

CHOREOLOGICA

“Turumbé con la turumbela; vamos bailando la tantarantela”:

Presence of the tarantella dance in Spain

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Abstract

This piece aims to be an exploration of one of the most emblematic dances in southern Europe, the tarantella.

Although of Italian origin, the tarantella in Spain had a wide diffusion due to geographical and political phenomena and because of the use of this dance as a healing remedy. The connection of the Kingdom of Naples with the Spanish Crown until 1861 and links between Naples with the important Mediterranean harbours such as Mallorca, Valencia or Barcelona, were decisive events that promoted the practice of the tarantella in the Iberian Peninsula.

To analyse in depth the process of immersion and assimilation of this dance in Spain that led to the so called “Tarantism”, historical dictionaries, choreographic, musical, theatrical and iconographic sources, as well as studies of contemporary authors specialized in this matter will be consulted.

The analysis of the tarantella will focus on parameters such as musical characteristics, instruments used, texts, prototypical characters involved in its execution, more recurrent body movements, contexts and places where it was developed or the possible relationships with other dances such as the jota, the zapateado or the fandango.

Keywords: tarantella; Italian dance in Spain; Spanish baroque theater; Italy-Spain connections.

“The tarantula carries a guitar on its back, and that is why it must be fought with another guitar”¹

1.- Reception of the tarantella in Spain. Tarantism

The tarantella is a dance from Taranto (the ancient *Tarantum*), in Apulia, a region in southern Italy. The tarantula (*Lycosa tarentula*) also comes from the city of Taranto. The organic effects of the spider bite (*latrodectism*), the dance caused by the music of the tarantella and the behavioral alterations gave rise to a phenomenon of hysterical nature called Tarantism.

Tarantism was introduced in Spain from the kingdom of Naples linked to the Spanish crown until 1861. Fabrizio Filioli Uranio’s publications show that in the 16th and 17th centuries Naples and Valencia were two of the main European commercial cities and slave markets. Probably the connections between Naples with the main Mediterranean harbours such as Mallorca, Valencia or Barcelona promoted the reception of the tarantella in the Iberian Peninsula².

The cure of the person affected by the arachnid bite was carried out through the dance that, by suggestion, caused the music of the tarantella. The ritual was practically the same in both countries, Italy and Spain. We know about this through documents written by doctors from the 18th century. The highest point occurred at the end of this century, with the official research collected in the *Expediente de la*

¹ TAUSIET, María: “La Fiesta de la Tarántula: júbilo y congoja en el Alto Aragón”, in: *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares*, vol LXIV, nº 2 (2009), p. 77.

² FILIOLI URANIO, Fabrizio: “Construyendo identidades hombres y esclavos en Nápoles y Valencia en la primera Edad Moderna”, in: *El siglo de la Inmaculada* / coord. by María Martínez Alcalde, Sergio Yago Soriano, José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez (2018), pp. 249-66 and “Identidades, valor y precio: el mercado de los esclavos y de los cautivos en Nápoles y Valencia en la primera Edad Moderna”, in: *Tiempos modernos: Revista Electrónica de Historia Moderna*, vol. 10, nº 41 (2020), pp. 1-16.

tarántula (Tarantula's File), the book by Francisco Xavier Cid³ and the case of a boy bitten by a tarantula at the General Hospital of Madrid.

Bitten patients reacted to a very specific music: music with a very lively and repetitive rhythm. This caused sweating. After several hours, the patient stopped to rest. Then, he returned to the dance again and again until he was cured. This occurred in an average of four days, curiously almost the same time as the then the conventional therapies lasted. In the 18th century, the term Tarantism was applied to any illness that manifested itself by movements like uncontrolled jumps, convulsions or frenetic dancing whose antecedents are the Saint Vitus dance or the choreomania of the Middle Age.

To illustrate this phenomenon we have several sources collected by Íñigo and Carlos Corral in their study about neurological aspects in the history of Tarantism in Spain⁴. The authors cited are Irañeta y Jáuregui⁵, the above-mentioned Cid and Piñera y Siles⁶.

Bartolomé Piñera y Siles published the case of a fourteen-year-old boy, Ambrosio Silvan. He danced for more than a month without clear improvement. In August he began to improve progressively and finally he was cured and left the Hospital on September 5. The case was mentioned at Court, commented among neighbours and in the press. Public of all social classes filled the Hospital room to see the show of Ambrosio's dancing the tarantella. In the streets of Madrid that year a song called "La tarantula" came into fashion⁷.

³ CID, Francisco Xavier: *Tarantismo observado en España*. Madrid, Imprenta de Manuel González, 1787.

⁴ CORRAL, Íñigo & CORRAL, Carlos: "Neurological considerations in the history of Tarantism in Spain", in: *Neurosciences and History* 4(3) (2016), pp. 99-108.

⁵ IRAÑETA y JÁUREGUI, Manuel: *Tratado del tarantismo ó enfermedad originada del veneno de la tarántula según observaciones que hizo en los Reales Hospitales del Quartel General de San Roque*. Madrid, Imprenta Real, 1786.

⁶ PIÑERA y SILES, Bartolomé: *Descripción histórica de una nueva especie de corea, ó baile de San Vito: originada por la picadura de un insecto, que por los fenómenos seguidos á ella se ha creído ser de la tarantula*. Madrid, Imprenta de Benito Cano, 1787.

⁷ TAUSIET, María: "La Fiesta de la Tarántula: júbilo y congoja en el Alto Aragón", *op. cit.*, p. 65.

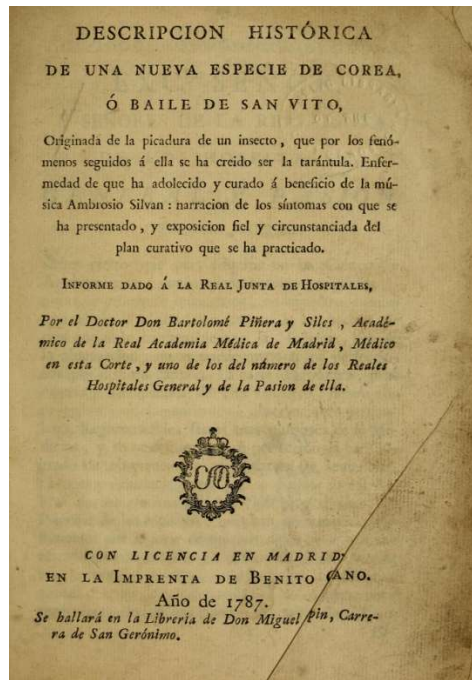


Fig. 1 Piñera y Siles, Bartolomé: *Descripción histórica de una nueva especie de corea, ó baile de San Vito*. Madrid, 1787.

During the 18th century a great controversy was generated about the nature of Tarantism. It was denied as an organic illness by many enlightened people, despite which Spanish doctors for years considered the tarantella as the most appropriate therapy for those bitten by the tarantula. Popularly, this therapy remained alive until the second half of the 20th century.

Gregorio Marañón, Spanish doctor and writer (1887-1960) cited the memoirs of a doctor from La Mancha who included among his remedies the scores of Tarantella⁸ but in general, in the 20th century, the use of dance was already carried out exclusively in popular contexts, without the doctors' intervention. In Fraga (Huesca, Aragón) there is testimony of Tarantism until the 1940s. The patient did not dance or move, but was cured by the music and dance performed by the townspeople. They were invited to eat and drink, turning the phenomenon into a local party. The music played in Fraga was not the tarantella, but the jota⁹. It was especially in the

⁸ MARAÑÓN, Gregorio: *La medicina y nuestro tiempo*. Buenos Aires, Espasa Calpe Argentina S.A., 1954.

⁹ In the last section of this paper we will develop the relationship between both dances.

towns of the Pyrenees where, due to the difficulties in reaching hospitals, these therapeutic musical rituals continued to be practiced.

The tarantula ritual in Aragon was developed in a different way from the rest of the Spanish regions, since actually what was danced and sung was a fast jota ("jotas aceleradas") according to the researcher Manuela Adamo¹⁰.

Having a person bitten by a tarantula at home was a problem, since the family had to provide food and accommodation for the musicians and dancers. In Aragón the ritual was different as the patient was located in a bed in the yard ("patio") of the house, while the whole town danced and sang those jotas until the tarantula that had bitten the neighbor died in a crystal jar. If the spider was not captured, beliefs said the animal would dance to the rhythm of the music in the country until it dropped dead of exhaustion. Dances could even last for three days. It was believed that the weaker the tarantula was, then stronger was the patient.

For this reason, stable groups of performers specialising in this type of therapy were created, earning a lot of money from it.

Cid collected thirty-five cases of Tarantism in the second half of the 18th century. He specifies the place, date, dances, instruments used, musicians as well as the duration of the therapy. Although the tarantella clearly predominates, there are also other dances such as the fandango, seguidillas, folía and even a minuet.

2.-Theatrical sources

The tarantella is cited in several plays of the 17th and 18th centuries in Spain. As a popular dance-song, the tarantella has been performed in dramatic "entremeses" (interludes, a short play that was performed between the acts of a comedy) from the second half of the 17th to the beginning of the 18th centuries.

¹⁰ ADAMO, Manuela: "La jota y la taranta. Ritualidad de la música y la danza en la cultura tradicional aragonesa", in: *Cuadernos de etnología y etnografía de Navarra*, año 53, n° 95 (2021), pp. 257-87.

In *El ayo* (The tutor) by Moreto¹¹, entremés written for the birthday of Felipe IV, foreign manners are satirised, especially the music and dance imported from Italy. The famous “gracioso o donaire” (that is, a comic actor in the Spanish baroque theatre) Cosme Pérez, nicknamed Juan Rana (John Frog), tries to get rid of the dance theater. The tutor challenges him to show who is the true expert, demonstrating different dances, including the tarantella.

He says:

Baile usted, como en Valencia,
Usted como en Cataluña,
Vuesarced la *tarantela*.

And so they dance.¹²

In *Las fiestas de Palacio* (The Palace festivals) by Moreto (1658)¹³, Italy comes out personified, and dances the tarantella, singing the following lyrics:

Questo es l’amante mio
que il cor alegra,
por quin mi mujigai
la *tarantela*.

La tarantella is danced by the “franchota” in the entremés so entitled by D. Pedro Calderón de la Barca in 1672¹⁴.

¹¹ Agustín Moreto y Cavana (1618-1669), *El ayo* (entremés), posthumously published in *Autos sacramentales, y al nacimiento de Christo: con sus loas y entremeses / recogidos de los maiores ingenios de España*. Madrid, Antonio Francisco de Zafra, 1675. Biblioteca Nacional de España, sig. R/11809.

¹² Extract cited in Cotarelo y Mori (1911) pt. I, vol. 1, pp. ccl and cclxi, who suggests 1648 as a posible date for this work. COTARELO Y MORI, Emilio: *Colección de Entremeses, Loas, Bales, Jácaras y Mojigangas desde fines del s. XVI a mediados del XVIII*. 2 vols. Madrid, Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, Bailly- Baillièrre, 1911.

¹³ Agustín Moreto y Cavana, *Las fiestas de palacio* (entremés), published in *Tardes apacibles de gustoso entretenimiento: repartidas en varios entremeses y bayles entremesados / escogidos de los mejores ingenios de España*. Madrid, Andrés García de la Iglesia: a costa de Iuan Martín Merinero, 1663. Biblioteca Nacional de España, sig. R/6355. (Extract cited in Cotarelo y Mori (1911) pt. I, vol. 1, p. cclxi).

¹⁴ Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681), *La franchota* (entremés), published in *Ramillete de sainetes escogidos de los mejores ingenios de España*. Zaragoza, 1672; modern edition in BUENDÍA, Felicidad (ed): *Antología del entremés (desde Lope de Rueda hasta Antonio de Zamora)*. Siglos XVI y XVII. Madrid, ed. Aguilar, 1965, p. 694.

Although “franchotes and gabachos” are names that can be applied to foreigners in general, very commonly they refer specifically and contemptuously to the French. The actress who plays the franchota has to sing and dance the tarantella (vv. 114-119), the lanturú (dance frequently associated with gabachos or franchotes) (vv. 136-140) and perform the final dance (closing motif of the entremés).

FRANCHOTA

A lo mar y a lo mar,
que salta tú si vui saltar.
A lo mar chico dexo ya
folla capucha cocucetona.

ALCALDE

Basta, que la cabeza tengo rota.

FRANCHOTA

Que ésta es la *tarantela*.

ALCALDE

¡Ay, qué franchota!

In Francisco de Castro’s entremés, *Los cuatro toreadores* (The four bullfighters) (1702)¹⁵, dramatic piece dedicated to Felipe V, at the end the tarantella is danced with the refrain:

ISABELA

Allá va el baile

TODOS (everybody).

¹⁵ Francisco de Castro (1672-1713), *Los cuatro toreadores* (entremés), published in his *Primera parte de Alegría cómica, explicada en diferentes assumptos jocosos*. Zaragoza, s.i., 1702. (Extract cited in Cotarelo y Mori (1911) pt. I, vol. 1, pp. cclxi-cclxii).

Que venga.

(*Isabela sings.*)

Turumbé con la turumbela,
Vamos bailando la *tantarantela*.

(*Tomate sings.*)

Éste si que es canto gracioso,
y la tonada es muy bella.

(*Isabela sings.*)

Turumbé, etc.

The Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy of Language (RAE)¹⁶ collects the term “tantarantán” as the sound of the drum when the beats are repeated.

It is known that this dance would have been taken by our comedians from the Trufaldines, a company of Italian actors specialized in Commedia dell’Arte that performed numerous theatrical works in Spain during the reign of Felipe V¹⁷.

And in another entremés by Castro, *El inglés hablador*¹⁸ (The Talkative Englishman) at the conclusion the actors dance a tarantella with the same refrain:

Turumbé con la turumbela,
Vamos bailando la *tantarantela*.

In the entremés *La Tataratera*, by Pedro Francisco de Lanini y Sagredo (1640-1715)¹⁹, a foreign woman who was walking in Madrid dances with the refrain:

¹⁶ REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA DE LA LENGUA: *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*. Barcelona, ed. Espasa, 2014.

¹⁷ About the Trufaldines, consult: DOMÉNECH RICO, Fernando: *Los Trufaldines y el Teatro de los Caños del Peral*. Madrid, Editorial Fundamentos / RESAD, 2007.

¹⁸ Francisco de Castro, *El inglés hablador* (entremés), published in his *Primera parte de Alegría cómica, explicada en diferentes assumptos jocosos*. Zaragoza, s.i., 1702. (According to Cotarelo y Mori (1911) pt. I, vol. 1, p. cclxii).

¹⁹ Pedro Francisco de Lanini y Sagredo, *La tataratera* (entremés), published in *Migaxas del ingenio, y apacible entretenimiento, en varios entremeses, bayles, y loas, escogidos de los mejores ingenios de España*. Zaragoza, printed by Diego Dormer, ca. 1632-1673. Biblioteca Nacional de España, sig. R/1464.

¡La tun la, tatarata tatero!

And this dance, called “La Taratera”, performed at Court in such a way that it is compared in popularity with the Italian tarantella.

Que como la tarantela
es contagio allá en Italia,
aquí rabian por bailar
la *Taratera* en España.

At the end, they all sing and dance saying, in the song lyrics, that it is a very dishonest dance:

Haber caído en gracia
la *Taratero*,
es porque es sólo un baile
muy deshonesto
¡ La tun la, tataratero!
es porque sólo es un baile
muy deshonesto.

Possibly, the presence of this indecorous dance determines a fast, wild and erotic dance on stage. Also, the content of the text forces the jumps of another prototypical character, the “alcalde” (mayor), something that surely would cause hilarity in the audience.

In *Los atarantados* by Luis Vélez de Guevara (1579-1644)²⁰, the character of Garabis talks about a girl who was bitten by the spider and the frenzied dance that it caused her:

GARABIS

...Tengan, escuchen, aguarden,
callen, oigan, vean, siendo
piedras, cantos, jaspe, mármol,
bronce, estaño, plomo, hierro.
Yo sé que hay en casa boda,
y para dalles contento,
ha de bailar quince días

²⁰ See URZÁIZ TORTAJADA, Héctor: “Un entremés olvidado de Luis Vélez de Guevara: Los atarantados”, in: *CRITICÓN*, 71 (1997), pp. 127-57.

esta moza hecha envolteto.
Es de las *atarantadas*,
que la picó en el cerebro
una *tarántula* enorme,
y así baila sin remedio;
mas todos se han de apartar,
que si toca a alguno de ellos,
bailará toda su vida.

In this extract you can see the resource of enumeration, the rhythmic effect of the accumulation, characteristic in texts of tarantella with its comic, theatrical content and carnival irrationality.

3.-Musical characteristics, instruments used, musical sources

The tarantella is a fast, anacrusic dance in 6/8 or 3/8 time and very lively movement. It is accompanied by the indications "Vivace", "Presto" or "Prestissimo" and they are often pieces of marked virtuosity. Occasionally, during the dance, spectators sing a melody of regular phrases that alternates between the major and minor modes and gradually increasing in speed. Rhythmically, it can display offbeat notes, syncopations, and hemiolas.

It is usually accompanied by plucked string instruments such as the vihuela, guitar, mandolin, bandurria, lute or chitarra battente. The chitarra battente is a southern Italian guitar with ten metal strings in five double orders. The word "battente" comes from the Italian "battere" which means "to hit", and refers to the use of the guitar technique of strumming ("rasgueado") that facilitates playing chords and rhythmic schemes simultaneously.



Fig. 2 *Chitarra battente* by Jacopo Mosca Cavelli. Perugia (Italy), 1725.

According to Francisco Xavier Cid:

The violin is a fairly common instrument to accompany this dance, which could be used with better effect than the vihuela. Its sound is livelier and more penetrating and consequently more effective. Indeed, it has already been used with great success in La Mancha and we hope that from now on it will be used in preference to the vihuela, if one is on hand²¹.

It is also usual to use popular instruments such as the zampoña (hurdy-gurdy), shepherd flute, rabel, and other wind instruments that have a sharp and penetrating sound, like chirimías, dulzainas, clarín, clarinet, etc.

Regarding percussion instruments, the use of tambourines, zambomba (hand drum) and castanets is widespread. The type of castanets used in the tarantella can today be found in regions inside Spain, in the upper Palancia and in the Maestrazgo. These tiny castanets were placed on the thumb of each hand to make it sound with the snap of the thumb and middle fingers.

Another instrument used in this dance is the Surdastrum, as stated by the musicologist and composer Felipe Pedrell (1841-1922) in his Technical Dictionary of Music:

²¹ CID, Francisco Xavier: *Tarantismo observado en España, op. cit.*, p. 98.

SURDASTRUM. According to Father Kircher, it is the name of a large box that was struck on both sides and that was intended to cure the tarantula²².

The Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) left us valuable information about the tarantella, especially in *Magnes sive de Arte Magnetica* (1641) but also in *Musurgia Universalis* (1650) and *Phonurgia nova* (1673)²³.

He also maintains that the most used music was the so-called "Turkish aria" and refers to the importance of the Phrygian and Hypodoric tones in this dance. In *Musurgia universalis* he comments that - "it happened very often in the mode Phrygian, since this allows to highlight the semitones, which have the peculiar virtue of exciting to jump"²⁴.

Kircher included eight songs used to cure Tarantism in his *Magnes*²⁵ noting that these tarantellas were "rural improvisations". All of them, except one, are in 2/4 time, unlike the traditional tarantella. Kircher's 6/8 tarantella music is very similar to the typical corrente of early 17th century.

Spanish musical compilations from the early 17th and 18th centuries collect examples of tarantella.

An arrangement of the tarantella was composed by the Aragonese guitarist and theorist Gaspar Sanz (1640-1710), a cosmopolitan musician who spent a long time in Rome and Naples. In his work titled *Instrucción de música sobre la guitarra*

²² PEDRELL, Felipe: *Diccionario técnico de la música*. Barcelona, Isidro Torres Oriol, ca. 1894 (2nd ed.). Biblioteca Nacional de España M/13189. Modern edition, ed. Maxtor, 2010, p. 432.

²³ KIRCHER, Athanasius: *Magnes Sive de Arte Magnetica*. Roma, 1641. Modern ed. London, Forgotten Books, 2019; *Musurgia Universalis*. Roma, Ex typographia Haeredum Francisci Corbelletti, 1650. Modern ed. Kassel, Bärenreiter, 2006; *Phonurgia nova*. Campidonae, Rudolphum Dreherr, 1673. Modern ed. Broude Brothers, New York, 1966.

²⁴ Cited by SCHNEIDER, Marius: *La danza de espadas y la tarantela. Ensayo musicológico, etnográfico y arqueológico sobre los ritos medicinales*. Barcelona, Instituto Español de Musicología C.S.I.C., 1948, p. 95.

²⁵ KIRCHER, Athanasius: *Magnes, op. cit.*, book iii, ch. 8.

española he makes a perfect synthesis of the prevailing styles of his time²⁶. On the other hand, Lucas Ruiz de Ribayaz (1626-?), includes also a tarantella²⁷.

Santiago de Murcia (1673-1739), is the author of the so-called Saldivar Codex n° 4²⁸. Born in Madrid, he is probably the most internationally renowned guitarist of the Spanish Baroque. He became the Guitar Master of Queen María Luisa Gabriela de Saboya, first wife of Felipe V. He probably did not travel to America but his works were performed there. The codex was dated approximately 1732 and contains gallardas, jácaras, folías, marionas, canarios, fandangos, jotas, tarantellas and other popular music.

In keyboard repertoire there are numerous examples in sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti²⁹, Antonio Soler³⁰- for example: sonata in C major, k. 159 and sonata in F major, n° 69 respectively - or the famous sonata "zapateado" in D major by Mateo Albéniz³¹.

Sonata en Ré

Padre Mateo António Pérez de Albéniz
(1755-1831)



²⁶ SANZ, Gaspar: *Instrucción de música sobre la guitarra española; y método de sus primeros rudimentos, hasta tañerla con destreza. Con dos laberintos ingeniosos, variedad de sonos, y dances de rasgueado, y punteado, al estilo español, italiano, francés, e inglés.* Zaragoza, 1674. Ed. facsímil Zaragoza, Institución Fernando el Católico, 1952.

²⁷ RUIZ de RIBAYAZ, Lucas: *Luz y norte musical, para caminar por las cifras de la guitarra española, y arpa, tañer, y cantar a compás por canto de órgano...Conságrale a la reyna de los ángeles Maria santíssima de Curriñego, patrona de dicha colegial.* Madrid, 1677. Modern ed. Madrid, editorial Alpuerto, 1982.

²⁸ MURCIA, Santiago de: *Códice Saldivar n° 4. A treasury of secular guitar music from baroque Mexico.* Edited by Craig H. Russell. Urbana & Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1995. Biblioteca Nacional de España M/14315.

²⁹ SCARLATTI, Domenico: *Sonates*, vol. 4. Revised ed. by Kenneth Gilbert. Paris, Heugel, 1976.

³⁰ SOLER, Antonio: *Sonatas para instrumentos de tecla*, vol. 5: Sonatas 69 a 90. Madrid, Unión Musical Española, 1959.

³¹ MARCHI, Giuliana (ed): *Las más bellas páginas de los clavecinistas españoles.* Milano, ed. Ricordi, 1955, 1986.

Fig. 3 Albéniz, Mateo: *Sonata en Ré*. Ed. by John Rickert. Werner Icking Music Collection.

Cid's treatise reproduces two double pages of music, containing a total of eleven tarantellas. He says that the more wildly the music is played, the greater the relief the patient receives. The author ends his book with four different examples of tarantella melodies. One is Spanish, and the other three Italian. The four melodies share the following characteristics: compound measure (notated in 6/8 or 12/8), phrases of four measures and the use of the minor mode ending in the note A³².

Equally, in Schneider's reference publication *La danza de espadas y la tarantela*³³ we can find seven tarantellas from the 18th century, some Spanish and others Italian, all of them in compound measure, four of which are taken from Cid's treatise.

The image displays a musical score titled "A Tarantelas" by Albéniz. It contains seven numbered examples of tarantella melodies, each presented in a compound measure (6/8 or 12/8). The examples are: 1. "España (J. Boucuro)", 2. "Italia (Palla)", 3. "Italia", 4. "Italia", 5. "España", 6. "España", and 7. "España". Each example is shown in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines characteristic of the tarantella style.

Fig. 4 Schneider, Marius: *La danza de espadas y la tarantela*. Barcelona, 1948, pp. 189-90.

³² CID, Francisco Xavier, *op. cit.*, final plate.

³³ SCHNEIDER, Marius: *La danza de espadas y la tarantela*, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-90.

4.- The dance of tarantella. Dictionaries. Relationship with other dances

The tarantella is cited in several of the main historical dictionaries. At the beginning of the 17th century Sebastián de Covarrubias in his *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana o Española*, writes:

TARANTULA. It is a type of poisonous and virulent spider that grows in Apulia and throughout the kingdom of Naples, especially in Taranto, hence its name. It causes many attacks to those it bites. It is treated with the music of instruments because the patient tolerates his illness moving with the music³⁴.

Aparently the tarantella was not stylized as an aristocratic dance. The *Diccionario de Autoridades* gives the following definition:

TARANTELA. s. f. Violent air, which is danced without any school, and it is the sound that is played for those who are bitten by the tarantula. 'Give the tarantéla' is a familiar saying which means getting excited, or moving the spirit to the execution of something out of opportunity, and method³⁵.

Various writers maintain that the music was therapeutic because it helped the victim to exude the poison through the pores. For example, Pablo Nassarre, Aragonese priest, organist and composer (1650-1730)³⁶ offers the following explanation based on ancient 16th century authors:

...As soon as the man is bitten, the musicians are sought out with celerity to play vihuelas, flutes or other instruments, varying the music and playing different songs. The effect produced by the music is that the injured person begins to dance, performing several variations as if he had spent his whole life learning them. He continues to dance in this way until that poison runs out and it is consumed by the effort of the music...It is natural that all body parts feel the effects of the music, so the

³⁴ COVARRUBIAS OROZCO, Sebastián: *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana o Española*, Madrid, 1611. Barcelona, ed. Alta Fulla, 1987, f. 39r.

³⁵ *Diccionario de Autoridades*. Ed. Facsímil (1726-1739) Real Academia Española. Madrid, ed. Gredos, 1990.

³⁶ NASSARRE, Pablo: *Escuela Música según la práctica moderna*. Zaragoza, Herederos de Diego Larumbe, 1724. Biblioteca Nacional de España M/1105, M/1106.

pores open, helped by that effort...Since the poison exits through the pores, there is no chance for it to reach the heart³⁷.

Nassarre does not specify the name tarantella when he is referring to music. In fact his observation implies that various types of music are effective.

Spanish dance treatises do not cite it until very late, possibly because it is a non-academic dance.

Felipe Roxo de Flores in his historical treatise³⁸ on the origin of dances and their evolution simply names it within a group of Spanish dances that he considers already out of fashion:

The character of the Spanish Bayles can be understood without much difficulty by the Music with which they are executed. There are known dances and others of which we only know the name as caballero, el rugero, jácara de la costa, mariona, tarantela, batalla, gelves and piegibado³⁹.

Antonio Cairón in page 123 of his publication provides more information:

Italian dance, with a violent air, that is danced without any school. It is also the dance that was performed in front of those who were bitten by the tarantula (without a doubt of some ridiculous invention). This dance came to us from the Kingdom of Naples, where today it is still danced by ordinary people⁴⁰.

Francisco Xavier Cid, relates it to the fandango, folía and canario:

It is the melody used to awaken from drowsiness and languor of those bitten by the tarantula. The tarantella sonata presents aspects in common with the fandango, folías, and canario. It is a certain harmonic sound "quite lively and accelerated between fandango, folías and canario, or a mixture of all these sonatas⁴¹.

³⁷ NASSARRE, Pablo, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, book 1, ch. 17 "De los maravillosos efectos que haze la música en la curación de varias enfermedades", p. 73.

³⁸ ROXO DE FLORES, Felipe: *Tratado de recreación instructiva sobre la Danza: su invención y diferencias*. Madrid, Imprenta Real, 1793.

³⁹ ROXO de FLORES, Felipe, *op. cit.*, ch. VIII, p. 118.

⁴⁰ CAIRÓN, Antonio: *Compendio de las principales reglas del baile traducido del francés por A. Cairón y aumentado de una explicación exacta y método de ejecutar la mayor parte de los bailes conocidos en España, tanto antiguos como modernos*. Madrid, Imprenta Repullés, 1820.

⁴¹ CID, Francisco Xavier, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-22.

In his study, focused on La Mancha, Andalusia and Extremadura, he distinguishes three types of tarantella used in the healing of Tarantism. In the dissemination of Tarantism in Spain, the musicians themselves played the most important role, since they earned a lot of money with the tarantella sessions to the point there existed a trade of tarantella players in Osuna (Seville). They had to alternate playing for whole days.

Cid collected thirty-five cases in an attempt to test the effectiveness of tarantella music in the treatment of tarantula bites. He claims that only one particular type of dance music helps the victim. For example, he relates the following episode:

The instrumentalist came in and played the fandango, but the patient remained still. He played the folías, but the patient did not move. He played the tarantella, and immediately the patient shook with inconceivable ease from his overwhelming lethargy. He stood up, the music (tocata) continued, and began to jump without missing a beat with the roaring music⁴².

As stated above, in Aragón the tarantula dance is a jota, the most representative music and dance of that region. If this is correct, we have to infer that two musical medicines - the tarantella and the jota- can cure the same illness, however being different one from the other in the melodic aspect. In Aragón, the tarantula dance is a jota. Two musical medicines -the tarantella and the jota- can cure the same illness, however being different one from the other in the melodic aspect. But the difference between the medicinal Aragonese jota and the tarantella is not so wide since this kind of jota has a different movement from the ordinary one.

In fact, the characteristic jota from Alto Aragón (the north of Aragón) is lively and jumping, and it is executed with very agile movement on the tip of the feet, movement called "Matar la araña". "Killing the spider" in choreographic terms means to move feet rapidly to end settling short, step that is part of some popular dances from La Mancha, Asturias and León, as well as the Aragonese jotas⁴³.

⁴² CID, Francisco Xavier, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

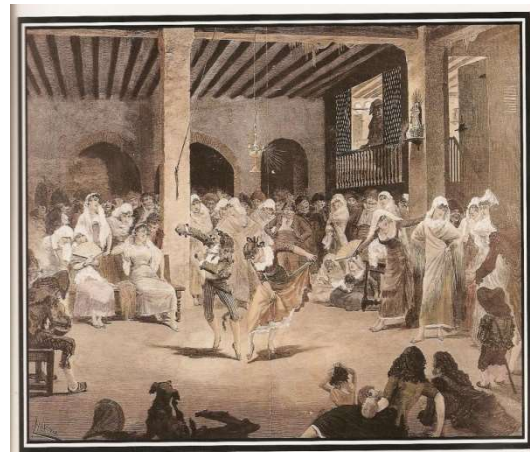
⁴³ ADELL CASTÁN, José Antonio & GARCÍA RODRÍGUEZ, Celedonio: *Fiestas tradicionales del Alto Aragón*. Huesca, Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses, 1988, p. 8.



Fig. 5 Doré, Gustave: *Man and woman dancing the Jota aragonesa, the traditional spanish dance.*

Paris, published on *Le Tour Du Monde*, 1867.

An outstanding iconographic source on the tarantella is due to Gatti e Dura⁴⁴. The publication that appeared in the first edition in 1834, includes twenty plates colored with watercolor by hand and with verbal explanations at the bottom. The illustrations focus on a couple of dancers captured in the different moments of the dance. A twenty-first plate consists of a musical score with the music of tarantella.



Figs. 6-7 Gatti e Dura, Gaetano: *La Tarantella*. Napoli, Società Editrice Napoletana, 1834. *La Cachucha Sevillana*. Paris, c. 1835. Archivo del Instituto del Teatro. Barcelona.

Some late examples of tarantella in Spain appear in the Zarzuela, a scenic musical genre that emerged in this country characterized mainly by containing instrumental,

⁴⁴ GATTI e DURA, Gaetano: *La Tarantella*, 1834. Napoli, Società Editrice Napoletana, 1900.

vocal and spoken parts. We will choose to end this paper the zapateado-tarantella that the gypsy boy Grabié sings and dances in the Zarzuela by Julián Romea and Jerónimo Jiménez *La Tempranica* premiered in Madrid in 1900⁴⁵. The poor boy seems to have been the victim of a spider bite and dances madly to relieve the shaking and pains of the bite. Here is an excerpt from the text. A real challenge for a singer on the stage!

Original text	Translation
<i>mardita la araña</i>	damn the spider
<i>que tié en la barriga</i>	that has a guitar
<i>pintá una guitarra!</i>	painted on its belly!
<i>Bailando se cura</i>	Dancing heals
<i>tan jondo doló...</i>	such a sharp pain...
<i>Ay ay ay</i>	Ow ow ow
<i>¡Malhaya la araña</i>	Damn the spider
<i>que a mí me picó!</i>	that bit me!

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