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*Global Tarantella: Reinventing Southern Italian Folk Music
and Dances* by Incoronata Inserra (review)

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the songs, the breaks, the dance routines” (p. 271) mastered as a result of years of transnational experience and, importantly, innovation. Specifically, Dr. Djo Bi’s band Asafo demonstrates his musical creativity and innovation in compositions, which, as they “build on and extend beyond ballet” (p. 274), make him unique.

In chapter 11, Reed provides an accessible summary and reframing of his arguments in light of the life stories and performances analyzed in the previous chapters.

This study’s attention to the intersection of lived experiences with wider historical events and social formations, as well as the author’s careful analysis of Ivorian ballet and the dances and drum rhythms that constitute the genre, make *Abidjan USA* an important intervention in ethnomusicology and folklore. Reed also connects his work to the wider body of literatures and debates across multiple academic fields on immigration and diaspora, thus contributing to the fields of diaspora studies, cultural studies, African studies, and the social sciences, with a focus on immigration. While this book is targeted to an academic audience, its blending of theory with lived experience makes it accessible to non-academics with scholarly sensibilities. Reed writes: “If the book succeeds, readers will know something of these four men and, through them, something of the experience of late twentieth- through early twenty-first-century migration, a new diaspora, the relationships of Africans to their music and dance, and their encounters with American conceptions of African music in their lives as immigrant artists” (p. xx). This book certainly succeeds.

Global Tarantella: Reinventing Southern Italian Folk Music and Dances. By Inconronata Inserra. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017. Pp. x + 210, acknowledgments, introduction, notes, works cited, index.)

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Global Tarantella provides “U.S. academic and cultural audiences with a local perspective on *tarantella*, one that takes into consideration the place-specific knowledge and community values embedded in this folk dance tradition” (p.

178). Inconronata Inserra examines *tarantella* through its history and global circulation and, in doing so, challenges the stereotypical image of Italian culture in favor of an immersive journey into “the historical, cultural, and linguistic complexity of Italy” (p. 178).

As explained in the introduction, *tarantella* is an umbrella term, which refers to a body of music and dance performances connected with agricultural and healing rituals that originated from various regions of Southern Italy. These region-based performances include the *pizzica* (spider dance from Apulia), *tammurriata* (Campania), *tarantella siciliana* (Sicily), and *tarantella calabrese* (Calabria), and have been used since at least the seventeenth century as a way to articulate the cycle of life of some of those regional communities. These traditions of Southern Italian folk music and dance went through two revival phases, the first during the 1970s and the most recent in the 1990s.

Focusing on the post-1990s revival, Inserra guides the reader through a multilayered analysis of the social, political, and musical dynamics involved with *tarantella*. By exploring the global circulation of *tarantella* outside of its regional and national boundaries and the changes to this Southern Italian phenomenon, Inserra is “able to locate the ways in which Southern Italian groups are constantly redefining their local culture and identity in relation to the larger context of Italy . . . as well as in relation to [the] Mediterranean, United States, and international cultural scene” (p. 20).

In chapter 1, Inserra offers a brief overview of the 1970s folk revival based on the work of Italian scholars who have studied *tarantella*, its subgenres, and Italian traditional culture in general. This includes the works of Ernesto De Martino, Antonio Gramsci, Franco Cassano, Roberto De Simone, Diego Carpitella, and Alan Lomax, all of whom have made valuable contributions in raising interest for the Southern Italy sonic universe and folklore. Moreover, the author explores “the scholarship surrounding the post-1990s *tarantella* revival” (p. 47) and how this revival addressed *tarantella* tradition. Inserra avoids reducing the revival to its merely entertaining aspects and instead relates it to the peculiar history of Southern Italy and its ongoing ability to inspire the cultural politics and identities of those local communities today.

The political connections embedded in the 1970s revival, a time of social conflicts and trade union struggles, help Inserra prepare the ground for her analysis of the social and cultural aspects that emerged from the 1990s revival movements. Here, the author focuses on the debate about the commodification of tarantella in the festival context, raising the example of the La Notte della Taranta festival. One of the largest tarantella festivals in the region of Apulia, this festival has generated great controversy because, according to some scholars and local performers, its use of the spider dance as a regional tourist attraction has overshadowed the complexity of the ritual and performative actions connected with this tradition.

In chapter 2, the author focuses on the dynamics of the resignification of tammurriata, a folk music and dance tradition from the Campania region, which is characterized by a slower, binary tempo and a strong emphasis on connections between rural communities and their lands. One of Inserra's main goals is to highlight the transformations that have occurred within tarantella and its subgenres once they moved outside Southern Italy—first to Northern Italy, and then the United States. To this aim, this chapter explores tammurriata festival events in Southern Italy first, and then in the Northern city of Milan. According to the author, the changes that have occurred in recent years re-framed “tammurriata's rural and religious worldview . . . within an urbanized and globalized cultural context” (p. 60). Here, Inserra unfolds her fieldwork, showing how the new globalized hosting contexts of tammurriata events have produced fresh cultural and ritual forms. Applying participant observation—first as a festival-goer, then as a researcher—the author investigates the festival dynamics and setting, as well as the tension between loyalty to tradition and commodification/touristification of this subgenre of tarantella. Inserra provides the reader with precious information about the calendrical and religious festivals in the Campania region, and their connections to both the agricultural cycle and the veneration of the Virgin Mary.

Inserra's thorough analysis moves from local perceptions of the tammurriata tradition, through old-timers' and new performers' perceptions, to the reception of tammurriata events in the Milan area, aiming to understand

how the tammurriata tradition is changing, what is causing these changes, and what the reinvention of tammurriata is bringing to its own context, as well as to the more general context of tarantella. The author challenges notions of authenticity, admonishing the “harsh criticism of today's tammurriata performers” (p. 99) from scholars who complain of the lack of connection with myth, devotion, and the peasant world in the post-1990s tammurriata revival in favor of a touristification of the tradition. Inserra shifts the question from “what it lacks” to “what new perspective it brings,” demonstrating the ephemeral value of the concept of authenticity. Inserra's investigation of the reinvention and resignification of tammurriata toward a more urbanized rituality, away from its original rural context, identifies new spaces, aesthetics, and dance choreography that are reshaping the spirit of tammurriata and increasing its popularity outside its usual audience and borders.

Within this new framework, tammurriata has transformed into a tool to empower social and political commitment against the Mafia power and waste-management crisis that still afflicts the local communities in some areas of Campania. Tammurriata has also become a display of social protest, women's rights advocacy, and reinterpretation of gender codes. For example, the different ways in which the new generation of dancers interprets tammurriata offer “a much closer body interaction” (p. 79). Although this reveals and makes explicit the underlying eroticism embedded in tammurriata, the emergence of this sexual component is problematic in the eyes of some of the old-time performers, who tend to keep tammurriata on a more conservative path. Moreover, Inserra also shows how performing tammurriata in Milan can be a way to deconstruct stereotypes and holographic images of the South, and how the embodiment of Southern Italian culture through music and dance helps the numerous Southern migrants living in that area “relocate within a globalized context of migration” (p. 90).

The third and fourth chapters focus on two case studies about the activities of the musician Eugenio Bennato and those of the dancer Alessandra Belloni, respectively. In chapter 3, through analysis of Bennato's work and career, Inserra shows that the post-1990s tarantella re-

vival has the ability to counteract “the exotic image of southern Italy still emerging in national and transoceanic discourse” (p. 137). Bennato’s music mirrors an alternate history of the South, a history that deals with the often ignored postcolonial issues generated by Northern occupation and the subsequent Southern resistance. This is relevant to Inserra’s scope, since Bennato’s production engages, through new tarantella songs, with the Italian Southern Question: the post-unification debate (1861) around the efforts to align the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of Southern Italy with those of Northern Italy. Among the effects produced by the Southern Question debate, there was “the gradual dismissal of tarantella music and dance rituals” (p. 18), considered symptoms of backwardness and cultural poverty.

In chapter 4, Inserra uses Alessandra Belloni’s work with tarantella rhythms as a tool to investigate the “recontextualization of tarantella in the United States from the 1970s until today” (p. 140). While the investigation of Belloni’s activity as dancer and workshop conductor reveals the persistence of “dynamics of exoticization” (p. 146) and “self-stereotyping” (p. 145), it is intriguing to notice that Belloni’s tammurriata has developed within a “gendered and New Age type of performance” (p. 140), generating a new cultural object. As Inserra suggests, Belloni’s dance replaced the ritual aspects connected with tarantella and its cross-references to the motherland, healing practices, and patriarchal communities with a new ritual dimension. Inserra highlights the importance of the workshop format employed by Belloni to communicate this Southern Italian practice to an American audience. The author traces a parallel between the essential learning components of the festivals in Italy and Belloni’s workshops. At the festivals, one can learn to play and dance tarantella by imitating either locals among the audience or the performers onstage, night after night. Belloni recontextualizes this educational function within her workshops, which bring the festival dimension to an American cultural setting. Moreover, Inserra traces the borders of what she defines as a complex moment of cultural brokerage, focusing on the tension between what Belloni includes within her perfor-

mance and what she excludes. In fact, Belloni’s performances and workshops have created a sort of new narrative and have generated a fruitful dialogue within New York City’s Italian American community in favor of both a reconciliation with their cultural heritage and the liberation of Italian American women “from their spider’s web” (p. 158).

Inserra’s *Global Tarantella* is a necessary book and an important addition to folklore studies. The author investigates dynamics of folklorization by focusing on processes that extract tarantella tradition from its context of origin and reposition it in dialogue with larger issues and ideologies. An invitation to appreciate the multiple outcomes of the recontextualized tarantella, Inserra’s work explore new aesthetics and authorities related to this folk tradition. Although it would have been helpful to “hear” more of the sound of tarantella and its textures and how these change throughout the numerous contexts mentioned by Inserra, *Global Tarantella* is a rare publication in the English language that addresses this fascinating and complex cultural phenomenon of Southern Italy. The ethnographic analysis benefits from the positionality of the author, an Italian scholar situated in American academia, a native of the Campania region, and a festival-goer, who provides a stimulating perspective on her own sociocultural system. Inserra investigates a field that has been poorly addressed by American scholarship, introducing the reader to essential identity issues connected with the performance of tarantella throughout Italy and the United States and contributing to the dissemination of a portion of Southern Italy’s history that is often completely ignored.

This book would make an excellent reference for a class on construction of tradition or the translocal and transnational aspects of Italian folklore. The clarity of Inserra’s writing makes this book suitable for both specialized audiences and the general public, providing a valuable historical recognition of Italian and international scholarship about the phenomenon of tarantella and a thorough and up-to-date analysis of the more recent aspects of this Southern Italian tradition in a national and international panorama.