

José Martínez

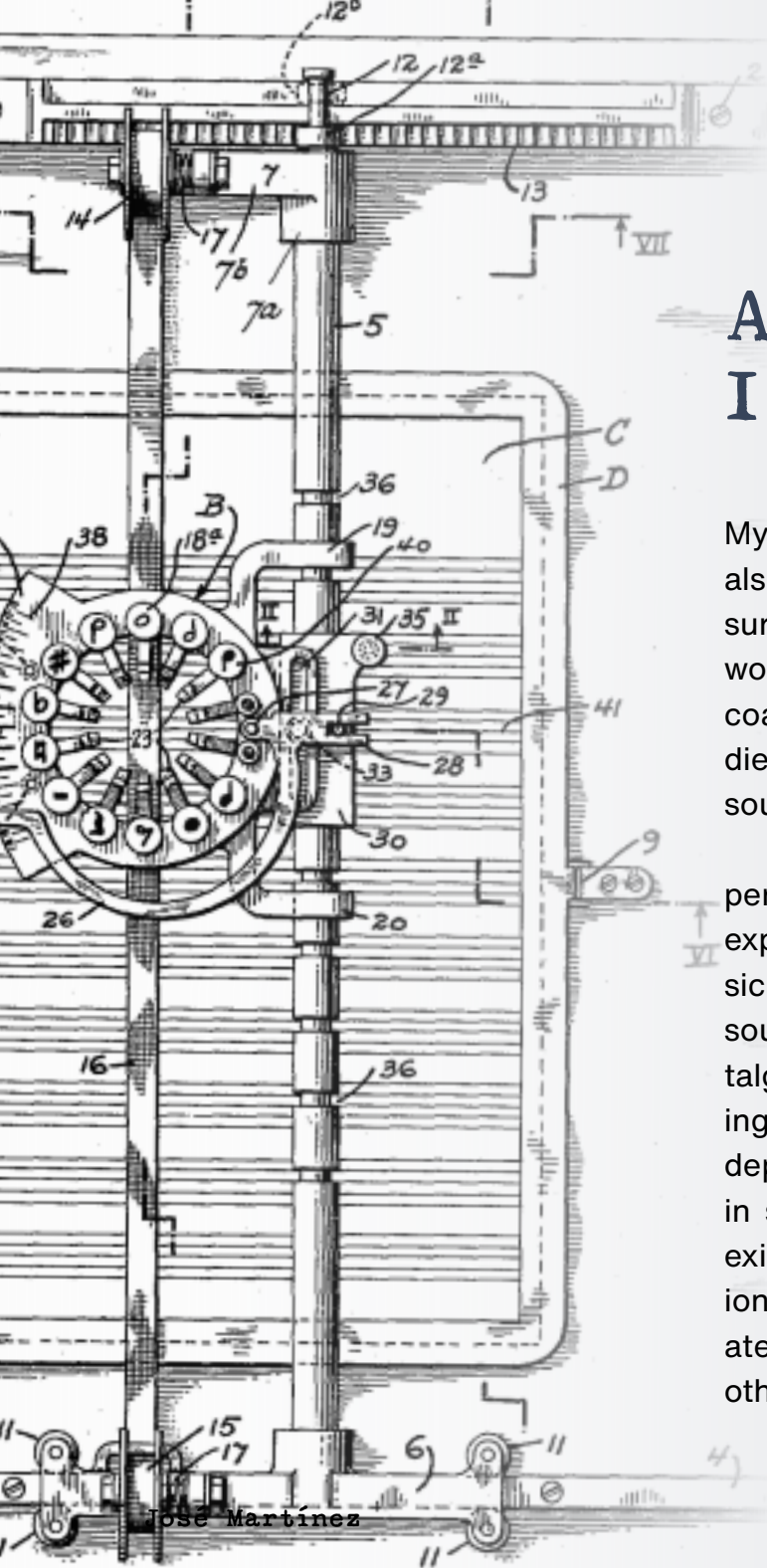
Short Stories



JORDAN WALSH • HOCKET DUO • HOT SECOND • NOA EVEN

José Martínez
Short Stories

1	Monologue V: Hidden Story	12:23
	Jordan Walsh, bass drum	
2	Do I Regret?	11:14
	Noa Even, alto Saxophone	
3	Sinsentido del Absurdo	15:47
	Hocket Duo	
	David Kaplan & Thomas Kotcheff, piano	
	Instructions for Playing	
4	I. Instructions for Stargazing	3:55
5	II. Instructions for Running	1:51
6	III. Instructions for Singing	3:58
7	IV. Instructions for Obstinacy	1:53
8	V. Instructions for Crying	3:02
	Hot Second	
	Rebecca McDaniel, percussion	
	Dylan Feldpausch, violin	
9	Coalescencia	15:47
	José Martínez, marimba de chonta	
	Total Time:	69:50



As much as a composer, I am a storyteller.

My stories are linear and direct, but also abstract and perhaps even absurd. They are told through sounds, words, concepts, and technology that coalesce into a script, inviting the audience to wander through my imagined soundscapes.

The stories on this album speak to personal struggles and identity while exploring surreal worlds and nonsensical tasks. They investigate ancestral sounds, revisited through a lens of nostalgia and longing with a forward-looking ambition. I utilize various points of departure for the works in this album; in some cases, my role was to enrich existing stories by adding a companion sonic world. Some texts were created as the score was composed, while others were imagined based on the fi-

nalized music. However, not all pieces utilize literal text; instead, many rely on concepts that serve as the blueprint for both the acoustic score and the accompanying electronics. These diverse methods of storytelling look to blur the lines between the narrative and sound, creating a symbiosis where the music becomes the very language to tell the stories.

Through this collection of works, I invite you to listen not just to the sounds, but to the intersections between them—the space where tradition meets technology and the personal meets the universal. This album is an invitation to inhabit these sonic worlds with me, to find your own path through the instructions, the memories, and the echoes of ancestral sounds.

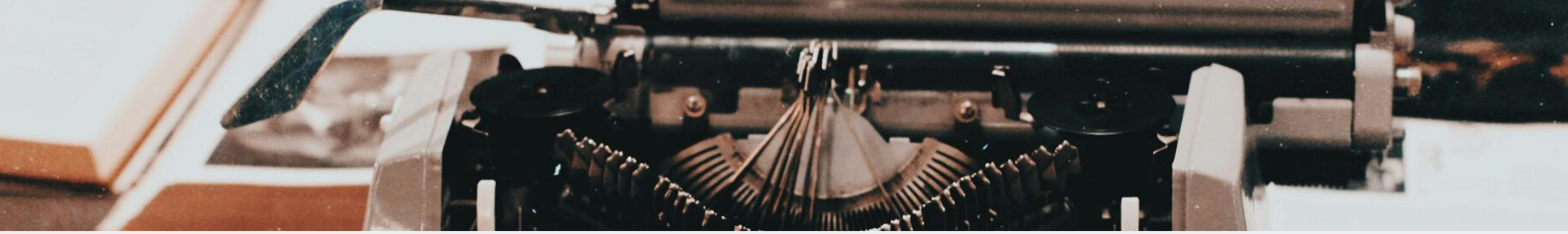
Monologue V: Hidden Story

Commissioned by Jordan Walsh, this work for bass drum and electronics explores the complexities of identity. While Jordan and I share a Hispanic background, our lived experiences differ: Jordan is connecting with his Mexican ancestry now as an adult, whereas my connection is ever-present as an immigrant. The narrative we weave is one of resonance and nostalgia, articulated through the drum's flexible vocabulary of strikes, scratches, and rolls. We further expand this dialogue through the computer, a "metacultural" device offering a vast landscape of sonic possibilities. The piece is also informed by the *batá* drumming of *Santería*; in this Afro-Caribbean tradition, drummers use their instruments to speak directly to the Orishas, who communicate solely through the language of the drum. For this work, I wrote a short poem in Spanglish addressing the duality between "here" and "there," and between reality and dreams. At the end of the piece, the text blends with the bass drum to give the instrument a voice and to elevate the meaning of words.

I find myself here, indagando en las afirmaciones
I find myself there, roaming, tanteando entre soluciones
Soy esto que escribo, struggle and sensuality
Soy aquello que sueño, presence and absence
— José Martínez

Do I Regret?

In this work, music is presented through two distinct lenses: the composed score, which acts as a script for a fixed narrative, and live improvisation, where the performer creates their own immediate story and future memories. These memories are captured and controlled by an interactive digital system who is the performer's primary partner. As the musician navigates the score, they are visited by these recent sonic memories, which may disturb, enrich, complement, or counter their path based on previous choices. Mirroring real-life experience, the performer navigates the consequences of their decisions and adapt in real time, making a piece that is never the same. The coda offers a unique opportunity to the performer: as the memories return one final time, they may alter them through the system, and they can be empowered, deleted, or minimized. They visit the past to answer the question, "Do I regret?"



Sinsentido del Absurdo

Commissioned by the HOCKET duo for their project *Photoplay Music: New Works for the Silent Film Era*, presented by Piano Spheres in Los Angeles, this work serves as a reimagined soundtrack for Man Ray's 1928 film *L'Étoile de Mer*. Similar to the film, the score embraces Dadaist principles, specifically the use of absurdity, collage, and "ready-made" objects. The absurd is realized through the juxtaposition of Afro-Colombian *cumbia* with Dadaist cinema, two worlds that otherwise would not meet. The collage element is reflected in my eclectic aesthetic that, among others, draws from post-tonal harmonies, extended piano techniques, and improvisatory passages to mirror the film's abstract narrative. Finally, the use of ready-made materials is explored through samples of the album *Amistad* by Colombian American group *Wache*. Here, I am recontextualizing the sound of the *gaitas y tambores* tradition within an entirely new sonic landscape. Through this intersection of folklore and experimentation, the work challenges historical and geographic boundaries to create a modern, multidisciplinary, and at times absurdist dialogue.

Instructions for Playing

As a longtime reader of Argentinian writer Julio Cortázar (1914–1984), I have often drawn inspiration from his work. This piece takes its point of departure from his 1962 book *Historias de Cronopios y Famas (Stories of Cronopios and Famas)*, specifically the section titled *Manual de Instrucciones (Instruction Manual)*. In this text, Cortázar provides meticulous guidelines for mundane tasks, such as instructions for climbing stairs, crying, or singing. The absurdity of providing rigid rules for such innate human acts creates a compelling contrast with his detailed prose. This led me to view the musical score itself as a set of precise instructions intended to convey abstract narratives and emotions. Inspired by Cortázar's approach, I created my own musical instructions for other specific actions: stargazing, running, and obstinacy. While *Instructions for Playing* exists in two versions, the iteration for instruments and electronics was created specifically for this album. Here, the electronics act as a third performer, enhancing the existing sonic landscape and enriching the overall narrative.



Baílo na transe

May Romero Quiñonez

Los tambores retumban en la orilla
que el oleaje se llevó.
Sonidos ancestrales y sintéticos
desordenan mi mente
y convocan criaturas que piensan conmigo.

El agua saliniza mis heridas
mientras camino descalza,
la sed me quiebra la lengua
y solo emito sonidos ásperos
hasta encontrar la guía
de manglares que sostienen la vida.

Bebo.
La lengua se regenera
y sigo hacia la selva húmeda.

Entre tambores y marimba,
en cuevas que amplifican el llamado,
bailo en transe:
no es un fin,
son muchos finales conectados.

Mi cuerpo se desmaterializa.
Caigo de nuevo sobre la arena blanca,
junto al fuego fosforescente.

El viaje continúa.

I dance in a trance

Translation by José Martínez

Drums rumble on the shore
that waves swept away.
Ancestral and synthetic sounds
clutter my mind
and summon creatures who think with me.

Water salts my wounds
as I walk barefoot;
thirst cracks my tongue
and I utter only harsh sounds
until I find the guidance
of mangroves that sustain life.

I drink.
My tongue regenerates,
and I continue toward the rainforest.

Among drums and marimba,
inside caves that amplify the call,
I dance in a trance:
it is not one end,
but many connected endings.

My body dematerializes.
I fall again upon the white sand,
beside the phosphorescent fire.

The journey continues.



José Martínez

José Martínez is a composer, percussionist, and educator interested in the intersection of contemporary composition, Afro-Latin music, audio sampling, and interactive systems. His portfolio encompasses a range of works, from solo electronics and electroacoustic pieces to chamber ensemble music, large-scale orchestral works, and interdisciplinary collaborations. Leading ensembles, including Alarm Will Sound, Wild Up, and the Grammy Award-winning Third Coast Percussion, have performed his music. An alumnus of the National University of Colombia, he earned advanced degrees in composition from the University of Missouri and UT Austin. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Music at Colby College.

josegmartinez.com

Performers



Violin and percussion duo **Hot Second** approaches music-making through a unique lens of curiosity and joy, supported by a deep commitment to technical rigor. Comprised of Dylan Feldpausch (violin) and Rebecca McDaniel (percussion), the duo harnesses a vibrant energy to craft genre-bending performances that invite audiences into adventurous, playful sound worlds. As bold performers and dedicated educators, Feldpausch and McDaniel maintain active roles within the Chicago arts community. In addition to their work as Hot Second, they collaborate with esteemed organizations including Apollo's Fire, Third Coast Percussion, Mycelium New Music, and Beyond This Point, as well as Wheaton Warrenville South.

Based in Philadelphia, **Noa Even** is a versatile saxophonist dedicated to the creation of new music through improvisation, composition, and close collaboration with composers. She is a member of New Thread Quartet and duos Ogni Suono, Patchwork, and Audra. Noa has toured internationally and taught over 80 master classes around the world. She is Assistant Teaching Professor and Head of Woodwinds at Rowan University in New Jersey, a Conn-Selmer Artist-Clinician, and a Vandoren Artist.
noaevenmusic.com



Los Angeles–based pianist and composer **Thomas Kotcheff** is a renowned advocate for contemporary music, praised by the *Los Angeles Times* for his “dazzling” performances. A Core Artist with Piano Spheres and co-founder of the piano duo HOCKET, his discography includes the world-premiere recording of Frederic Rzewski’s *Songs of Insurrection*. Beyond the concert stage, Kotcheff is an award-winning composer and contributor to major film scores, including the Academy Award–winning *Oppenheimer*. He serves on the faculty at the Colburn School and holds degrees from the Peabody Institute and the University of Southern California.



Pianist **David Kaplan**, praised by *The New York Times* as “excellent and adventurous,” is recognized for his creative programming that interweaves classical and contemporary works. A Yamaha Artist, he has performed as a soloist at the Barbican Centre and Carnegie Hall, and recently debuted with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Kaplan is a core member of Decoda and a frequent collaborator with the Attacca and Ariel String Quartets. Currently Associate Professor at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, he holds a DMA from Yale. His acclaimed discography includes the 2024 GRAMMY-nominated *Decoda* and the 2023 duo album *Vent*. hocket.org



Austin-based percussionist, producer, and educator **Jordan Walsh** specializes in contemporary repertoire, electronics, and musical theater. He is the principal percussionist for Density512 and a frequent collaborator with Line Upon Line. A dedicated proponent of new music, Walsh has performed at major festivals including PASIC, SEAMUS, and New Music Dublin. Beyond performing, he is an accomplished audio engineer and producer, specializing in electroacoustic music and software. Currently, Walsh serves as Assistant Professor at Southwestern University and Adjunct Associate Professor at Austin Community College. He holds a Doctorate from the University of Texas at Austin.

jordanwalshmusic.com



As a sociologist, writer, and researcher, **May Romero Quiñonez** explores the complex intersections of race, gender, and emotion. Their work utilizes literature not merely as a narrative tool, but as a medium for “re-existence” and social transformation. They are the author of the fanzines *Relatos de una Flor* and *Torcer la Palabra*, the editor of the thirteenth edition of the journal *Matamba*, and the co-author of the short story collection *Tierra Querida*.

Spanish Translation

Soy un compositor y soy un contador de historias. Mis relatos pudieran ser lineales y directos, pero también abstractos e incluso absurdos. Narro a través de sonidos, palabras, conceptos y tecnología que se fusionan como un guion, invitando a la audiencia a deambular por paisajes sonoros imaginarios.

Los relatos de este álbum hablan de luchas personales, de identidad; simultáneamente, exploran mundos irreales y tareas absurdas. Investigan sonidos ancestrales, que son visitados a través del lente de la nostalgia y la añoranza, pero con una ambición sonora experimental. En este álbum utilizo diversos puntos de partida para las obras; en algunos casos, mi papel fue el de enriquecer relatos existentes añadiendo un mundo musical complementario. En otros casos, los textos los escribí al mismo tiempo que la partitura, mientras otros textos fueron imaginados una vez la música fue finalizada. Sin embargo, no todas las piezas utilizan palabras, ya que algunas se apoyan en conceptos que sirven como guía estructural y narrativa para lo acústico y lo digital. Con estos métodos diversos de narración busco desdibujar las líneas entre la narrativa y el sonido, creando una simbiosis donde la música se convierte en el lenguaje mismo que cuenta las historias.

A través de esta colección de obras invito al oyente a apreciar los sonidos independientes y a su vez, a disfrutar las intersecciones en las marañas sonoras, a encontrar ese espacio donde la tradición se encuentra con la tecnología y lo personal con lo universal. Este álbum es una invitación a habitar estos mundos sonoros, a encontrar un camino propio a través de las instrucciones, los recuerdos y los ecos de las voces ancestrales.

Monólogo V: Historia Escondida

Encargada por Jordan Walsh, esta obra para bombo sinfónico y electrónica explora las complejidades de la identidad, un tema inevitable en los Estados Unidos. Aunque Jordan y yo compartimos una herencia latinoamericana, nuestras experiencias de vida son muy diferentes: Jordan se ha estado conectando con su herencia mexicana más recientemente ya como adulto, mientras que mi condición de inmigrante colombiano la hace omnipresente. La narrativa que tejemos es a través de la resonancia de la nostalgia, articulada a través de un vocabulario flexible del bombo mediante golpes, rasguños y redobles. Este diálogo lo expandimos con el computador, pensándolo como un dispositivo “metacultural” que ofrece vastas posibilidades

sonoras. La pieza también se nutre de la tradición de los tambores batá de la Santería afrocubana, en esta tradición, los percusionistas usan los tambores para hablar directamente con los Orishas, quienes entienden únicamente el lenguaje del tambor. Al final de la pieza y con ayuda del computador, el tambor “habla” y lo que narra es un corto poema en *spanGLISH* en el que abordo la dualidad entre el “aquí” y el “allá”, y entre la realidad y los sueños, elevando el significado de las palabras y de los sonidos.

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I find myself there, roaming, tanteando entre soluciones
Soy esto que escribo, struggle and sensuality
Soy aquello que sueño, presence and absence
— José Martínez

¿Me Arrepiento?

La música de esta pieza se puede pensar a través de dos perspectivas complementarias: la primera es la partitura compuesta y notada, que actúa como un guion para un relato ya predeterminado; la segunda es la improvisación en vivo, donde el intérprete crea su relato inmediato que después volverá como recuerdos. Estas improvisaciones son capturadas y controladas por un sistema digital interactivo que acompaña al intérprete y, a medida que el músico navega por la partitura, es visitado por ellas a manera de recuerdos sonoros, que podrían perturbar, enriquecer, complementar o contrarrestar su relato. Así como en la vida,

el intérprete navega las consecuencias de sus decisiones pasadas y se va adaptando y reaccionando libremente en tiempo real, lo que da como resultado una pieza que siempre es diferente. La coda ofrece una oportunidad más al intérprete: cuando los recuerdos regresan por última vez, el músico puede usar el sistema digital para cambiarlos más radicalmente, pudiendo ser potenciados, minimizados o hasta eliminados, visitando y cambiando el pasado y respondiendo la pregunta: “¿Me arrepiento?” (*Do I regret?*).

Sinsentido del Absurdo

Esta pieza fue encargada por el dúo HOCKET para su proyecto *Photoplay Music: New Works for the Silent Film Era*, presentado por Piano Spheres en Los Ángeles. Para este proyecto, el dúo comisionó a varios compositores a crear bandas sonoras para películas mudas de principios del siglo XX. Mi pieza acompaña la película *L'Étoile de Mer* de Man Ray de 1928 y, al igual que el filme, la partitura se inspira en los principios dadaístas, específicamente lo absurdo, el *collage* y los objetos “*ready-made*”. Lo absurdo se materializa mediante la yuxtaposición de la cumbia y gaita colombiana con el cine dadaísta, dos mundos que no tienen mucho en común, salvo este proyecto. El elemento del *collage* se refleja en mi estética ecléctica que, entre otros, usa armonías post-tonales, técnicas extendidas de piano y pasajes improvisados para acompañar la narrativa abstracta de la película. Finalmente, exploro los materiales *ready-made* a través de *samples*, los cuales extraje del álbum

Amistad del grupo colombo-estadounidense Wache, con los que recontextualizo la tradición de gaitas y tambores en un paisaje sónico enteramente nuevo y foráneo. A través de esta intersección de folclore y experimentación, la obra hace preguntas sobre las fronteras históricas y geográficas y busca crear un diálogo moderno, multidisciplinario y, por momentos, absurdo.

Instrucciones para Tocar

Como lector asiduo del escritor argentino Julio Cortázar (1914–1984), a menudo he hallado inspiración en su obra, en este caso, esta pieza toma como punto de partida su libro de 1962 *Historias de Cronopios y de Famas*, específicamente la sección titulada *Manual de Instrucciones*. En este texto, Cortázar ofrece pautas muy meticulosas para tareas muy cotidianas, como instrucciones para subir una escalera, para llorar o para cantar. Lo absurdo de proporcionar reglas rígidas para actos humanos tan comunes crea un contraste fascinante con la prosa tan detallada y puntual. Esto me llevó a pensar la partitura musical en sí misma como un conjunto de instrucciones precisas destinadas a transmitir narrativas y emociones abstractas. Además, inspirado por Cortázar, creé mis propias instrucciones musicales para otras acciones comunes como lo fueron: contemplar las estrellas, correr y cómo ser obstinado. Esta pieza existe en dos versiones: con y sin electrónica, la segunda fue creada específicamente para este álbum, y la adición de la

electrónica aporta un tercer intérprete, realzando el paisaje sonoro ya existente y enriqueciendo la narrativa en general.

Coalescencia

Este relato es un experimento de coexistencia que invita la voz ancestral de la marimba de chonta, el alma del currulao afrocolombiano, a compartir un espacio común con las infinitas posibilidades de la síntesis digital y el sampleo. Mi papel como compositor se acerca más al de un traductor, al de un puente que conecta dos culturas y prácticas que, aunque aparentemente distantes, dialogan a través del sonido. La marimba de chonta es herencia viva, y su madera canta las resonancias de muchas generaciones negras de la costa Pacífica colombiana, y en los últimos años he estado estudiando esta música y aprendiendo sus complejidades estilísticas. Esta pieza es, pues, un experimento que a través de transformaciones tímbricas, mezclas armónicas y cambios sonoros agresivos, aspira a proponer algo más allá de sus dos orígenes, transformando la nostalgia en una exploración asidua de identidad y soñando crear un paisaje musical “metacultural”.

En contraste con los otros enfoques narrativos de las piezas anteriores, la historia contada en esta obra surgió después de que la música ya fuera creada. Trabajé con el escritor afrocolombiano May Romero Quiñonez, quien escribió un texto inspirado en la música. En su poema ella habla del agua, del cuerpo que escucha y del llamado de los ancestros.

Track 1 recorded by Elise Etherton at Hungry Dog Sound Studios, Austin, TX
Track 2 recorded by Daniel Nissenbaum at Nut Tree Music, New Jersey, NJ
Track 3 recorded by Louis NG at Thayer Hall, Colburn School. Los Angeles, CA
Tracks 4 - 8 recorded by Troy Cruz at Experimental Sound Studio, Chicago, IL
Track 9 recorded by José Martínez at Atavismo Studio, Cali, Colombia

All electronics and sound design by José Martínez
Mixed and produced by José Martínez
Mixing assistance by Alex Fulton and Luca Gardani
Mastered by Luca Gardani

Liner notes by José Martínez
Design: Marc Wolf (marcjwolf.com)
Cover image: Typewriter by Point Normal (Unsplash)

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José Martínez: Julia Gang
Hot Second: Aline Stern
Jordan Walsh: Mackenzie Coleman
Thomas Kotcheff: Jeremy Jackson
David Kaplan: Anna Azarov
Noa Even: Angelo Merendino
May Romero: Saju Castaño

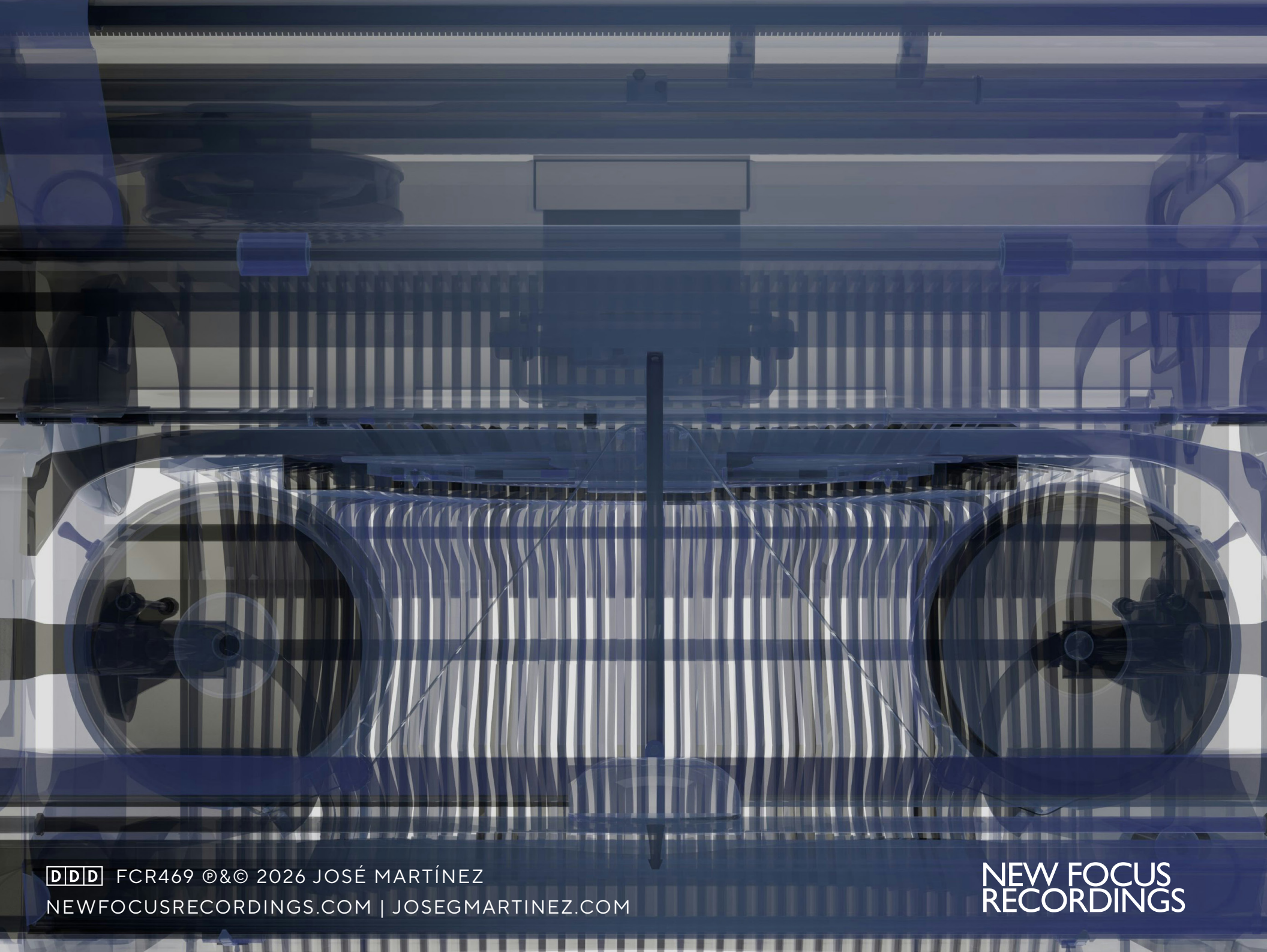
Thanks to my wife Katya and my daughter Olga for your never-ending support and love. Thanks to my family in Colombia and in Canada, who have always believed in me. Thanks to all performers in this album for dedicating time and energy to my music. Thanks to every teacher and student who has enriched my musical path in Colombia and in the US. Gracias a todos los maestros y estudiantes que me he cruzado en el camino en este lado y en el otro.

Monologue V: Hidden Story was commissioned by Jordan Walsh; Sinsentido del Absurdo was commissioned by Hocket Duo; Instructions for Playing was commissioned by Hot Second.

This project was made possible through the generous support of Colby College.

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