

learned at my mother's knee...[his mother, Sarah Makem, was an internationally renowned source for folk songs] I would do songs that I've learned from her, and there's songs that I picked up; I don't go out to listen to people to learn songs, but if I hear a song that I like I'll make an attempt to get it and learn it, and then I write some songs myself.

RO: You've had a relationship with Pete Seeger?

TM: Yes, for a long, long, long time.

RO: What comes to mind when you think of Pete Seeger?

TM: Well, Pete would be the voice of American song, and when I say songs I mean all kinds of songs...He's done more for American music than anyone I know.

RO: Are you still in contact with Liam [Clancy]?

TM: We bump into each other every once in a while.

RO: Do you have any plans of ever playing with him [again]?

TM: No, I don't have any plans...both of us did the Guinness Fleadh here a couple months ago, both the one in Boston and the one in New York, so we were chatting and talking...

RO: How do you see the state of Irish music?

TM: I think it's fantastic, there's a lot of young people doing traditional music, and they're absolutely fabulous. I

must say that in the United States and in Canada they have to be given great credit for keeping the tradition going – some of the players are just absolutely sensational.

I regret that the song tradition seems to be forgotten about, although it's equally important – if not more important because it would have been there before the instrumental tradition – but I'm absolutely ecstatic that the instrumental stuff is so popular around the world. I would be a little hesitant about some of the attempts at new music, I wouldn't be too fussy about it...some of the stuff I've heard I would be very opposed to as it's damaging the culture.

RO: Is there any song that you can look at and say "that's my proudest moment"?

TM: I never even thought of that. "Four Green Fields" would be the song most people would know, but I've written other songs that were equally good, I think "The Winds Are Singing Freedom" is a good song.

RO: What do you listen to these days?

TM: What do I listen to? I listen to some of the new traditional people, and I listen to a bit of classical music, and once in a while I would like the older American country singers – I like Willie Nelson very much.

I would be very fond of what the Barra MacNeils do...I

saw them in concert in Glasgow, last year I think it was, and they were superb...there was some other music on but they blew away whatever was on the stage with them. I think they were just superb.

RO: Is there any person or group that you can say you enjoyed sharing the stage with the most?

TM: Well, Pete Seeger would certainly be one.

RO: What are your thoughts on the developments in Northern Ireland?

TM: I think it's very regrettable that anyone should be able to hold peace back, and progress. Very regrettable.

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RO: Do you see the role Tony Blair's played as positive?

TM: Yeah, it's positive enough...I must say that he's to be admired for taking the stand he has taken, but he's going to have to stand up and push a bit more and say "Look, this is how it is, these are the realities – get on with it."

RO: You've never written an autobiography.

TM: No.

RO: Any plans?

TM: No, because I wouldn't want to be sued! Nah, I'm only joking. I have a book out called Tommy Makem's Secret Ireland, published by St. Martin's Press in New York, but it's about traveling in make a dart for Ireland.

RO: Any plans in coming back to the Island?

TM: I don't know, I'd love to come anytime but I don't know of anything in the near future. Perhaps in the next millennium!

RO: Do you plan on continuing into the next millennium indefinitely?

TM: Oh God yes!

RO: No plans for retirement?

TM: Oh no. END

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## THE ESSENTIAL TOMMY MAKEM:

1. Four Green Fields
2. The Winds Are Singing Freedom
3. Peter Kagen And The Wind
4. The Cobbler
5. Waltzing With Bears
6. The Town I Loved So Well
7. O'Donnell Abu
8. Brennan On The Moor
9. Johnnie MacAldoo
10. Rambles Of Spring