

# **Students Organising Sounds: Examining the fragile relationship between scaffolding and creativity in the area of electroacoustic composition at secondary school level**

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Two points must be made at the outset: (a) Free composition is not a compulsory component of the secondary school curriculum in Ireland and the number of candidates choosing to present original works for their final examination is now in single-digit figures. (b) Although musique concrète and electronic music have been in existence for over sixty years, no electroacoustic work has ever featured on the secondary school music syllabus in the Republic of Ireland. Music teachers who responded to a recent questionnaire explained that they would not know how to tackle the topic with their students, given the technological procedures used in the construction of such works. This paper emerges from and builds on a small-scale scoping study comprising four progressive stages in researching electroacoustic composition at secondary school level in Ireland. All participants were aged 16 and 17. (1) Students analysed programmatic works by the composer Roger Doyle. Supporting material allowed the composer's intentions in the programmatic pieces to be understood quite easily by the listeners. (2) However, no consensus could be reached on the most and least effective aspects of Doyle's abstract pieces. (3) The students were then set a composing task – each would re-create, using an audio editor and real-world sounds, a short piece by an established composer. This pastiche-type assignment would make them become more aware of the relationship between the musical events in the piece. (4) Finally, each student would compose an original piece of musique concrète, lasting between 45 and 60 seconds. The findings will be discussed in this paper and several questions arising from the study will be addressed. How influential is the teacher's modelling of a work on the students? How does a teacher gauge the amount of scaffolding required? Are creativity and independence stymied by an over-reliance on the teacher's ideas?