

AXIVIL ALJAMÍA

Flamenco Singing: Pedro Sanz  
Eastern Flutes: Javier Paxariño  
Hurdy Gurdy: Jota Martínez  
Vocals and Renaissance Viola: Luís Antonio Muñoz  
Percussion, *oud* and vocals: Wafir S. Gibril

Percussion: Pedro Esteban  
Lute: Felipe Sánchez Mascaño  
Director and Musical Arrangements: Felipe Sánchez Mascaño  
Production: Ángeles Burrel

Singing and Guitar

MADRID

TEATRO DEL INSTITUT FRANÇAIS (THE THEATER AT THE INSTITUT FRANÇAIS)  
THURSDAY, JUNE 24<sup>TH</sup> AT 20:00

PERFUME MUDÉJAR (MUDEJAR SCENT)

This show explores the connection between Spanish music at the end of the medieval period and current-day flamenco. Axivil finds this connection in the fusion that took place on the peninsula between Mudejar and Christian music from the days of Al-Andalus up to the expulsion of the Moors. Axivil's director, Felipe Sánchez Mascaño, offers a hypothesis of what this 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Century fusion between Andalusí music and Christian scores may have sounded like.

Rhythm and song, the extraordinary dialogue between the vocals and the Andalusí lute, in and of themselves evoke the flamenco universe. Romance literature was omnipresent in Spain during that period and was adopted by gypsy communities from the start. The genre is intimately linked to the origins of *cante* (flamenco singing).

The best instrumentalists from different musical backgrounds have joined together to work on this bold project, because *duende* ("spirit") is beyond time periods: it is pure art.

**Axivil Aljamía.** Axivil is a prestigious team made up of old timers. Felipe Sánchez Mascaño and Ángeles Burrel founded the group in 1998 with the aim of reconstructing, recovering, and recreating historical Spanish music. To this end, they invariably use instruments that are appropriate to the time period they are exploring.

The group was named after Jewish musician Juceff Axivil, who, in 1352, was hired to accompany Prince Juan of Aragón on a trip from Huesca to Zaragoza. Axivil's mission was to play the *vihuela de peñola* (a guitar-like string instrument that was played with a pectrum) in order to keep the young prince entertained on his journey.

The group Axivil has taken on various projects since its founding, including: Axivil Criollo, Axivil Castizo, Axivil Goyesco, Axivil Siglo XV and Axivil Aljamia. They always choose repertoires from by-gone eras that are part of the history of European music and have a decidedly Hispanic flavor. The group has recorded several records. They have also participated in specialized festivals and early music series. The group has also composed period music for several films such as Carlos Saura's *Iberia* and *Goya en Burdeos* (Goya in Bordeaux) and *Lázaro de Tormes*, directed by Fernando Fernán Gómez and García Sánchez.

Critics and audiences alike have praised the group for its historic accuracy as well as for the imaginative performances that manage to bring modern-day audiences closer to historical music by adding freshness and novelty to a repertoire that had, for years, been limited by stale, strictly scholarly interpretations.

For their latest project, entitled *Perfume Mudéjar* (Mudejar Scent), the group has assumed the name of Axivil Aljamía. The project explores Andalusí music, a genre of poetry known as "border Romances", and some pieces from the Palace Songbook (a compilation of Renaissance music). What is interesting about the project is that, along with different Renaissance instruments, it features the intimate and broken voice of flamenco *cantaor* Pedro Sanz. Flamenco, with its dramatic tension and sensitivity, gives early music a new dimension and, especially when they sing border Romances such as *Paseábase el Rey Moro* (The Moorish King Went for a Walk) or *De Antequera sale el Moro* (The Moor Left Antequera), an impressive song in three voices. Attending one of Axivil Aljamía's recitals is like spending an evening at the Christian court in medieval-Renaissance times, when, as was common in Al-Andalus, most of the musicians were Moorish. The group manages to achieve this with traditional Andalusí pieces, some Serphardic and some Christian songs played on Moorish instruments, and, finally, with some Romances that have a Moorish influence. Their repertoire encompasses a period of some forty years, from the last third of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century until the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century, a time period that more or less coincides with the reign of the Catholic Monarchs.