

JOAQUÍN  
ORELLANA:  
THE SPINE  
OF MUSIC

---

AMERICAS  
SOCIETY

---

EXHIBITIONS

---



# CONTENTS

7	<b>Foreword</b> Susan Segal
11	<b>The Mallet as a Brush</b> Diana Flatto
33	<b>Efluvios y puntos (Outpours and Dots)</b> Joaquín Orellana
45	<b>Humanophony: Orellana's útiles sonoros</b> Sebastián Zubieta
63	<b>Works</b>
64	Joaquín Orellana
94	Carlos Amoraes
98	Maria Adela Díaz
100	Akira Ikezoe
104	Alberto Rodríguez Collía
107	<b>Orellana's Compositions</b>
114	<b>Selected Bibliography</b>
116	<b>Artist Biographies</b>
117	<b>Author Biographies</b>
119	<b>Acknowledgments</b>

## FOREWORD

Americas Society is pleased to present *Joaquín Orellana: The Spine of Music*, the first exhibition in the United States of the Guatemalan artist. At the age of ninety, he is receiving renewed recognition for his decades-long career as a composer and sculptor of instruments, as well as for his influence on contemporary art.

This exhibition of Orellana's instruments is particularly special to Americas Society as it brings together music and the visual arts, two fields that intersect in his work and are core to our cultural mission. I am grateful to Americas Society's co-curators, Diana Flatto, former Assistant Curator of Visual Arts, and Sebastián Zubieta, Director of Music. I want

to especially thank Gabriela Rangel, former Director and Chief Curator of Visual Arts at Americas Society and currently Director of Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA), for bringing this project to our institution. I also want to thank Aimé Iglesias Lukin, Director and Chief Curator of Visual Arts, whose interdisciplinary and engaging programming is very exciting.

I am thankful to Karen Marta for her editorial support of Americas Society's publications, Todd Bradway for his project management, and Garrick Gott for designing this series. Natalia Viera Salgado, Assistant Curator of Visual Arts, and Gina Portale, Assistant to the Music Director, also deserve special recognition for their work on this exhibition and its programs. The presentation of *Joaquín Orellana: The Spine of Music* is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. It is also made possible, in part, by the New York State Council on the Arts with the

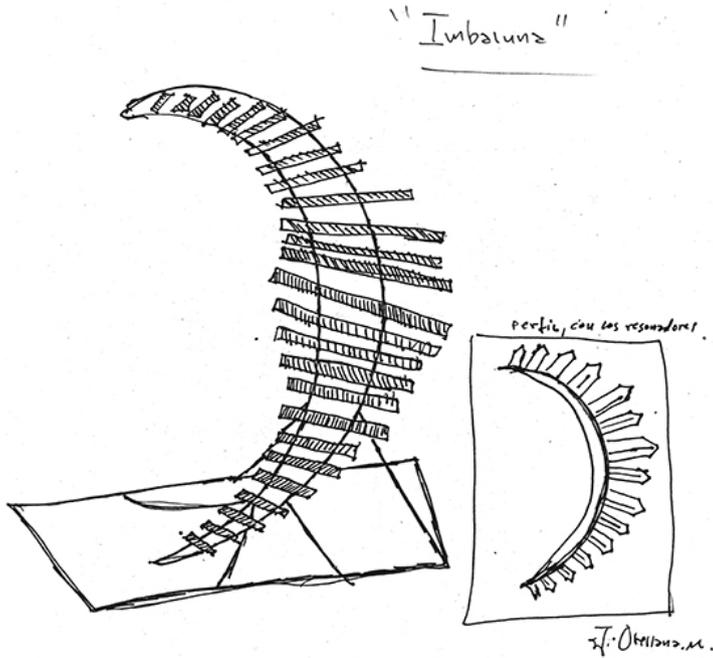
support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Additional support is provided by MetLife Foundation, Presenting Sponsor of the MetLife Foundation Music of the Americas Concert Series; the Smart Family Foundation of New York; Mex-Am Cultural Foundation; and the Japan Foundation, New York.

Americas Society acknowledges the generous support from the Arts of the Americas Circle members: Estrellita B. Brodsky; Virginia Cowles Schroth; Diana Fane; Galeria Almeida e Dale; Isabella Hutchinson; Carolina Jannicelli; Vivian Pfeiffer and Jeanette van Campenhout, Phillips; Gabriela Pérez Rocchietti; Erica Roberts; Sharon Schultz; Diana López and Herman Sifontes; and Edward J. Sullivan.

SUSAN SEGAL  
PRESIDENT AND CEO, AS/COA

# THE MALLET AS A BRUSH

**Diana Flatto**



Design for *Imbaluna*, 1984.

The *útiles sonoros* (sound tools) gracefully undulate through space and playfully balance on stands or hang from armatures, inviting interaction; others function as wearable accessories and handheld tools. Their formal qualities command the eye as much as the ear. From their initial designs, which often read as unpretentious drawings, to their dignified presence on the stage of a concert hall or installed in a museum, these instruments exist as visual objects waiting to be activated by performers. Joaquín Orellana conceives of the structure of each instrument from the gesture associated with playing it.<sup>i</sup>

The forms of the *útiles sonoros* are born of a mallet in the artist's hand in place of a brush, and of a process that has more in common with painting than sculpting. The curve of the *Imbaluna*, one of the most elegant *útiles*, whose arabesque of marimba bars is widest in the middle and comes to a point at either end, was not designed as a reference to the crescent moon, but to the arc of the percussionist's arm. The

waves of the *Sinusoido*, which has two sizes, each with its own tonal range, correspond to the peaks and valleys of the arm's motion, resulting in its curvy, guitarlike figure. Each stretch of the *Sinusoido* differs slightly in size, resulting in a unique tonal register. The *Circumar*, a cylindrical instrument composed of suspended wooden marimba bars, emerges from the musician's continuous stirring. Their circles, arcs, or amoeba shapes emerge like paint strokes from the head of the tool that activates them. Like the gestural lyrical abstraction prolific in the decades before Orellana invented his instruments, these objects mirror the movements of their creator.

Orellana's first compositions as a child were experiments in language, tunes he made up for his mother's ducklings, whom he named "Tú," "Dí," and "Colilla." In a 2017 interview, he recalled:

It became a semantic problem; because "Tú" was the name, if I said, "Look, Tú," or "Dí, Tú," I was

using a pronoun and not a noun. So then I started out with "Tú Dí" to the duck that was called "Dí," from the verb "to say." I would call out to him "Tú dí Dí," and "Dí Colilla Tú" to the other, and then I began, [singing] "Tú Dí Dí Dí Tú Tú Dí Colilla Tú Tú Dí Dí." [singing] "Dí Tú Tú Tú Dí Dí."<sup>ii</sup>

The beginning of Orellana's formal training in music was in the fourth grade, when his school started a marching band. They hired a music teacher who had played trombone in a marching band and he enlisted Orellana to play the trumpet. Orellana credits his experience in the marching band with "[giving] me my impetus, let's say. And later on, I followed my own path."<sup>iii</sup> In 1949 he entered the Conservatorio Nacional de Música de Guatemala, where he studied violin and composition and embraced the dodecaphony of Arnold Schoenberg. Orellana was just out of school in 1959 when he began to receive recognition in Guatemala as an emerging composer. He received a fellowship at the Centro

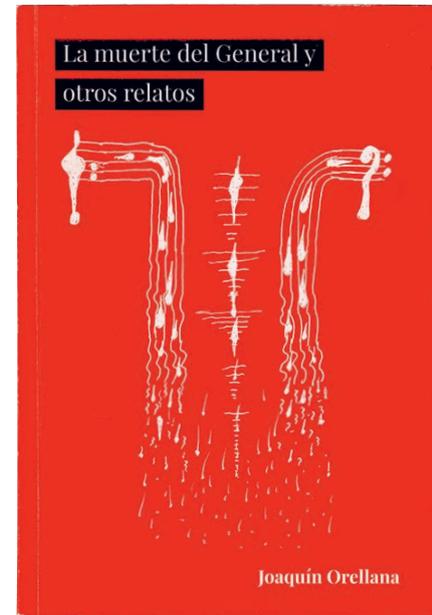
Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales del Instituto Torcuato Di Tella (CLAEM) in 1967 and went to live in Buenos Aires. Di Tella's Centro de Artes Visuales (CAV) was at its apex, exhibiting such artists as León Ferrari, David Lamelas, and Marta Minujín, whose happenings and avant-garde installations defy classification by traditional media. This period in an experimental environment encouraged him to take a radical interdisciplinary approach back to Guatemala.

Orellana's studio is located in Guatemala City's national theater. The Centro Cultural Miguel Ángel Asturias is a building that is itself a sculptural work, in the shape of a jaguar, by the architect Efraín Recinos. It is also the home of the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas "Rafael Rodríguez Padilla" and the Escuela Nacional de Arte Dramático "Carlos Figueroa Juárez," as well as the Instituto Nacional de la Marimba. The proximity to his working environment of these disciplines—visual arts, dramatic arts, and music—while

not a direct influence, provided a backdrop against which Orellana could compose music and create his interdisciplinary sound tools.

Not unlike self-portraiture, Orellana manipulates and reimagines the traditional marimba, a poignant symbol of national identity in Guatemala.<sup>iv</sup> In his studio, his team carefully crafts the metal forms, shaping and staining the wood, and repurposing the resonators from children's marimbas, resulting in the graceful forms of the *Imbalunas* and *Sinusoidos*. The *Onda-im* maintains more of the marimba's original form, its wooden bars placed in size order, but without resonators or legs. Unlike the marimba, the *Onda-im* is played by swaying the instrument back and forth. The mallets are built into it, their round heads hanging by string atop each bar, so that the musician's swaying strikes several bars at once. The materiality of these objects—which are grouped by their base media: for the marimba, bamboo, metal, and plastic—utilizes the characteristics of each to produce the artist's soundscape.

With witty plays on words combining their shape, origin, and function, Orellana lends a poetic voice to the lyrical names that echo the form of the instruments themselves. For instance, *Sonarimba* combines parts of the word *sonaja* (rattle) with the word *marimba*, *Imbaluna* includes part of the word *medialuna* (crescent moon) with the word *marimba*; *Circumar* merges the words *círculo* (circle) and *marimba*; *Onda-im* combines *onda* (wave) with the middle syllable of the word *marimba*; *Sinusoido* comes from sine or sinusoidal wave, a trigonometric curve that is a smooth repetitive oscillation; and *Herroím* comes from *hierro* (iron). *Cantos a la marimba* (2019), a series of odes to the marimba in the form of concrete poems, incorporates design elements such as figures and arrows into the deliberately spaced text.<sup>v</sup> In 2019 Orellana published a collection of short stories, *La muerte del General y otros relatos*, and illustrated the cover with a drawing of an abstracted musical score. His sophisticated use of language came from his study of literature and philosophy,

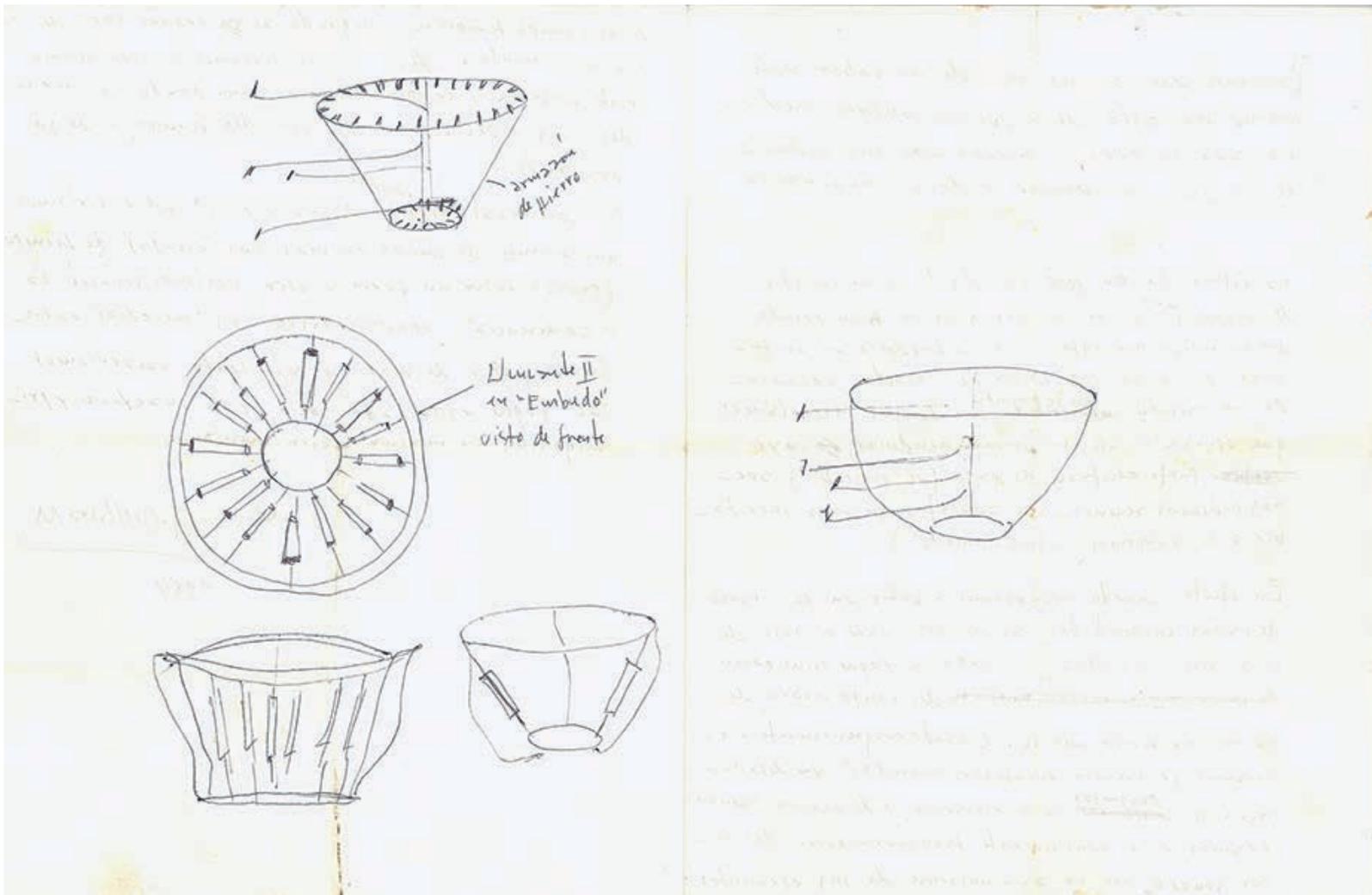


Joaquín Orellana, *La muerte del General y otros relatos*, 2019.

including the works of Alexandre Dumas, Franz Kafka, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Stefan Zweig.<sup>vi</sup>

When shown in an institutional context, Orellana's *útiles* have been discussed only in conventional terms as sculpture, although they are beyond this classification. His instruments and drawings marry the visual with the auditory, much like the abstractions of Wassily Kandinsky and Stuart Davis, famously tied to musical trends. Carlos Amoraes likens the *útiles* to Jean Tinguely's mechanized artworks dating from the 1950s.<sup>vii</sup> In the catalogue for *Sinfonía delirante*, the first exhibition of these works at Guatemala's Museo Nacional de Arte Moderno in 1998, Rozzina Cazali compares them with sculptures, mobiles, and penetrales by Julio González, Alexander Calder, and Jesús Soto, but their purpose is rooted in the choreographies of their musical function rather than in their relationship to space.<sup>viii</sup> They are less kinetic sculptures than three-dimensional paintings.

These instruments are described in the introduction to the catalogue for *Sinfonía delirante* as a “bosque fantástico” (fantastical forest).<sup>ix</sup> This description focuses on the works' decorative qualities and separates them from their musical function, which is inextricable from their role as artworks. Three of the instruments—the *Cirlum*, *Circumar*, and *Ululante*—demonstrate how each *útil* is not only based on the gesture of the musician, but also on materiality and form. All three have the same basic shape, a circle of vertically suspended bars, played by a musician bent over the instrument, striking the bars with a mallet from the inside in a circular motion. Despite the similarity of gesture by the performers, these *útiles* are differentiated by their materials. The *Cirlum*'s bars are round metal chimes, while the *Circumar* is made with traditional wooden marimba bars, and the bars of the *Ululante* are bamboo stalks. The *Cirlum* and *Ululante* are both made in *grande* and *pequeño* sizes, the larger with deeper sounds and the



Design for *Ululante*, 1984.

smaller with higher ones. These differences in material, color, and size not only lend different voices to Orellana's soundscapes—the metallic sounds of the chimes, the light ringing of the bamboo, and the familiar toll of the marimba keys—but visually define them as individual artworks.

Orellana's more monumental *útiles* defy categorization. One of his most substantial and innovative instruments, the *Periomin*, is made from several colorful arcs of beads and metal chimes hanging from a bar suspended over rockers. The *útil* is activated by the musician pushing the bar back and forth, swaying to a rhythm composed by Orellana and noted in the scores. The imposing *Herroím* is constructed out of iron that stands like a whale's tail on its base. Its aggressive sound comes from vibrations created by sliding various oversize bows across its upper edges; each bow has a unique characteristic. The *Prehimulinho* is built vertically, a ladder of bamboo activated by components attached to its armature.

The handheld or wearable *útiles* are far more modest than the elegant marimba-based works. Orellana fashions the *Pre-ar* from bamboo and brightly colored tape to create a sort of flute where the musician can easily move from one note to the next, privileging the function of everyday material over sculptural beauty. The *Resolam* is another simple handheld instrument with a large metal jar as its base and a kettle-like spout and handle added for the musician to blow into. With a mindfulness about the look as well as its functionality, all but the white mouthpiece is painted black. Orellana's resourcefulness comes clearly through in the *Pultap*, a small plastic cylinder that hooks onto the performer's belt loops. This instrument, though smaller and less handsome than others, is one of the first played in the newly commissioned composition for *The Spine of Music*, *Efluvios y puntos* (Outpours and dots), setting the tempo for the rest of the piece despite its unassuming stature.

Orellana's compositions transgress the strictures of the discipline of music. The percussionists double as dancers and singers, their movements dictated by the instruments they play as well as by the particularities of Orellana's musical scores. Even his scores are aesthetic objects with idiosyncratic glyphic marks indicating both movement and rhythm. Small drawings representing each handheld instrument are illustrated with arrows to direct the performers' motions, punctuated by more traditional music notes and symbols. In *Efluvios y puntos*, the four performers' entrance is choreographed in time with their wearable *Pultaps*.<sup>x</sup> The performance extends to the audience, engaging them in vocalizations in time with the music, much like Tania Bruguera offering a podium to the public, Adrian Piper inviting museumgoers to whistle, or Tino Sehgal's interventionist dialogues with exhibition visitors.

The intersection of music, visual art, and literature is at the core of Guatemala's cultural ethos. One of Guatemala's most

treasured visual artists, the modernist painter and printmaker Carlos Mérida, was trained in music in Quetzaltenango by the composer and *marimbista* Jesús Castillo. Mérida continued the thread of performance and music throughout his career with works on indigenous performance, as well as in his later theater designs. The marimba is such an integral part of Guatemalan culture that the home of the writer Luis de Lión, who was disappeared during the Guatemalan Civil War, is now not only a museum but also a marimba school for the local children in San Juan del Obispo, a small town outside Antigua Guatemala.<sup>xi</sup>

Performance has become a central medium for many contemporary artists, such as Regina José Galindo, whose pieces including *El gran retorno* (2019) and *I Am Alive* (2015) incorporate musical elements, and Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa, who works between performance, installation, and other media. Guatemala's contemporary art scene has expanded with the proliferation of artist-run spaces,

including Proyectos Ultravioleta, Riña, and the museum NuMu (Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo), a 2-by-2.5-meter egg-shaped kunsthalle, where Orellana’s *Sonarimbas* and scores were exhibited in 2016.

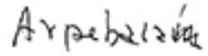
The work of the other artists included in *The Spine of Music* amplifies and complicates the idea of Orellana’s *útiles sonoros* as visual art objects. All of the artists in the exhibition work similarly at the intersection of visual art and other disciplines. María Adela Díaz includes Orellana’s compositions in her videos; the winding *Sinusoido* and curve of the *Imbaluna* dialogue with found and invented objects in Akira Ikezoe’s paintings; his calligraphic musical scores are magnified in Alberto Rodríguez Collía’s prints, and the artist as composer is venerated in Carlos Amoraless’s film and related artworks.<sup>xii</sup> Presenting Orellana’s *útiles sonoros* alongside these other artworks and activating them in the space of a gallery affirms them as art objects without removing them from their primary function: to make music.

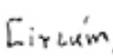
## ENDNOTES

- i. Joaquín Orellana discussed this creative process in an unpublished interview conducted by the author and Sebastián Zubieta at the Teatro Nacional, Guatemala City, on February 19, 2020.
- ii. Joaquín Orellana, as quoted in “To Create the Sound of Hunger: Joaquín Orellana in Conversation with Stefan Benchoam, Julio Santos, and Alejandro Torón, with an introduction by Monika Szewczyk,” in *South as a State of Mind* #7 (Documenta 14 #2), ed. Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk (Kassel: Documenta and Museum Fridericianum gGmbH, 2016), <https://www.documenta14.de/en/south/>, accessed August 3, 2020.
- iii. Ibid.
- iv. The traditional marimba is an official national symbol embraced by the country’s widely Mayan culture since its first written mention in 1680, when it was played in Antigua Guatemala. See Arturo Taracena Arriola, “Marimba,” in *The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Greg Grandin, Deborah T. Levenson, and Elizabeth Oglesby (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 150.
- v. Joaquín Orellana, *Cantos a la marimba* (Antigua Guatemala: Proyecto editorial los zopilotes, 2019).
- vi. Orellana, as quoted in “To Create the Sound of Hunger.”
- vii. Carlos Amoraless, *Anti Tropicalia* (San José, Costa Rica: Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo, 2015).
- viii. Rossina Cazali, “Joaquín Orellana ¿Escultor Espontáneo,” in Joaquín Orellana, *Sinfonía delirante: los útiles sonoros* (Guatemala City: Museo Nacional de Arte Moderno, 1998), 17.
- ix. Anamaría Cofiño K., “El paisaje también es un útil sonoro,” in Orellana, *Sinfonía delirante*, 5.
- x. The premiere of *Efluvios y puntos* at Americas Society may be modified to minimize audience interaction for public health and safety.
- xi. A number of students from the Proyecto Luis de León have gone on to be part of the country’s leading marimba groups. Mayarí de León, conversation with author, February 17, 2020.
- xii. A number of the artists included in the exhibition—Carlos Amoraless, Akira Ikezoe, and Alberto Rodríguez Collía—each contributed works to raise funds to bring Orellana’s *útiles sonoros* to Athens for Documenta 14 in 2017, culminating in a performance of *Sinfonía desde el Tercer Mundo* (Symphony from the Third World).

Glosario  
Útiles sonoros

De caña: ULUU,  G. M. Ag. | ULUU, III,  Ag. M. G. | prehinulinos,  : M. Ag. Grupo "Prehinul"     
 Impomperias,  M. Ag. Mediolunas,  (pueden accionarse a collar).

De placa de Hormigo:  Sonarimbas,  Bazoquinbas,  Onda-im,  itero-imbas,  Ficlo-im |  Circumar,  imbas,  Balzimi,  Gofumar,  Camparim,  Arpebetón Uumar 

De Aluminio:  Eirulim,  Aluperin,  Tubarc  Gran Eirulim   Tróam

EXTRA:  (cajas de madera perforadas) | BATIDOS: Tam-cir,  

De soplo:  Pre-Ar,  Pre-L,  | Tradicionales: 5 flautas dulces.

Espes zones:

  Torfuoir  
 Estridol

Glosario útiles sonoros, 1980. Including the material-based categories: de caña (bamboo), de placa de Hormigo (Hormigo [Platymiscium dimorphandrum] wood keys), de aluminio (aluminum), de soplo (blowing), and caparazones (shells).

**EFLUVIOS Y PUNTOS  
(OUTPOURS AND DOTS)**

**Joaquín Orellana**

One of only three works composed exclusively for the *útiles sonoros*, the pages of *Efluvios y puntos* (Outpours and dots), 2019, are works of art in their own right. This hand-drawn manuscript combining traditional musical notation with minute sketches of the instruments themselves and drawings that indicate how the *útiles* should be played—by prescribing the performers’ movements onstage—shows the relationship between visual art, music, and motion in Orellana’s work. This score comprises parts for four performers using thirty-four *útiles*—including Hormigo wood, bamboo, aluminum, and plastic instruments—as well as their voices and the participation of the audience.

*Efluvios y puntos* was commissioned from Orellana by Americas Society for this exhibition.

-1-		"Útiles Sonoros"	
		Glosario:	4 Percusionistas Masculinos
Madera	1°	Sonorimbos	y sus voces. Llevan 2 "puitóp"
	2°	Imbrazunas	cada uno, dispuestos en su cuer-
Cuerpo	2°	Circunzas	po, a la altura de la espalda/2-
	2°	Sinuspidos	ta. Los percuten con sus puñares.
Cuerpo	4°	Ondalim	ⓐ Se presentan Hieráticos, con
	2°	Uluantes/Grave/Aguda	sus manos detrás de sus espal-
Cuerpo	1°	Preuimulios	das. Desde oscuro, una luz cen-
	8°	Prepre	tal comienza a iluminarlas, en
Cuerpo	5°	Pre-l	ese momento comienzan a tocar
	1°	Pinzafes	lentamente. Conforme la luz
Cuerpo	1°	Herrojón	sube en intensidad, los toques
	1°	[F#(A)]	de "puitóp" se aceleran.
Cuerpo	4°	Resalim	
	5°	Tuberc	
Plástico	8°	"puitóp"	
	4°	"Tancis"	



	"Imba-lung" gills leuco		Guis Iron		Guis longo		"Herrain" 	Baquet & bonds				-4-
	"Imba-lung" gills leuco		Guis Iron		Guis longo		Voces	noyante grave				
	"Circu-mor" 		leuco & decer.				"Resolm" 					
	"Ulu-lante" (peq.) 						Cortel					
	"Sinu-Saide" (esp.) 						Tubaro 					

"Resolm" 	A M G		
"Circu-mor" 	2		
"Cortel" 	2		
Voces/plu biaco Cortel	A M G		
"Herrain" 			

"Circu-mor" 1 	
"Circu-mor" 2 	
"Perionin" 	
"Herrain" 	Armonicos 
"Tubaro" 	
C#	

<p>"Pizzier"</p>	<p>Tubo Jato Horizontal frontal Recinado</p> <p>Accl. Progres</p>
<p>"Herrain"</p>	<p>22 vez</p> <p>Arco</p>
<p>Voces</p>	<p>7 co</p>
<p>"Inbous"</p>	
<p>"Puckte"</p>	<p>22 vez</p>
<p>"Tubose"</p>	<p>7-</p>

<p>"Resolva"</p>	<p>A M G</p> <p>B-9, 0y-9, 9-9-9</p> <p>irradiat</p> <p>Lig</p>
<p>"Resolva"</p>	<p>A M G</p> <p>B-9, 0y-9, 9-9-9</p> <p>irradiat</p> <p>Lig</p>
<p>"Herrain"</p>	<p>Arco</p> <p>020</p> <p>irradiat</p>
<p>"Languetón"</p>	<p>irradiat</p>
<p>"Pizzier"</p>	<p>voces de público</p> <p>Terror/flight</p>
<p>*</p>	
<p>-8-</p>	

<p>"Prel"</p>	<p>Lenzo</p> <p>Accl.</p>	<p>"CP"</p> <p>(4)</p> <p>Lenzo</p> <p>Accl. discont</p>
<p>"Prel"</p>	<p>Accl.</p>	<p>"Tam"</p> <p>cr"</p>
<p>"Ondain"</p>	<p>Accl.</p>	<p>"Piso"</p> <p>L. y m"</p>
<p>"Público"</p> <p>Whisper</p>	<p>Accl.</p>	<p>"Público"</p> <p>voz</p>

	<p>Proc</p> <p>Pizz</p>	<p>"Dud"</p> <p>low</p>
		<p>"Sim"</p> <p>wide</p>
	<p>duiv</p>	<p>"Sim"</p> <p>wide</p>
<p>"Público"</p> <p>voz</p>	<p>Lamentation</p> <p>cartel</p> <p>Lamentation</p> <p>duiv</p>	<p>"Sim"</p> <p>wide</p>

"Pinzafete"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	4 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
"Lagunão"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	4 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
"[F(s)]"	4 4	↑ <i>mostre Cortes</i>	*	7 4		?	4 4		?	4 4		?	4 4		?	4 4		?
"Percutina"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	4 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
"Público Grito"	4 4	12 Grito	22 whisper murmuring	*	3 4		?	3 4		4 4		?	4 4		?	4 4		?

-11-

"Pierófer"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	4 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
"Lagunão"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	4 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
"Percutina"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	4 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
"[F(s)]"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	4 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
"Voces simultaneas 1 2 3 4"	4 4	A M G	?	2 4		?	3 4		?	4 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?

-12-

	<i>simila ditata</i>	*		"Pierófer"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
	<i>Más Lento</i>			"Lagunão"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
	<i>simila ditata</i>	*		"Percutina"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
	<i>Más Lento</i>			"[F(s)]"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
				"Público Grito"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
				"Voces simultaneas"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?
				"Voces simultaneas"	4 4		?	2 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?	3 4		?

-13-

HUMANOPHONY:  
ORELLANA'S  
*ÚTILES SONOROS*

Sebastián Zubieta



Joaquín Orellana activating the *Sinusoido Grande*, 2020

To walk into Joaquín Orellana’s studio in the colorful entrails of the Teatro Nacional in Guatemala City is to walk into the workshop of a crazy scientist. The main room is big, low-ceilinged, and chock full of *útiles sonoros*; to the left, a smaller room is the workshop where his team builds these musical instruments using lathes, pliers, drills, and soldering machines. Before I visited him in his studio, I was so fascinated by his creativity—by his instruments, their stories and stubborn survival—that I wasn’t aware of what I now understand as Orellana’s powerful desire for community. When I asked him about it later, he agreed that being part of this community of curious and dedicated people is very important to him.<sup>i</sup> This community of dedicated collaborators is, perhaps, for Orellana, as important as the instruments themselves.

Invented by Orellana in the 1970s, the *útiles sonoros*, based on the sounds of Guatemala, are a logical twentieth-century response to years of oppression, and yet, at the same time, they

are free from old European musical strictures. Janus-like, these low-tech, handmade instruments face the past and future at the same time, but, above all, they are communal and profoundly “humanophonic.”

Orellana was always a humanist (more precisely, a “humanophonist”) and I think that the greatest impetus for his musical development came from discussions with other students and faculty at the Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales (CLAEM) at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella (ITDT) in Buenos Aires.<sup>ii</sup> Even though he had already received a solid musical education and was recognized as a promising composer with a successful career in Guatemala, the story of the *útiles sonoros* begins in 1967 when Orellana arrived in Buenos Aires to start a fellowship at the CLAEM.

This experience, and the aesthetic upheaval he experienced upon his return to Guatemala two years later, was a crucial chapter in his life and, in light of what came later, in the history of Latin American avant-garde music.

**PANORAMA DE PANORAMA**

### Poca danza y mucha literatura

**Graciela Luciani. Danza Contemporánea.**  
Músicas: A. Yuravlev, E. Falló, Leda y María A. Ramírez, J. y H. Garín, E. Rovira, E. S. Diegopolo, Modern Jazz Quartet, A. Frascolla, Poessle G., Benvenuto, J. A. Gallardo, J. Tchekaski, Borges, Guibari, Vallejos. Teatro del Centro, Martes 12 y 10 de noviembre.

Graciela Luciani elige voluntariamente la limitación: selecciona un poema o una música y se cifre a interpretar el texto o los ritmos. Esto da a su danza un carácter de bordado literario que la vacía de lo que es el baile en sí: espacio, movimiento, hondura. Sólida en su físico, interpretar la tierra —y las seis primeras danzas del recital así lo desean— es su intención. Obtiene de ese modo una concepción primaria de la pampa, del monte, del río, la piedra o el malambo, donde poco le queda a la imaginación del espectador; pues todo está dicho. Sin duda “Malambo” con poncho rojo llega al público, en un comentario a las palabras de J. A. Gallardo. Incluir poemas en un espectáculo de danza moderna suele ser una experiencia repetida; Graciela Luciani posee personalidad y en ella se apoya para intentar la danza de Borges, Vallejo o Tchekaski —“hablar de la ternura y aprendernos” — aunque no aporta mayor belleza que la de los textos. Luciani sabe estar en escena, aún pueda variar y enriquecer su lenguaje coreográfico, si le añade sutileza e imaginación al que ya posee. Porque la danza no es la poesía ni la música ni los ponchos ni el ritmo. Es todo lo demás. ▶



*Después de experimentar de varias maneras, se alejan los becerros americanos.*

### MUSICA

#### El becario está triste y sonríe

Hay un clima especial en el primer piso de Florida 936. Nervios, apurones y aprestos de viaje, en medio de ensayos y de instrumentos musicales que llenan todo un salón. En el Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales del Instituto Di Tella acaba de realizarse el Séptimo Festival de Música Contemporánea, y Giannastara, director del Centro, ya presidió las últimas sesiones, donde se escucharon los trabajos realizados por los compositores becados durante el bienio 1967-1968. Ahora viene la separación de estos nueve músicos, pues los extranjeros emprenden viaje a sus respectivos países. El año próximo habrá caras nuevas.

Para Jacqueline Nova, colombiana de 31 años, hija de padre americano y madre belga, estos veinte meses en Buenos Aires y en el Centro de Di Tella le han dado “una experiencia formidable”. Jacqueline, que alquiló un pequeño departamento cerca del Instituto, confiesa que reñon los 200 dólares mensuales que recibe como becaria, pudo vivir muy bien, sin angustias económicas. Es inquieta, fuma una increíble cantidad de cigarrillos por día y le gusta viajar, tanto que aprovechó el mes de enero, en que el Centro da vacaciones, para conocer Córdoba y Mar del Plata.

Para esta compositora, que en 1966 ganó con “12 Moviles” el premio para obra de cámara en el Tercer Festival de Música de Caracas, ha sido muy difícil adaptarse a la vida de Buenos Aires porcellista y más universal por tanto. Pero

un poco saturada”. Es toda la ciudad dice, “la que obliga a uno a otro ritmo, aunque en parte es bueno, porque estimula para la creación”. Está actualmente muy interesada por la composición de música electrónica, a la cual tuvo acceso recién aquí, en el Di Tella. Le ve grandes posibilidades y cree que este procedimiento ha superado hoy su etapa de experimentación. Aunque parezca paradójico, “actualmente la experimentación se da en el terreno de los instrumentos”. Piensa que “hay mucho que buscar en ellos: nuevos timbres y hasta nuevos instrumentos”; en cambio está convencida de que la electrónica hoy es un procedimiento estabilizado, que pueda ser juzgado porque se tiene actualmente una conciencia clara de sus posibilidades.

A Joaquín Orellana, guatemalteco de 33 años, la experiencia en Buenos Aires le ha permitido darse cuenta “del atraso musical de mi país, en visión de época”. Reconoce que no faltan allí elementos. Hay, según él, una orquesta eficiente y buenos instrumentistas; pero lo más moderno que se escucha es Stravinsky y de Schoenberg apenas se han ejecutado sus primeras obras. “Haber aflorado a la música de vanguardia —dice— me ha dado oportunidad de ubicarme. Y me ha dado ideas”. Estas últimas tendrían a buscar una síntesis entre el nacionalismo musical sobre la base del folklore, que es lo que todavía impera en Guatemala, con un lenguaje actual, menos localista y más universal por tanto. Pero



*Maximalistas palabras alrededor del texto.*

*Panorama*, 1968. This issue of the Argentinian magazine features Orellana as a fellow at the Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales del Instituto Torcuato Di Tella (CLAEM) in Buenos Aires.

Before he left Guatemala Orellana had already started to think outside of the narrow confines of the classical music establishment. *Contrastes* (1963), the piece with which he was accepted for the fellowship, is a successful orchestral ballet with a section for prerecorded tape featuring processed voices, which was very unusual at that time. At the CLAEM, he had a generous stipend that meant he could devote all of his time to learning about the latest developments in European concert music and to creating new works.<sup>iii</sup> He also had access to musical resources and information, which proved revelatory for him. Prior to the internet, access to avant-garde music was severely limited to what was available at specialized libraries and information centers. The library at Di Tella was full of cutting-edge music scores and recordings that would have been inaccessible to most students elsewhere.

Perhaps even more importantly, during those pre-internet years, Orellana had the opportunity to meet a group of like-minded

emerging composers from throughout Latin America. In those politically agitated times, issues of social justice and regional identity were never far from the minds and discussions of Orellana and his peers. Although students were not allowed to talk politics, Luigi Nono's visit in 1968—Orellana's second year—had a profound effect. Nono was a very political composer (he visited Argentina just as Alberto Ginastera's opera *Bomarzo* was banned at the Colón and withdrew his music from a series of planned concerts in solidarity with his Argentinean host) and he asked the fellows directly to tell him about the political situation in their countries during the composition seminar.<sup>iv</sup> As Graciela Paraskevaídis, another fellow, recalled in her interview in *Conversaciones en torno al CLAEM*:

The considerations and conversations we had with our fellow students from other countries of Latin America, of which we knew very little were very important. . . .

Let's say that I discovered a different America, an underlying, deeper America.<sup>v</sup>

During his two years in Buenos Aires, Orellana premiered two pieces in the fellows' concerts. The first was his second String Quartet (1967) (subtitled "Frater ignotus," "Unknown brother" in Latin, and dedicated to Ginastera), which integrated a lyrical sensibility within a "traditional" avant-garde sonic landscape. At the end of his second year, in November 1968, the premiere of *Metéora*, an electronic piece based on piano sounds created completely in the studio and presented in concert without the intervention of live musicians, using a reel-to-reel tape player, marked a milestone: it was Orellana's first purely electronic piece and apparently the first created by a Central American composer.<sup>vi</sup> He was very proud of having discovered a novel way to record and work with the sound of the piano, revealing an evocative "vocal" quality:

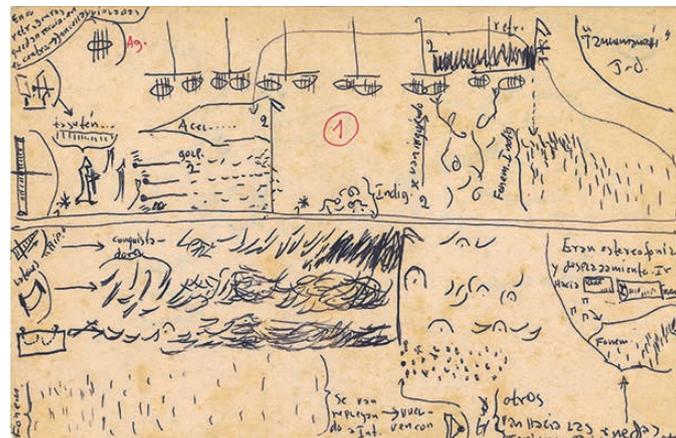
a kind of halo formed around me, because the Argentineans could not believe that this little man, just arrived from Central America had found, almost immediately, the musical meaning of the machines.<sup>vii</sup>

*Metéora* is also a piece of musique concrète<sup>viii</sup> whose source material was the resonance of the strings of one of the school's pianos. The sounds were recorded and subsequently processed at the CLAEM's state-of-the-art studio, which was run by a dedicated and knowledgeable staff that included engineer Fernando von Reichenbach and composer Francisco Kröpfl, who Orellana still considers the most significant teacher he met during his fellowship. Orellana continued to write mostly electronic music for the next decade, until he invented the *útiles sonoros*.

Upon his return to Guatemala, Orellana had an intense feeling of not belonging, and felt stuck between the national music of his native country and the newly found European electronic style he discovered in Buenos

Aires.<sup>ix</sup> Guatemala in the 1970s was entering the second decade of a conflict that wouldn't end until 1996, leaving hundreds of thousands dead, mostly among the country's sizable rural Maya population. Orellana felt the need to recover these silenced voices. Recognizing that, although the genocide was raging at that moment, the oppression of indigenous people dated all the way back to the Spanish conquest, he set out to create in his music the "ancestral suffering" present in indigenous spoken language: the real voice of his people.

The initial manifestation of this desire was a series of electronic pieces, including *Humanofonía I* (1971), *Malebolge* (*Humanofonía II*) (1972), and *Imposible a la X* (1980). The source material is what Orellana calls the "sonic landscape": sounds recorded in markets (in *Humanofonía I*), the songlike cries of the children whose job it is to loudly announce the destination of local buses (in *Imposible a la X*), Gregorian chants during religious services and the cries of beggars in church atriums,



Notes for *Tzulumanachi*, 1978, one of the earliest compositions for Orellana's *útiles sonoros*.

and the invented indigenous languages of the rural peoples (also in *Humanofonía I*). As this process continued through the 1970s and into the early 1980s, Orellana started to notice that, always present, never far from the surface, was the ubiquitous sound of Guatemala's national instrument: the marimba.

Orellana says that his music is political, that he is incapable of writing nonpolitical music, and that the marimba is itself a requiem, an instrument of a shamanic exorcism that the warrior performs to keep the genocidal jackal at bay.<sup>x</sup> The marimba is made of a series of hardwood keys set on a wooden frame atop resonators made of hollowed-out gourds or bamboo tubes, struck by mallets whose heads are made of rattan-covered balls or hard rubber. Its characteristic buzzing sound is from the vibrations of a membrane (typically made of pigskin) stretched over the resonator. The instrument's origin is unclear, but current theories suggest that it was brought to Central America by enslaved West African people

during the sixteenth century (marimba-like instruments have been popular in Africa for centuries). The marimba was readily adopted by rural, mostly indigenous populations, from Ecuador to southern Mexico. It has become so enmeshed within the fabric of Guatemala's culture and identity that it has enjoyed centuries of popularity and, in 1999, was officially declared one of the country's national symbols, alongside the national anthem and flag. The marimba took a foundational place in Orellana's music and in his concept of his own Guatemalan identity; naturally, he set out to break it apart.

To make the *útiles*, Orellana took the constituent elements of the marimba—wooden keys and resonators—and reorganized them with an amazing display of imagination. Some of the instruments' unique shapes are a consequence of the gestures performed by the musicians that play them, while others are designed to add a dynamic spatial dimension to their sound.<sup>xi</sup> The *Sinusoido*, for example, is a

“marimba” built around a percussionist’s circular arm motion, allowing for the production of an uninterrupted stream of sounds by running a mallet around the instrument’s circular array of keys. The first *útil*, the *Sonarimba*,<sup>xii</sup> consists of two marimba keys attached to either end of a bamboo tube containing a plastic ball. When the performers move their arms, as if dancing, the ball hits the keys while the tube acts as a resonator; its purpose is to allow the sound of the marimba to surround the audience and move in the concert hall.<sup>xiii</sup> Similar gestural intentions provide the creative impulses behind other *útiles*.

By creating these visually and sonically captivating musical instruments, Orellana also created a community of people who believe in their musical power as well as the composer’s ideals, which is to say, they believe in him. The *útiles* are made to be played in groups (Orellana mentions the use of up to forty *Sonarimbas* in a single work) and create constellations of sounds that guide the musical discourse. All of these

instruments are designed by Orellana and built by a dedicated group of artisans and artists.

*Efluvios y puntos* (Outpours and dots), commissioned by Americas Society and composed by Orellana in 2019, is his third piece to feature *útiles sonoros* exclusively. It is written for four performers who play thirty-four instruments and sing. It also includes an active part for the audience, which is instructed to scream, howl, and weep in an invented language at precisely indicated points. As is the case in many of Orellana’s pieces, *Efluvios* has a strong collective character in which the performers’ movements in the concert hall and the audience’s participation create the sense of an intricate—and undefined—ritual. The interplay of the materials from which the *útiles* are built (wood, metal, bamboo, plastic) and the particular modes in which they are played (dragging a mallet over a multitude of wood or bamboo segments, using a bow over metal tubes or sheets to create sustained tones, etc.) define the overall shape of the piece. For example, the metallic, sustained

sounds of the *Herroím* and *Tubarc* usher in a new section after an extended segment in which the multiple sounds of the wooden *Imbalunas*, *Sinusoidos*, and *Ululantes* take turns with discrete, pointillistic explosions of the plastic *Pultaps*. In each part, traditional Western musical techniques such as imitation or varied repetition organize the musical discourse. This instrumental organization is in constant dialogue with the quintessential “humanophony,” the voices of performers and audience. The performers use four *Resolam*, metal *útiles* based on garden watering cans, which modify their voices, giving them an otherworldly quality. The groups of voices challenge and imitate each other, finishing in a long, soft moment of shared commonality.

Orellana didn’t want to undertake his work alone, so he took the whole post-conquest history of his people, hung it on his shoulders as an old-time *marimbero* would carry his instrument, and invited everyone into his new world of strange sounds—sounds by humans, for humans.

## ENDNOTES

- i. Joaquín Orellana, WhatsApp conversation with author, July 22, 2020.
- ii. A lot has been written about the artistic experiment at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, but it remains hard to overstate the importance of the CLAEM experience for the field of music composition in Latin America. Di Tella was structured in three centers: Centro de Artes Visuales, Centro de Experimentación Audiovisual, and CLAEM, which was devoted to music composition and directed by Alberto Ginastera, the dean and brightest international star of the Argentinean classical music world. See Eduardo Herrera, *Elite Art Worlds: Philanthropy, Latin Americanism, and Avant-Garde Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Laura Novoa, “Listening to Cultures in Conflict: the Politics of Sound in Buenos Aires in the 1960s,” *Parallax* 20, no. 4 (October 2014): 303–19; Hernán Gabriel Vázquez, *Conversaciones en torno al CLAEM. Entrevistas a compositores becarios del Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales del Instituto T. Di Tella* (Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Instituto Nacional de Musicología “Carlos Vega,” 2014); and John King, *El Di Tella y el desarrollo cultural argentino en la década del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Asunto Impreso Ediciones, 2007).
- iii. Years later, Alberto Ginastera, the director of the CLAEM, told John King that the stipend (two hundred US dollars) was generous enough that the students didn’t have to spend their nights performing in bars and cabarets to make ends meet. See King, *El Di Tella*, 353.
- iv. Orellana, conversation with author, July 22, 2020.
- v. Graciela Paraskevaïdis, quoted in Vázquez, *Conversaciones en torno al CLAEM*, 212 (unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own).
- vi. See Gerardo E. Meza Sandoval, *Del paisaje sonoro a la marimba fantástica* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Alma Máter, 2018), 85.
- vii. Joaquín Orellana, quoted in *ibid.*, 88.
- viii. *Musique concrète* is a type of electronic composition that was developed by Pierre Schaeffer immediately after World War II. It uses recorded sounds as its source material; these sounds are later modified in the studio.
- ix. See Vázquez, *Conversaciones en torno al CLAEM*, 203.
- x. See María Alejandra Privado Catalán, *Lo social en las fibras de la música de Joaquín Orellana* (Guatemala City: Editorial Cultura, 2010), 36.
- xi. Joaquín Orellana discussed the *útiles sonoros* in an unpublished interview conducted by the author and Diana Flatto at the Teatro Nacional, Guatemala City, on February 19, 2020.
- xii. The name is a combination of *sonaja* (rattle) and *marimba*.
- xiii. See *Prensa Libre*, “Conozca la Sonarimba. El mundo sonoro de Joaquín Orellana,” YouTube video, January 7, 2018, 1:32, <https://youtu.be/Gbcrr1OnF8iA?t=49>.

WORKS

JOAQUÍN ORELLANA



*Sinusoido Grande*, 1996. Hormigo wood and mixed media,  
71  $\frac{3}{8}$  × 47  $\frac{3}{8}$  × 21  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (182 × 121 × 55 cm)



*Sinusoido Pequeño*, 1996. Hormigo wood and mixed media,  
55  $\frac{1}{8}$  × 31  $\frac{3}{8}$  × 23  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (140 × 80 × 60 cm)



*Imbaluna*, 1984. Hormigo wood and mixed media,  
68  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 51  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 15  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches (173 x 130 x 40 cm)



*Pinzafer*, 1989. Iron and mixed media,  $47\frac{1}{4} \times 57\frac{1}{8} \times 13\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
( $120 \times 145.2 \times 35$  cm)



*Herroím*, 2001. Iron and mixed media, 32 × 45½ × 15¾ inches  
(81.5 × 115.5 × 40 cm)



*Cirlum Grande*, 1985. Aluminum and mixed media, 30 × 34 × 34 inches (76.2 × 86.4 × 86.4 cm)



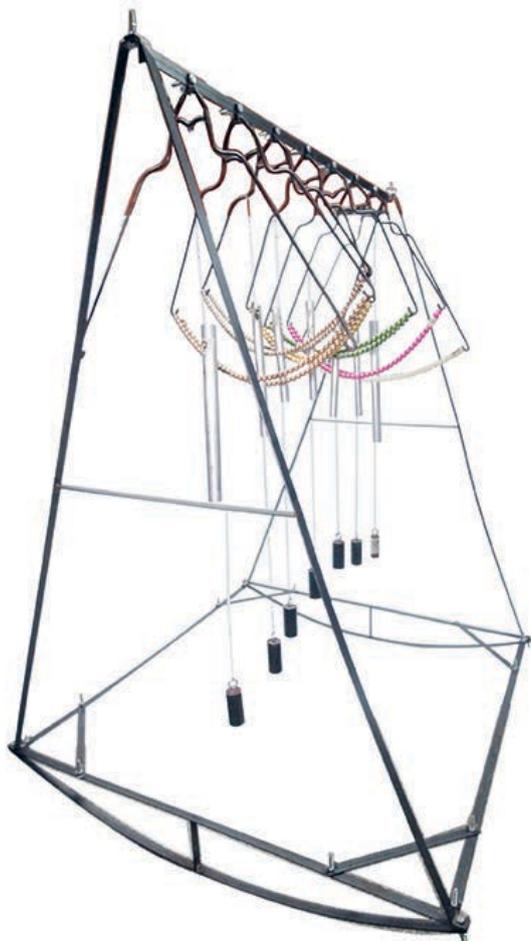
*Cirlum Pequeño*, 1985. Aluminum and mixed media, 24  $\frac{3}{8}$  × 26  $\frac{3}{8}$  × 26  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (62 × 67 × 67 cm)



*Circumar*, 1984. Hormigo wood and mixed media,  
21½ × 27⅛ × 27⅛ inches (54.5 × 69 × 69 cm)



*Ululante Pequeño*, 1975. Bamboo and mixed media,  
17 × 26⅜ × 26⅜ inches (43 × 67 × 67 cm)



*Periomin*, 1996. Aluminum and mixed media,  
57 × 76 × 59 inches (145 × 193 × 150 cm)



*Ululante Grande*, 1975. Bamboo and mixed media,  
17 × 30 × 30 inches (43 × 76.2 × 76.2 cm)



*Tubarc*, 1990. Aluminum and mixed media,  
36  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 35 x 5  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches (100 x 89 x 14 cm)





*Resolam*, 1985. Mixed media,  $9\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{4} \times 17$  inches (25 x 21 x 43 cm)



*Tamcir*, 1983. Mixed media,  $5\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{7}{8} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$  inches (14 x 20 x 20 cm)



*Pre-L, 1975. Mixed media, 2 ¾ × 15 × 2 ¾ inches (7 × 38 × 7 cm)*



*Pre-Ar, 1975. Bamboo and mixed media, 9 × 4 ¾ × 2 ¾ inches (23 × 11 × 7 cm)*



*Pultap*, 2015. Mixed media,  $2\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{7}{8}$  inches (7 × 7 × 10 cm)



*Onda-im*, 1976. Hormigo wood and mixed media,  $10 \frac{1}{4} \times 21 \frac{5}{8} \times 1 \frac{1}{2}$  inches (26 x 55 x 4 cm)



*Prehimulinho*, 1989. Bamboo and mixed media, 19 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 19 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>  
inches (50 × 30 × 50 cm)



*Sonarimba*, 1971. Hormigo wood and mixed media,  $9\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{3}{8}$  inches (24 x 27 x 3 cm)

## CARLOS AMORALES



*Orellana's Fantasia*, based on the Disney classic, features Orellana with his music and *útiles sonoros*. In 2015, Amoraless showed his *güiro*-based drawings, made with graphite replicas of the Latin American instrument, alongside Orellana's *útiles sonoros* in the exhibition *Antitropicalia* at the Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo, San José, Costa Rica.

In collaboration with Julian Lede, *Orellana's Fantasia*, 2013. Black-and-white video with sound, music by Joaquín Orellana (stills), 25:00, variable dimensions.



*Antitropicalia*, 2015. Exhibition views (left, clockwise: *Notations for the Use of Typographies*, *Fax Mantra*, and *Antitropicalia*; right, clockwise: *Habana Suite*, *Notations for the Use of Typographies*, *Antitropicalia*), MADC, Costa Rica, 2015, variable dimensions.

## MARÍA ADELA DÍAZ



Orellana's *Humanofonía* (1971) is the soundtrack for *Caída libre* (Free fall, 2006). Díaz hired day laborers to jump off a ledge, a reflection of the uncertainty of immigrants' lives. There is also a conceptual relationship with Orellana's *Elegía a una migrante muerta en camino* (Ballad of the migrant who died on the road, 2007), which is about a Guatemalan woman who died of thirst on her way to the United States.

*Caída libre* (Free fall), 2006. Video performance, variable dimensions.

## AKIRA IKEZOE



The organic forms in the ongoing *Future Primitive* series are visually informed by found and invented objects as well as by Orellana's *útiles sonoros*. Ikezoe visited Orellana's studio while he was living in Guatemala in 2015 and he traveled to Athens in 2017 to see the performance of *Sinfonia desde el Tercer Mundo* (Symphony from the Third World) at Documenta 14.

*Future Primitive IX*, 2017. Oil on canvas, 44 × 64 inches (111.8 × 162.6 cm).

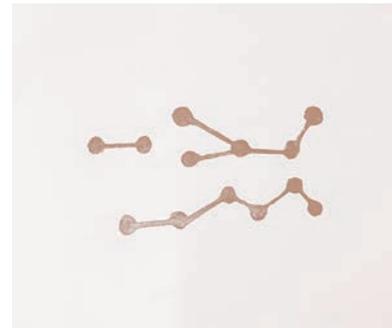
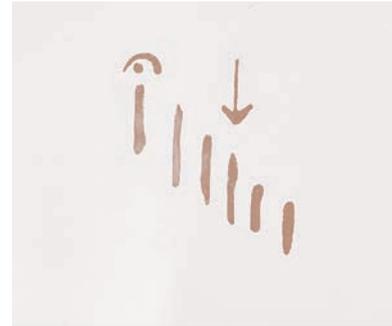


*Future Primitive XV*, 2019. Oil on canvas, 48 × 48 inches (121.9 × 121.9 cm).



*Future Primitive III*, 2016. Oil on canvas, 46 × 40 inches (116.8 × 101.6 cm). Private collection

## ALBERTO RODRÍGUEZ COLLÍA



Rodríguez Collía's prints draw from Orellana's idiosyncratic scores, amplifying the notations that dictate how the performers sway with the *Periomin* (1996), the staccato of a mallet striking the wooden bars of the *Cirlum* (1985), and the motion of playing the handheld *Sonarimba* (1971).

**Untitled Suite, 2017. Drypoints printed with metallic ink, each 16 × 24 inches (40.6 × 61 cm).**

## ORELLANA'S COMPOSITIONS

### Music for voices and instruments

*Balada trágica* (Tragic ballade), 1952 (6 min), 2.2.2.2-2.o.o.o.-  
S-strings

Two lieder: *Un cuento misterioso* (A mysterious story) and *Yo también cual tú* (Me too, just like you), c. 1956–57 (8 min)

Note: On texts by Leonor Paz y Paz

*Canción esotérica* (Esoteric song), 1957 (8 min)

Note: First Prize in the Concurso Nacional de la Canción TGW, 1957

*Perdanzas*, 1965

*Responso negro* (Black responsory), 1969 (8 min), 2.2.2.2-  
2.o.2.o-S-strings

*Responso negro* (Black responsory), 1969 (8 min), chorus  
a cappella

*Cantata dialéctica* (*Dios está con nosotros . . . y el Diablo también*  
(Dialectical cantata [god is with us . . . and so is the  
devil]), 1974 (30 min), 1.o.o.2-2.o.o.o-timp-perc-S-2  
choruses-útiles sonoros-strings

*Primitiva grande* (Large primitive), 1975 (10 min), chorus-  
útiles sonoros

*Tzulumanachí*, c. 1976–79 (25 min), 12 actors-útiles sonoros

Note: Musical action for a theater group

*Música incidental para la obra “Bodas de Sangre” de García Lorca*  
(Incidental music for the play *Blood Wedding* by García  
Lorca), 1977 (20 min), chorus-útiles sonoros

*Ante-Par III*, 1980 (20 min), 2.2.2.2-2.o.o.o-timp-perc-  
S-strings

*Santanadasatán*, c. 1980–81 (30 min), singing actress-male  
chorus-útiles sonoros

*“La libertad de un mundo” (ecos de un teatro inaudito)* (The  
liberty of a world [echoes of an unheard-of theater]),

1982 (25 min), chorus-children's chorus-3 reciters

Note: Declamatory choral poem. Selected for a collection of works in honor of Simón Bolívar, Venezuela, 1982

*Canción de Imbertalt (Imbertalt's song)*, 1984 (7 min)

*Sacratávica (in memoriam por las víctimas de Río Negro de 1982)* (Sacratávica [in memoriam the victims of Río Negro, 1982]), 1998–99 (26 min), 3 recorders-large chorus-marimba-útiles sonoros

*Cancioncillas nostálgimientes bufonantes*, 1995–2007

Note: Issued on CD in 2008

*Villancicos: A la Ro-Ro niño y Divino Infante (Carols: "Lullaby" and "Divine Child")*, 1998

*Elegía in memoriam Laura Mejía Ruiz (1913–2005)*, c. 2005–6, S-chorus

*Balada de la migrante muerta en camino (Ballad of the migrant who died on the road)*, 2007 (3 min), fl-pft-chorus

*Canciones sobre el mito de El violín valsante de Huis. Armadel (Songs on the myth of Huis. Armadel's waltzing violin)*, 2009

*Historia del niño que se llamaba Espejito con Ojos (Story of the child called Little Mirror with Eyes)*, 2010, orchestra-chorus-children's chorus

Note: inspired by the story "The Man Who Had Everything, Everything, Everything," by Miguel Ángel Asturias. Issued on CD

*Gritos en la memoria (Screams in memory)*, 2011

Note: Includes *Antepar III* and *Imposible a la X*

*Elegía desgarrada a María Tiú (Torn elegy for María Tiú)*, 2016, chorus a cappella

*Deveritas ¡Ay! (Really, ah!)*, chorus

Instrumental music

*Dos poemas para violín y piano (Two poems for violin and piano)*, 1953 (10 min)

*Exorcismo (Exorcism)*, c. 1954 (8 min)

Note: Scherzante for piano

*La vanidosa (The vainglorious one)*, c. 1955–58 (6 min)

Note: Rondeau for violin and piano

*Cuarteto de cuerdas no. 1 (andante-allegro, introducción-fuga)* (String quartet #1 [andante-allegro, introduction-fugue]), 1957 (15 min)

*Preludio temperamental para violoncello y piano (Temperamental prelude for cello and piano)*, 1958 (8 min)

*Preludio-abstracción para viola y orquesta de cámara (Prelude-abstraction for viola and chamber orchestra)*, 1963 (6 min)

*Trío para violín, viola y violoncello (adagio, miniatura pastoril, scherzo, danza frenética)* (String trio [adagio, pastoral miniature, scherzo, frantic dance]), c. 1964–65 (15 min)

Note: Commissioned by the Pan-American Union. Premiered in Washington, DC, in 1965

*Cuarteto de cuerdas no. 2 "Frater Ignotus"* (String quartet #2 "Frater ignotus"), 1967 (12 min)

Note: In one movement, based on Gregorian themes. Written and premiered at the Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales of the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires

*Violín sideral (Sidereal violin)*, 1972, vln-pft

*Dos poemas para violín y grupos orquestales (canto y textura, inductor)* (Two poems for violin and orchestral groups [song and texture, inductor]), 1972 (18 min)

Note: Second Prize in the Certamen Centroamericano "15 de septiembre," 1972

*Divert-intento*, 1975 (5 min), fl-gtr-db

Note: Performed during the 5th Curso Latinoamericano de Música Contemporánea, Uruguay, 1976

*Híbrido a presión* (Hybrid under pressure), 1982 (25 min),  
2 fl-tape-útiles sonoros

Note: Published by US Embassy, Guatemala

*Piezas características para cuarteto de cuerdas (Oxidorganillo, Mandolina en el recuerdo)* (Character pieces for string quartet [oxidorganillo, mandoline in memory]), 1983 (9 min)

Note: Homage to the Guatemalan creole waltzes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Recorded by Quinteto de Cuerdas Pentaforum in 1995

*Híbrido a presión II* (Hybrid under pressure II), c. 1986–87 (12 min), 2 fl-magnetic tape-útiles sonoros

Note: Published by US Embassy, Guatemala

*Ramajes de una marimba imaginaria* (Foliage of an imaginary marimba), c. 1990–95 (15 min), marimba-reciter-útiles sonoros

Note: Recorded by Quinteto Pentaforum in 1995 and issued on CD

*El paso secreto* (The secret step), 1998, (9 min)

Note: String quartet version

*Émulo Lipolidón*, 2007, (5 min), voices-string quartet

Note: Originally the second movement of *La tumba del Gran Lengua*

*Violinada violhonda (in memoriam Marcel Duval)*, 2010–11, 6 vln-5 va-“ghost” vln

Note: Issued on CD

*In memoriam Arturo Santa María*, 2012, db-orchestra

*Melancolía* (Melancholy), 2014

Note: Slow waltz

## Orchestral music

*El jardín encantado (superstición, romance infantil, figuras grotescas del pueblo)* (The enchanted garden [superstition, childhood romance, grotesque popular images]), 1958 (18 min), 2.2.2.2-4.3.3.1-timp- perc-strings

*Violante en el claustro* (Violante in the cloister), 1960 (20 min),  
2.2.2.2-4.3.3.1-reciter-timp-perc-strings

*Adagio and Scherzo*, 1962 (12 min), 2.2.2.2-4.3.3.1-timp-perc-strings

*Poenimio sinfónico*, concerto for cello and orchestra, c. 1962,  
2.2.2.2-2.0.0.0-vlc-strings

*Contrastes (tema y variantes)* (Contrasts [theme and variations]), 1963 (8 min), 2.2.2.2-4.3.3.1-tape-timp-perc-strings

Note: Music for ballet. First time composer uses magnetic tape

*Un extraño personaje* (A strange character), 1964 (15 min),  
for orchestra

Note: Symphonic poem. First Prize in the Certamen Centroamericano “15 de septiembre,” 1964

*Multifona*, 1967 (10 min), 2.2.2.-4.3.3.1-timp-perc-strings

Note: Pointillistic, nontonal

*Estampas de un cuento de hadas (fantoques, danza de Loreto, llegada del bando)* (Images from a fairy tale [puppets, dance from Loreto, the band’s arrival]), 1968,  
2.2.2.2-4.0.0.0-timp-perc-strings

*Metéora*, 1970 (10 min), 2.2.2.2-4.3.3.1-tape-vibr-harp-pft-timp-perc-strings

Note: Published by Laboratorio del Instituto “Torcuato Di Tella,” Buenos Aires

*Música incidental para la obra de teatro “La última profecía” de Manuel José Arce* (Incidental music for the play “The last prophecy” by Manuel José Arce), 1972

Note: *Tanajunarin*, for mixed chorus a cappella, is derived from this piece

*Música para la película Los Ángeles de Chinautla* (Music for the film “The angels from Chinautla”), 1976–78 (18 min)

*Música incidental para la obra Historias del Popol Vuh contadas para niños del año 2000* (Incidental music for the play

“Stories from the Popol Vuh” for children of the year 2000, 1979 (30 min), 2.2.2.2-2.0.0.0-tape-útiles sonoros *El violín valsante de Huis. Armadel* (Huis. Armadel’s waltzing violin), 1984 (10 min), vln-strings

Note: Based on a story by the composer

*Evocaciones de una ignota heroína* (Evocation of an unknown heroine), 2013, voice-strings

Note: Written for the Orquesta Sinfónica Juvenil Femenina Alaide Foppa

*Sinfonía desde el Tercer Mundo* (Symphony from the Third World), 2017, orchestra-chorus-children’s chorus-Guatemalan marimba ensemble-útiles sonoros

Note: Written for Documenta 14, premiered in Athens in 2017, conducted by Julio Santos

## Electroacoustic works

*Metéora*, 1968 (10 min)

Note: Published by Laboratorio del Instituto “Torcuato Di Tella,” Buenos Aires. First electroacoustic piece written by a Central American composer

*Humanofonía*, 1971 (12 min)

Note: Published by US Embassy, Guatemala

*Humanofonía II (Malebolge)*, 1972

Note: Based on a passage in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Version 1: 25 min; Version 2: 18 min. Published by Ediciones Tacuabé, Montevideo

*Entropé*, 1972 (6 min)

*Primitiva I (Primitive I)*, 1972 (5 min)

Note: Published by US Embassy, Guatemala

*Asediado-asediante (Besieged-besieger)*, 1972 (4 min)

Note: Published by US Embassy, Guatemala

*Itero-tzul*, 1972 (4 min)

Note: Published by Hei Hel, Guatemala

*Sortilegio*, 1978

*Rupestre en el futuro (Primitive in the future)*, 1979 (25 min)

Note: Published by Hei Hel, Guatemala. Winner of the Prize at the 7th Bourges Electroacoustic Music Competition

*Imposible a la X (Imágenes de una historia en redondo)* (Impossible to the X [images of a circular history]), 1980 (20 min)

Note: Published by Hei Hel, Guatemala

*Música para La rueda sin fin de los Katunes* (Music for “The endless wheel of the Katunes”), 1984 (8 min)

Note: Based on a play by Carlos Mencos Deka

## Works with marimba

*Evocación profunda y traslaciones de una marimba* (Deep evocation and movement of a marimba), 1984 (25 min), marimba-5 recorders-útiles sonoros-chorus-tape-reciter

Note: Published by Estudios Sinco, Guatemala

*Ramajes de una marimba imaginaria* (Foliage of an imaginary marimba), 1990 (15 min), marimba-útiles sonoros-reciter

*En los cerros de Ilóm* (In the mountains of Ilóm), 1992

Note: Opera based on *Men of Maize* by Miguel Ángel Asturias. The song “Fiesta de mi campo” is part of this work

*La tumba del Gran Lengua* (The tomb of Great Tongue), 2001

Note: Scenic cantata

## Works for útiles sonoros

*Bosquejo de “Alucuart”* (Draft for “Alucuart”), 2012

*Fantoidea*, 2012 (6 min)

*Efluvios y puntos* (Outpours and dots), 2019 (20 min)

Note: Four performers. Commissioned by Americas Society

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Catalán, María Alejandra. *Lo social en las fibras de la música de Joaquín Orellana*. Guatemala City: Ediciones Superiores S. A., 2010.

Cazali, Rossina, and Anamaría Cofiño K. *Sinfonía delirante: Los útiles sonoros de Joaquín Orellana*. Guatemala City: Museo Nacional de Arte Moderno de Guatemala, 1998.

King, John. *El Di Tella*. Buenos Aires: Asunto Impreso Ediciones, 2007.

Orellana, Joaquín. *Cantos a la marimba*. Antigua Guatemala: Proyecto editorial los zopilotes, 2019.

———. *La muerte del General y otros relatos*. Guatemala City: Universidad Rafael Landívar, Editorial Cara Parens, 2019.

Sandoval, Gerardo E. *Del paisaje sonoro a la marimba fantástica*. San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Librería Alma Mater, 2018.

———. *Tres compositores centroamericanos: Del Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales del Instituto Torcuato di Tella*. San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Librería Alma Mater, 2015.

“To Create the Sound of Hunger: Joaquín Orellana in Conversation with Stefan Benchoam, Julio Santos,

and Alejandro Torún, with an introduction by Monika Szewczyk.” In *South as a State of Mind #7* (Documenta 14 #2), ed. Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk. Kassel: Documenta and Museum Fridericianum gGmbH, 2016. <https://www.documenta14.de/en/south>.

Vázquez, H. G. *Conversaciones en torno al CLAEM*. Buenos Aires: Instituto Nacional de Musicología “Carlos Vega,” 2015.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

**Joaquín Orellana** (b. 1930, Guatemala City) studied violin and composition at the National Conservatory of Music in Guatemala and was a fellow at the Centro Latinoamericano de Estudios Musicales at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires. In 1968 he returned to Guatemala to work on a series of instruments that were to provide an analog means of achieving electronic musical sound, a sound that established a cultural identity for Guatemala.

**Carlos Amoraes** (b. 1970, Mexico City) studied in Amsterdam at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten. Amoraes experiments at the limits between image and sign using an array of platforms: animation, video, film, drawing, installation, performance, and sound. His practice is based on different forms of translation: instruments that become characters in his films, letters that become shapes, and narratives that unfold as nonverbal actions.

**María Adela Díaz** (b. 1973, Guatemala City) uses her body and various media to explore patriarchal values, political deception, and discriminatory ideology, employing video and installation to seduce and provoke the observer within unexpected everyday contexts. Her work has been presented in venues including the Centre Pompidou in Paris, Ex Teresa Arte Actual in Mexico City, and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in San José, Costa Rica. Díaz resides in Los Angeles, where she works as an art director.

**Akira Ikezoe** (b. 1979, Kochi, Japan) explores the experience of navigating cultural differences between what is perceived as “East” and “West.” Through various disciplines, he creates works in relation to the forces we think of as *outside* or *before* ourselves. Often the human figure is presented as an alter ego and woven into a metaphysical and mythological context that depicts a timeless melting point between human and natural boundaries.

**Alberto Rodríguez-Collía** (b. 1985, Guatemala City) studied printmaking at Escuela de Arte 10 in Madrid. He works with mass media images and archives to produce videos, graphic art, installations, and paintings. He has been awarded residencies from CASA in Oaxaca, AIT in Japan, FAAP in São Paulo, and Despacio in Costa Rica. He has also worked on films by Julio Hernández Cordón, and César Díaz’s *Nuestras madres*, a 2019 award winner at the Cannes Film Festival.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Diana Flatto** is a PhD student in the Department of History of Art & Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh and the former Assistant Curator of Visual Arts at Americas Society. She holds an MA in art history with an advanced certificate in curatorial studies from Hunter College. She has co-curated and assisted on several exhibitions, including *Alice Miceli: Projeto Chernobyl* at Americas Society (2019) and *Framing Community: Magnum Photos 1947–Present* at Hunter College Art Galleries (2017).

**Sebastián Zubieta** has been Music Director at Americas Society since 2005. He has taught music history, and composition, and is also a composer and the conductor of the vocal ensemble Meridionalis, with which he has performed contemporary and early music in the United States and Latin America. He holds a doctorate in composition from Yale and a licentiate in musicology from Universidad Católica Argentina in Buenos Aires.

## CREDITS

All works and archival materials by Joaquín Orellana are reproduced courtesy of the artist.

pp. 2–3: Photo: Diana Flatto.

p. 46: Photo: María Reneé Barrientos/Prensa Libre.

pp. 64–69, 71–77, 79–89, 91–93: Photos: Francisco Soto.

p. 95: Courtesy of Kurimanzutto Gallery Mexico City and New York, and Estudio Amoraes.

pp. 96–97: Courtesy of Kurimanzutto Gallery Mexico City and New York, and Estudio Amoraes. Photos: Adriana Artavia / Roberto Guerrero.

p. 99: Courtesy of María Adela Díaz. Photos: Miguel Morales.

pp. 101–5: Courtesy of Akira Ikezoe and Proyectos Ultravioleta, Guatemala City.

p. 107: Courtesy of Alberto Rodríguez Collía.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Lucía Armas; Ethel Batres; Stefan Benchoam; Alida Boer; Jamie Denburg Habie; Mitchell Denburg; Estudio Joaquín Orellana; Suzanne Farrin; Jessica Kairé; José Kuri; Mayarí de León; Mónica Manzutto; Ulises Martínez Escobar; Omar Morales Abril; Hugo Quinto; Sergio Ramírez; Gabriela Rangel; Julio Santos; Diana Solares; Alejandro Torún; Bree Zucker.



*Joaquín Orellana: The Spine of Music*

January 6–March 5, 2021

Americas Society  
680 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10065  
[www.as-coa.org/visual-arts](http://www.as-coa.org/visual-arts)

Founder: David Rockefeller †  
Chairman: Andrés Gluski  
President and CEO: Susan L. Segal  
Treasurer: George B. Weiksner  
Vice President, Public Policy Programs and Corporate Relations: Ragnhild Melzi

#### Exhibition

Curators: Diana Flatto and Sebastián Zubieta  
Director and Chief Curator of Visual Arts: Aimé Iglesias Lukin  
Assistant Curator: Natalia Viera Salgado  
Assistant to the Music Director: Gina Portale  
Programs Assistant: Alessandra Medina  
Gallery Attendants: Andrea Coronil and Alessandra Medina  
Head Preparator and Fabricator: Cein Watson  
Installation: Thane Lund, John Peery, and Kevin Swanson

#### Publication

Visual Arts exhibition series editors: Aimé Iglesias Lukin and Karen Marta  
Associate editor: Diana Flatto  
Project manager: Todd Bradway  
Copy editor: Miles Champion  
Designer: Garrick Gott

Printed and bound by Graphicom, Vicenza, Italy

Printed on Magno Natural 120 gsm  
Typeset in Basis Grotesque and Dorian

Publication © 2021, Americas Society  
All texts © 2021, the authors  
All artworks © 2021, the artists

ISBN 978-1-879128-47-7  
Library of Congress Control Number: 2020921484

Printed in Italy

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be produced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher. The publisher gratefully acknowledges permission granted to reproduce the copyrighted materials in this book. Every effort has been made to contact copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyrighted material. The publisher apologizes for any errors or omissions and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints or editions of this publication.

**AS**/AMERICAS  
SOCIETY