

Two Sides Of Irish Folk At Pres Centre

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The multifarious nature of the Irish folk tradition got a timely airing at the Presentation Centre in Enniscorthy when two bands, presented in association with Wexford Arts Centre, offered distinctly different approaches to the canon.

First up were the five-man Green Road, who, armed with guitar, uilleann pipes, banjo, mandolin, keyboardist and percussion, delivered lusty and familiar versions of such folk treasures as 'Paddy's Green Shamrock Shore', 'Go Lassie Go' and 'Mursheen Durkin', harmonies and all. They're at the Wexford Arts Centre every Wednesday from July 4 until August 22.

Lankum, who take their name from a ballad sung by John Reilly Jr, and were once known as Lynched, are three men and a woman who specialise in deliciously rich harmonies and the studied use of drones through uilleann pipes, concertina, accordion and harmonium, as well as guitar and fiddle. They achieve a delicate balance of rawness and subtlety that treats the tradition as something that lives and breathes, changes and grows.

The voice of Radie Peat led them into a sonorous version of 'What Will We Do When We Have No Money' with the other three voices joining her against a droning soundscape conjured from Ian Lynch's uilleann pipes to give the song a powerful, spiritual uplift. Daragh Lynch's plangent guitar drew us into 'Henry My Son' which also benefitted from delicate harmonies and a terrific pipes solo that gave the song a gentler edge than we're used to.

Cormac Mac Diarmada's fiddle kicked off the light and jolly 'The Townie Polka' with Peat on harmonium and fine guitar picking from Daragh, and they treated such tunes as 'Cold On Fire', 'Rose Connolly' and 'The Old Man From Over The Sea' with an equal blend of verve and delicacy.

With remarkable ease, Lankum live achieve that wild mercury sound of the street that Bob Dylan hankered after. Attractively ragged at times, their sound is all-enveloping. Some pointless stage banter about Iron Maiden aside, this was a concert to remember. If you've only experienced Lankum via YouTube, be advised; they're way better than that.