

BIOGRAPHY

Great bandleaders shape their ensembles into their personal instruments.

In the early 1980s, guitarist and composer Paco de Lucía assembled a sextet that, in its instrumentation and jazz-like approach, would forever change the sound of flamenco. It would take the guitarist 20 years to put together another group that would provide him with both the support and push for his talent and his vision.

The nucleus of the band came together in 2004, at the recording of de Lucía's Latin Grammy-winning *Cositas Buenas*, (Good Little Things) and grew into a collection of exceptional young talent including his nephew, Antonio Sánchez on guitar; Alain Pérez on bass; Israel Suárez "Piraña," percussion; Antonio Serrano, harmonica; David de Jacoba, singer and Antonio Fernandez "Farruco" (a/k/a "Farru"), dancer.

With this group, de Lucía (born Francisco Gustavo Sánchez Gomez) toured and performed for the next 10 year. The talented, combustible mix of wisdom and power was best captured in the 2010 double CD *Paco de Lucía En Vivo – Conciertos: Live in Spain*.

But de Lucía died unexpectedly of a heart attack in Mexico on February 25, 2014. He was 66.

His passing seemed to also mark the end of his group. It did not.

The Paco de Lucía Project, created by Grammy-winning producer and composer Javier Limón, a longtime collaborator and friend of de Lucía, brings back together the group for a celebration of Paco and his legacy. Notably, this tour takes place on the 50th anniversary of the release of de Lucía's first recording, aptly titled [*La fabulosa guitarra de Paco de Lucía*](#) (*The Fabulous Guitar of Paco de Lucía*) (1967)

"For us it's a tribute to a genius, a teacher, a partner in so many adventures and someone we loved very much," says Antonio Sánchez." In this project each one of us contributes our part to celebrate Paco and his work. Serrano is such a brilliant harmonica player; Piraña is the best percussionist in the history of flamenco; Alain is a tremendous musician and composer and Farru and David are great at what they do."

Sánchez, the son of Paco's older brother, also named Antonio Sánchez, started playing at a very young age under the watchful eye of his uncles, Paco and Ramón de Algeciras, and his cousin J.M Bandera. (His dad, who died just two months after Paco's passing, is the only of the brothers who did not pursue an artistic career.) Sánchez also studied with Juan Manuel Cañizares, another flamenco guitar and composition luminary. Antonio then worked with dance companies and in *tablaos* (flamenco clubs), most notably the popular *tablaos* Cordobés de Barcelona and in 2010, joined his uncle as a second guitar, replacing then-budding flamenco star Niño Josele

"Paco saw me perform only a few times but when he needed a guitarist someone suggested my name and he hired me," recalls Sánchez. As for the difference between Paco the uncle and Paco the boss, Sanchez asserts: "Paco was always the same, on stage, out on the street or at home. He was very humble and with a great sense of humor. When this group played with him there was a great sense of complicity between all of us -- glances, smiles, a knowing wink. There was a lot of communication without words. It felt very much like a family."

That sentiment was, in fact, one of the reasons that inspired producer Javier Limón, who won a Latin Grammy with de Lucía for *Cositas Buenas*, to create the Paco de Lucía Project.

He recalled that while producing *Entre 20 Aguas (Between 20 Waters)*, a Latin Grammy-winning album of Paco de Lucía's music performed by a cast of international superstars, he was reminded that "Paco had created a new sound with his first group, and another with this band, because it's made of musicians from a different generation than his -- he had arrived at a different approach to composing and to a different sonority. And I kept thinking: why are we throwing away a sound that took so many years and so much work to create? And the other reason is emotional," he continued. "For all of us to get together for Paco and remember moments and stories from the concerts and the tours is such a joy."

On stage, de Lucía gave his band "a lot of freedom," said Sánchez.

"With his first sextet he had to create everything from zero, there were no models," he said. "The members of our band grew up listening to Paco, so we arrived with our homework done. The dynamic was different."

Perhaps mirroring Miles Davis's approach, who famously told his musicians he paid them "to rehearse on stage," de Lucía didn't rehearse his band, recalled Sánchez. It was a strategy that created a creative tension, that "in performance, forced us to be more in-the-moment," he said. And after all, he noted, "the language of a group is not made of words but of listening, of paying attention and taking chances."

For this tour, the program will consist of de Lucía's jewels such as "Zyryab," "Canción de Amor," and "Entre dos Aguas," as well as original music by the members of the band.

"I take carrying on Paco's music with great humility. It's a great challenge," said Sánchez who, by carrying Paco's family name and being the guitarist in the group, has the added burden of "playing Paco." "The name is a burden only if you don't study, if you don't apply yourself and work. I come from a very humble family. That doesn't affect me. As a guitarist, it falls on me to present his work, but this project is by all of us. The important things here are the music and the group."

LINEUP:

Antonio Sánchez (guitar)

Antonio Serrano (harmonica) *

Alain Pérez (bass)

Israel Suárez "Piraña" (percussion)

David de Jacoba (vocals)

Antonio Fernández "Farruco" (dance)