



# Sound Neighbours

Contemporary Music  
in Northern Ireland




- 1. Northern Man** Different Drums 3:03  
(PETER O HANLON)
  - 2. Splendid Isolation / Mrs. Lawries**  
Cathal Hayden 3:54  
(BRENDAN MCGLINCHEY)
  - 3. The Belfast Mountains** Craobh Rua 4:24  
(ARR. CRAOBH RUA)
  - 4. Ships in Full Sail / The Three Sisters**  
Barry Kerr 3:35  
(BARRY KERR)
  - 5. A Stór, A Stór, A Ghrá**  
Geraldine Bradley 1:49  
(ARR. GERALDINE BRADLEY-NOEL LENAGHAN)
  - 6. There Were Roses** Tommy Sands 6:24  
(TOMMY SANDS / ELM GROVE MUSIC)
  - 7. Ma na Bh Finna (Plain of the Deer) / Correl Glen** Jim Mc Grath featuring Robert Watt 3:23 (JIM MC GRATH)
  - 8. Omagh Town** Roisin White 2:43
  - 9. My Ain Countrie** Low Country Boys 3:42  
(MARY LEE DEMAREST)
  - 10. The Old Bush Set** Jarlath Henderson 4:30  
(ARR. BY JARLATH HENDERSON-ROSS AINSLEY)
  - 11. The Donegall Road** Colum Sands 4:43  
(COLUM SANDS / ELM GROVE MUSIC)
  - 12. The Shankill and The Falls**  
Bap Kennedy 2:46  
(BAP KENNEDY / COMPLETE MUSIC, MCPS)
  - 13. The Singing Stream** Niall and Cillian Valley 4:10  
(NIALL VALLELY / SGO MUSIC PUBLISHING, LTD.)
  - 14. The Verdant Braes of Screen**  
Briege Murphy 3:16
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Hidden Fermanagh 2:40
  - 16. The Newry Highwayman** Len Graham 2:17 (ARR. LEN GRAHAM / CRANNAGH MUSIC, MCPS / PRS)
  - 17. The Shipyard Slips (Island Men)**  
Gerry Jones 2:42  
(BRIAN MOORE)
  - 18. Sean Maguire's Set** At First Light: Dónal O Connor and John Mc Sherry 3:46  
(ARR. JOHN MC SHERRY-DÓNAL O CONNOR / BON ACCORD MUSIC, MCPS)
  - 19. Sunrise** The Divine Comedy 3:16  
(NEIL HANNON / BMG MUSIC PUBLISHING, UK)
  - 20. My Lagan Love** Desi Wilkinson 4:36
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**CURATOR'S PREFACE** This CD documents the musical landscape of Northern Ireland at a seminal moment in its history. Produced in conjunction with the Northern Ireland program at the 2007 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, this compilation celebrates the richness and diversity of the region's musical traditions following a ten-year period of relative peace and stability, and the restoration of Northern Ireland's political institutions. The musical wealth of Northern Ireland has only recently begun to attract the international attention it deserves. The lyrical beauty of older traditional materials, compelling drive of newly composed tunes, haunting thoughtfulness of contemporary songwriting, and overall virtuosity found on this disk may come as a surprise. Like so much else about Northern Ireland, they challenge assumptions and stereotypes. Although the CD might not be what some expect, we trust the carefully chosen tracks on *Sound Neighbours* will transcend preconceived notions and, through music, introduce listeners to the fabled past, vibrant present, and exciting future of this beautiful region.

I am delighted that someone of the quality and international renown of singer, songwriter, and producer Colum Sands agreed to write the notes for this production and even happier that he also consented to submit a track of his own for inclusion.

NANCY GROCE, CURATOR  
*Northern Ireland at the Smithsonian*  
2007 Smithsonian Folklife Festival





# Introduction

The traditional music, song, and dance of Northern Ireland are recognized as being integral parts of the rich and diverse tapestry that makes the traditional arts of the island of Ireland so appealing to international audiences.

The amount of home-grown talent discovered for this CD made compiling it a challenging but rewarding task. Northern Ireland is “spoiled for choice,” in terms of the variety and quality available. This CD contains a representative mix of musicians, both professional and grassroots, of both Irish and Scots descent, from across Northern Ireland.

This is an exciting time for Northern Ireland as we have the opportunity to showcase our traditional and contemporary music and song on an international stage. I hope that listeners will enjoy rediscovering Northern Ireland and that this CD will open up new avenues in experiencing traditional music.

PAUL FLYNN  
Traditional Arts Officer  
Arts Council of Northern Ireland



# Sound Neighbours

**Colum Sands**

Northern Ireland is a relatively new name for an ancient place with a wealth of music and songs to celebrate both its age and youth. Luckily those songs and tunes are light-footed travelers; they cross borders with ease. Indeed, were they not so light of foot, the whole island of Ireland might have been submerged years ago by the sheer weight of glorious dance tunes and songs in praise of counties, towns, villages, parishes, and townlands—and that's before we even start counting the sad songs! And then there's the story behind each song—especially those stories which remind us that the source of the music, even for those who write it, is always something of a mystery.

Not far from where I live in County Down, a man called Joe Brannigan sang a fine song called “The Maid of Ballydoo.” When asked by a song collector where he had learned the song, Joe explained, “I was courting a girl one time and I found it in her pocket.”

A quick search in the pockets of history reveals that in common with the North and South of America, the north and south of Ireland have a long history of overseas visitors. Some of them came well armed, they grabbed anything they could, they wrote their histories in terms of battles won and spoils acquired, and they raised monuments to themselves with the same lack of subtlety that characterized their ambitions.

Others came, and still come, in search of better times, bringing with them new hopes, dreams, words, tunes, beliefs, and all those countless elements which melt into the life's blood of a culture. Their history

lives in a less visible but more lasting way, in that place where the step of the dancer flies above the plod of the soldier and the song of hope soars like a rainbow on a wet day. It is in this place of youth and age that there's a verse for everyone, from the old north and south of Viking and Celt to all the cultures that lie between and beyond today and tomorrow. In this space there's a partner for every dancer, a listener for every musician, and, above all, a song for the future.

## 1. **NORTHERN MAN** **DIFFERENT DRUMS**

From *New Day Dawning* (Red Branch Records 001)

The opening line of this song is a reminder that love knows no borders—songwriter Pete O Hanlon's parents were from Tyrone and Donegal, and crossed political and county frontiers as easily and as naturally as a song or a tune might slip past a customs man. The singer, Roy Arbuckle, grew up in Derry and is well aware that such crossings are not always so easily made in the mind, especially in a land where history conspires to confuse. Donegal, for example, is geographically the northernmost county in Ireland, but politically it's in “The South.”

Roy Arbuckle is a musician who sees above the walls of history, and this song, like his inter-community work with Different Drums, is all about acknowledging the footsteps of different traditions while, at the same time, laying a finger on the common pulse of humankind.



## 2. **SPLENDID ISOLATION / MRS. LAWRIES** **CATHAL HAYDEN**

From *Cathal Hayden* (Hook 001)

Cathal Hayden comes from a stronghold of fiddle playing in an area famed in song, the Mountains of Pomeroy in County Tyrone. Recognized from an early age as an outstanding talent on tenor banjo and fiddle, Cathal's distinctive style has taken him to many stages around the world with the band Four Men and a Dog. As well as keeping a great tradition alive, he has an ear for more recent tunes, and these two compositions are from another fine fiddle player, Brendan McGlinchey of Armagh.

Cathal Hayden is joined on this recording by another exceptional Tyrone musician, the hugely influential guitarist Arty McGlynn, and the superb Derry percussionist Liam Bradley.



## 3. **THE BELFAST MOUNTAINS** **CRAOBH RUA**

From *If Ida Been Here, Ida Been There* (Lochshore CDLDL 1296)

Long ago in Ulster, there was a legendary band of knights roaming the land enforcing law and order. These knights were known as The Red Branch, or Craobh Rua. I can't tell you much more about those knights, but I do know that the Craobh Rua of today is a well-traveled and respected band, roaming the world armed with great songs and tunes. The band members come from in and around Belfast, and this fine song of unrequited love has its setting on the beautiful mountain which overlooks the city. It's a fact of life that city dwellers inevitably see streets and houses all



around them. A young woman who had grown up in Belfast once told me that she had not realized there was a mountain so close to her home place until she heard this song. Her story reminded me that a song has the power to widen our vision in more ways than one.

#### **4. SHIPS IN FULL SAIL / THE THREE SISTERS**

**BARRY KERR**

*From The Three Sisters* (Spring Records SCD 1040)

In the lore of any imaginative people, there's a legend to challenge most geographical theories. When the Irish giant Fionn Mac Cumhaill/Finn McCool picked up a sod of earth to throw it at a giant who had annoyed him, the earthly missile landed in the Irish Sea to form the Isle of Man, while the hole left in the ground by the extracted sod became Lough Neagh. Whatever the truth in this story, Lough Neagh can lay claim to being the biggest lake in Ireland (and surrounding islands!), and its shores have produced some outstanding singers and musicians. One of them is Barry Kerr from Lurgan, and this recording, made when he was nineteen years old, is remarkable proof of a tradition being maintained and revitalized. The technique and energy breathed into the traditional piece "Ships in Full Sail" is very much in keeping with the title. His skills as a composer can be heard on "The Three Sisters," a tune which also reflects his awareness of his own locality—the "three sisters" being a notorious series of waves much feared by the fishermen of Lough Neagh. Gerard Thompson on guitar and Tommie Taylor on *bodhran* complete this memorable performance.





## 5. A STÓR, A STÓR, A GHRÁ

GERALDINE BRADLEY

From *The Rising Spring* (Coolnacran Records 001)

Thanks to the work of singers and collectors like Seoirse Ó Dochartaigh and Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin, the vast wealth of songs in the Irish language has been coming to light and new life in recent years. This one is commonly sung in Donegal and associated in particular with the singing of the Rann na Feirste area. Reputed to have been composed by local singer Aodh O Duibheannaigh, it has the catchy melody of a children's song, but the lyrics have the ring of life's experience. Fortunes fade from the summer morning in the first verse, when the young woman is eyed with appreciation—and more—by all the men in the marketplace, to the last verse, when things have changed drastically.

Armagh singer Geraldine Bradley comes from a great Armagh family of music and song; her brother Paul is a noted instrument maker and fiddle player in the band Dorsa. Here, she is joined by Belfast-born singer Noel Lenaghan on vocals. This track is from her forthcoming debut album.

**Chorus:** *My darling, my darling, my love / My darling, my darling, will you come?  
My darling, my darling, my love / Will you come or will you stay?*

*I was standing in the market one fine summer's day and  
Many men said to me, "It's a pity I hadn't you at home with me."*

*My love promised me that she would surely come  
Her costume was not finished and that is what delayed her.*

*The water comes from Lough Erne and the hay is given to us by heaven  
The cows' udders are bursting with the plentiful quantities of milk.*

*Down at the bottom of the garden, Mary, did you bring the fiddle?  
We'll take a shortcut through the potato patch, to go across to the fiddler.*

*There was a time when everyone was fond of me  
Hasn't life changed a great deal when no one has any affection for me any more?*



## 6. THERE WERE ROSES

TOMMY SANDS

From *Singing of the Times* (Spring Records SCD 1015)

Tommy Sands has written many songs which aim to heal the wounds across political and cultural divides, including “Music of Healing” (co-written with Pete Seeger). As Tommy’s brother, I know that he spent ten years in the writing of this song about how two neighbours (he changed their names to respect their families’ wishes) were killed in a couple of tit-for-tat sectarian murders in the mid-1970s. It was summertime and the roses were in bloom outside our family home on the Ryan Road in County Down, a few yards from where one of the murders took place. As well as providing a powerful and moving description of these tragic incidents, the song places them in the context of war in general, pointing out that history, politics, and more importantly, vested interests often conspire to set neighbour against neighbour for the benefit of a few and to the cost of many. These elements have given “There Were Roses” recognition and resonance in many countries around the world.



## 7. MA NA BH FÍNNA (PLAIN OF THE DEER) / CORREL GLEN

JIM MC GRATH FEATURING ROBERT WATT

From *Melodious Accord*

Jim Mc Grath's home place of Monea (Ma na Bh Finna, – "Plain of the Deer") and Correl Glen are acknowledged in the titles of these jigs, but the music is also inspired by a much wider landscape. Growing up in the spectacular lake county of Fermanagh, Jim was aware of the tunes that floated across the water from accordion players like Frank Quinn in County Longford and the melodies that drifted into the family home from Scotland by way of Jimmy Shand on the wind-up gramophone. Jim draws on these influences and finds melodious accord around a table of his own compositions, placing chairs side by side for guest musicians on *bodhran* and snare drums, fiddles, flutes, and Scottish pipes, the latter instrument in the hands of the fine Maghera piper Robert Watt.





## 8. OMAGH TOWN

ROISIN WHITE

From *The First of My Rambles* (Veteran VT126)

Roisin White comes from Attical in County Down, an area of spectacular beauty where a patchwork quilt of stone-walled fields stretches like a hammock from the foothills of the Mourne down to the shores of Carlingford Lough.

Roisin brings the drama of that backdrop to every note she sings. She goes to the heart of a song and comes to the listener from the inside with an energy that brings her to traditional singing sessions and festivals all over Ireland and further afield.

“Omagh Town,” a traditional song in praise of place, could be adjusted to fit almost any town, but Roisin White sings it with a conviction that resonates through the rhythms and rhymes of every street, leaving you with the feeling that, until you’ve been to Omagh, your life won’t be quite complete.

## 9. MY AIN COUNTRIE

LOW COUNTRY BOYS

From *Gran Time Comin*

(Ochtava 001)

The Ulster poet John Hewitt once wrote, “The whole point of the ideal Ulsterman is... that he must carry within himself elements of both Scots and English, with a strong charge of the basic Irish.” For the best part of three centuries, many of these Ulstermen and women, ideal and otherwise, have crossed the Atlantic in search of better times and have brought hugely influential elements of the three cultures mentioned by Hewitt to the linguistic and musical melting pot of the “New



World.” In a further and fascinating stage in the distillation of that mix, the music appears back home on the shores of County Down in the songs and sound of the Low Country Boys. The band, based in the beautiful Ards Peninsula of County Down, bring their music to venues across the land, from mission halls to Ulster Scots gatherings. Their heartwarming sound on this song is a reminder of a quest that is common to all humankind—the search for home both in this world and the next.

## 10. THE OLD BUSH SET (THE LONG HILLS OF MOURNE)

JARLATH HENDERSON

From *Partners in Crime*

(Vertical Records)

Jarlath Henderson is an excellent young musician from County Tyrone who began playing Uilleann pipes at the age of ten (the Irish Uilleann pipes receive their air supply from a bellows which is powered by the elbow; *uilleann* is the Irish word for elbow). With three All Ireland Championship titles under his belt at the age of nineteen, he has established himself as one of the leading pipers of his generation. A recent winner of the prestigious BBC Radio 2 Young Musician of the Year Award, he is currently studying in Aberdeen and adding his considerable talents to the Scottish music scene. On this track he opens with an Irish reel, “The Old Bush,” also known as “The Long Hills of Mourne,” and then joins forces for the second reel with Ross Ainslie on Scottish border pipes (also elbow powered) for a stirring sample of their fusion of old and new in the best traditions of Irish and Scottish piping.



## 11. THE DONEGALL ROAD

COLUM SANDS

From *The Note That Lingers On*  
(Spring Records SCD 1051)

The M1 motorway from the south reaches Belfast with a roundabout, which turns countryside to city and dissects the Donegall Road. A left turn at the roundabout leads towards the Catholic Falls Road, a right turn leads towards the city centre through traditionally Protestant areas like the Village and The Shankill Road. This song began on an April morning as I drove along, observing side-street names like Thalia and Pandora rising out of Greek mythology to live alongside the work of more recent muses who had added their graffiti to the local reading material. Despite this sense of the past all around me, there was a warmth in the sunshine that morning, and it cast a light on people on either side of the street as they went about their everyday lives and walked unknowingly into this song about the promise of a new day.



## 12. THE SHANKILL AND THE FALLS

BAP KENNEDY

From *Domestic Blues* (Lonely Street Discs LSD 710) / (ESquared 51058)

Bap Kennedy was the lead singer and main songwriter of the Belfast rock band Energy Orchard, and since turning solo in the mid-1990s he has performed and co-written with world-famous names like Mark Knopfler and Van Morrison. However, this song takes him back full circle and finds him in a contemplative mood on the streets of his native Belfast. The Shankill and The Falls are traditional strongholds of Protestants and Catholics in the city, and “the painted walls” is a reference to the murals



that mark the boundaries of those areas. Kennedy looks forward to a day when people rise above the old traditions of division and move forward to find a way of living together, whether in Tiger's Bay, an area of Belfast, or The Silent Valley, a beautiful spot in County Down.

### **13. THE SINGING STREAM**

**NIALL AND CILLIAN VALLELY**

From *Callan Bridge*

(Compass Records 4348)

Niall and Cillian Vallely come from a family that has long made room for neighbours and neighbours' children around that most creative hearthstone in their home city—The Armagh Pipers Club. Their parents Brian

and Eithne Vallely founded that club as well as The William Kennedy Piping Festival, an event that brings a wonderful international array of pipers to concert stages and schools around Armagh each winter. It was for this festival that Niall Vallely composed "The Singing Stream," and this track is part of a longer piece of music for four Uilleann pipers. Niall has charted new territory for anglo concertina in his virtuoso playing with many musical combinations including the band Nomos, while Cillian's exceptional piping has been showcased on stages around the world in the band Lúnasa.



## 14. THE VERDANT BRAES OF SCREEN

BRIEGE MURPHY

From *From Now On* (Sceolag CD1)

Often mistaken for a Scottish song, the language of this eavesdrop on a young couple is a reminder of the strong linguistic connections between Scotland and Ulster. In both, “brae” is a hillside, while “Screen” is an abbreviation for Ballinascreen in County Derry. Somewhere in that area, aided by the back support of a hawthorn tree, the unknown writer of this beautiful song reports delicately on the refusal of a young woman to be lured onto the grass by a young man whom she knows to be in love with a Connaught maid. This version comes from Briega Murphy, herself a fine songwriter, who has based many of her own verses in and around her native South Armagh. “Cloghinne Winds” and “The Hills of South Armagh” are just two examples of her work which are well worth hearing.



## 15. EDDIE DUFFY'S MONAGHAN TWIG / THE STORMY SATURDAY

HIDDEN FERMANAGH

From *Hidden Fermanagh Vol 1*

As a member of the Boys of the Lough and as a solo performer, Cathal McConnell has been bringing international audiences the traditional music and song of his native County Fermanagh for the best part of five decades. It is no surprise then that he is involved in the production of a superb collection of songs and tunes released on CD and in a book with the aim of unearthing some of the wealth of music and song to be found in *Hidden Fermanagh*. This track features Cathal on flute with the fine fiddle player Brenda McCann and two highly respected accompanists—Pat and Fintan McManus on guitar and bouzouki—for a great rendition of “Eddie Duffy’s Monaghan Twig” and a reel, “The Stormy Saturday,” from the playing of another giant of traditional music in County Fermanagh, Tommy Gunn.







## 16. THE NEWRY HIGHWAYMAN

LEN GRAHAM

From *Ebb & Flow* (Cranagh Music CMCD3344)

This song probably relates to the exploits of an 18th-century Irishman by the name of Charley O Reilly, whose fame lives on in verses which have been collected from Ireland and Britain to Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky.

The Newry Highwayman has galloped through the repertoires of many singers, ranging from Sean Cannon to Bob Dylan, but seldom has he been in safer hands than here with Len Graham. Influenced from an early age by fellow Antrim singers like the legendary Robert Cinnamond and Joe Holmes as well as Eddie Butcher of Derry and Paddy Tunney from Fermanagh, Len honed his craft as a singer in recordings with Joe Holmes and as a solo performer at home and across Europe and the United States. He is also an important collector of old songs, and his creativity in adapting or com-

pleting ballad fragments has produced songs to grace the repertoires of countless singers. Len Graham has also recorded with Skylark, John Campbell, and Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin; he performs to audiences of all ages and represents a vital bridge between the past and present of traditional singing.

## 17. THE SHIPYARD SLIPS

(ISLAND MEN)

GERRY JONES

From *The Far Set* (Outlet PTICD 1098)

Two giant cranes, “Samson” and “Goliath,” dominate the Belfast skyline and act as a reminder that the Queen’s Island area of the city once housed a vast work force of “island men” in the biggest shipyard in the world. The Harland and Wolff shipyard had as many as 35,000 workers on its books at one time, and in the early 20th century it wrote one particularly famous though ill-fated page in history when *Titanic*, the



largest manmade moving object on earth, sailed off from there to its tragic encounter with ice.

In recent years, in common with many other industrial cities like Glasgow or Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Belfast's ship-building trade has declined to the point of extinction. Brian Moore wrote the song based on an idea given to him by East Belfast artist Dave Scott. Dave has since emigrated to Australia, and aptly these verses are set on board a ship as an ex-island man sails off in hope of a new life but with a dream of returning. This recording is by the singer and guitar/bouzouki player Gerry Jones, who together with Belfast flute player Michael Clarkson recorded a fine album of tunes and songs under the title *The Far Set*.

## 18. SEAN MAGUIRE'S SET

**AT FIRST LIGHT: DÓNAL O CONNOR AND  
JOHN MC SHERRY**

From *Tripswitch* (Compass Records 4433)

At First Light brings together three great musical clans. Members of Dónal O Connor's family from Dundalk in County Louth have laid horsehair on fiddle string for at least four generations; the superb Uilleann piper John Mc Sherry comes from a fine Belfast family of music (his brother Paul guests on guitar on this track); and Francis Mc Ilduff is a son of Kathleen Mc Peake of the legendary Mc Peakes, a highly influential Belfast family that has combined harp, Uilleann pipes, and vocals since the 1950s and continues to perform and teach music to this day. At First Light's present lineup is completed by singer and guitarist Alan Kelly, and the band blends a great respect for the past with an imaginative sense of invention for the future. Pipes and fiddle blend beautifully



on this set to acknowledge the influence of three outstanding northern fiddle players. Donegal's Tommy Peoples (a founder member of the Bothy Band) is their source of the first reel, "Johnny Going to the Ceili." The second tune is named after the great Sean Maguire, who reached traditional and mainstream audiences alike through the virtuosity and flamboyancy of recordings and performances which date back to the 1940s. The third reel is named after the Donegal fiddle player John Doherty, a highly individual performer with a style and repertoire to remind us that Donegal and Scotland are close musical neighbours. The set concludes with "The First Month of Summer," learned from piper and flute player Pádraig Mac Mathúna.

## 19. SUNRISE

### THE DIVINE COMEDY: NEIL HANNON

From *Fin de Siecle* (Divine Comedy Records)

Inspired by Dante for the title of his sometimes one-man band Divine Comedy, Neil Hannon's "Sunrise" is a "hint of blue in the black sky" and a call of hope and humanity from the inferno of entrenched sectarianism. In 1609 (coincidentally exactly three hundred years after Dante commenced work on *Divina Commedia*), Derry (from the Irish *doire*, meaning oak grove) had its name changed to Londonderry by James I of England when he granted the area to London merchants. Deeds as old as this and as recent as the 1987 IRA bombing of Enniskillen (Inis Ceithleann in Irish means Ceithleann's island) are recalled in this powerful song, where Hannon asks: *Who cares where national borders lie/Who cares whose laws you're governed by/Who cares what name you call a town/Who'll care when you're six feet beneath the ground?*



## 20. MY LAGAN LOVE

DESI WILKINSON

From *Shady Woods* (Deas Records 01)

Belfast (Beal Feirste, “Mouth of the Sandbank”) takes its name from the sandbank where the River Farset (also named after the sandbank) flows into the larger River Lagan. The poet Joseph Campbell/Seosamh Mac Cathmhaoil (1879–1944) often walked the banks of the Lagan, and his lyrics set to this beautiful old Irish air have helped to link the melody to Belfast. This is a haunting rendition by Belfast-born musician Desi Wilkinson. Desi’s playing and academic pursuits have been influenced by the Sligo-Leitrim flute styles, but he adds the spice of his own travels and personality to every note he plays, whether as a lecturer, solo performer, or member of the band Cran.



# Credits

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Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States. Our mission is the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding.

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