

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## Zorro

Book and lyrics Stephen Clark, music by the Gypsy Kings  
Opera House, Manchester, and touring  
(2007)

The spirits of Douglas Fairbanks and Tyrone Power's film versions are alive and well and living in the musical *Zorro*. Due to technical problems the show arrived a day later than scheduled at the Opera House in Manchester on its national tour. It boasts an ebullient score by the Gypsy Kings and the distinguished Chilean novelist Isabel Allende as producer. This retelling of the story of the caped and masked crusader and his fight for justice in early 19th century California hits all the right notes.

Don Diego de la Vega disguises himself as Zorro in order to defeat his arch enemy, the evil Captain Ramon who has usurped power from Don Diego's father Don Alejandro. If you add in to this the fact that they are both in love with the beautiful and pure Luisa and the fact that Zorro doubles as gypsy loving Don Diego, then the stage is set for an epic struggle between good and evil and over who gets to go off into the sunset with the heroine.

The staging is very satisfying. The spare planks which form the main set are cleverly hidden by drapes for the first third of the show. There is great use of different height levels for parts of the action and the set pieces involve the partial collapse of the edifice. The sword play from both Matt Rawle as Zorro and Adam Cooper as Ramon fulfils all that you could desire of buckled swashes and they also swing very effectively from ropes in their fight scenes.

Ben Ormerod's lighting design deserves special mention whether his skill bathes the set in warm sunlight or we see stars sparkle in the night sky. The costumes by Tom Piper had an authentic flamenco feel to them. The women of the chorus wore evocative two piece dresses with frilly skirts in contrasting deep hues of red and yellow which were able to be held aloft with one hand while dancing. They sported effectively heeled shoes for stamping and the quicker flamenco group dances. The men wore bandanas and cummerbunds and short waistcoats in pastel shades which brilliantly complemented the women's costumes. Or as the soldiers they wore navy blue jackets with white pantaloons tucked into thigh-length black boots. And the fantastic dances composed by top Spanish choreographer Rafael Amargo were zestfully executed by the ensemble. They put this reviewer in mind of an unforgettable evening of Flamenco he experienced in Cordoba. There was a real Spanish soul flavour to the movements whether expressing joy or grief.

All the leads were excellent. Adam Cooper swaggered about the stage being a thoroughly nasty piece of work as Ramon. He avoided the one dimensional interpretation which a lesser performer would have offered. He also got to demonstrate a fine baritone as well as a powerful piece of solo dance, reminding one of his past glory as a classical dancer. Matt Rawle beguiled the audience with his powerful singing, stage presence and charisma. His was a very sensual performance as Zorro and you could really see why the women and even one of the men at one point would fall under his spell. Aimie Atkinson trod a delicate path as Luisa, pure but who has a passionate side to her nature which is revealed by the gypsies. She offered the most skilled vocal talent in the show.

Worthy of particular mention are Lesli Margherita as the feisty leading gypsy Inez and the alternately moving and comic mime from Daniel Genteley as Chego. And Nick Cavaliere and Earl Carpenter as respectively the comic officer Garcia and Zorro's father Don Alejandro offered solid support.

The plot may be pantomimic but the production was so infectious and accomplished that the audience's rapturous reception was well deserved. Director Christopher Renshaw has cleverly balanced the many action and dance sequences with quieter and more reflective solo flamenco inspired singing. As patrons left the Opera House with the rhythmic chanting of the Gypsy King's *Bamboleo* fresh in their minds some were surely considering their next Spanish trip.

*"Zorro" is at the Opera House until 5th April and then moves to Milton Keynes*

Philip Fisher [reviewed](#) this production on its transfer to the West End's Garrick Theatre

**Reviewer:** [Andrew Edwards](#)