



# The Songman

*Tommy Sands*

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## **The Songman** Tommy Sands

With a Fenian fiddle in one ear and an Orange drum in the other', singer Tommy Sands was reared in the foothills of the Mourne mountains, where he still lives. As a child, he was immersed in folk music - his father played the fiddle, his mother the accordion. The kitchen was where Protestant and Catholic farmers alike would gather for songs and storytelling at the end of a day's harvesting. During the sixties and seventies Tommy was chief songwriter for The Sands Family, who played wherever they were welcome, from local wakes and weddings to New York's Carnegie Hall; his songs have been recorded by Joan Baez, Dolores Keane, Dick Gaughan and The Dubliners. He tells of his family's traditional way of life; of the turbulent days of the civil rights movement; The Bothy Band brawling in Brittany; encounters with Alan Stivell, Mary O'Hara and Pete Seeger; Ian Paisley on his radio show Country Céilí; and a 'defining moment' during the Good Friday Agreement talks, when he organized an impromptu performance with children and Lambeg drummers. The Songman is a memoir replete with warmth and wit. 'Tommy Sands' words fairly 'freewheel down the hill' but they also have a great zest to 'sow the seeds of justice'. You feel you can trust the singer as well as the song.' - Seamus Heaney 'Tommy Sands has achieved that difficult but wonderful balance between knowing and loving the traditions of his home as well as being concerned with the future of the whole world.' - Pete Seeger

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