



MOERAN

Complete Solo Songs

Geraldine McGreevy (soprano), Adrian Thompson (tenor), Roderick Williams (baritone), John Talbot (piano)
Chandos CHAN 10596(2)
118:41 mins (2 discs)
BBC Music Direct £12.99

Moeran, aka Jack, is a fairly dim figure now, but this half-Irish, unsettled character was one of the outstanding inter-war 'pastoral' composers who rejected serialism in favour of folk and early music, and suffered undue neglect for it later. Symphonic and orchestral pieces such as *Wythorne's Shadow* recall Vaughan Williams, but his songs are more reminiscent of smaller-scale contemporaries like John Ireland and Moeran's friend Peter Warlock. Some 50 are collected here for the first time, and while soloists Roderick Williams, Geraldine McGreevy, Adrian Thompson and pianist John Talbot uncover no startling masterpieces, they undoubtedly reveal Moeran's achievement.

The songs comprise an impressive body, light-hued but intense, tinged with a distinctly Celtic melancholy. Two large AE Housman sequences often do bear comparison with Butterworth in their illumination of the verse, especially 'The Lads in their Hundreds' and 'Loveliest of Trees' – high praise. But other settings range surprisingly widely, from Jacobean like Dekker, Shakespeare and Chettle to Yeats, Joyce – some limpidly wistful settings – and, remarkably, Dorothy L Sayers; and they're all well worth hearing.

In raucous contrast, Moeran's drinking habits inspired some pub ballads such as 'Mrs Dyer, the Baby Farmer'. The male voice ensemble cheerfully hams up versions of 'Maltworms (Back and side go bare)' and 'Can't You Dance the Polka?'.

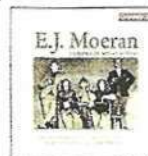
Michael Scott Rohan

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

BBC Music Magazine June 2010

Moeran: Complete Solo Songs

McGreevy/Thompson/
Williams/Talbot
★★★★★



(Chandos, two CDs)

Even the persistent enthusiasm for British music from the first half of the 20th century hasn't quite embraced EJ Moeran (1894-1950) as enthusiastically as it might. His *Symphony in G minor*, indebted to both Sibelius and Vaughan Williams, gets occasional outings, his *Violin Concerto* and *Sinfonietta* fewer performances still, while the rest of his output is hardly ever heard. Here, though, is a complete collection of Moeran's songs, and they reveal the half-Irish, half-English composer to have had a refined literary palate and a sensitive ear for setting his chosen texts. The poets represented range from Shakespeare and Marlowe to Yeats and Massfield, and if some of the songs are routine and sometimes rather twee examples of early 20th-century English word-setting, others are far more distinctive. AE Housman seems to have brought something special out of Moeran just as his poetry did in so many composers of the same generation, and the highlights of these discs are the two groups of Housman songs that baritone Roderick Williams sings with his usual burnished fluency. The miniature cycle *Ludlow Town* from 1920 and a more diverse sequence, including a ravishing *O Loveliest of Trees*, both reveal that Moeran's version of the pastoral was distinctly different from those better known ones from Butterworth and Vaughan Williams.

The Guardian, 28th May 2010

EJ Moeran: Complete Solo Songs

(Chandos)



Fiona Maddocks
The Observer, Sunday 23 May 2010
[Article history](#)

Long underrated together with those other composers of the "English cowpat" tendency, Ernest John Moeran (1894-1950) is at last being rehabilitated. His love of folk song and his natural lyricism produced song settings of wistful poignancy, especially the *Ludlow Town* poems of AE Housman. This welcome, complete Chandos collection conjures a pastoral, mystical England (and Ireland, too; Moeran was famous for propping up the bars in Kenmare), beautifully expressed by the three soloists and pianist John Talbot. The imminent [English Music Festival](#) (Oxfordshire, 28-31 May) and the [English Song Weekend](#) (Ludlow 3-6 June) are ideal chances to hear more of this neglected repertoire.