

The Romeros – no comparison

The real thing in classical guitar

By Hector Saldaña

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The Romeros, the Royal Family of the Classical Guitar, play at the Majestic. Photo: Courtesy Mark Johnson

The Romeros are known for stunning audiences with classical brilliance on the Spanish guitar.

After all, the family quartet is known as the Royal Family of the Classical Guitar, hailed in the New York Times as the only group of its type “of real stature.”

The Romeros perform with Concierto Málaga String Orchestra at Charline McCombs Empire Theatre tonight. The Christmas-themed concert is presented by ARTS San Antonio.

But the group is in for a shock itself — hearing firsthand about the death of legendary flamenco guitarist Willie “El Curro” Champion. He died Aug. 18.

The musicians admired each other deeply.

Singer Rosalinda “Chayito” Champion recounted how much her father loved Los Romeros — and the pilgrimage that the Spanish musicians would make whenever they were in San Antonio.

“They were very dear friends,” she said. “They don't know dad's gone, and they're going to come looking because every time they'd call my mom and come look for him. They looked for ‘El Curro’ all the time. They are very good friends of my family.”

The Romeros were founded by Celedonio Romero with sons Celin, Pepe and Angel. The patriarch died in 1996, but the tradition is carried on around the world by his sons and grandsons.

The New York Times described their prowess: “One of the enduring mysteries of musical talent is how skills seem to flow genetically from musical parent to musical child. In the Romero family the flow has been swift and unimpeded. The virtuosity of the four Romeros was uniformly solid and finely considered, as if these techniques had derived from a single mold.”

Don't compare them to the Gipsy Kings.

“The amazing thing about it is, not only that they're a family, but the melodic sounds that come from the combinations of guitars, the harmonies, plus the generations,” Champion added. “There is no comparison of the Gipsy Kings. You cannot compare them. These are trained, classical guitarists. They are on a whole level of their own. Every time I hear them I cry. It's so beautiful. Es una cosa increíble de música.”

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