

# Landless: Lúireach review – fans of Celtic music should flock to this stunning sound



Vocal harmony is in the dense weave of so much traditional music, and it becomes a startling, golden thread in Landless's second album. Named after an Irish word that can mean a cloak for protection, a breastplate and a hymn, Lúireach is a collection of 10 sublime songs, many of them about bold women. It also showcases four female singers (Méabh Meir, Lily Power, Ruth Clinton and Sinéad Lynch), whose voices seem to rise from the sacra of their spines, emerging from their bodies in heavenly flight or heavy drones.

As ancient, deep and moving as an unusual early music instrument, Meir's tones are the first that we hear, on *The Newry Highwayman*. She is joined by her bandmates in tender support, plus Alex Borwick's soft, sighing trombone, string drones played by [Lankum](#)'s Cormac Mac Diarmada, and the growing dread that's such a signature flourish of John "Spud" Murphy's production (for Lankum and others). Then comes a sweet, unusual version of folk standard *Blackwaterside*, learned from Irish Traveller Paddy Doran, showcasing the group's similar facility and respect for lightness and darkness.

So many other treasures abound. Lúireach Bhríde, bolstered by all four women singing powerfully, is a beautiful original, commissioned by the RTÉ folk awards as a piece revisiting the pre-Christian stories of Irish goddess Brigid. Then comes Clinton's Conacher pipe organ introduction to [Death and the Lady](#), sounding precise and profound; the clavichord on *The Hag* (Lynch's setting of a 17th-century Robert Herrick poem) adding delicacy to the tale of a woman "astride / this night for to ride"; Meir's shruti box and singing bowls sounding impossibly loving on Slovakian closer *Ej Husári*. Long-term Celtic music fans should flock to them – they're a deliciously doomier Clannad – while devotees of Ireland's current, brilliant scene should also respond to their stunning intensity.