

Modelling Musique Concrète Composing at Secondary School

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Demonstration, explanation and imitation are important pedagogical tools. By working out a 16-bar melody and stock chord progressions on the board, for example, music teachers reveal to their students the thought processes that are involved in core composing tasks. A problem arises, however, when musique concrète composing is introduced at secondary school level. Without conventional elements such as a beat, a melodic line, harmonic support and instrumental timbres, appropriate criteria for both creating and evaluating the students' compositions must be stipulated. Modelling is required. But how can someone who is not a composer create an example that is valid and 'correct'? Set in a social constructivist framework, this qualitative scoping study addresses the following research question: 'In what way might a teacher support secondary school students in their composing and understanding of musique concrète?' Using an audio editor and found sounds, the teacher modelled two contrasting pieces, lasting five minutes in all, during composing workshops with Transition Year students. These highlighted aspects that she considered to be important and were uploaded on the 'Soundcloud' website, along with explanatory notes. Established composers from Ireland and England, music analysts, textbook authors, methodology lecturers, Leaving Cert examiners and Transition year students were invited to listen to the pieces in order to rate them. Findings are derived from their comments, the programme notes, the teacher's reflections, the use of a rubric and the pieces themselves. The discussion hinges on three points: aesthetic values, assessment and the link between tuition and intuition.

Key words: modelling, scaffolding, musique concrète, musical concepts.
