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I will discuss two heuristic ideas concerning the spectrum of Laplacians, and I will give examples from the realms of manifolds, graphs and fractals of theorems that validate these heuristics. The first concerns Laplacians that do not have discrete spectra. Here I introduce the notion of "spectral mass" as an average of the diagonal of the kernel of the spectral projection operators, to serve as a substitute for the eigenvalue counting function (here the meaning of "average" depends on the context). The second is an asymptotic Schur's Lemma to describe the proportion of the spectrum corresponding to eigenfunctions transforming according to the irreducible representations of a finite symmetry group of the Laplacian. In particular, the Sierpinski gasket Laplacian has much smaller remainder terms than most nonfractal examples. (Received August 04, 2010)