

# TARANTELLA - SPIDER DANCE

*New York is bitten again by the Spider -- the mystical and sensual music/theater/dance spectacular about the history of the Tarantella, the Southern Italian myth of the bite of the tarantula, birth of the Spider Woman, and celebration of the wild ecstatic rites of Dionysus.*



## Plot Description:

The show follows the storyline with powerful narrator, and a fire dancer/acrobat/singer/capoeira master as the young Dionysus. We witness the healing journey of a "tarantata" as she is taken to the shaman (Alessandra Belloni), who cures her with the tarantella trance dance.

Her amazing journey includes:

- a powerful procession of the Black Madonna in Southern Italy
- a celebration of the Feast of St. Rocco, where the dance form "hip-hop," entices her further
- a healing ceremony of the pizzica tarantata, the wild erotic trance dance played with large tambourines non-stop to a 12/8 beat with loud accents, attended by townspeople in the piazza

The show also relates the dual journeys of Athena and Ariadne, who both suffer from tarantismo, transmitted from the bite of the spider Arachne. Athena's drumming induces a trance dance and reveals the age-old myth of Arachne and birth of the spider woman. Ariadne gains insight of her own madness and suicidal mania and actively seeks a cure. The ecstatic drumming and dancing lead Ariadne to New York and Brazil, where she encounters the common threads of universal rhythms and traditional cures through music and dance. Ariadne and Athena re-unite in a cross-cultural celebration of healing which allows her finally to truly love.

Alessandra Belloni, international REMO artist and award-winning Southern Italian percussionist and singer, with her unique 16-member ensemble of musicians, vocalists, stilt dancer, aerial dancer, fire dancer, tarantella dancers, in the exotic spectacle "**Tarantella - Spider Dance**," a sensual and mystical musical about the healing power of the Tarantella trance dance. A rich and fascinating trip into Southern Italian music, dance, history, and ancient legends.

**Ben Brantley, Critic's Picks of the NY Times, writes:** "The 'Spider Dance' or *Tarantella*, is a quite erotic trance dance ritual from Southern Italy, which has been used to cure the mythical bite of the tarantula. This new 'Spider Dance' production infuses the ancient melodies and instrumentation of the authentic tarantella with modern electronic dance beats. It features aerial, fire and stilt dancers, acrobats and a techno Tarantella trance dance. As with all of Belloni's presentations, the show is meticulously researched, with costumes and instrumentation as authentic as possible. The music ranges from traditional 6/8 southern Italian to 12/8 heavy-accented modern sounds, and includes tarantellas, sensual love songs, and women's work chants."

Instrumentation is both traditional and modern. Traditional instruments include Renaissance folk guitar, mandolin, accordion, viella, frame drums, tambourines, frame drums and dumbeck. Electric violin and guitar, and techno beats have been added to the more modern music segments.

[Watch video from the 2013 production](#) at the Theatre for the New City on You Tube

### **Featured in the cast:**

Alessandra Belloni - concept/direction, lead vocals, Southern Italian percussion, ritual dance in the role of the shaman

Joe Deninzon - music arranger, electric and acoustic violin

Guest percussionist: Massimo Cusato from Calabria, Italy.

Anthony Anderson - fire dancer/acrobat/capoeira master as young Dionysus

WITH: Mark Mindek (stilt dancer), Fran Sperling (aerial dancer), Hillary Litwin (Oriental dancer), Michael Garret (hip hop dancer), Peter De Geronimo (acrobat/dancer), Wilson Montuori (classical and acoustic guitar), Susan Eberenz (flutes, piccolo, recorders), Giuseppe De Falco (Neapolitan singer), Peter Abazia (drums/percussion), Sharon Li Vardo (dancer in the role of Arachne), Francesca Silvano (in the role of Tarantata dancer) AND Caterina Rago, Greta Campo & Lindsay Poulis (of the Martha Graham Dance Company)

**Tarantella - Spider Dance** - repressed sexuality, powerlessness, abuse, and the feeling of being "caught in a web that binds them" - causes many women, known as "tarantate" to suffer "tarantismo" - a lethal mixture of depression, loneliness, and oppression. Their cure is to dance the "pizzica tarantata" - The Spider Dance!

### **Review Highlights**

Jon Pareles of *The New York Times*, "Ms. Belloni sang in an exultant voice. The songs blazed with an age-old momentum."

Dan Hackman, *Los Angeles Times*

"Alessandra Belloni and Dance of the Ancient Spider is a revelation - utterly fascinating."

*Drum Magazine*

"Italian-born virtuoso Alessandra Belloni is established as a unique phenomenon, not just a percussionist, but also an actress, lecturer, entertainer and healer."

