With a voice that sounds a bit like Michael Stipe gone folk, Richard Shindell's songs feel instantly familiar even if you've never heard him before. Those vocals are magnetic and dramatic, and the singer/songwriter pays as much attention to melody and musical settings as he does his words. But it's his first-person narratives that have garnered him critical praise and a loyal following.

Shindell, who will perform on Tuesday at Davenport's Unitarian Church, has been called (by the *Boston Globe*) "a master builder of songs, yet always leading listeners toward the emotional essence of the moment or character he is evoking."

Like many folk musicians, Shindell's songs are often topical, yet they're rarely dogmatic or judgmental.

His "Fishing" - from 1994's "Blue Divide" - uses his voice to great effect, employing a breathy urgency that belies the greetings and apologies of the opening: "Please have a seat / I'm sorry I'm late / I know how long you've been waiting."