

Soundtrack as a Scaffold for Musique Concrète Composing at Secondary School

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This paper is derived from a grounded theory investigation into the processes that support musique concrète composing at secondary school. 'Soundtrack' is the label given in this study to one of those processes. It refers to a sound file composed to illustrate a video or slideshow of images. For the purposes of this study, the soundtrack consists of 'found' (i.e. recorded) sounds. The idea for this process arose from data that emerged during the early stages of the research, specifically the evocative imagery used by sixteen-year-old students when describing the soundscapes they had composed. In follow-up workshops in six schools, the research questions focused on how different types of images facilitated students in their soundtrack composing and on how soundtrack composing prepared them to undertake musique concrète composing. Eleven soundtracks were composed by nineteen students. They used literal, surreal and invented images. Examples are played to demonstrate findings, including the following: (i) a sequence of literal images can stimulate motivic development and structural progression in the soundtrack; (ii) surreal images can foster the blending of disparate sounds and (iii) images for which there are no existing sound associations can promote timbral exploration and invention. Creative restrictions in these visual scaffolds are acknowledged. To position the paper within the context of the main study, an outline is given of the composing techniques that are common to soundtrack and musique concrète. Finally, a recommendation is made that soundtrack composing be considered as a preparatory stage for musique concrète composing at secondary school.

Key words: musique concrète; visual scaffolding; soundtrack