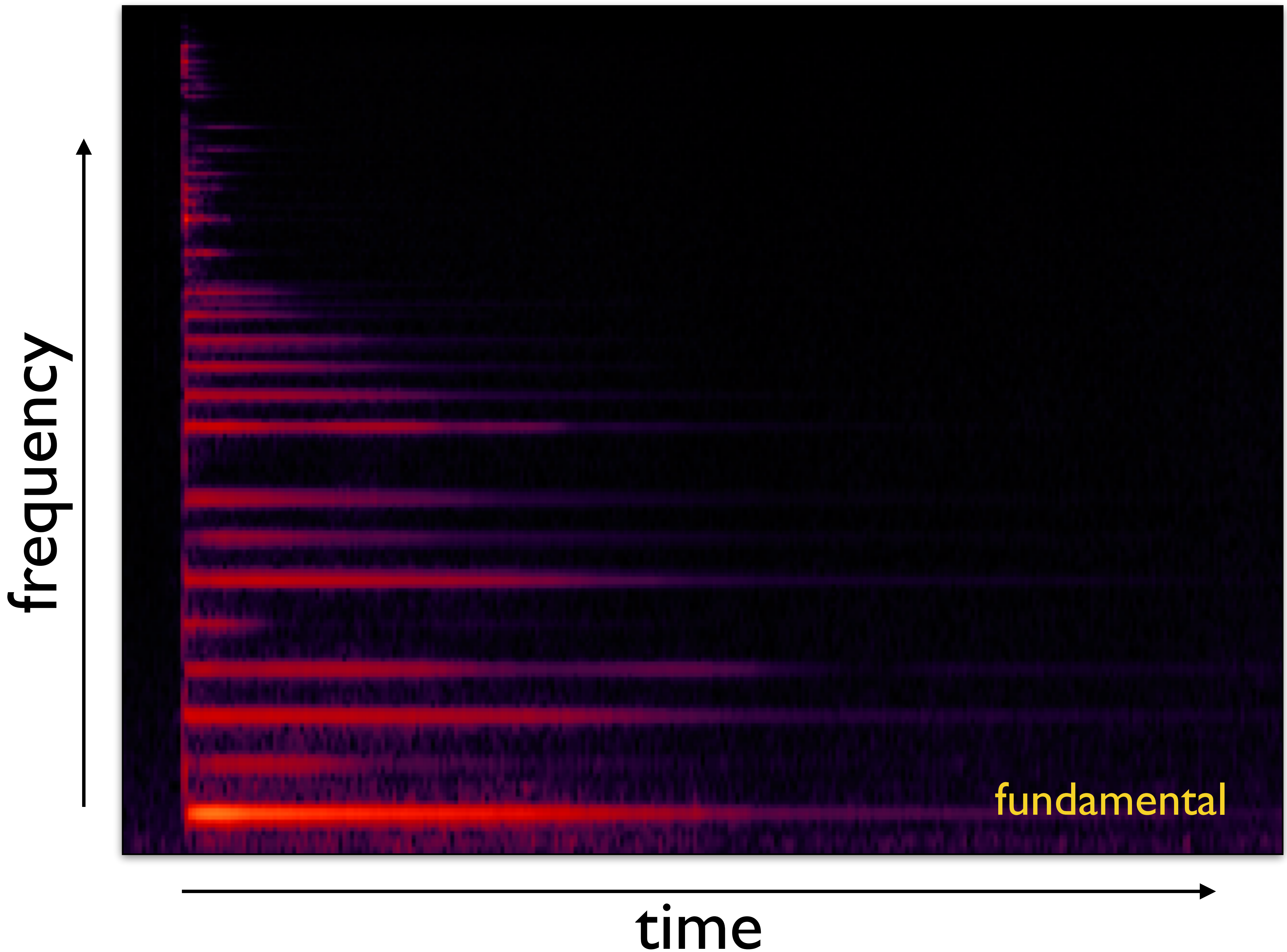


- In fact, this is the true waveform:



Spectrogram of the Harp



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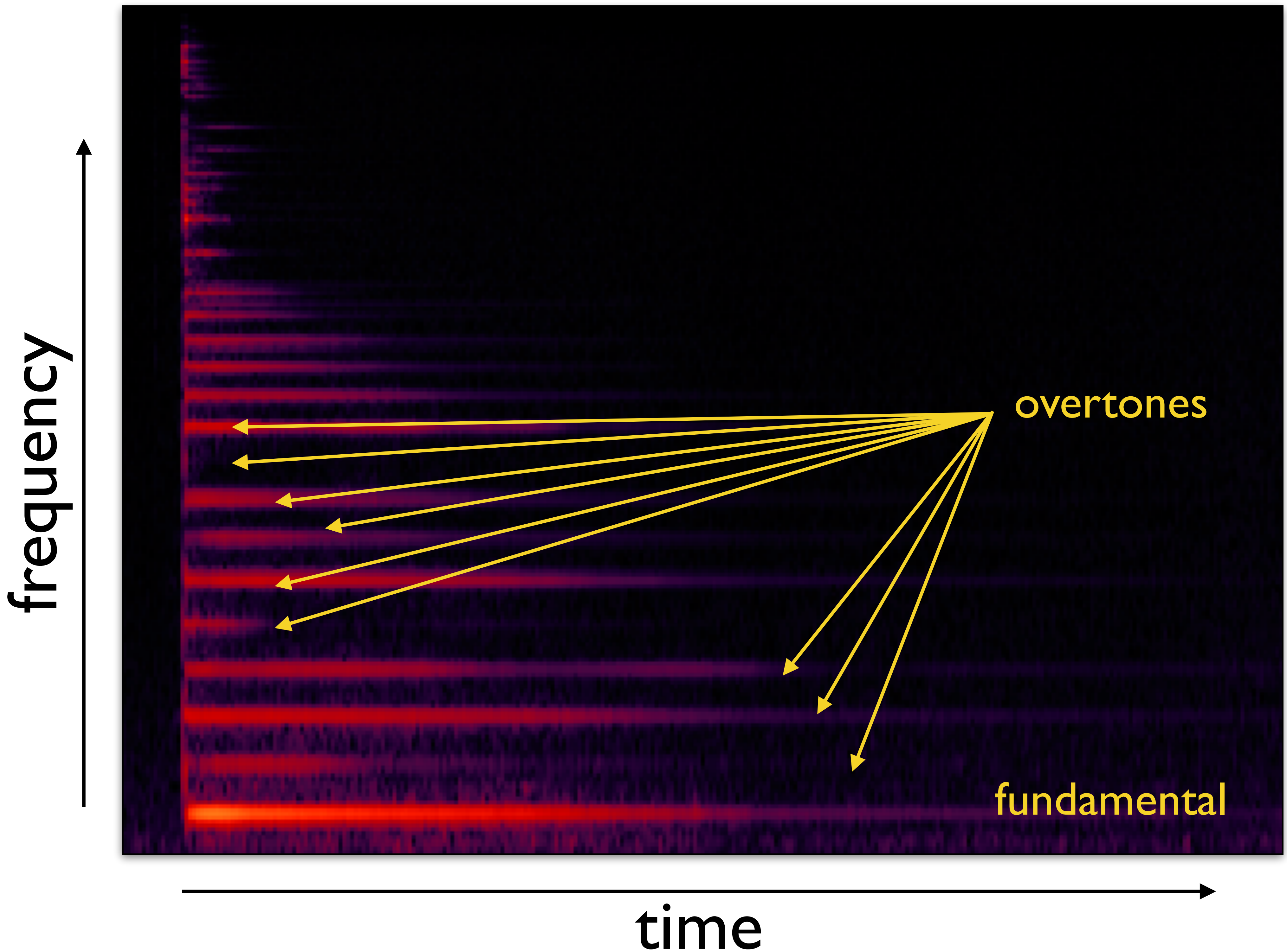

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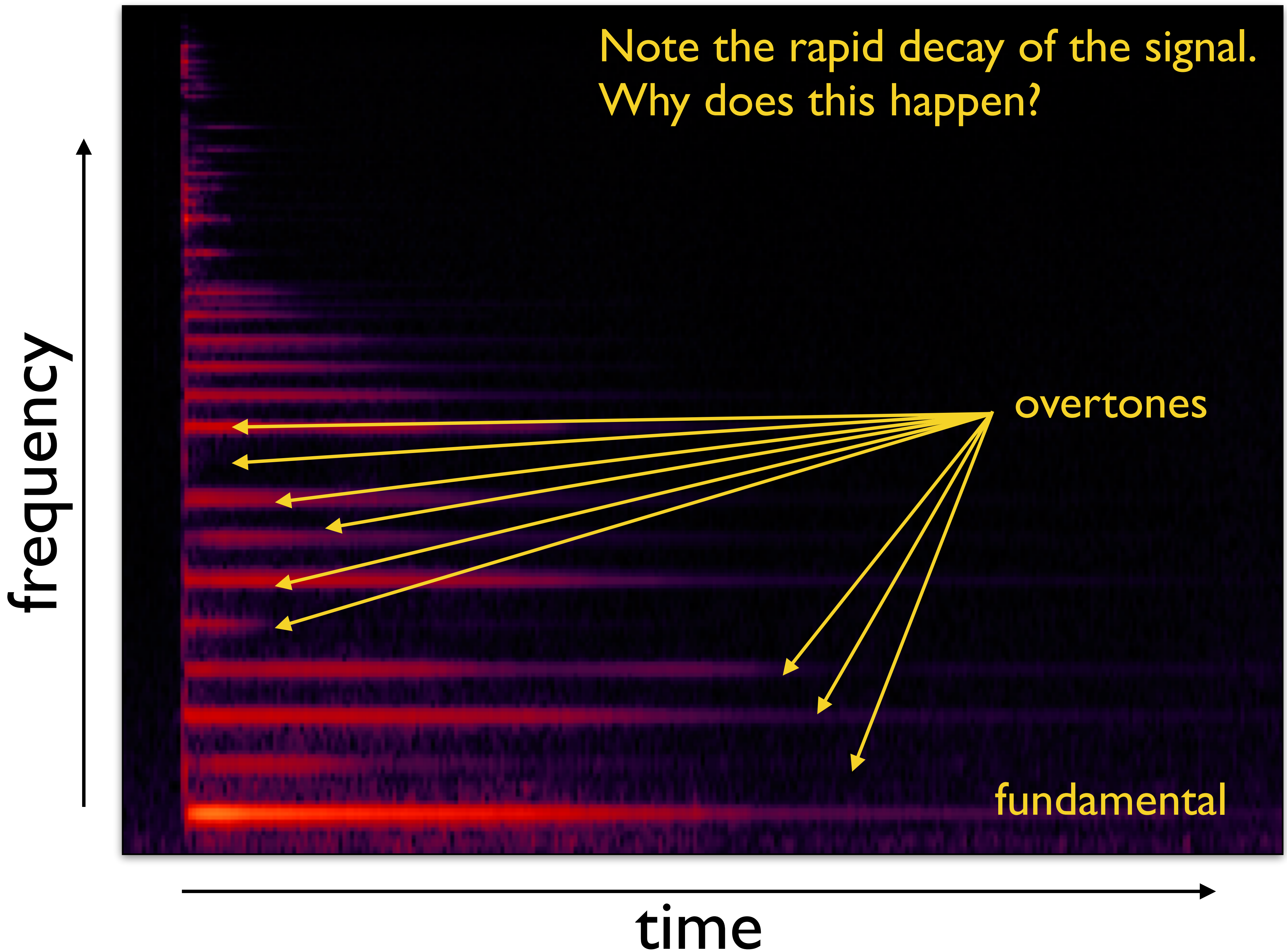
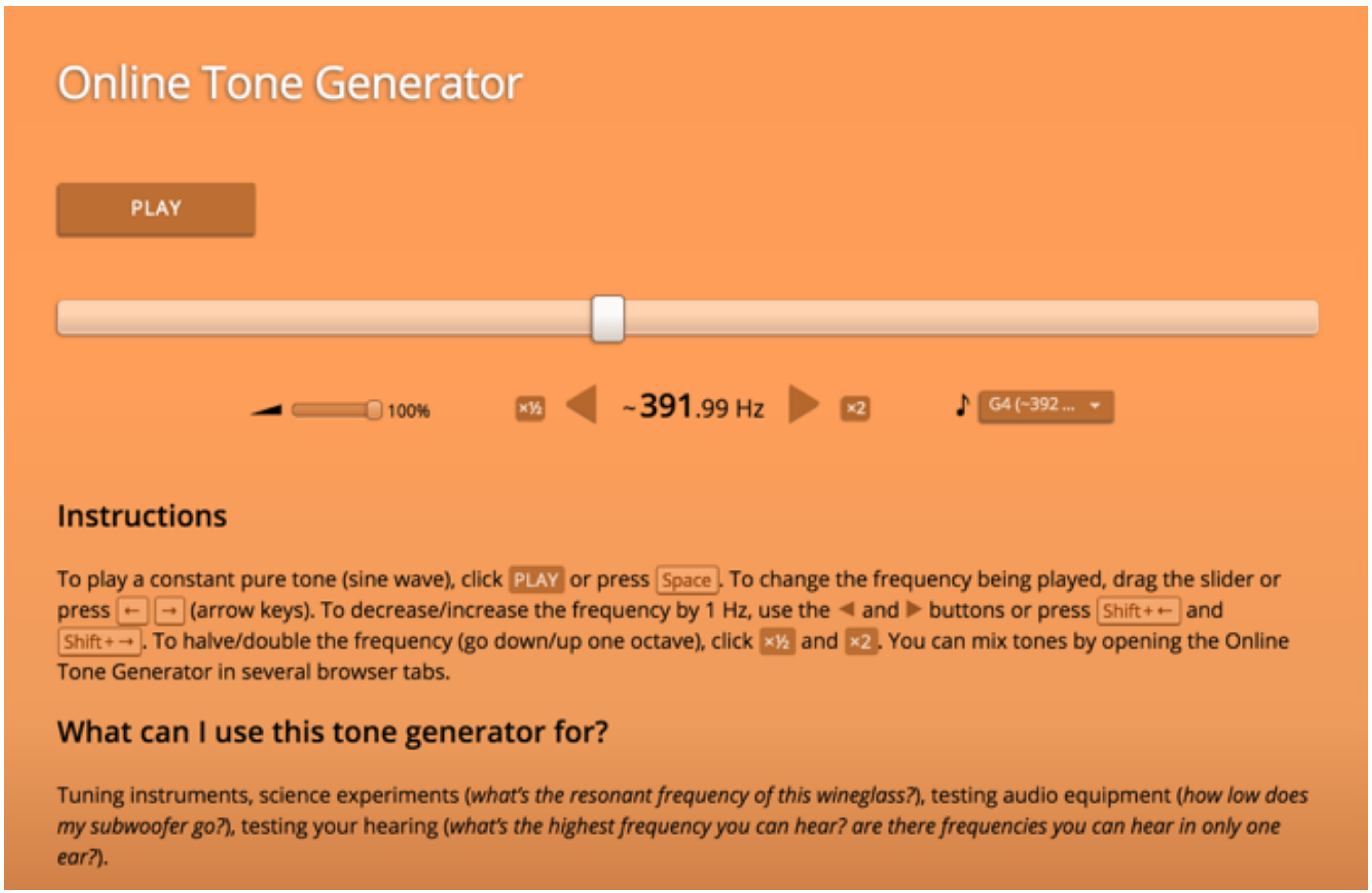


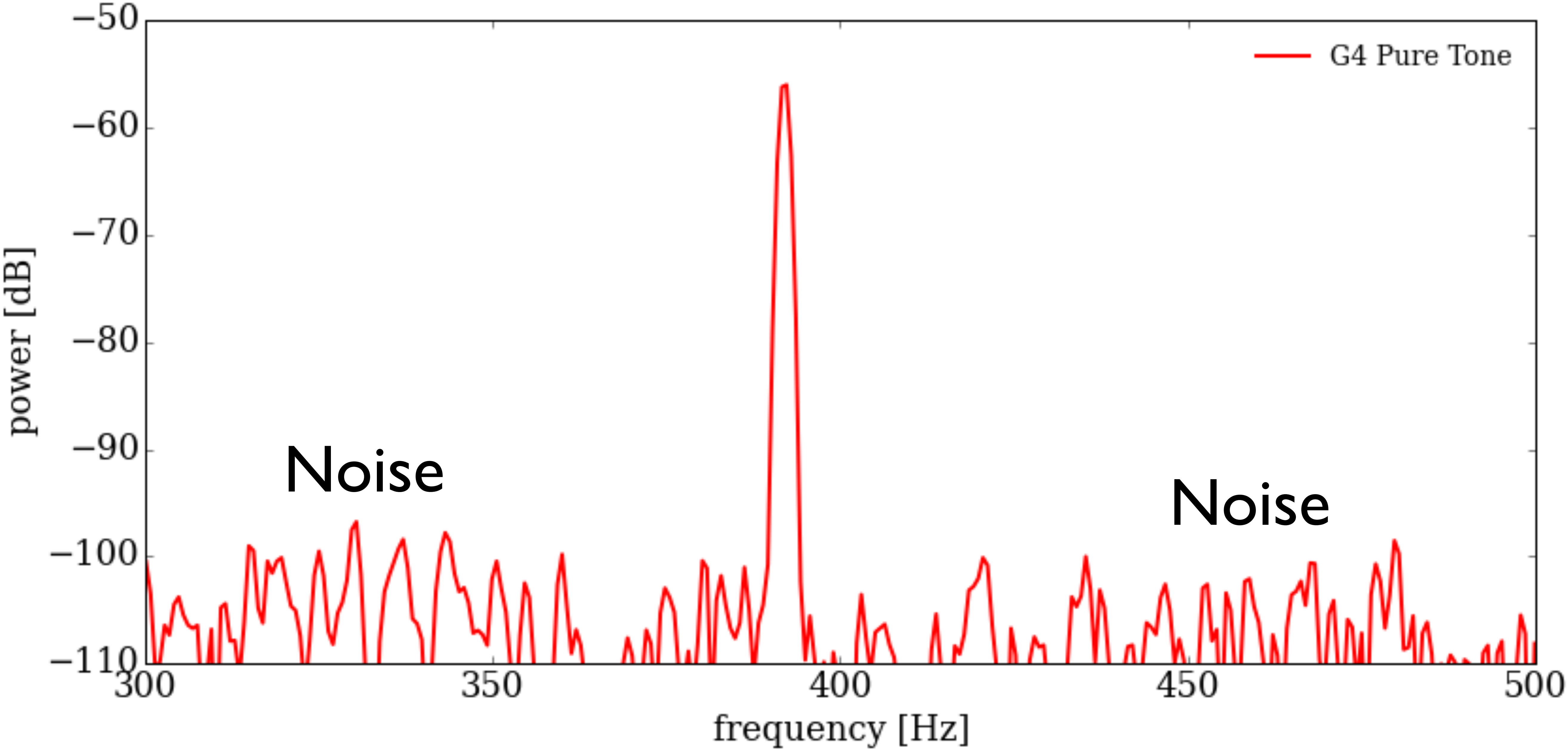
Making Pure Tones

- If you don't have an open speaker and function generator, you can go here:
  - http://plasticity.szynalski.com/tone-generator.htm



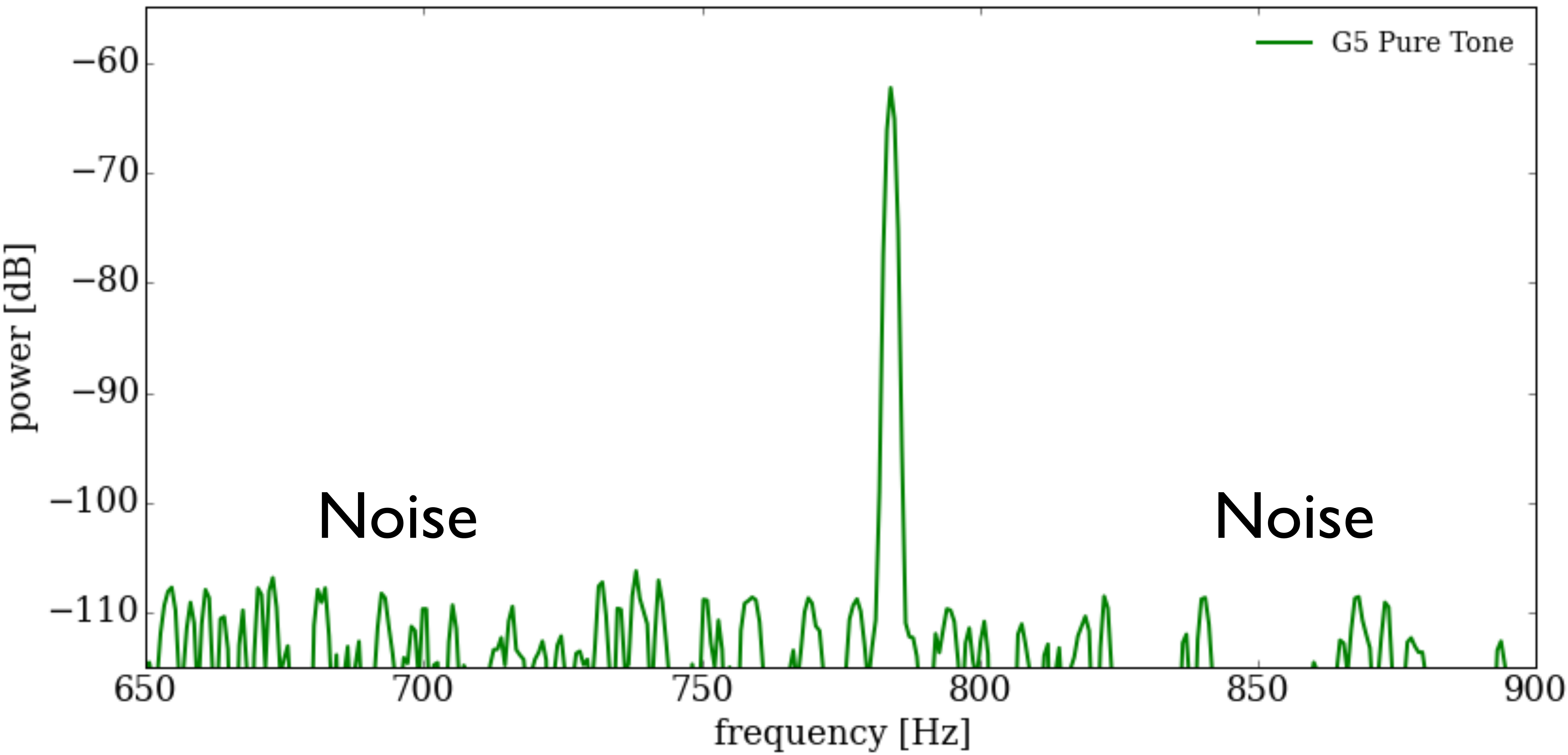
Spectrum of a Pure Tone

- Pure sine wave looks like a spike at one frequency



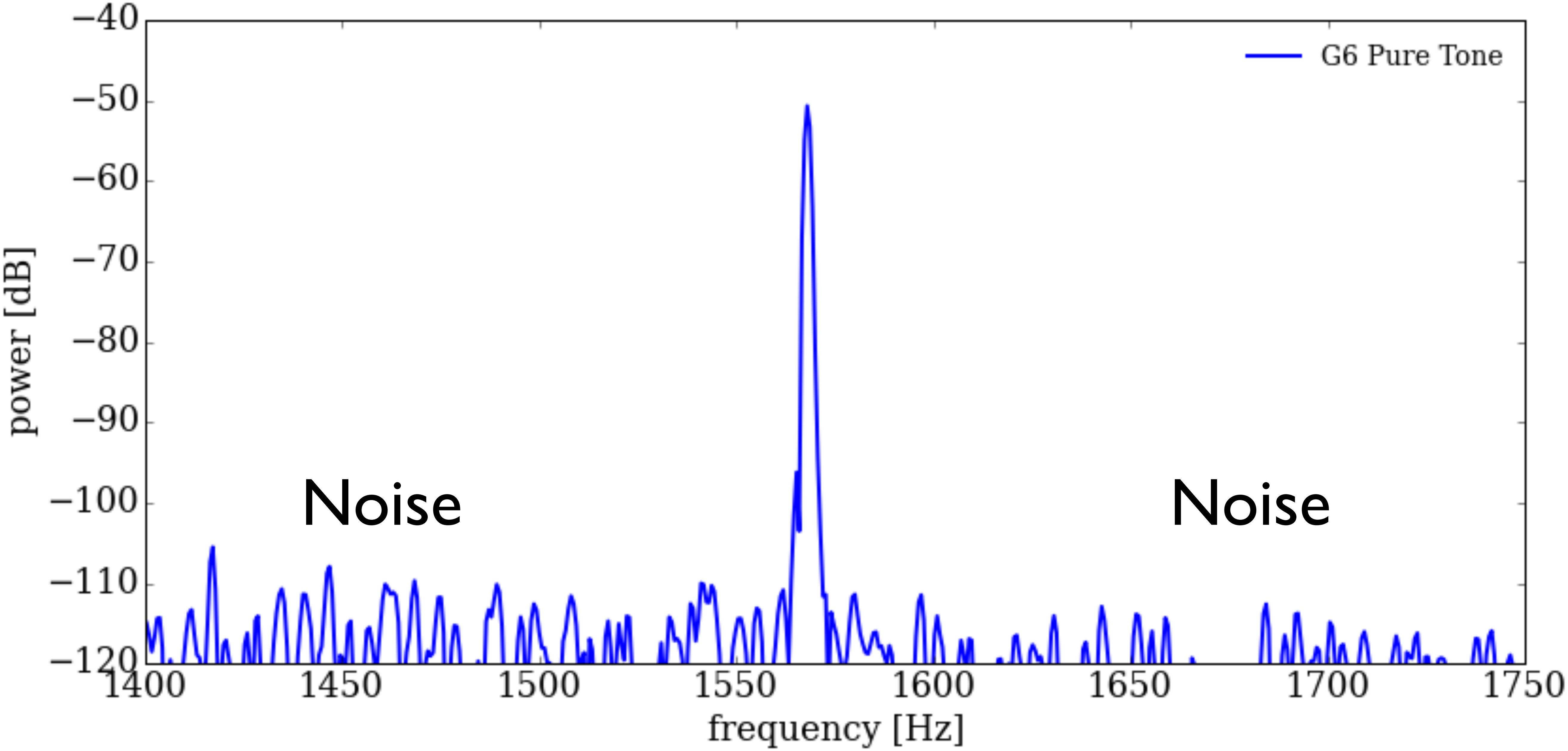
Spectrum of Pure G5

- Pure sine wave looks like a spike at one frequency



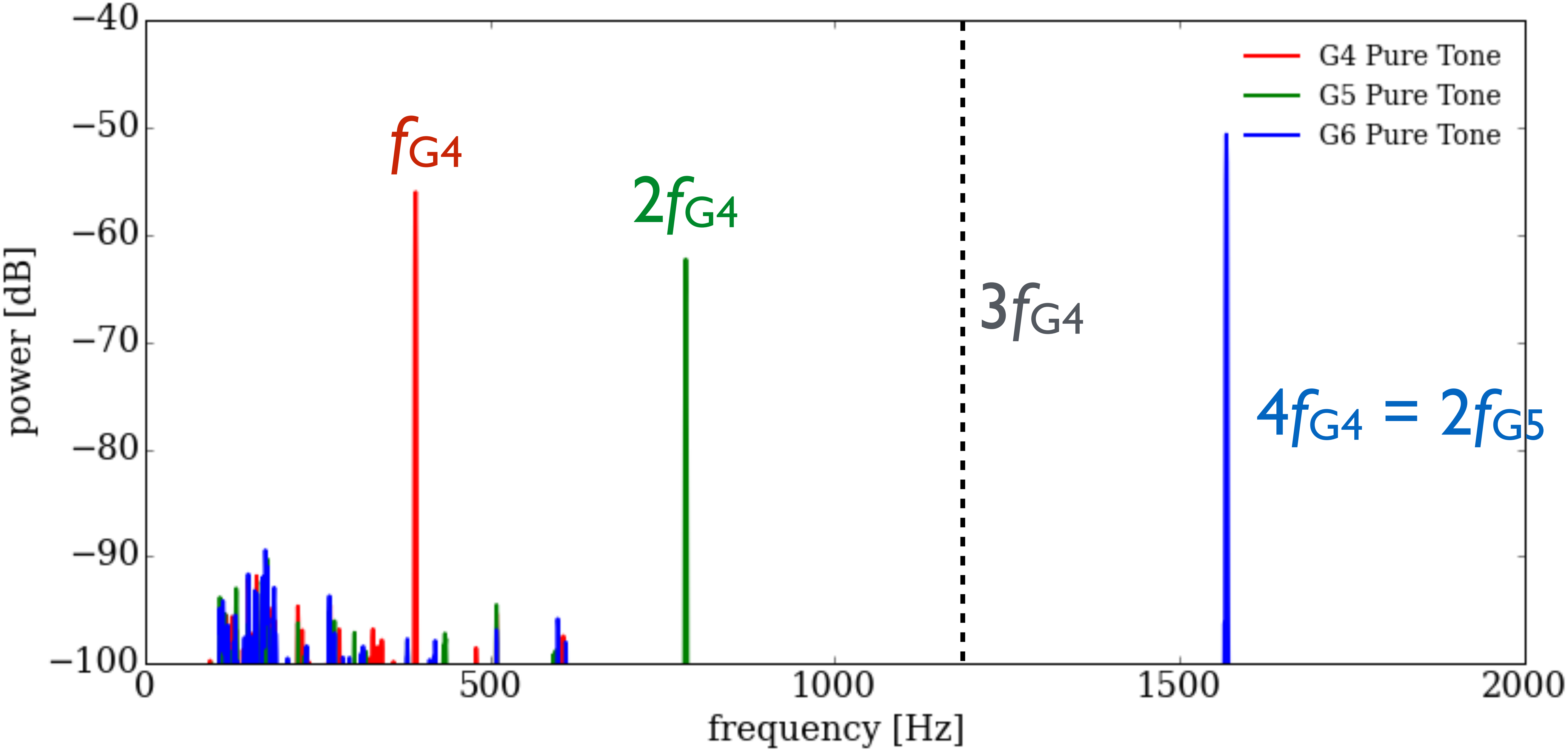
Spectrum of Pure G6

- Pure sine wave looks like a spike at one frequency

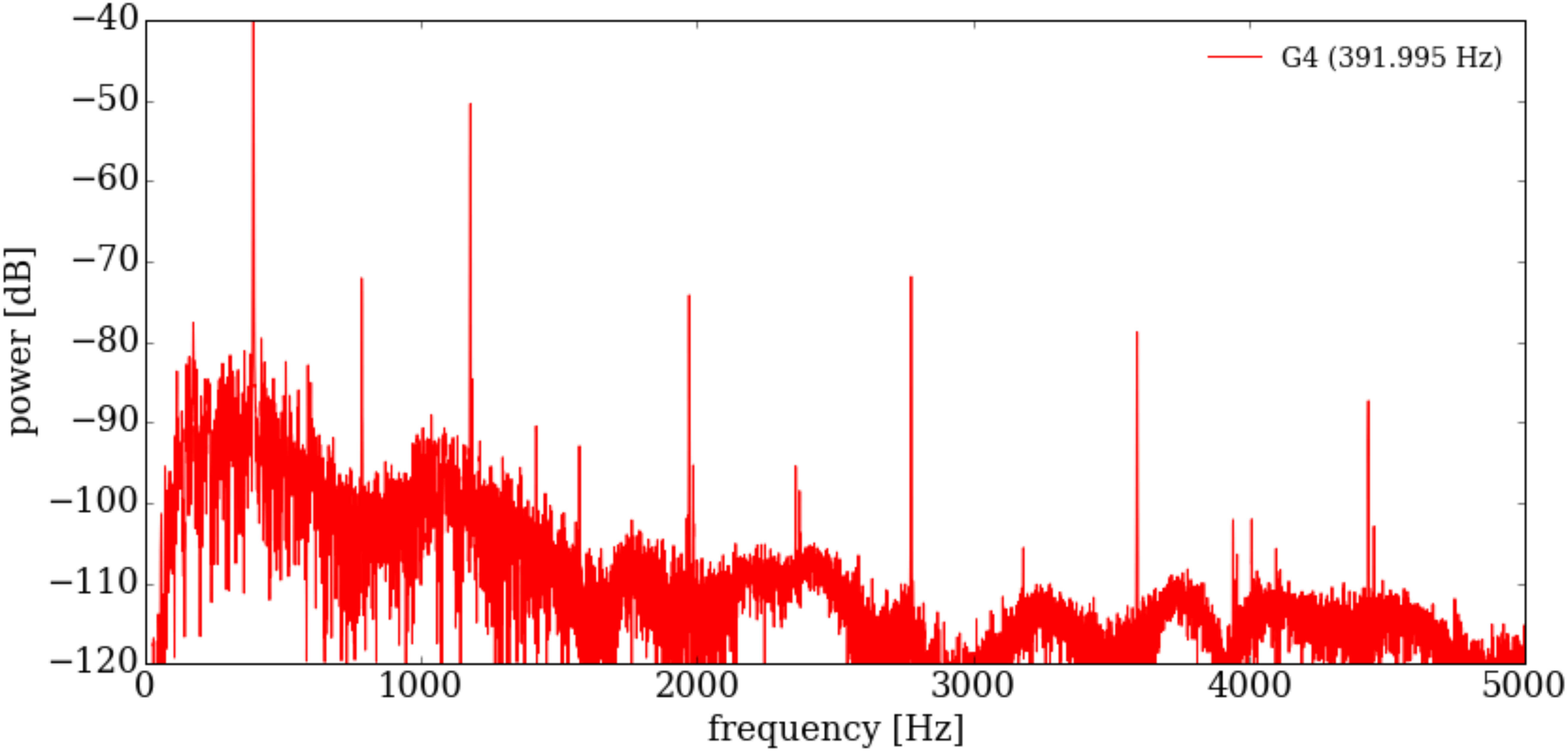


Pure G4, G5, G6

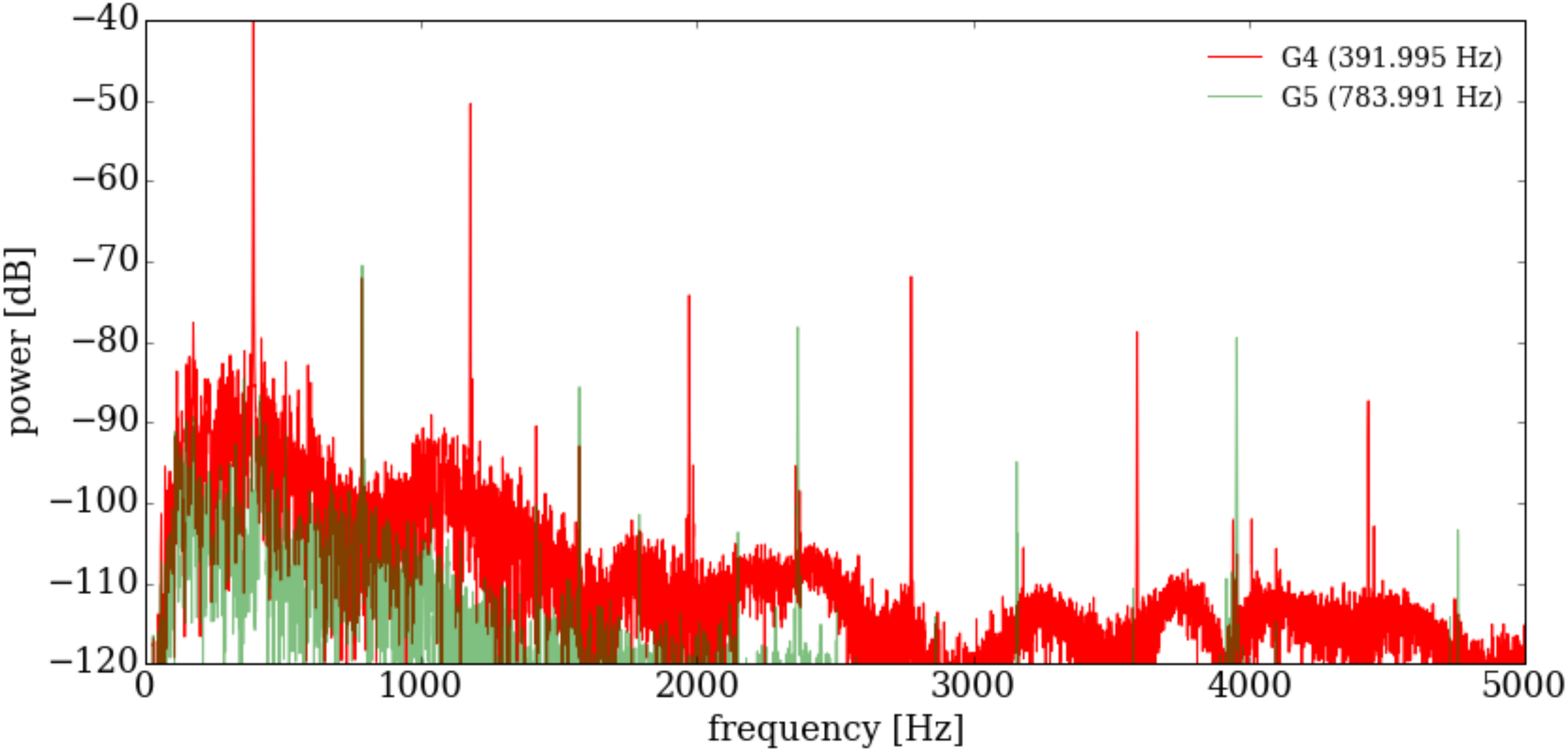
- Note the integer relationship between the pure tones



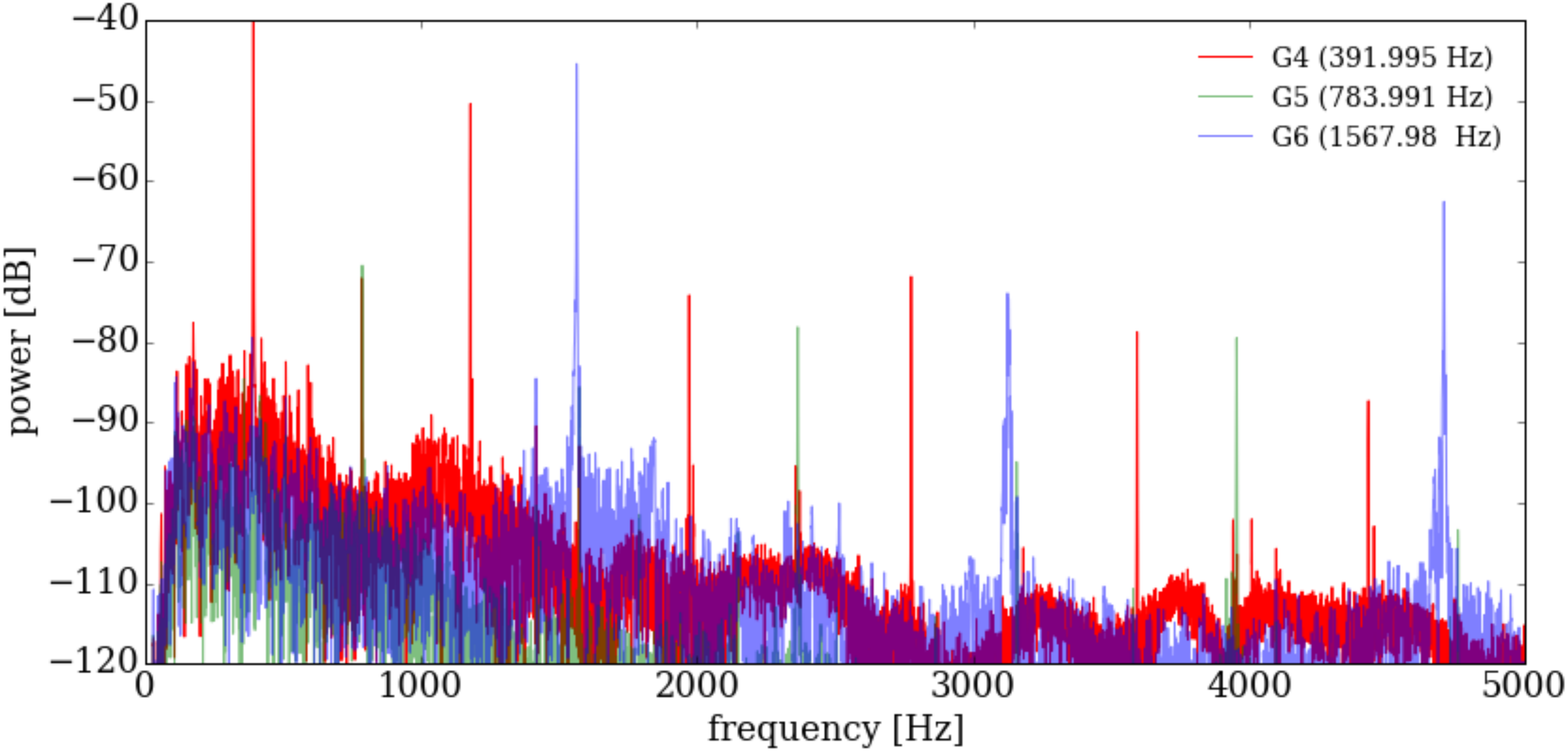
Power Spectrum of G4



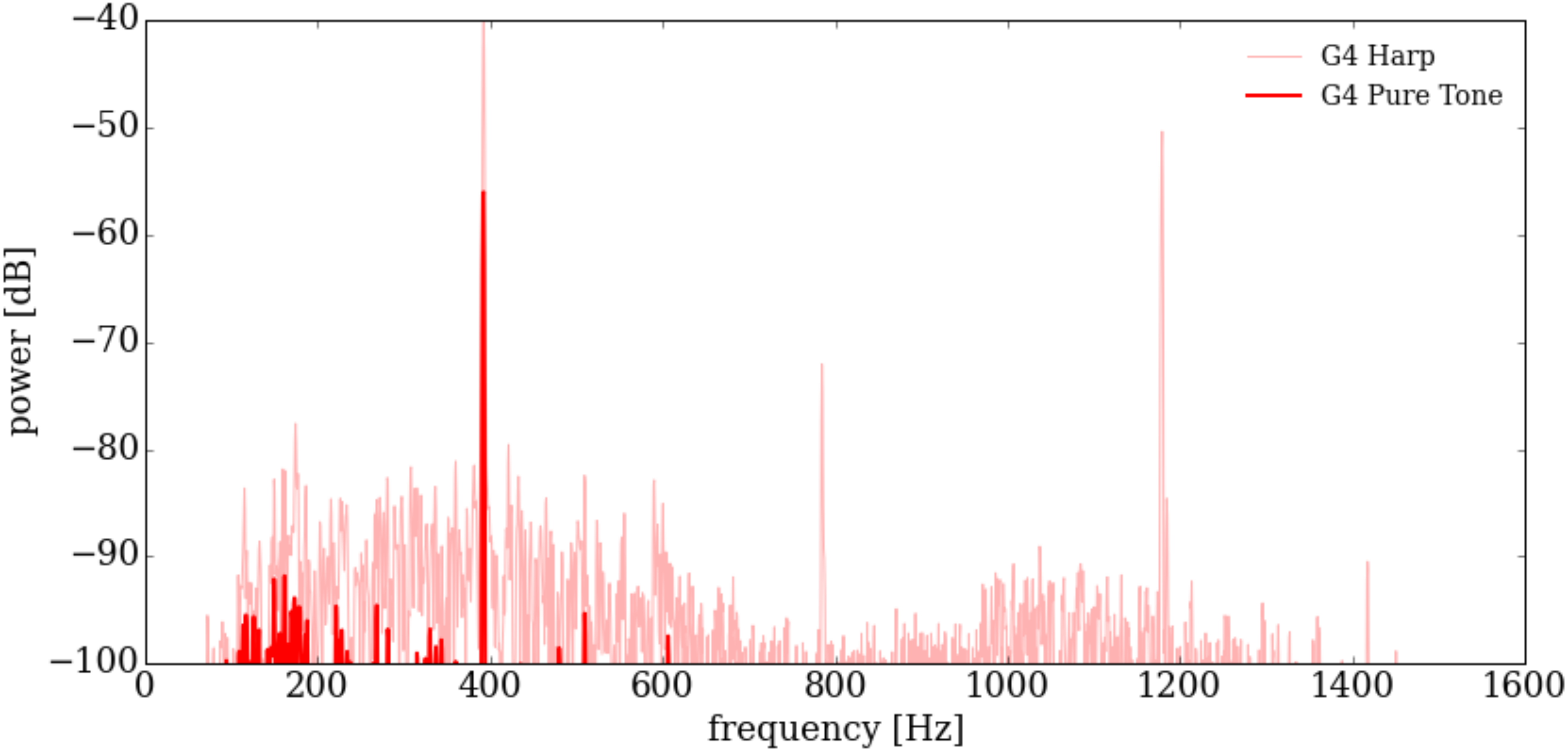
Spectrum of G4 and G5



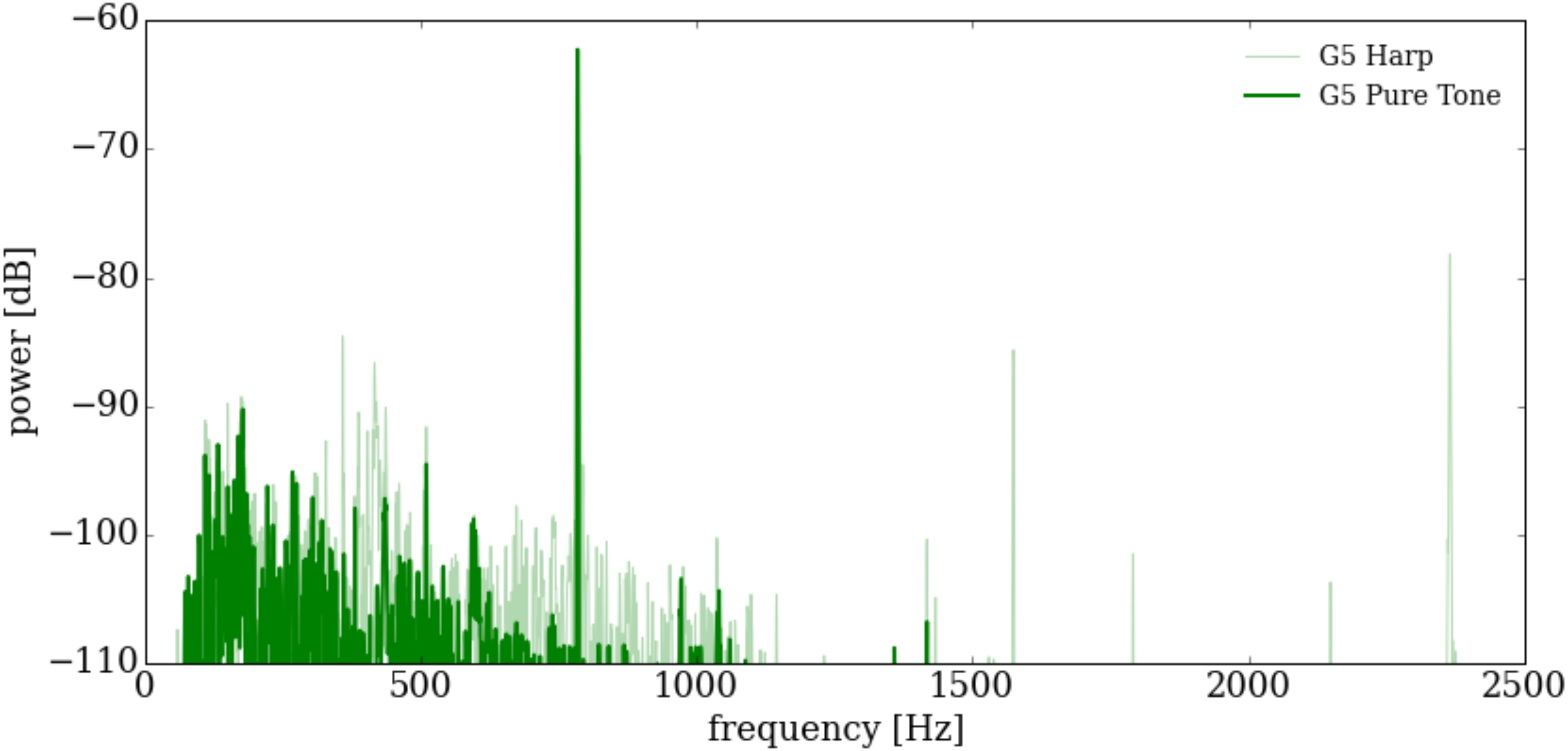
Spectrum of G4, G5, & G6



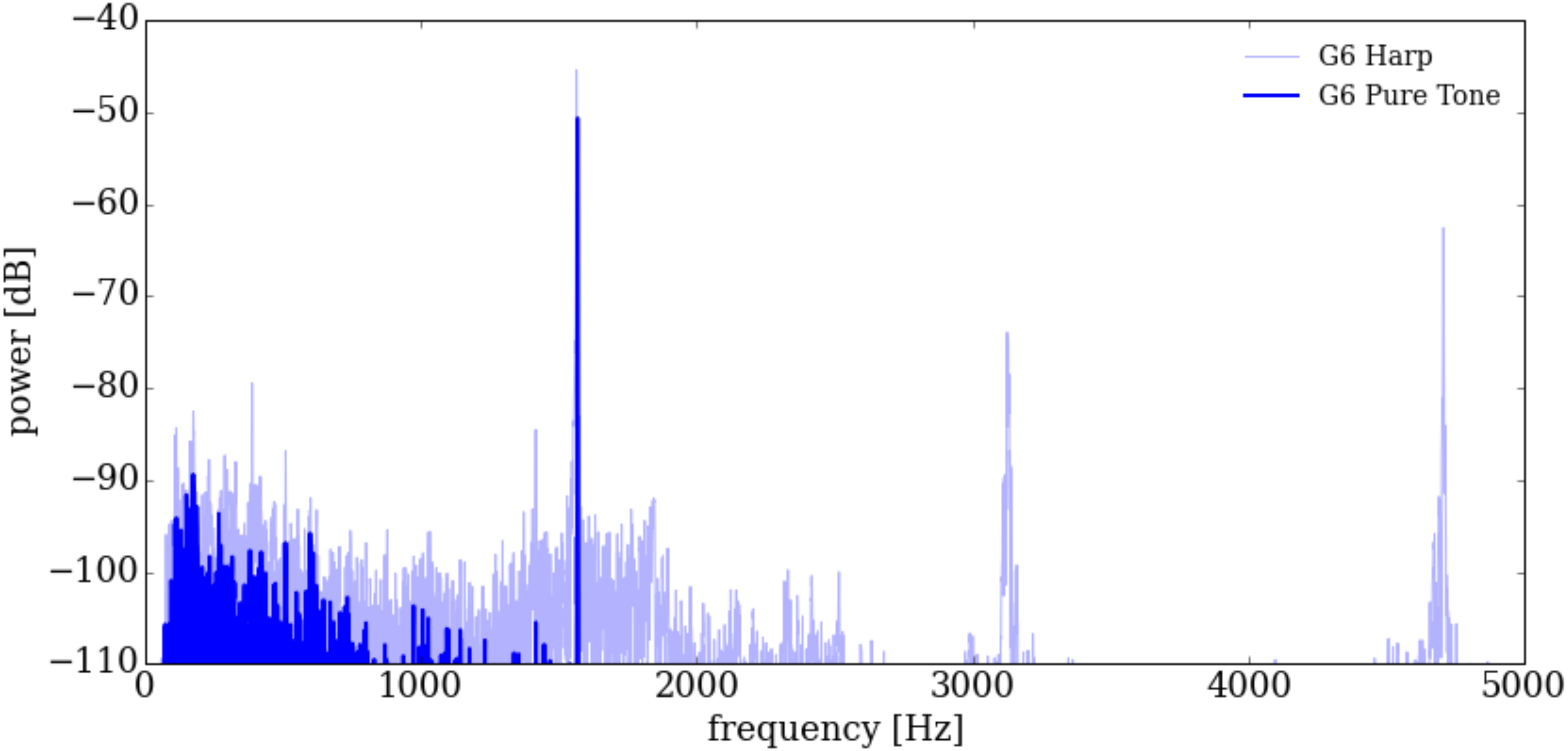
Harp and Pure Tone: G4



Harp and Pure Tone: G5

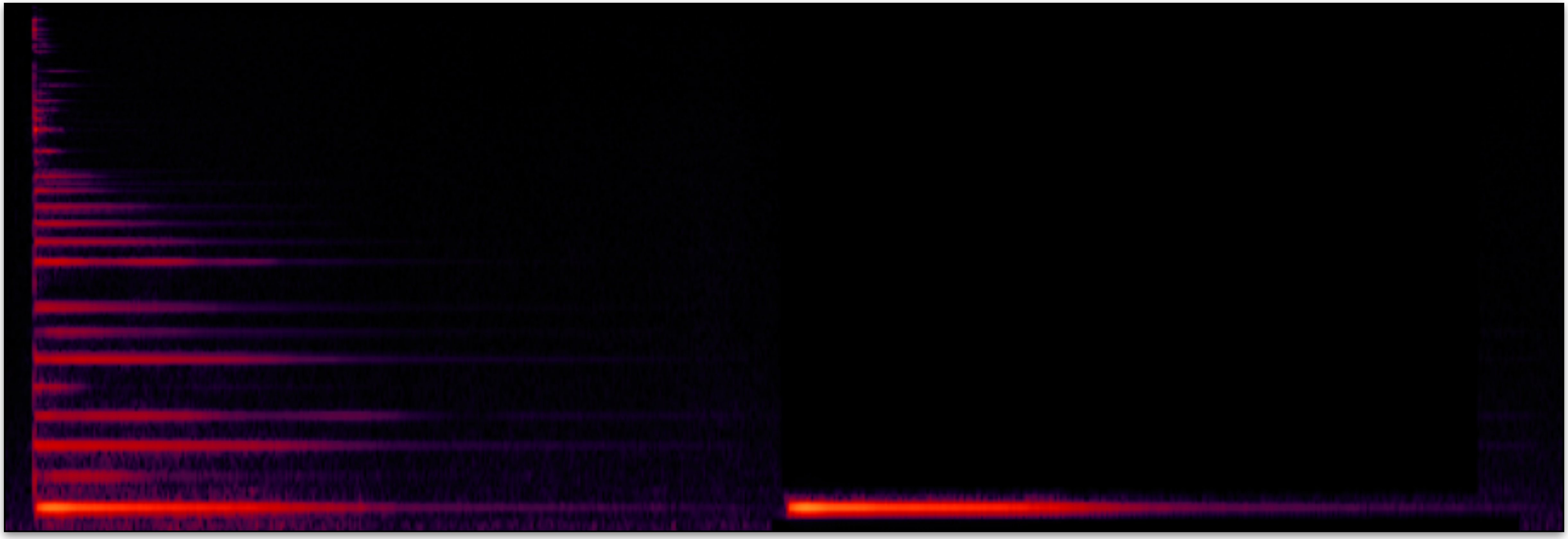


Harp and Pure Tone: G5



“Cleaning” the Spectrogram

- We can use Audition to remove the overtones from the second “pluck” in the spectrogram



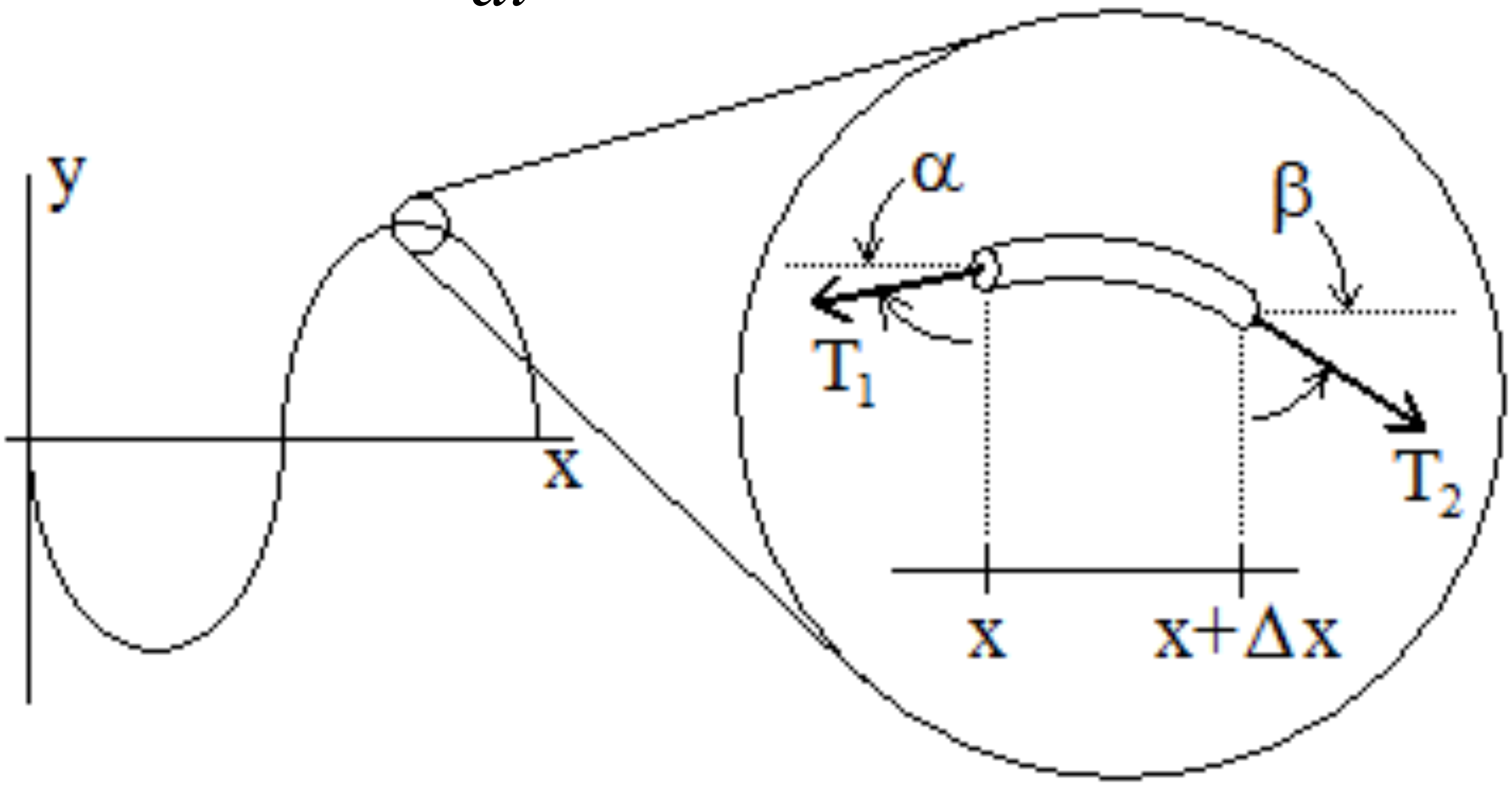
- What do you think the second pluck will sound like after cleaning?

Summary

- Waves on a string move with velocity $v = \sqrt{T/\rho}$
  - T is the string tension and ρ is the density
- Open strings fixed at both ends will exhibit standing waves
  - Increasing number of higher harmonics or overtones
  - Integer multiples of fundamental tone with $f_1=\sqrt{(T/\rho)}/2L$
  - Nodes: positions where the string doesn't oscillate
  - Antinodes: positions of maximum oscillation
- When a string is plucked or driven, all of the overtones can be excited simultaneously. But only some are dominant and determine the timbre

Wave on a Rope: Geometry

$$\rho\Delta x \cdot \frac{d^2 y}{dt^2} = -T_2 \sin\beta - T_1 \sin\alpha$$



$$T_{2x} = T_2 \cos\beta \approx T$$

$$T_{1x} = T_1 \cos\alpha \approx T$$

Deriving the Wave Equation

$$\rho\Delta x \cdot \frac{d^2 y}{dt^2} = -T_2 \sin\beta - T_1 \sin\alpha$$

forces on rope segment

$$\frac{\rho\Delta x}{T} \cdot \frac{d^2 y}{dt^2} = -\frac{T_2 \sin\beta}{T} - \frac{T_1 \sin\alpha}{T}$$

divide both sides by *T*

$$\approx -\frac{T_2 \sin\beta}{T_2 \cos\beta} - \frac{T_1 \sin\alpha}{T_1 \cos\alpha}$$

substitute expression for *x* components of *T*

$$= -\tan\beta - \tan\alpha$$

$$= -\left(\left.\frac{dy}{dx}\right|_x - \left.\frac{dy}{dx}\right|_{x+\Delta x} \right)$$

Note that the tangents are equal to the slope at either end

$$\frac{\rho}{T} \cdot \frac{d^2 y}{dt^2} = \frac{1}{\Delta x}\left(\left.\frac{dy}{dx}\right|_{x+\Delta x} - \left.\frac{dy}{dx}\right|_x \right) = \frac{d^2 y}{dx^2}$$

group terms and simplify