

Bio:

I am Slavi Begov, founder and leader of the *Hlyab i Sol* (“Bread and Salt”) Balkan folk dance group in Dublin. My journey with Bulgarian folk dance began in childhood, learning dances from my family and later spending several years training with ensembles. After moving to Ireland, I returned to folk dance through independent practice. In 2011, I qualified in Bulgaria as a leader of groups for authentic folklore. In 2014, friends inspired me to start teaching, and what began as a small group in Dublin gradually grew into a long-term exploration of Bulgarian music and dance traditions.

My focus is on the traditional, natural character of Bulgarian *horo*—the way people dance in villages, at celebrations and gatherings, rather than the more stylised forms created for the stage and majority of modern folk clubs. Encounters with folk groups and tradition bearers from different parts of Bulgaria have given me new perspectives on the remarkable regional diversity of Bulgarian music, rhythms and dances. I hope to share this richness with others and show that Bulgarian folk dance is much more than exercise: it is a living expression of community, creativity, music and cultural identity. I also started learning to play *djura gaida* (Bulgarian bagpipe).