

MUSICÀNTICA

Art Form: Music

Style: Traditional and Modern

Culture: Southern Italy

MEET THE ARTIST:

Roberto Catalano and Enzo Fina, creators of **Musicàntica**, perform the enchanting folk music of Southern Italy. This collection of songs and fables was passed on from generation to generation by the fishermen, peasants and street vendors of their homeland. Roberto Catalano (guitar, chitarra battente, mandolin, bouzouki, jaw's harp, benas, putipù, frame drum and percussion) was born in Catania, Sicily, where he began his music career as a self-taught guitarist in 1973. A scholar, teacher, composer, and multi-instrumentalist who holds a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from UCLA, he is also a collector and maker of musical instruments. Enzo Fina (frame drums, fina, guitar, mandolin, percussion, putipù, jaw's harp, flutes) was born in Salice, Lecce, Italy and holds a degree in painting from the State Institute of Art and Painting of the Academy of Fine Arts in Lecce. His experience as both a musician and artist inspired him to explore relationships between musical and visual arts.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Musicàntica offers traditional and original compositions that sing of times past, present, and still to come. They learned most of the music they present from Southern Italy's tradition, but have expanded it to include more contemporary ideas. Their program includes various improvisations and re-adaptations of older material. Several of the traditional instruments include the *tamburieddhru*, a frame drum used for the *pizzica tarantata* dance; the friction drum known as *putipù*; the *chitarra battente*, a Renaissance 10 string guitar; percussion such as lava stones, castanets, animal jingle collars, sheep bells made of copper; the *benas*, a single and double reed clarinet from Sardinia; the *marranzanu*, or jaw's harp. The rest of the instrumentation includes guitars, *mandola*, mandolin, the *fina*, a personal elaboration of the African *mbira*, created by Enzo Fina, as well as homemade sound effects. A highlight in the seven song program is the fable of *Nanni Uercu*, (Nanni the Ogre). This fable will be performed in the style of the Sicilian *cantastorie*, itinerant artists who told either fictional or real stories in poetry and music by using a large painted banner in which key moments of the story were painted on. The final song is a stirring tarantella called, *Pizzica*.

PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

This celebration of folk traditions, music and oral history of Southern Italy focuses on Sicily and the Salentine Peninsula. The Salentine Peninsula, the 'heel of the boot,' looks over both the Ionian and the Adriatic Sea; Sicily, the largest of the Mediterranean islands just off the southernmost tip of Italy. Historically, both areas have been dominated by a wide variety of cultures - Phoenician, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Norman, French, Austrian, and Spanish. Each ruling dynasty left its own distinctive mark on the landscape and architecture - as seen, for example, in the surviving traces of Arabic and Roman agricultural schemes, castles, churches and fortified medieval towns. These areas are rich in folk music, songs and stories, passed on through the oral tradition. The stories mostly emanate from the lower classes, whose struggle against oppression is a major theme. It is interesting that the stories were constantly altered to reflect the changing conditions and beliefs of the people. Up through the twentieth century, both Salentine and Sicilian people suffered because of almost constant invasions and wars fought on their soil. There were also many famines and plagues that almost every generation of southerners experienced from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. The stories, fables and the songs spoke about their lives and how they wished to change them and often included a belief in magic with specific lessons to be learned. The story song in this performance features an ogre, a captive maiden, and a young man who, moved by love, releases the captive maiden and marries her in a happy ending.



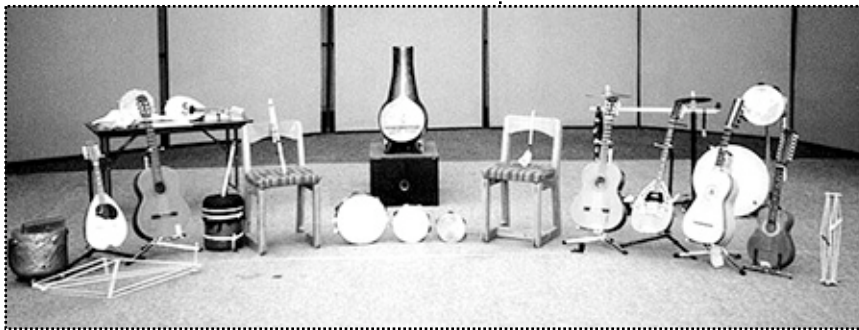
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What most surprised you or interested you about the performance?
- Name some of the instruments that you remember being introduced and played. Describe the type of instrument, shape and sound of each one.
- Which two musical pieces contrasted the most? In what ways were they different?
- What did you learn about the Southern Italian culture from watching and listening to the performance?

FRAMEWORK FOCUS - HISTORY/LANG ARTS:

The tradition of telling folktales in Southern Italy has been passed on from one generation to the next, with each person adding some of their own dialogue and details. However, the main plot of the story usually remained true, with universal themes that all can identify with. For the most part the stories are about relationships and daily lives, most ending unhappily, rather than “happily ever after.” There were traditional endings to these stories, such as “And then they all lived happily and content, but we were left without a cent.”

In small groups, have one person begin a story that will pass from person to person until it has gone around 2-3 times. The last person must end the tale. It should be a story that is based on something that could happen in ordinary life. For example, something has been lost and then found after a series of misadventures. When the story ends, the whole group will say together, “And then they all lived happily and content, but we were left without a cent.” Have the students discuss this phrase and how it made them feel after the story was ended.



ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

- ❖ Lies and deceit abound in all the Sicilian tales, but giving one’s word (pledge) is equal to giving one’s life. Curses can only be broken by words that count in one’s life – words that come from the heart with trust. Ask students to recall a time when they “gave their word” to someone. Ask them to partner up and recall the time and then decide whether or not each person was able to “keep their word.” Why or why not? How did this make them feel?
- ❖ Research some of the fairy tales from different cultures. Grimm’s Fairy Tales are a good source to begin with. As a class or in small groups have the students learn one and then take turns moving around the circle retelling the story in their own words. A variation of this could be to change the actual ending, which usually ends “happily ever after.” Have them make up an ending where the characters do not end up living “happily ever after.” Discuss the differences in the endings and how they compare to real life.
- Research songs that tell a story. There are many from old English Ballads. Examples include: The Bailiffs Daughters of Islington, Clementine, The Streets of Laredo, Lord Randall My Son. If you can get a recording of the song, listen to it and discuss the main sequence of the story song. Learn the song and what culture it is from, as well as the universal theme of the story. Sing it as a class and add rhythms using simple percussion instruments.

► Find Italy on a map and locate Sicily, the Salentine Peninsula, and Adriatic Sea. Also find the cities of Catania in Sicily and Salice in Lecce where the performers were born.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Beautiful Angiola, The Great Treasury of Sicilian Folk and Fairy Tales collected by Laura Gonzenbach. Translated with an Introduction by Jack Zipes. Routledge, NY.
www.italianfolkmusic.com/musicantica.html
www.italianfolkmusic.com/ecstacies.html
www.italianfolkmusic.com/enzo.html

- Legend:
- ⊗ Artistic perception
 - ❖ Creative expression
 - Historical & cultural context
 - Aesthetic valuing
 - * Connections, Relations, Applications