

**Moeran** 'Complete Solo Folksong Arrangements'

*Six Folksongs from Norfolk. The North Sea Ground. High Germany. The Sailor and Young Nancy. The Little Milkmaid. The Jolly Carter. Parson and Clerk. Gaol Song. Six Suffolk Folksongs. Songs from County Kerry.*

Adrian Thompson *tenor* Marcus Farnsworth *baritone* John Talbot *pianoforte*  
Weybridge Male Voice Choir/Christine Best

British Music Society **BMS438CD** (65" • DDD)

**Moeranes will not want to miss out on this delightful folksong anthology.**

Jack Moeran was a 19-year-old student at the Royal College when he encountered one of Vaughan Williams's *Norfolk Rhapsodies* at a Queen's Hall concert in the spring of 1914. A Norfolk lad himself, Moeran was entranced by how the music "seemed to breathe the very spirit of the English countryside", promptly purchased Cecil Sharp's *Folk Songs from Somerset* and returned home to set about collecting folksongs for himself. Either side of the Great War (in which he enlisted as a motorcycle despatch rider before being invalided out with a head wound in May 1917), Moeran managed to transcribe nearly 70 songs from such local figures as James "Old Larpin" Sutton from Winterton, Bob "Jolt" Miller from Sutton and Harry Cox from Hickling. Arranged in 1923 and published the following year, the collection entitled *Six Folksongs from Norfolk* includes two tunes that were to prove particularly fruitful: "Lonely Waters" subsequently inspired his haunting orchestral impression of the same name; and "The Shooting of his Dear" stalks the elegiac slow movement of his glorious Symphony in G minor. A second, rather less distinctive set, *Six Suffolk Folksongs*, appeared eight years later and is preceded here by a further seven settings, of which the bracing, rather Stanfordinian "The North Sea Ground" (1915) only came to light as recently as 2000.

From the early 1930s Moeran divided his time between England and Ireland, eventually settling in Kenmare, County Kerry. Seven of the tunes he collected in Kenmare, Caherciveen and Sneem found a home in the enchanting and subtly crafted *Songs from County Kerry* (published in 1950, the last year of his life), in the preface to which Moeran states: "The verse-by-verse variants in some of the tunes are exactly as I heard from the singers themselves on a number of occasions." Perhaps the most fascinating aspect, though, is the shared heritage of so much of this material: trawlermen from East Anglia and Kerry regularly plied their trade in each other's fishing grounds and would certainly have performed songs together over a glass or two of ale or stout. As Moeran's fellow composer and friend Aloys Fleischmann has observed: "It is true that the folk music of these islands may at times be difficult to distinguish but the composer himself used to point out that in Norfolk he heard characteristically Irish tunes, and again, Norfolk tunes in Kerry, brought in each case by visiting fisherfolk from one country to another...[the] folk music of each county contributed its share to the texture of his music."

Baritone Marcus Farnsworth, winner of the 2009 Wigmore Hall International Song Competition, has the lion's share of duties and brings a most personable warmth, commitment and no little narrative flair to the task in hand (his enunciation, by the way, is admirable). Tenor Adrian Thompson possesses a less ingratiating timbre but there's no denying his infectious ardour and idiomatic delivery. Moreover, that indefatigable champion of the composer, John Talbot, contributes consistently understanding and stylish accompaniments. Vividly truthful sound - and a special word of praise for Roy Palmer's painstakingly researched annotation, which strikes me as a model of its kind. Full texts can be downloaded from the BMS website <http://www.britishmusicsociety.com>. A job well done! **Andrew Achenbach**