

## Rhythm is the Cure:

### A Healing Dance and Percussion Workshop

*From the Ancient Mediterranean to today, Alessandra Belloni conducts her world-renowned workshops... (New York Open Center, Findhorn Foundation, Scotland, Eselon Institute, Glastonbury Goddess Festival, Chapel of the Sacred Mirrors, Annual Workshop in Tuscany, Italy, and in California, Brazil, Australia, the Pyrenees & the Pyramids) always transforming the lives of many women... and men.*



### Introduction

In this workshop featuring Southern Italian folk dances and rituals we will learn chants used to invoke the healing power of the sun and moon, as well as a repertoire of therapeutic dances, accompanied by the beat of frame drums and tambourines.

Alessandra presents these unique dance movements which trace their roots from Southern Italy back to ancient Greece, with connections to Iran, Egypt and Andalusia, as well as to the traditions of the Gypsies who traveled from Rajasthan through North Africa, Morocco and Spain to Sicily and Calabria.

Representing an unbroken chain of inspiration from pre-Christian times to the present these dance movements embody and culminate the different dance traditions which we know today as Flamenco, Belly Dance and Tribal Dance.

Videos collected during Alessandra's research are shown at the beginning of the workshop demonstrating actual rituals from outside the churches of Southern Italy.

Alessandra will talk about her own experience with the dance, how she healed herself from irregular bleeding which led her to the creation of workshops and performances to help heal women. She will also share her experience working in the out-patient division of Mount Sinai Mental Hospital, women shelters and the healings she has observed over the years of this work.

**Participants are encouraged to wear white and red, and women to wear skirts with bare feet to invoke a lost femininity & to help facilitate the feeling of being part of a ritual.**

*In Alessandra's workshops, you will:*

- Be introduced to the rich rhythm and dance tradition of Southern Italy known as the tarantella.
- Learn the history of this powerful tambourine style, originally done mainly by women, which dates back to the rites of the Mother Earth Goddess Cybele, now worshipped as the Black Madonna
- Experience the healing and stress-relieving effect of these rhythms and dances.
- Re-connect with the ancient lineage of a lost drumming tradition.
- Join in the power of being part of healing ritual in community
- Release blockages of emotional and sensual energies through the Pizzica dance of liberation, expelling feelings of depression and repression.



## Background

The historic Dance of the Tarantula, is a healing trance dance ritual from Southern Italy (in ancient times Magna Graecia, part of Greece) for women from the Greek rites of the “Baccantes, in honor of Dionyusus, God of Ecstasy and wine (Baccus).” Women involved in these rites, later called Tarantate, danced the “Pizzica Tarantata” (“the bite of the spider tarantula,” also called “the bite of love”).

A bite of love drives them to dance in a wild frenzy in order to free themselves of repressed sexual desires. The dominant music was percussion, with large tambourines playing non-stop to a 12/8 beat, with loud accents. By spinning and stomping their feet, participants symbolically expelled the “poison” of the mythical bite of the tarantula from their bodies.

A double row of jingles on the instruments accentuated the madness as dancers, traditionally clad in white with red scarves and ribbons, moved on their backs like spiders. All participants customarily experienced a trance-like state induced by the combination of music and dancing.

## **Participants should prepare to learn and be enraptured by these exciting and healing dances:**

**TAMMORRIATA** – This elegant and sensual dance from Naples is performed by couples playing castanets to the rhythm of the large drum, called the Tammorra. The dance movements have a strong Spanish and Middle Eastern flourish, with many recognizable movements of the Flamenco and Belly Dance traditions. These movements are set to the beat of African 4/4 rhythms. The Tammorriata is based upon an improvisational style of drumming and singing usually enacted during the summer rituals in honor of the ancient Earth Goddess Cybele, and later, the Black Madonna.

**THE PIZZICA TARANTATA** – This erotic and dynamic ritual dance originated as a cure for the mythical bite of the Tarantula, a condition causing a mental disease called tarantismo, which afflicted mainly women (tarantate) in Southern Italy. The wild rhythm of the Pizzica, played on medium size tambourines and accompanied by dance was performed as an exorcism ritual which produced a trance-like state beneficial for the healing of many disorders and imbalances.

As part of a re-enactment of this healing ritual, Alessandra will lead the participants in a circle dance accompanied by her magic tambourine 6/8 rhythm and singing. During the ritual each student will learn the steps of the Pizzica, which means “bite,” building up to a culmination where each student will enter the circle and lay down upon a white sheet, surrounded by red ribbons, and emulate “Spider-like” movements on the ground, releasing stress and blockages of sexual energy, as well as opening the heart and throat chakras. The dance comes to completion as each participant dances their way out of an imaginary “Spider Web.”

**TARANTELLA DE’ 600** – This is a Renaissance folk dance which is done in pairs which is very popular in Italy and throughout the Mediterranean. It contains both fast, energetic steps and combined arm and leg movements which improve coordination. This invigorating dance had been called by Alessandra’s students ‘Italian Aerobics’.

**RITMO E DANZA DI SAN ROCCO or SPINNING DANCE** – This dance originating in Calabria during the Middle Ages evokes the elegant and meditative movements of the Whirling Dervish ceremonies of the Sufis. This dance was used during the time of the plague to heal people and as a release from overpowering fears of death. Due to the trance-inducing movements and incessant spinning many people enter ecstatic states during this dance. The session ends with a meditation utilizing a chant to the Sun, Jesce Sole, in the Lydian scale. The calming and lulling harmonies of this chant combined with the ocean drum guides students into complete relaxation. Participants emerge feeling light and joyful after this healing journey through sound and dance...

## **Online**

[\*\*Alessandra speaking about history and myth of the Tarantella and Black Madonna\*\*](#)

[\*\*Video Playlist of Alessandra Teaching\*\*](#)

[\*\*The Tarantella Trance, film trailer about Alessandra’s healing work, series \*Living Shamanism\*\*\*](#)

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[\*\*IgniVox Featured Performer Website\*\*](#)

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