



Click here to find out more...



Home

News

Sport

Business

Travel

Jobs

Motoring

Telegraph TV

SEARCH



Arts home

Books

Film

Music

Stage

TV & radio

Visual arts

Arts blogs

Picture galleries

Latest reviews

Culture Minute

Glastonbury

Box office

Chess Club

Crossword Society

Horoscopes

Announcements

Arts

Blogs

Comment

Crossword

Dating

Digital Life

Earth

Education

Expat

Family

Fantasy Games

Fashion

Features

Food & Drink

Football

Gardening

Health

Horoscopes

My Telegraph

Obituaries

Promotions

Property

Science

Sudoku

Telegraph offers

Weather

Your Money

Your View

The Gipsy Kings: Zorro rides to the rumba flamenca

Last Updated: 12:01am GMT 03/03/2008

The swashbuckling hero is taking to the stage backed by the music of the Gipsy Kings. It's a perfect fit, they tell Adam Sweeting

In more than 30 years of playing together, the Gipsy Kings have grown accustomed to sunnier and more romantic venues than the rehearsal studios in south London where I catch up with them on a dull February afternoon.

A stone's throw from the Oval cricket ground and hemmed in by depressing council blocks, it's the last place you'd expect to find musicians and a theatre company flinging themselves into the adventures of Zorro, the mysterious sword-wielding nobleman from sun-bleached Spanish California.

But on March 13, this original Caped Crusader will make a giant leap on to the stage when Zorro: The Musical is given its world première at the New Victoria Theatre in Woking.

After a trundle round the regions, the production will head for the West End, then hopefully transfer to Broadway and beyond. Alongside dance routines by Spanish choreographer and flamenco dancer Rafael Amargo, its secret weapon will be a musical score by the Gipsy Kings, making their first foray into the land of the roaring greasepaint.

"We've worked on movies before, but never on a stage musical," says Tonino Baliardos, the Kings' lead guitarist, in his Catalan-inflected French.

"There used to be a Zorro TV series we'd watch every Thursday afternoon, and we saw the movie with Antonio Banderas and Catherine Zeta-Jones, but this is our first musical so it's all brand new for us."

Although they'd worked extensively with director Christopher Renshaw, arranger John Cameron and lyricist Stephen Clark to develop the musical score, this afternoon was their first, and fairly brief, glimpse of what the production would look like.

"It was a big surprise for us, but we're very happy with it," declares Nicolas Reyes, singer and guitar-player.

"I think it stays faithful to the image of Zorro and its gipsy spirit, moving from Spain to California. It's funny, the English people working on it get closer to the reality of Zorro than the Hollywood movie did. We wanted to be involved because we think the Gipsy Kings and Zorro make a natural fit."

The Gipsy Kings' schedule meant that any notions of them performing in person were out of the question - they've just embarked on a three-month American tour and are planning to record a new album - but band and production team are confident that they've managed to distil all the necessary drama and emotional colour into the score, which will be performed by a 10-piece house band.

Some of the pieces are reworkings of such familiar Kings hits as Bamboleo, Baila Me and Jobi Joba, but the bulk of them are new compositions.

"Stephen Clark and I travelled down to a place near Montpellier [in southern France] where the Gipsy Kings record, a beautiful 12th-century, semi-ruined farmhouse," Christopher



Working on Zorro: The Gipsy Kings rely on instinct

MOST VIEWED

Esther Rantzen: 'don't put a sell-by date on me'

Film review: WALL-E
Lorna Byrne: 'To me, seeing angels is natural'

How bad was J.M. Barrie?

Elite Squad: the movie that shook Brazil

Short Film Challenge

Winners announced
view all the entries and the critics choice

Access to your money is just a click away

6.00%
GROSS PA. PER VARIABLE

Apply now

northern rock



NEWS SERVICES

Blackberry service
Content syndication
Desktop alerts
Email services
Home delivery
Mobile
Reader prints
Telegraph e-paper
Weekly Telegraph

ACTIVITY PLANNER**WIDGETS****FEATURE FOCUS**

Renshaw reports.

"The first thing that happened was that they played me everything that was in their hearts. It was all acoustic and didn't sound anything like their commercial recordings, so we had 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."

In 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 specific demands of plot and characterisation.

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

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

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 north-eastern 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,



I'm a gal who's glass is definitely half full, needs laughter and a

[See my profile](#)

[Find friendship and romance for free](#)

ADVERTISING FEATURE

**UBS OPENINGS:
TATE MODERN**

[find out more](#)



more emotions and more voices. Simple music to make people dance and have a good time. We think that's the way to work again."

- Tour dates and tickets: www.zorrothemusical.com

 [Print](#)

 [Email this story](#)

Post this story to: [del.icio.us](#) | [Digg](#) | [Newsvine](#) | [NowPublic](#) | [Reddit](#) | [Fark](#)

Related articles

19 April 2004[Arts]: Masters of the irresistible strumalong



YOUR MONEY **Gold rush**

Investor demand for gold bars and coins hits 25-year high.



TRAVEL **Sign language**

Another selection of bizarre signs from around the world.



FILM **Fragile beauty**

The delightful Anne Hathaway is feeling a little sore.



FOOD AND DRINK **50 summer eats**

We reveal the best places to dine out, come rain or shine.

Ads by Google

[Zorro](#)

Everything to do with Zorro items.
Yahoo.com

[Gipsy Kings Tickets](#)

Cheap Gipsy Kings Tickets. Quality Tickets at Low Prices.
www.TicketTango.com

[The Mask of Zorro](#)

The Mask of Zorro Your Favorite Video Games Reviewed
Games.TopTenReviews.com

You are here: [Telegraph](#) > [Arts](#) > [Stage](#) > [Features](#)

[Contact us](#) | [Forgotten your password?](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Promotions](#) | [Archive](#) | [Today's news](#) | [Style Book](#)

© Copyright of Telegraph Media Group Limited 2008 | [Terms & Conditions of reading](#) | [Privacy and Cookie Policy](#)