



UOA D33

MUSIC, DRAMA, DANCE, PERFORMING ARTS,
FILM AND SCREEN STUDIES



RESEARCHER

Peter Nelson

OUTPUT TITLE

Limology

OUTPUT TYPE

Composition

DATE OF PERFORMANCE

28–29 September 2018

FIG. 1

Still from video of *Nómadas*,
 Fei and Milton Wong Experimental
 Theater, SFU Goldcorp Centre for the Arts,
 Vancouver. Choreographer: Henry Daniel,
 Videographer Asad Yahya. © Asad Yahya.
 Used with permission.



Video of performance

<https://www.henrydaniel.ca/contemporary-nomads>

01 / STATEMENT

Limology is an original 20 minute work in three sections for percussion ensemble, composed by Peter Nelson between 2017–18 during a fellowship from the Bogliasco Foundation, as part of a theatrical work in five parts, *Nómadas* conceived by Caribbean-born choreographer Henry Daniel. It was commissioned by Cambridge Music Conference for the Canadian ensemble Fringe Percussion.

Nómadas is a collaborative work with composers Nigel Osborne (UK) and Owen Underhill (Canada), on the subject of the contemporary migration crisis. Preliminary discussions based on existing work by Daniel took place between the four principal collaborators, and one conceptual area was agreed for each of the three composers. *Limology* deals specifically with Mediterranean migration, using structural concepts from border theory. It forms the third part of the work, using images reflecting contemporary media representations.

Swell portrays the surge of the Mediterranean, or any stormy crossing seen from a rubber raft or overcrowded vessel, passing from crisis to loss. *Flight* presents the imagined border between hope and terror, crossed and re-crossed in the mind of the migrant. *Limbo* evokes the temporary stasis of the refugee camp or detention centre. Thematic elements composed by Nelson for *Limology* were taken by Underhill as the basis for the final part of the work.

The decision to work collaboratively was a conscious attempt to share concepts and materials emblematic of the cultural divides and reconciliations at the heart of the project. The place of performance, Squamish land in the heart of the city of Vancouver, was implicated from the start as a site of critical importance in the imagination of the work, as a site settled by immigrants. The cross-cultural imperatives of the creative process led to a work that presents its diverse materials as imagined in the contexts and contrasts of settler culture, and as recognising the encounters arising from contemporary migration.

02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS

Limology: Swell – Flight – Limbo is a musical work in three parts, composed by Peter Nelson for a percussion ensemble of four players.

It was commissioned by the Cambridge Music Conference as part of a larger dance work, *Nómadas*, conceived collaboratively with the choreographer Henry Daniel, and the composers Owen Underhill and Nigel Osborne.

It was written in Bogliasco, Italy and first produced at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, 28-29 September 2018 at the Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theater, SFU Goldcorp Centre for the Arts, Vancouver, by Fringe Percussion, and the Full Performing Bodies dance company, and choreographed and directed by Henry Daniel (see Appendix, page 10).

03 / ORIGINALITY

This work is collaborative, both within and across disciplines, and acknowledges the contexts within which it exists. It draws on published research by Nelson, concerning rhythm and sociality.

Although the material and structure of the score are original, they were conceived in relation to the work of Nigel Osborne, which begins the theatrical presentation, and of Owen Underhill, whose work ends the theatrical presentation, and also alongside other materials related to Northwest Pacific indigenous peoples, particularly the Kwakwaka'wakw language and culture, which is the basis of the section of the work that immediately precedes *Limology*.

The music was written according to a concept agreed by all the creative participants, concerning patterns of chaos and integration in the dynamics of three converging human journeys, or migrations. The theatrical production was built on previous iterations of this concept, and devised to the completed percussion score and other materials. The performance took place on Squamish land, and was welcomed by a Squamish elder, in acknowledgement of the Truth and Reconciliation programme of Reconciliation Canada. The explicit sharing of concepts and materials, in recognition of the place and traditions in which the sharing is effected, is emblematic of the histories of migration, and the cultural divides and reconciliations at the heart of the project.

These themes of social and cultural relationality are the focus of Nelson (2013), and of the invited talk (Nelson, 2018). In particular, Nelson (2013) attempts to re-theorise rhythm, in music and in other contexts, as a social enterprise mediating and constructing temporal bonds and affects. It takes time as material, constructed, and dialectical, based on the work of Bachelard (1936) and Bourdieu (1990), and develops a social and inter-subjective basis for a new understanding of rhythm. These themes of sociality inform the performance conception and musical detail of *Limology*, by, for example, contrasting different rhythmic regimes of interlocking and synchrony.

FIG. 2

Still from video of *Nómadas*,
Fei and Milton Wong Experimental
Theater, SFU Goldcorp Centre for the
Arts, Vancouver. Choreographer: Henry
Daniel, Videographer Asad Yahya. ©
Asad Yahya. Used with permission.



04 / RIGOUR

The original percussion score was composed by Nelson over the course of a Bogliasco Foundation Fellowship, in Autumn 2017.

The fellowship application was reviewed on this specific project, commissioned by Cambridge Music Conference, for Fringe Percussion. Elements of the score material were shared with Fringe percussion at an early stage, and various instrumental strategies were agreed.

The overall concept of the piece, and its position within the larger stage work, were worked out by email discussion with the other participants. Various compositional elements were investigated: thus the temporal structure of the opening sequence is based on timings taken from a Mediterranean storm recorded at Camogli, Liguria; the recorded samples, played by the percussionists from cheap, hand-held music-players, are from 2017 hit songs popular in Libya, Egypt, Morocco and Turkey.

The scholar, Thomas Nail (2016) shows us that 'the border is a process of circulation'. This piece takes its imagery from the circulations of contemporary migrants, as they cross and re-cross borders geographical, physical and institutional. Its images, and their rhythmic structures, are investigated through a consideration of rhythm as a social phenomenon, both in previous published work (Nelson, 2013) and in an invited talk at the Cambridge Music Conference 2018 (see Appendix, page 10).

05 / SIGNIFICANCE

The work sits within the *Nómadas* project of the Caribbean-born artist and scholar, Henry Daniel, that "investigates five stages of the 'traveller', 'migrant' or 'refugee's journey (in the broadest sense of these terms), seeking to find out how, when, and why individuals and populations move from place to place." (Daniel, n.d.).

The performances were part of the Cambridge Music Conference event *Migration versus Multiculturalism*, an international and intercultural event, held at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, that sought to question the processes of migration from the complex of rights and traditions arising on settled land.

The work and surrounding discussions involved contributions from international artists and scholars, alongside naturalised Canadians from both indigenous and settler cultures, in relation to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation initiative. Ideas and concepts from Nelson (2013) were presented and discussed in plenary session, in relation to the public performances of the theatrical work.

06 / APPENDIX

Performances

Premiere performance 28 September 2018 at the Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theater, SFU Goldcorp Centre for the Arts, Vancouver, with Fringe Percussion, and SFU Dance Company, choreographed and directed by Henry Daniel.

Video of performance

Limology runs from 13m 00s – 32m 03s.

<https://www.henrydaniel.ca/contemporary-nomads>

Invited talks

Opening the Question of Rhythm. Cambridge Music Conference, *Migration versus Multiculturalism*. SFU Vancouver, 29 September 2018.

07 / REFERENCES

Bachelard, Gaston. 1936. *La dialectique de la durée*, *Bibliothèque de la Revue des cours et conférences*. Paris: Boivin et Cie.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Daniel, Henry. Contemporary Nomads website [accessed 28 April 2020].

<https://www.henrydaniel.ca/contemporary-nomads>

Nail, Thomas. 2016. *Theory of the Border*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nelson, Peter. 2013. 'Towards a Social Theory of Rhythm.' In *Actualités des Universaux en Musique / Topics in Universals in Music*, edited by J.-L. Leroy. Paris, France: Edition des Archives Contemporaines. pp. 149-155.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

ISBN: 978-1-83645-028-3
DOI: 10.2218/ED.9781836450283

All text in this portfolio is under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence. This means you are free to share and adapt this content provided you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

All images in this portfolio are All Rights Reserved. This means the authors retain copyright over original work and it is not permitted to copy or redistribute these images.

May 2020

The University of Edinburgh
is a charitable body, registered
in Scotland, with registration
number SC005336.

www.eca.ed.ac.uk
