

Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino Returns Stateside

Natasha Lardera (September 29, 2016)



Their music is passionate, obsessive and conducive to trance, it hails from Salento and puts together Italy's fascinating dichotomy of tradition and modernity. Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino, Puglia's Pizzica Powerhouse and Italy's leading ensemble on the world music circuit, is about to return to the US for a series of Fall concerts, running from September 29th through October 10th, including one in New York City at the legendary Poisson Rouge on October 5th.

Puglia's Pizzica Powerhouse and Italy's leading ensemble on the world music circuit, [Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino](#) [2] (CGS) is about to return to the US for a series of Fall concerts, running from September 29th through October 10th, including one in New York City at the legendary [Poisson Rouge](#) [3] on October 5th. Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino's 2016 tour includes Midwest performances at the [Madison World Music Festival](#) [4] (September 29th), [Legion Arts](#) [5] (Cedar Rapids, IA, on October 2nd) and [Minneapolis's Cedar Cultural Center](#) [6] (October 3rd). Following the New York show on the 5th, the group will head to the [Richmond Folk Festival](#) [7] where they will have several performances.



Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino was originally founded in 1975 by Daniele Durante and leadership of the ensemble was handed down to Durante's son Mauro, an already noted percussionist and violinist, in 2007. Hailing from the Puglia region, the seven piece band and dancer are the leading exponents in a new wave of young performers re-inventing Southern Italy's Pizzica Taranta musical and dance traditions for today's global audience.

The band - [Mauro Durante](#) [8] (voice, frame drums, violin), [Alessia Tondo](#) [9] (voice), [Giulio Bianco](#) [10] (Italian bagpipes, harmonica, recorders), [Massimiliano Morabito](#) [11] (diatonic accordion), [Emanuele Licci](#) [12] (voice, guitar, bouzouki), [Giancarlo Paglialonga](#) [13] (voice, tamburrieddhu) and [Silvia Perrone](#) [14] (dance) - is critically acclaimed with 17 albums and countless live performances throughout the USA, Canada, Europe and the Middle East. In 2010 the group was awarded Best Italian World Music Group at Italy's MEI's confab.

Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2015 with the release of "[Quaranta](#) [15]" (40), an album produced by Ian Brennan, 2012 Grammy Award winner in the Best World Music category for [Tinariwen](#) [16]'s "[Tassili](#) [17]" album, and that features special guests. Quaranta is also well known for the video for the song "[Solo Andata](#) [18]" (One Way Ticket) which received [Amnesty International](#) [19] Italy's 2014 Arts and Human Rights Award. Set to text by author [Erri de Luca](#) [20], and directed by [Alessandro Gassmann](#) [21], the song tackles the ongoing issue of immigrants from North Africa to Italy's shores. The group has been touring Italy with de Luca, presenting Solo Andata as an individual show.

Just to find out more about the upcoming shows, we had a chance to ask Mauro Durante a few questions before the beginning of the tour.

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino, in 2015, the group released "Quaranta" (40), which was cited in Best of the Year world music album round-ups by the likes of Huffington Post and PopMatters. Tell us what makes Quaranta so special and what is the creative process behind the release of a new album.

I believe that Quaranta is a very intense album. It originates from a reflection on Tarantismo (Vocabulary definition: a nervous disorder characterized by an uncontrollable impulse to dance; popularly attributed to bite of the southern European tarantula or wolf spider) and what is left of it today, in other words, its legacy. It deals with the demons of our times and the need of dancing, dance being the physical representation of our search for contact and need to be a community, as we all an effective means of exorcism. We are proud of Quaranta's success and each album we release is a snapshot of what we are living through at the moment we are putting it together, as we write, play and dance. When we are in the embryonic stage of a new job, it's important to let it find itself, let it find its natural predisposition, whatever it may be. We are working on a new album that should be released in 2017. Its connection to New York is strong, both in genesis and production, but we'll talk about it more in the near future!

You are the author of most of the group's songs, what inspires you and what are the predominant influences on Canzoniere's music?

I'm inspired by what I experience day by day, the music I listen to, my wife's glances, current events, and both the big issues and the little things. Traditional music has always answered to an emergency, that being the irresistible need to be set to music, to be sung and shared. Canzoniere sings about its present, and does so with both chants from the past, that are universal and therefore timeless and current, and with new, original music that tells who we are today. First and foremost, we are influenced by Apulian traditional music and by music from Southern Italy. We also are inspired by the music of the Mediterranean basin, the world's trance and dance music, and canzone italiana (Vocabulary definition: an Italian song or ballad. The term is also used to describe a type of lyric which resembles a madrigal). Let's not forget the impact of contemporary music, of the individual musical experiences of each band member and of the magic that is born from the coming together of all these different souls.

In Quaranta there are several songs created in collaboration with guest artists, such as



pianist and composer Ludovico Einaudi and singer-songwriter Piers Faccini. What's the allure of collaborating with others?

Collaborating with other artists is always a great opportunity for growth and observation. Something unexpectedly beautiful can come to life thanks to the encounter between different and seemingly distant sensitivities. I have collaborated with [Ludovico Einaudi](#) [22] for six years, first on his music and then on mine when he was called to direct [La Notte Della Taranta](#) [23] (a music festival from Salento focused on Pizzica). We've become friends and the song "Taranta" was created by the union of rhythmic cells with a vocal melody that soon becomes choral and grows to its the final paroxysm. "Taranta" has become the perfect embodiment of the concept of Quaranta, and that is captured by the phrase "If you dance alone you cannot heal." Piers is a friend as well, and we have collaborated with him for some time now, both on his and my projects. As author of the lyrics of "I love Italia," he was able to give a poetic but yet sarcastic and bitter image of today's Italy, seen through the careful eyes of a "foreigner," who happens to be an "Italian" not by birth but by choice.

There are rumors that Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino is currently developing a Taranta-themed theatrical production with the team that brought the show Fela! to Broadway to be performed in the US. What can you tell us about that?

We are ecstatic to have the opportunity to create a theatrical show in the US. Our manager, [Mark Gartenberg](#) [24], came up with the idea, which is similar to that of Quaranta. We have put together an exceptional creative, award winning team. The director is [Niegel Smith](#) [25], one of the most important emerging figures in American theater, [Maija Garcia](#) [26] is the choreographer and [Jim Lewis](#) [27] is the playwright. We have workshopped it in Salento last year and we are planning the next steps in order to put it on stage as soon as possible.

[September 29 Madison, WI Terrance at the Memorial Union - Madison World Music Festival](#) [28]

[October 2 Cedar Rapids, IA CSPA Hall](#) [5]

[October 3 Minneapolis, MN The Cedar Cultural Center - Global Roots](#) [29]

[October 5 New York, NY \(Le\) Poisson Rouge](#) [30]

[October 7 - 9 Richmond, VA Richmond Folk Festival](#) [31]

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[4] <https://union.wisc.edu/events-and-activities/event-calendar/event/madison-world-music-festival-free>

[5] <http://legionarts.org>

[6] <http://www.thecedar.org>

[7] <http://www.richmondfolkfestival.org>

[8] <http://www.canzonieregrecanicosalentino.net/artists/mauro-durante/?lang=en>

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[14] <http://www.canzonieregrecanicosalentino.net/portfolio/silvia-perrone/?lang=en>



- [15] <https://www.amazon.com/40-Quaranta-Canzoniere-Grecanico-Salentino/dp/B00TP96TNY>
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- [30] http://lpr.com/lpr_artists/canzoniere-grecanico-salentino/
- [31] http://www.richmondfolkfestival.org/docs/2016_performers/Canzoniere_grecanico.html