

The Gipsy Kings: Zorro rides to the rumba flamenca - Telegraph The Gipsy Kings: Zorro rides to the rumba flamenca - Telegraph

improvised a melody, which we recorded and then wrote down.

specific demands of plot and characterisation.

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Renshaw reports.

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this extraordinary smorgasbord of emotions and melodies and styles. They love food as
well, so we'd stop for wonderful lunches and then go off and work again."MobileIn fine gipsy tradition, the Kings are self-taught musicians who rely on instinct and
spontaneity, so Renshaw had to devise a method of channelling their energies into the

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and we'd say 'it needs a middle section', and they could add that in. At the same time, Stephen started to write the lyrics, and the songs were built up like that." Renshaw worked as an opera director at Glyndebourne and Covent Garden before moving into musical theatre with a revival of The King and I, the Boy George musical Taboo and Queen's We Will Rock You. Launching a new theatrical production is always a hair-raising punt, but he's optimistic about the crowd-pleasing potential of two such bankable brand names as the Gipsy Kings,

Launching a new theatrical production is always a hair-raising punt, but he's optimistic about the crowd-pleasing potential of two such bankable brand names as the Gipsy Kings, whose so-called "rumba flamenca" style has helped generate a wallet-fattening 20 million album sales, and Zorro, whose legend began with the publication of Johnston McCulley's story The Curse of Capistrano in 1919.

'We'd describe a situation and get them to improvise a melody or a feeling. For instance,

for the scene where Louisa is broken-hearted because Zorro won't show his face, they

"We'd add a click-track [electronic metronome] so they could pick up the rhythm again,

Zorro, the avenging horseman with a mission to defend the helpless citizenry against corrupt politicians and bullying landowners, instantly struck a chord with audiences, and influenced the creation of subsequent superheroes like Batman and Superman.

Over the decades, the Zorro story has inspired countless TV versions, movies and animated treatments. Ghoul-rocker Alice Cooper wrote a song about him called Zorro's Ascent, and in 2005 Isabel Allende published the bestselling Zorro: A Novel.

"We've been influenced by Isabel Allende, who's one of our producers, but it's not her book: it's our own story we've developed over two or three years," Renshaw explains.

"It's quite traditional in that it uses elements of music, dance, fight and 'book'. All those disciplines can tell stories, and it's been fun to mix them up."

"There's no reason why it shouldn't work," beams Tonino. "Zorro is well known around the world, and so are the Gipsy Kings. When we're touring the world with the band, we'll be able to go and see Zorro on our day off."

"Rafael Amargo has 'la touche gipsy' in his choreography," adds Nicolas.

"It's very good - it's not pure flamenco, it's rumba flamenca with a lot of people dancing. Rumba flamenca is less conventional than flamenco, it's much more free. After two glasses of wine, tout le monde can dance rumba flamenca."

The band are so enthusiastic that they're already talking about creating Zorro 2, but they could do worse than turn the Gipsy Kings' own history into a stage musical.

The group's present incarnation is a combination of the five Reyes brothers - their father José was a renowned flamenco singer who worked with guitarist Manitas de Plata - and their three Baliardos cousins.

The Reyes family, who earned a living raising horses, had fled from their home in northeastern Spain to Arles in southern France during the Spanish civil war. Years later, it was at the annual gipsy pilgrimage to Saintes Maries de la Mer, in the Camargue, that the Reyes and Baliardos eventually banded together.

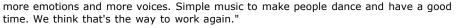
"For the pilgrimage, all the gipsies come in caravans and have a festival," says Tonino.

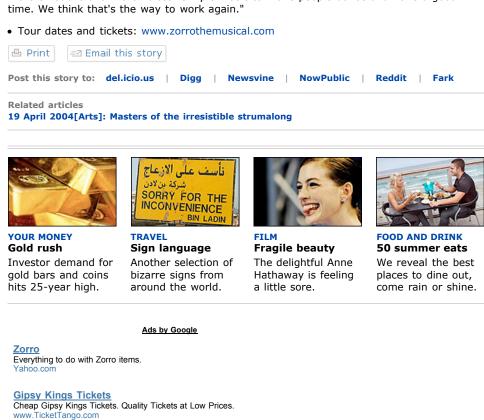
"It's very serious during the day, then every evening they have a big party with guitars and fires and drinking and girls dancing."

"Music is the soul of the gipsy, it's the way they express themselves," adds Nicolas. "If something needs to be done, gipsies can do it through music."

Their work on Zorro has inspired ideas about a fresh approach to their next album, though with a fanbase stretching from Brazil and the USA to Iran and South Korea, they don't seem to be doing a lot wrong.

"We may come back to how we were at the beginning," ponders Nicolas. "More guitars,





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