

# INTRODUCTION

Dear Harpists,

Welcome to the world of beautiful Balkan music. This book contains a collection of traditional songs and dance tunes from central Serbia and its Northern Province of Vojvodina (Voivodina), arranged for the harp for the first time.

Serbia and the whole Balkan region are known as a crossroads of many different cultures as well as the meeting point between east and west; it has provided the setting for one of the most impressive song and dance traditions in Europe.

Serbia borders Hungary to the north, Romania and Bulgaria to the east, the Republic of Macedonia and Albania to the south, and Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro to the west. Therefore, its traditional music was, and still is, influenced by all the nations of this region. Traditional instrumentation is simple but mesmerising.

Music has always played a major part in the lives of Balkan people: traditional melodies were sung during work in the fields and, as today, no holiday, Saint's day, wedding or other celebration could go without song and dance; at village fairs groups from many different villages, complete with their own musicians, would meet to celebrate their joy of life in a swirl of sound and colour.

Branka Crowder

## NOTES ON THE PIECES

The river Danube poses as a natural border between central Serbia and Vojvodina. Vojvodina is a flat, fertile area and an important source of food for the whole region. It is located to the north of Serbia and is divided into three plains: Srem, which carries on into Croatia; Banat, which carries on into Hungary and Backa which carries on into Romania.

Music from central Serbia is influenced by eastern Balkan music. Songs and dances from Vojvodina are influenced by the folk music of central Europe, Hungary and Romania, with slow, flowing waltz-like melodies, as well as quick, vivacious dances usually accompanied by strings and an instrument similar to the mandolin, called the tamburitza.

### Kolo

Kolo is a type of dance from the Balkan countries where a group of people, holding each other by the hands or around the waist, dance either in line, circle or semi-circle or in pairs. Kolo steps range from very simple dances at walking pace, to very complex dances with fast, intricate steps. However,

there is almost no movement above the waist and hands are joined in a low "V" hold or crossed in a "W" hold.

In addition to the familiar 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 rhythms common in the countries of western Balkans, there are many complex rhythms such as 7/8, 7/16, 9/16, as well as combinations of different rhythms within the same dance, characteristic of Bulgaria and Macedonia.

Kolo accompaniment can be both vocal and instrumental and each region has at least one unique Kolo and distinctive traditional costumes.

Some titles translated into English have had to have been changed or adjusted. Titles are also written in their original language.

### The Sunflower

Serbia has many fields full of sunflowers from late June to early August, which inspired me to use the sunflower as the main symbol for the illustrations in this book. It is also a symbol of sunny optimism and longevity. Bright and cheerful, the sunflower brings feelings of warmth and happiness.

#### **Sunflower Waltz**

*Divan Je Kićeni Srem*

This song comes from the Srem region in Vojvodina. Its lyrics and music celebrate the joy of living in Srem.

#### **Milica Has Long Eyelashes**

*U Milice Duge Trepavice*

This song originates from central Serbia and tells about a beautiful but shy girl.

#### **Watermelon Dance**

*Banaćansko Kolo*

This happy dance comes from the rich Banat region of Vojvodina. Dances from Banat are well known for their youthful liveliness and step improvisation.

#### **Piglets in the Blackberry Bush**

*Bečkerečko Kolo*

This dance comes from the Backa region in Vojvodina and is originally named after the small town of Beckerek.

#### **The Stream**

*Na Studencu*

This melody from Srem, Vojvodina, dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was inspired by a poem by Branko Radicevic about a shy young lady and a gallant horseman.

## **Buttercup Dance**

*Djurdjevkina Kolo*

This dance comes from central Serbia. Djurdjevkina is a female name but Djurdjevak is also the Serbian word for Buttercup.

## **Can't Wait for Sunday!**

*Jedva Čekam Da Nedelja Dodje!*

This old song comes from the Shumadija region of Serbia. It tells the story of a girl who can't wait for Sunday when she will see her true love.

## **The Milky Way**

*Rodno Je Nebo Zvezdama*

This enchanting song comes from the Homolje region of Serbia and is originally sung a capella (without accompaniment) by female singers.

## **Jelena's Song**

*O, Jelo, Jelena*

This lively dance accompanied by song comes from central Serbia. It celebrates one of the most popular names in the Balkans. Jelena (pronounced as Yellena) would be the equivalent of Helen.

## **Hats in the Air!**

*Vojvodjansko Kolo*

This up-beat dance comes from Vojvodina where dancers in richly embroidered costumes usually express their joy with many jumps, shouts, whistles and the throwing of hats in the air!

I would like to dedicate this book to both of my families, in Serbia and the UK, and give a special thanks to all my harp teachers who have given me support and encouragement over the years.