



Welcome to Macedonia!

BALKAN PROVERB:

“Watch out! The Serbs may out-sing you, the Bulgarians may out-dance you, but the Macedonians will always out-sing, out-dance, and out-play you!”

Situated right at Europe's doorway to the Middle East, Macedonia is the ancient cultural crossroads bridging East and West, Slav and Mediterranean. The very word itself has come to mean “mix” or “variety” as in the famous French “salade macedoine”. And nothing gives a better taste of this mingling than its lively folkloric tradition.

Macedonia is home to Europe's best-integrated Romany population, whose music flows freely throughout the country, especially during its now-famous summer wedding and festival season.



“Etno-Malesh” takes it into the streets, where celebrations join the earthy beats of the “Tapan” drums and the call of the “Zurli”. During the wedding season, the mobile musical spectacle is the festive companion to bridal processions throughout the towns & villages.

RUNS IN THE FAMILY



LOCAL MASTER, INTERNATIONAL RISING STAR.

Milaim (Milo) Destanovski was brought up in the family musical tradition - learning from his own father and passing the heritage down to his own sons.

He was curator, musician & choreographer Berovo's Folkoric Society for close to 20 years before moving to the US.

Milo now travels extensively bringing his knowledge of Balkan and Romany music & dance to festivals & workshops around the world.



Etno-Maleš

A family ensemble including Milo and his sons on zurli and his brother Džafer on tapan, the band accompanies so many community activities in Berovo.

During Ancestral Steps 2026, the band will accompany some of our folkloric dance workshops with Milo, and we'll also get a chance to dance with them publicly during the parade.

Some of the dances we'll be learning with Milo include "Maleševka",

"Berovka", "Kopačka", "Nevestinsko" and more.

You can always request a dance step from Milo and Džafer as both are really steeped in the ancestral steps.



Започна фестивалската еуфорија во Берово

Четвртник, 27 Август 2015 * БД1

На плоштадот "Димитар Беровски" во Берово денеска започна шестото издание на Етно плоштад фестивалот.



Etno-Maleš opening the 2015 edition of the "Ethno-Square" Festival with a traditional folkloric cortege. The festival was founded in 2007 in a partnership between Milaim Destanovski and Sophia Blanton, Macedonian-born folklorist, teacher and world dancer.

The same year, Sophia produced the short documentary "Raq'n the Roots with Malesh-Roma", which focused on Milo's enduring contribution to Macedonian cultural heritage.

GYPSY BRASS CHAMPIONS

"ORKESTAR USKA KAN"



Representing Macedonia, the Boys from Berovo win the **Guca Trumpet Fest Award 2012 & 2013!**

Uska Kan is widely regarded as one of the top Balkan brass bands to rise to prominence in the last 10 years. The orchestra's great success is largely due to its long-standing history of family musical tradition, particularly the multi-generational tradition of the Kanturovski family. Uska Kan has won many awards over the years, but they first garnered international recognition and acclaim following two wins at "Guča", the world's most famous Brass Band festival and competition, based in Guča, Serbia.

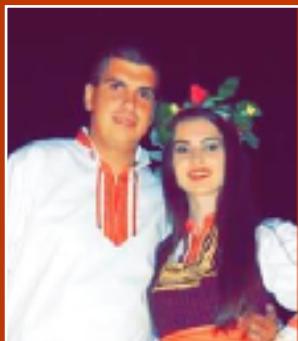
In 2012, the band's youngest trumpet soloist and rising star, Demir Kanturovski, won the Guča Festival's prestigious "Golden Trumpet" (Zlatna Truba) prize. Although rooted in tradition, Uska Kan's music is admired for its unique style, blending the authentic Balkan brass band sound with rich harmonies from a variety of genres.

We always have fun with Uska and his family when we visit Berovo! Whether at an outdoor dinner party or neighborhood jam, it's always a lively time.



Performing
with Sophia at
Etno-Square 2015

The Next Generation Steps Up! Local Youth Culture Leaders Are Dedicated to the Preservation of Maleshevo's Rich Cultural Heritage



Metodi Skenderski

studies Ethnomusicology at the Macedonian Academy of Music in Stip, specializing in Macedonian folkloric instruments and dances. An accomplished dancer & accordeon, kaval, and tapan player, he's taken over the training of Berovo's Folkloric Society Dancers, of which there are over 250. He is a member of the "Ansambl Makedonija" national performance troupe which represents the country internationally.



Metodi offers instruction in traditional Macedonian instrumentation, traditional "Hora", as well as regional dances of Maleshevo.

"Ansambl Makedonija"



During Ancestral Steps, Metodi will give three afternoon workshops in Macedonian folkloric ensemble dancing.

We'll learn a variety of curated steps like "Sitnoto", "Ratevka", "Starobersko" and "Teškoto" with his expert instruction.

Your Hostess - Софија Блантон

From one of Berovo's founding families, I return to my birthplace over the years because of my love for its folklore, music & culture. Growing up in the U.S., my parents organized concerts for Macedonian stars like Esma Redzepova and taught me the rich repertory of Balkan dance.

As an international dance artist, I choreograph Balkan dance in theatrical interpretations that blend ancestral steps with a touch of modern flair. I'm excited to host you and to share my style with you during my own "Balkanic Explosion" workshop during the ten days.

I invite you to come and share this amazing ten-day Cultural Journey with me and international friends from August 21-31, 2026. For further details, please email connect@sophiablanton.com.



THE PLACE: BEROVO

With an average of 310 days of sun annually, Berovo is a quaint highland destination for Europeans seeking fresh air, mountain beauty, amazing musical culture, and delicious regional cuisine.

Mountain pathways lead to tiny villages, vineyards, ancient monasteries, beautiful lakes, and endless fruit groves.

Sample the local wines & cheeses with our welcoming local population who take pride in Balkan hospitality.

English is widely spoken and the national currency, the “Denar”, is a great value for foreign visitors.

