

Stephen Malinowski's Bach, Fugue in A minor, BWV 904 Visualization Review

In Stephen Malinowski's visualization of Bach's Fugue in A minor, they make use of shape, color, and line to convey different aspects of the musical piece. Line is used as a guide from note to note as well as an indicator for pitch as if on a musical score. Additionally, proximity between each note on the line indicates longer lengths of time between different notes. Type of instrument is displayed by the shape of the note, with brass as circles as an example and squares for woodwind instruments. The size of each circle signifies how long a particular note is held, but a different method is used for the square notes, which only uses the line distance-between-notes indicator for how long a note is held. Lastly, color is used for indicating different instruments within brass/woodwind.

The visualization uses different aspects such as color, proximity, shape, and size expertly to convey different aspects of a musical piece. However, the use of the line as both the pitch and the guide causes some contradiction in some of the hold notes. For example, if you were to go from a low note, hold a high note, and then back to a low note, the visualization would appear like you are slowly changing your pitch from high to low, but that is not the case all the time. There is little distinction between those two possible scenarios.

As an additional small complaint, the usage of squares to shift focus as a different instrument works and conveys that idea easily, I do think that the squares are a bit difficult to look at. The colors are much too bright and don't work very well together. Perhaps using different color themes for the brass and woodwind separately would be much more easy on the eyes (for example, pastels for the woodwind section and more earthy-toned colors for the brass section).