Ernest John Moeran: Seven Poems of James Joyce
A Singer’s Guide to Preparation and Performance

D.M.A. DOCUMENT

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By

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ABSTRACT

*Seven Poems of James Joyce* is a song cycle by British composer Ernest John Moeran. Moeran beautifully sets to music text by the great Irish poet, James Joyce, about a journey of love reflected through the seasons. Each piece depicts one’s experiences with love and nature through the various seasons of life. This document provides a brief biography of the composer and poet, and presents important characteristics in each movement of the cycle. It also serves as an introduction to the work of E. J. Moeran.
Dedicated to my wife, Amy
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my thanks to the organizations that support the work of composers. Their dedication to music helps to ensure that the lives of many fascinating men and women will not go unnoticed.

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Studies in Vocal Performance, Vocal Pedagogy, Vocal Literature, Diction, Opera
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Relatively unknown, Ernest John “Jack” Moeran was the creator of over one hundred fifty vocal, instrumental, and orchestral works. Early in his life he was inspired by the music he heard in pubs and various other rural establishments. Moeran made it his life’s work to collect and preserve the folk songs heard in these venues for future generations.

Not only did Moeran have a great appreciation for folk songs, he also had a love of his father’s homeland, Ireland. In 1929 he travelled to Kenmare, a town with which he fell in love, and made it the place that he would consider home for the rest of his life. It was during this time that Moeran became acquainted with the poetry of the great Irish poet James Joyce.

Moeran selected seven poems from Joyce’s Chamber Music and wrote the song cycle Seven Poems of James Joyce, which was published in 1930. Two poems are cheerful in nature, and the other five are melancholy. The subject of each of the poems is love and the music of nature, and the songs take the listener on a journey through life’s seasons: the bustle of spring, the sunny days of summer, a rainy fall day, and the barren landscape of winter. Although
Moeran’s settings are folk-like, they use parallel fourths and fifths to achieve more dissonance in the harmony.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is three-fold: to present a detailed biography of Ernest John Moeran including his musical influences; to offer a biographical sketch of James Joyce; and to provide performers and teachers with a guide which builds on insights from the composer’s past, musical ideas presented in the score, and interpretation of the text. A biography of E. J. Moeran can be found in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 is a brief biography of James Joyce, the author of the texts used in the composition. The fourth chapter contains specific information regarding the song cycle Seven Poems of James Joyce. The appendices include a complete list of Moeran’s compositions separated into three categories: vocal, orchestral, and instrumental works.

PROCEDURES

In preparation for this document, I first collected data for the purpose of writing Moeran’s biography. Other researchers have developed an online database in honor of E. J. Moeran. The creators of this website have compiled all articles, books, and other resources regarding Moeran’s life and works, including a chronology of Moeran’s life, and many sound clips of Moeran as a guest speaker for the British Broadcasting Corporation. Then I collected data for
Chapter 2 including biographical information about the teachers and acquaintances who had an impact on Moeran’s compositional style.

The life of James Joyce, the author of the poems Moeran used for *Seven Poems of James Joyce*, was the last area of research. Information found in Chapter 3 comes from articles and other documents found on the official website for the James Joyce Centre. Finally, the author prepared and coached the composition for a public performance that took place on May 20, 2008.
CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY OF ERNEST JOHN MOERAN

Ernest John “Jack” Moeran was born in Heston, England on New Year’s Eve, 1894. His was a religious household, as his father, J. W. W. Moeran, was an Anglican priest from Ireland. Shortly after his birth the family relocated to a home in rural Norfolk Fen Country. At the age of twelve, Jack was enrolled in the Suffield Park Preparatory School in Cromer. It was there that he began studying violin and taught himself chords on the piano based on the hymns he heard in church. Although Moeran’s parents knew of his interest in music, they still hoped he would become an engineer. From an early age Moeran was fascinated with mechanical things; later in life it was fast cars and motorcycles.

After three years at the Suffield Park school, Moeran was enrolled in the Uppingham School, where he began playing in the school’s orchestra as a second violinist. Moeran was also a member of the House Under 16 Cricket team. In 1911, he won the Speech Day prize for piano, formed his own string quartet, and made his first attempts at composition by writing three string quartets and a sonata for cello and piano in four movements.¹

On the evening of April 17, 1912, Moeran attended a concert featuring Balfour Gardiner in Queen’s Hall, London, where he heard the music of Ralph
Vaughan Williams’s second and third *Norfolk Rhapsodies*. This was the first time Moeran experienced the use of folk music as the subject for orchestral music. In an article he wrote in 1946, he reflected:

> One wintery evening, when I had been to St. Paul’s Cathedral intending to hear Bach’s *Passion* music and failed to obtain a seat there, feeling in the mood for any music rather than none at all, I went to the Queen’s Hall where there was a Balfour Gardiner concert, prepared to be bored stiff. On the contrary, I was so filled with enthusiasm, and so much moved by some of the music I heard that night, that from then on I made a point of missing no more of these concerts.²

In September 1912, Moeran enrolled in the Royal College of Music where he was a student of Charles Stanford, focusing on composition and piano with a minor in viola. Stanford is best known for his church music and choral compositions. His choral compositions reflect an influence of Brahms; Stanford has a gift for melody and an ability to capture great emotion within the line. Although his time with Stanford was brief, Moeran’s music shows signs of Stanford’s influence in regard to melody.

On March 8, 1913, Moeran attended a second concert in Queen’s Hall where he heard Delius’s *Piano Concerto* and Bax’s *In The Faery Hills*. This concert, like the previous one, sparked his interest in folk music. It was also Moeran’s first experience with the music of Delius. Delius’s music was inspired by the songs of African-American workers in the orange groves of Florida and by
European folk idioms. Delius also used chromaticism and pentatonic scales, which are reflected in Moeran’s compositions. Moeran noted that Delius could capture sound imagery in a fleeting moment of emotion, sparked by contemplation of natural phenomena such as sunsets or spring, or human experiences such as parting or ecstasy of love.³

Moeran was intrigued by Delius’s lush, picturesque music, and was inspired to experiment with folk melodies as the subject of his own work. As a result, he travelled around Norfolk County to collect melodies and songs. Moeran told the following story about an event that took place on March 16, 1913:

When I was home the following weekend, I tackled the senior member of the church choir after the Sunday evening service. He mentioned a song called “The Dark Eyed Sailor”, but nothing would induce him to sing it on a Sunday. I found afterwards that I never could persuade anybody else, even some hard-boiled reprobate, to perform for me on a Sunday, at least not in Norfolk and Suffolk. As for this “Dark-eyed Sailor”, I was able to write it down, together with other old songs. This was the first song I ‘collected’ as a boy. True, it was not an entirely new discovery, but it was encouraging to me, and started my ball rolling.⁴

In the fall of 1914, Moeran’s studies were cut short due to the escalation of the war. He enlisted as a dispatch rider in the 6th Cyclist Battalion of the Royal Norfolk Regiment and in November was promoted to Lance-corporal. He was
commissioned as an officer with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant in June 1915, and in his free time he collected folk songs at Winterton.

On the third of May, 1917, while completing an assignment, Moeran was badly injured by shrapnel lodged too close to the brain for removal. He underwent surgery which resulted in a plate being fitted to his skull. Moeran served an additional two years following his injury. Modern medical professionals would note a direct correlation between this traumatic experience and the health problems he experienced throughout his life.

During the years following his injury, Moeran was promoted to Lieutenant and was stationed in Ireland. This was his first encounter with his father's native land. While in Ireland, he completed *At The Horse Fair* for piano, his first published piece. He also began sketches for his first orchestral work, *In The Mountain Country*, which was dedicated to Sir Hamilton Harty. This marks the beginning of a friendship with the Irish musician Harty that would ultimately lead to the *Symphony in G minor*.

Artists who took part in the War were significantly affected by their experiences, and these memories helped shape their work’s emotional and thematic materials. Moeran was no exception, and had strong bitterness toward the loss of those killed in battle. He believed their deaths were not only a waste of human life, but also of the creativity each possessed.⁵
Benjamin Britten, who was living in the United States at the time of the war, was criticized for his absence. Moeran, who was not fond of Britten’s work, came to his defense by saying:

...provided that he keeps valid his artistic integrity, I consider he is doing his duty by remaining where he is... The death of Butterworth in 1915 was a tragedy, the nature of which no country with any pretensions to the preservation of culture and a respect for art can afford a recurrence.⁶

After being discharged with full disability benefits, Moeran returned home to teach as Assistant Music Master at the Uppingham School for a few years, where he rejoined the school orchestra to play with the second violins. During this time, he published *Three Piano Pieces*, inspired by the music of John Ireland and Robert Schumann. These exhibit the typical bleak, introspective qualities for which Moeran is known. These pieces were heavily pentatonic and possessed characteristics which Moeran carried over into his *Piano Trio*.

In February of 1920, Moeran re-enrolled in the Royal College, and this time his primary teacher was John Ireland. As a student of Ireland, Moeran had great respect for his teaching and compositions. In 1931 he wrote an article for the *Musical Merchandise Review*, a magazine which has been in publication since 1879. In the article, “John Ireland as Teacher,” Moeran discussed Ireland not only as a teacher but also as a friend. Ireland believed and taught his
students that every composer must make his own technique.⁷ Moeran said that he possessed an “uncanny knack of immediately and accurately probing the aesthetic content of what is put before him.”⁸

Moeran grew to appreciate Ireland’s insistence on counterpoint, and came to understand its connection to harmony. Moeran said the following:

Harmony arises out of counterpoint, for it implies contrary motion among the parts; otherwise it is no longer harmony. Moreover there can be no rhythm without melody, otherwise it descends to mere meter, which is not music. On the other hand melody, divorced from harmony and rhythm, descends into a meandering succession of fragmentary ideas, bearing little relation one to another, and totally lacking organic unity.⁹

Moeran went on to say, “the greatest music is polyphony, for without this nothing can be complete, and to deviate from this will result in a blind alley.”¹⁰

Moeran considered himself to be fortunate to have worked with Ireland. He said Ireland was the antithesis of the so-called teacher of composition, and his pupils received the best that he could offer. Ireland did not tolerate any lack of focus, and did not consider a work to be complete until every last detail had been scrutinized. Moeran concluded the article with the statement, “His pupils soon discover a very human personality and a very warm friend.”¹¹

Moeran’s years at the Royal College of Music proved to be productive for him. During this time he composed Theme and Variations for Piano, Piano Trio,
the song-cycle *Ludlow Town*, *String Quartet in A Minor*, and *First Rhapsody for Orchestra*; he also completed *In The Mountain Country* and a number of works for solo piano. His *First Rhapsody*, which premiered at the Royal College of Music Patron’s Fund Concert, made an impression on many in attendance. It would see repeat performances at Bournemouth, Queen’s Hall, and by Hamilton Harty and the Halle Orchestra.

Moeran’s time at the Royal College of Music was important because of the numerous friendships he established with the artists and musicians who would influence and perform his music. In 1921, Hamilton Harty and Moeran became great friends, a friendship Moeran valued because of Harty’s advocacy of Moeran’s work. Harty would program much of Moeran’s music in the future, and commission several pieces for the Halle Orchestra.

In the early 1920s, Moeran devoted much of his time to visiting pubs throughout Norfolk and Suffolk. He notated folk songs and other old songs that were being sung at the time. Many of these folk songs were transcribed and adapted for a variety of vocal arrangements, from solo voice to full chorus. He compiled them into collections, such as the *Six Folksongs from Norfolk*, *Six Suffolk Folksongs*, and *Songs from County Kerry*.

During his travels, Moeran met Bob “Jolt” Miller, whom he would interview on numerous occasions. At one such interview, he was introduced to Harry Cox, a renowned folk-singer, who was invited by Miller to sing songs for Moeran. Cox
was known for the story-teller-like manner in which he presented songs. Moeran said the following of Cox:

Thus it was that I first met Harry Cox, still in his prime today, and probably unique in England as a folk-singer, presenting his songs with true artistry in a style which has almost disappeared. Harry had such a prodigious memory that, apart from his large repertory of songs handed down through the family, he is capable of hearing, on no more than three or four separate occasions, a song of a dozen or more verses, and remembering it permanently.¹²

Though he devoted much of his time to collecting folk music, Moeran still found time to complete other compositions. He wrote his Violin Sonata and Fancies for piano in January 1922. The Violin Sonata in E minor exhibited Ireland’s influence on the young Moeran, though it exceeded in scope any similar works by Ireland. Ireland preferred small scale forms and wrote no symphonies or operas.¹³

On January 15, 1923, Moeran promoted his first concert series of chamber music at Wigmore Hall in London. The first performance featured Three Piano Pieces with Harriet Cohen at the piano, as well as his Violin Sonata in E minor and String Quartet in A minor. It was during this time that Moeran met Philip Heseltine, better known as Peter Warlock. The two men had much in common, and shared a fascination with folk music. In the fall of 1923, the two men took a trip to collect folk songs in Sutton.
Philip Heseltine was a man who never settled in one place for very long. After conceiving a child together, he and his girlfriend, Minnie Lucy Channing, were married and settled in Cornwall. Heseltine soon became paranoid about the possibility of a military draft and fled to Dublin, leaving his wife and child behind. While in Dublin, he became involved with witchcraft and the occult. Because he knew his name carried a stigma, he began using the name Peter Warlock.¹⁴

In April 1923, Moeran attended the first production of Delius’s opera *Hassan*. A former student of Delius, Peter Warlock arranged for Moeran to meet Delius for the first time. Moeran had the opportunity to express his appreciation for Delius’s work. This concert also exposed Moeran to Delius’s new style that incorporated characteristics of impressionism.

Following this time with Delius, Moeran was invited to conduct *First Rhapsody* at a number of performance venues. It was so well received that Moeran was commissioned to compose *Second Rhapsody* for the Norwich Festival, which was premiered November 1, 1924 in St. Andrew’s Hall in Norwich. At this performance, King George V was in attendance and Moeran and Ralph Vaughan Williams shared the conducting duties.

Moeran had begun to build a reputation as a fine composer. He was highly regarded among both the public and his fellow musicians. In 1924, Peter Warlock wrote:
There is no British composer from whom we may more confidently expect work of sound and enduring quality in the next ten years than from Jack Moeran; there is certainly no one of his years who has yet achieved so much.¹

Moeran was commissioned by Sir Hamilton Harty to compose a symphony on which he began working in 1924, but quickly felt uninspired and abandoned the project. Instead, Moeran began his sketches for *Lonely Waters*, a piece for small orchestra. Moeran struggled with the symphony due to his self criticism and doubt. He had never attempted a composition of this scale, and worried that he would not be able to follow through with the commission.¹

In 1925 Moeran and Warlock, together with the artist Hal Collins, rented a cottage in Eynsford, Kent, where they lived for three years. It is generally known that the men lived a rather impetuous lifestyle, consuming heroic quantities of beer and hosting a variety of guests. The biographer Nina Hammett recalls:

> Moeran was a shadowy figure singing folk songs on Friday nights. He and Warlock played piano duets which would usually end when one pushed the other off the stool.¹

Their raucous lifestyle created an interesting relationship with neighbors and the authorities. Needless to say, this period of time saw a decline in Moeran’s compositional output. Self argues that this was the start of his alcoholism, which he battled for the rest of his life.¹

The years spent in Eynsford
were the closest Moeran came to a home of his own. For the rest of his life he would lodge with his parents and various other landlords.

On March 20, 1925, Moeran coordinated the second series of chamber music concerts at Wigmore Hall. It is in this series that he accompanied friend and fellow composer John Goss in the first performance of Ludlow Town, and violinist Winifred Small in the revised version of Moeran's Violin Sonata at Aeolian Hall. On June 13 of the same year, the revised version of Piano Trio was performed at Wigmore Hall with Moeran at the piano.

In July 1925, Warlock and Moeran went to Grez to visit Delius. During this holiday, Moeran was inspired by Delius to write two pieces, Bank Holiday and Summer Valley. Geoffrey Self notes Summer Valley was the model for O Cool is the Valley from Seven Poems of James Joyce. Although Bank Holiday was the first composition that clearly displayed Warlock’s influence on Moeran, the final measures still reflected Ireland’s teaching. Ian Copley compared Bank Holiday with Warlock’s Mr Belloc’s Fancy (1921), and concluded that both pieces incorporate wide-spreading left-hand chords. Copley also notes that Moeran’s piece contains a splashy piano accompaniment in the final bars, similar to the accompaniments of Ireland.

In February of 1926, Moeran and Warlock collaborated on Maltworms. The local dramatic society was presenting one-act plays, and they approached both Warlock and Moeran to compose the music. The two met at the Five Bells Pub, a bar just across the street from their cottage, to begin work on the music.
Moeran arrived first, and by the time Warlock arrived, he had already finished the chorus. Warlock then suggested a tune for the first two lines, the two finished the melody, and together created the harmony. Moeran wrote the piano accompaniment and Warlock wrote parts for a brass band. *Maltworms* was never performed with the original instrumentation; although the two men did perform it with a double piano accompaniment.

In June of 1926, after Moeran wrote an essay on Warlock, the two men traveled to Hickling to collect more songs. Warlock presented Moeran with a collection of Whythorne songs which he had transcribed. Moeran began sketches for *Whythorne’s Shadow*. *Whythorne’s Shadow* is a retrospective work for small orchestra based loosely on Thomas Whythorne’s SATTB part-song *As Thy Shadow Itself Apply’th*.

For all of his productivity, Moeran was not a single-minded composer. Moeran had many interests during his lifetime. He was an avid hiker, who loved taking long walks in the hills of Kington, and he enjoyed spending time outside communing with nature. Moeran’s love of nature helped shape him as a composer. A surprising interest of Moeran’s was his love of motorcycles and automobiles. Moeran was an expert cyclist, and was awarded a gold medal for his performance in the London-Land’s End trials. Warlock said the following about Moeran:

To those who meet him for the first time, his comparatively large output may come as a surprise,
for it is quite usual for strangers to spend an hour in
his company without suspecting him of being a
musician at all.²¹

With so many interests and the accessibility of alcohol, it was very easy
for Moeran to get distracted from his composing duties. In September 1927, with
depleted funds, an expired lease, and an overall frustration with his lack of focus
on composing, Moeran returned to London. It almost seemed he regretted the
few years he spent in Eynsford, as he comments in a 1948 letter to Peers
Coetmore, who would later become his wife:

I lost faith in myself round about 1926 and composed
nothing for several years. I had an awfully lazy period
in Eynsford. If you knock off for a long time, it is
frightfully hard to get going.²²

In 1928, looking for inspiration, Moeran made various trips to Leeds,
Wales, and Hampshire, and to his dissatisfaction finished no new compositions.
In January 1929, Warlock again invited Moeran to travel to Grez to visit Delius.
On the way, the two stopped in Brussels and had a bit too much to drink. They
never showed up for their scheduled appointment with Delius. Embarrassed by
this blunder, Moeran would never attempt to see Delius again.

Moeran’s overall compositional style began to shift from that of his early
works, deviating from the influences of Delius and Ireland, specifically with his
use of harmony. The year 1929 marked a re-appraisal of Moeran’s compositional
style. Due to a knee injury, Moeran was bedridden in Ipswich. He was not
physically able to sit at the piano to experiment, so he was forced to sit and put things directly onto paper.²³ Moeran also passed time reading poetry and novels, including those by James Joyce. His love of Joyce’s poetry led him to the texts for Seven Poems of James Joyce and Songs of Springtime.²⁴ These important compositions helped pull Moeran out of a three-year dry-spell.

Moeran was suffering from a slump in performances, which in turn put a stop to his income. Believing that singers were no longer interested in his work, Moeran turned his attention to chamber music. He felt that his energy was best spent writing for congenial companions with whom he shared similar musical tastes. As a result he began work on the Sonata for Two Violins and Trio for Strings.

Even with Moeran’s grandfather, father, and brother all serving in the Anglican priesthood, Moeran was never religious. In his entire career, he only published four sacred works, and was quoted describing his work as “tripe for the church.” During his recuperation, and in need of money, he composed Canticles. In 1931, Moeran composed three additional sacred works, which were a quick way for him to earn money. Each of these pieces is still in use by the Anglican church today.

December 17, 1930, Peter Warlock passed away in London. While in mourning, Moeran wrote a letter stating what he believed to be a contributor to Warlock’s death, the neglect of his music:
The lamentable neglect towards Warlock’s magnificent output, many of them masterpieces, has embittered me against singers in general. The majority of his songs he never even heard sung. I cannot help feeling that he might have been still with us had he been given some of the recognition he deserved. The musical profession as a whole is to be blamed for allowing a man of his genius to exist very nearly in penury.²⁵

Moeran regathered his thoughts and continued composing, but changed his focus to instrumental works. Moeran desired to make some kind of mark on the wider international scene. He enjoyed success in Britain and Ireland, but with the development of serialism and impressionism, he realized his music did not connect with traditional Europeans who opposed music that did not flow in the mainstream.²⁶

In February 1931, Moeran completed the first sketches of *Songs of Springtime* and *Farrago Suite* while staying in Lingwood. The BBC broadcast the first performance of *Farrago Suite* on April 21 of that same year. Interestingly, later in life Moeran claimed this work did not exist. *Farrago Suite* was inspired by Warlock’s Renaissance dance *Capriol Suite*, in which Warlock used tunes of Arbeau as the basis for the work.

In the fall of 1931, Moeran focused on two works, his *String Trio* and *Sonata for 2 Violins*. The *Sonata for 2 Violins* is a three-movement work whose final movement is a passacaglia, which displayed Moeran’s more academic side. The *String Trio* showed Moeran’s lyrical side with lush part writing and is
considered to be the first masterpiece of his mature style, which shows signs of impressionism, parallel triads, and harmonies in fourths and fifths.²⁷ The completion of these two works helped his music grow in popularity and be programmed by various orchestras. It was during this time that he also published the *Seven Poems of James Joyce*.

In September 1931, Moeran was commissioned by the Norwich Philharmonic Society to write a new work. He began work on *Nocturne* and completed sketches for *Symphony in G minor*. *Nocturne*, a piece for baritone, chorus and orchestra, is a setting of the text from *Don Juan Tenorio the Great*, a play by Moeran’s friend Robert Nichols. The piece was dedicated to the memory of Delius, who died in 1934. Jelka, Delius's wife, wrote to Moeran:

> The poem is beautiful and I am sure it must have inspired you to give the best and most intimate and tender...you have in your heart. It is a tribute which I know would have given Frederick great pleasure.²⁸

January 21, 1935, Moeran was injured in a automobile accident while driving in Oxford and was taken to a nursing center in Cambridge. While he was recovering, he began scoring the first movement of the *Symphony in G minor*. Robert Nichols visited Moeran while he was living in Cambridge. Moeran was eager to show Nichols the progress made on the symphony. Shortly afterwards, Nichols sent word to Harty about his visit with Moeran. Harty was ecstatic to hear that Moeran was feeling better and wrote him a letter:
Nichols spoke of your Symphony being partly completed. This was good news, and I am looking forward so greatly to seeing the work fully completed with the orchestra parts ready - and the score lying between us as we discuss various points of interpretation! Good luck to your pen and may this summer bring you the necessary inspiration and lucky moods for work so that the Symphony may be finished.²⁹

In January of 1936 Moeran attended the first London performance of *Nocturne*, and the second performance in Norwich. Following these performances, Moeran returned to Kerry to finish his symphony. Moeran’s *Symphony in G minor* was completed on January 24, 1937, although the score and parts were not finished until September. The symphony was first performed on January 13, 1938 and was well received. The success of his symphony seemed to boost Moeran’s confidence and he immediately began to work on what is considered to be the symphony’s natural companion, his *Violin Concerto*.³⁰

Moeran began to take a renewed interest in his Irish roots. Although his father was an Irishman, Moeran had spent much of his life in England. He had a few opportunities to see the Irish countryside while in the army, but never made Irish melodies a subject in his compositions. In the spring of 1939, Moeran went to a small town in Ireland, Kenmare, the town which he would return to for musical inspiration for the rest of his life.
While in Kenmare, Moeran made the first sketches for his *2nd Symphony* and *Piano Rhapsody*, and completed *Phyllida and Corydon*. At the end of October 1939, Moeran returned to London for the first performances of *Phyllida and Corydon*, a piece which comprised nine unaccompanied settings of pastoral poetry by various poets. Following these concerts, Moeran returned to Ireland, where he devoted much of his time to the *Four Shakespeare Songs* and the *Violin Concerto*.

It is obvious the surrounding environment was very important in order for Moeran to compose. In Moeran’s letters to Peers, he describes the need for returning to Kerry in order to complete the concerto in the same surroundings where it was started. He said:

> Speaking purely personally, I find that “inspiration” arrives as a result of concentrated thought in complete solitude amid natural surroundings which seem to be conducive to the germination of musical ideas, such as long rambles over the countryside.³¹

In fall of 1941 he composed the second and third movements of the *Violin Concerto*, which he completed in its entirety in spring of 1942. The full score was finished on April 25, and in May, Moeran and violinist Arthur Catterall prepared for the premier performance. On July 8, the *Violin Concerto* was first performed at the Proms, a BBC concert series held at Royal Albert Hall in London. Following this performance, Moeran retreated to Kington for the rest of the year where he finished the *Piano Rhapsody*.
In November 1942, the British Council held recording sessions for the Symphony in G minor, with the Halle Orchestra conducted by Leslie Heward. Moeran was present for all of the recording sessions. Heward was selected to conduct because of his work with the Royal Philharmonic's performance of the symphony on October 5, 1941. In the spring of 1943, Moeran completed his Piano Rhapsody and continued to revise and edit the piece. Rehearsals with Harriet Cohen began in Bedford on July 13, and the first performance of the Piano Rhapsody was on August 19 at the Proms.

March 1, 1944 marked the first Irish performance of the Violin Concerto at the Capitol Theatre in Dublin. Moeran was fighting off some sort of sickness, and following a doctor’s visit, he was diagnosed with cardiac disease. While he was ailing, he did not slow down his travels. Instead, he went to Cork, Dublin, Waterford, and eventually returned to Kenmare where he continued working on Sinfonietta and additional Seumas O'Sullivan songs.

The first week of July, he returned to Kington with his Six Poems of Seumas O'Sullivan completed. Moeran had several concert engagements over the next few months, and on January 10, 1945, he travelled to Liverpool for the first rehearsal of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra’s performance of his Symphony in G minor, conducted by Max Rostal and Malcolm Sargent.

For the next six months, Moeran worked with Albert Sammons on the Violin Concerto, completed the Cello Concerto for Peers, and met up with Peers at various locations as she toured. On July 26, 1945, Moeran and Peers were
married at Kington Church. The couple honeymooned at Bala, North Wales, and decided to settle in London.

August 28, 1945, marked the premier performance of the *Violin Concerto* at Royal Albert Hall. Moeran’s *Cello Concerto* was premiered on November 25 at the Capitol Theatre in London, with Peers as the soloist. Following the performance, Moeran accompanied Peers on a tour of Ireland. The first half of 1946 saw many performances of the *Cello Concerto* throughout England and Ireland.

Moeran’s temperament and reliability damaged his reputation as a conductor, and prevented him from having offers to guest conduct. In 1946 he was scheduled to conduct the London Symphony Orchestra at the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford. At the last minute he backed out, claiming that the authorities had not checked with him before scheduling the performance. This was the beginning of Moeran’s many bitter feelings toward musicians as a whole. He vented his frustrations in correspondence to his friends. In a letter to Harriet Cohen, he said:

> The trouble about piano music as a rule is that there are such a lot of damned fools who set out to be pianists; they play our works occasionally and completely misinterpret them and pull them about.³²

Moeran did not just reserve his comments for pianists. After not being informed of a performance of his Symphony he wrote:
It all makes me depressed. These people who play one’s music seem to have no thought that the composer might like to hear it - and it took me two and a half years to write.³³

Singers, too, were the object of his frustration. Moeran wrote:

Singers are so stupid and uninterested in music that it seems more worthwhile to conserve one’s energies for writing music in other forms. The pity of it is in my case that I think I am better at songs than anything else; i.e. some of my songs are my very best works, but there is not the slightest chance of much happening about them with the present level of intelligence of singers in this country.³⁴

Moeran’s wife, Peers, had a powerful influence on him. Moeran had long been intrigued by the cello, evident in his days at the Uppingham School. Now he had an accomplished cellist for whom to write. On April 17, 1947, he completed the *Cello Sonata*, which was then premiered on May 9 in Dublin with Peers as the soloist. In July, Moeran attended the Cheltenham Festival with Peers to hear the Halle Orchestra perform his *Violin Concerto* with Laurance Turner as the soloist. Peers was contracted for a lengthy tour of Australia, which began soon after this concert. This was one of the last times that Moeran and Peers would be together.

During the next few years, Peers and Moeran had long separations, due to both of their schedules. It has been said that Moeran and Peers had a very
productive marriage, musically. Moeran and Peers never had a traditional marriage due to her performance schedule and his various trips. Moeran’s requirement for freedom to travel was, perhaps, stronger than his love. On the night before the wedding he told his friend, Dr. Dick Jobson, that the marriage would be a disaster; he was simply following through with it because he had given Peers his word.\textsuperscript{35}

The contents of their letters make it clear the two loved each other, but it was a relationship with a great deal of physical distance between them. In a letter to Peers, Moeran said, “My dearest Peers, At Kington I can go into the pastures or up the hill and somehow feel that you are there with me in a telepathic way. Don’t forget to think of me up on Bradnor planning out my music.”\textsuperscript{36}

In September of 1948, Moeran returned to London to attend rehearsals of the London Symphony Orchestra’s premier performance of \textit{Serenade in G}, conducted by Basil Cameron at Royal Albert Hall. A week later he gave a talk entitled “Musical Curiosities” for the BBC. He returned to Ireland a few days later, where he suffered a massive breakdown and began drinking heavily. He was taken to Cheltenham to be hospitalized.

While in Cheltenham, Moeran continued work on his \textit{Second Symphony}. He became very discouraged by the slow progress, and decided to stay with his brother in Ledbury. After a few days, Moeran returned to Cheltenham where he
decided to discontinue working on the symphony. This indecisive behavior would recur over the next few months.

By late 1949, Moeran’s drinking had greatly increased. Financially strained, Moeran had to petition his long time friend Lionel Hill for money; Hill was only too happy to oblige. From September 1949 to January 1950, Moeran did not spend any time composing. He disappeared into seclusion until January 25 when he attended a concert at the Royal Albert Hall where Beecham was conducting the *Sinfonietta*.

In February of 1950, he began collecting folk songs in Kerry. Moeran would give reconsideration to his second symphony and would revisit it from time to time. He used the spring to take walks in the mountains, travel to see old acquaintances, and catch an occasional concert. In March, Moeran went to see an eye doctor in Dublin, and was diagnosed with a brain disorder. This diagnosis sent him into a drunken rage. He began acting irrationally and even filed a report with the police claiming to have been robbed.

Moeran began trying to reach his family after his diagnosis. He sent letters to Peers and attempted to reach his mother by wire. Moeran eventually returned to Kenmare where he found a room at the lodge, and sobered up. Late in the summer, Harty’s friend Pat Ryan visited Moeran to talk about his second symphony, but nothing ever materialized from this conversation. Moeran remained in Kenmare where he taught an occasional lesson and listened to the radio.
On December 1, 1950, the weather in Kenmare was very stormy, so Moeran slept in until the early afternoon. Around 4PM he was seen walking on the Kenmare Pier, and somehow fell into the swelling water. A rescue team was dispatched, and upon pulling Moeran from the water, discovered he was dead. The Medical Examiner’s report stated that a cerebral hemorrhage was the cause of death. The plate that was inserted following his injury in World War I had shifted and pushed the shrapnel deeper into his brain. On December 3, 1950, he was buried in the Old Churchyard in Kenmare.
² Ernest John Moeran, “Folk Songs and some Traditional Singers in East Anglia,” Countrygoer No. 7 (Autumn 1946).
³ Frederick Delius Website, “Biography,” Frederick Delius Website, http://www.delius.org.uk/g_biology.htm
⁴ Ernest John Moeran, “Folk Songs and some Traditional Singers in East Anglia,” Countrygoer No. 7 (Autumn 1946).
⁶ Ibid., 21.
⁸ Ibid.
⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰ Ibid.
¹¹ Ibid.
¹² Ernest John Moeran, “Folk Songs and some Traditional Singers in East Anglia,” Countrygoer No. 7 (Autumn 1946).
¹⁶ Ibid., 43.
¹⁷ Ibid., 61.
²⁰ Ibid., 69.
²⁵ Ibid., 74.
²⁶ Ibid., 75.
²⁷ Ibid., 94.
²⁸ Ibid., 100.
²⁹ Ibid., 104.
³² Ibid., 248.
³³ Ibid., 248.
³⁴ Ibid., 248.
³⁵ Ibid., 157.
James Joyce, the oldest of ten children, was born on February 2, 1882. He studied at both Clogowes Wood College and Belvedere College before going to University College where he studied modern languages. Following graduation, Joyce went to Paris to study medicine, but was called back to Dublin in April 1903 due to his mother’s failing health and eventual death. He remained in Ireland until 1904, where he met Nora Barncale, who would eventually become his wife in June of that year.

In August 1904, Joyce’s first short stories were published in the Irish Homestead magazine. In October he was offered a position teaching English at a school in Pula, Croatia. After this move, he made only four return visits to Ireland, the last one in 1912, after which he never returned.

Six months after their arrival in Pula, the family moved to Trieste where they lived for ten years. Joyce and Nora learned the Italian language, and this remained the family’s home language for years. Joyce wrote and published articles in Italian for the Piccolo della Sera newspaper and gave lectures on English literature. In 1914, with the help of the poet Ezra Pound, Joyce’s first novel, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, was published in The Egoist in
serial form. In 1914 he published a collection of short stories, *Dubliners*, and finished his only play, *Exiles*. With these projects behind him, Joyce was able to focus on *Ulysses*, a novel he had been sketching since 1907.

When World War I began, Joyce, his wife, and their two children were forced to leave Trieste. They moved to Zurich for the duration of the war where they had little money and had to rely on help from family and friends, including Harriet Weaver, his editor in London. Despite this less than ideal setting, Joyce continued his work on *Ulysses*. For much of his life, Joyce was without an office or space of his own to do his writing. Instead of trying to block out the things happening around him, he wove them into the stories that he wrote.

Following the war, Joyce wanted to return to Trieste, but Ezra Pound persuaded him to come to Paris. The family moved and remained in Paris for the next ten years. In 1921, the publication of *Ulysses* in serial form in the American journal *The Little Review* was quickly stopped due to a court ruling that it was obscene literature. Harriet Weaver began searching for other printers in England, but to no avail; the book remained unpublished. A friend, Sylvia Beach, who managed a Paris bookstore, offered to publish the novel following the lift of the American ban. On February 2, 1922, Joyce’s fortieth birthday, the first edition of *Ulysses* was published.

After Beach gave up the rights to *Ulysses* in 1930, Joyce’s friend Paul Léon began to manage his business and legal affairs. The Léon’s apartment became the center for Joyce studies, and many gathered to discuss translations
of *Ulysses* and the serial publications of *Finnegans Wake*. For the next ten years, Léon served as a proofreader for all of Joyce’s work.

Joyce’s last work, *Finnegans Wake*, was published on May 4, 1939. It was received with great acclaim, and immediately landed a place on the “book of the week” list in the UK and the United States. In 1940, because of the Nazi invasion, Joyce and his family fled to the south of France. Léon was instrumental in securing all of Joyce’s materials from his Paris apartment for safekeeping. Because of these efforts, most of Joyce’s personal belongings and manuscripts survive. Joyce died on January 13, 1941 in Zurich where he and his family were granted asylum. He was buried in Flunern cemetery in Zurich.

Each of Joyce’s novels was scrutinized for content. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce, an Irish expatriate, wrote about the bigotry of Ireland and the need for Stephen Dedalus (James Joyce) to rid himself of the effects of religion and politics in order to become a true artist. Joyce’s compositional style exhibited constant development throughout his career with regard to his experimentation with and treatment of language. In his final work, *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce captures Dublin’s sleeping life in the same fashion that *Ulysses* chronicled the wide-awake city. Joyce manipulated and distorted the language to push the work to the furthest limits of comprehension.¹

Joyce is known for his novels and collections of short stories, but he also wrote many poems. Joyce published two collections of poetry, *Chamber Music* and *Poems Penyeach*. *Chamber Music* is a collection of thirty-six poems
published in 1907. Joyce believed the title was “too complacent,” and wrote “I should prefer a title which repudiated the book without altogether disparaging it.” ²

As to how the title was actually given, it is an interesting story:

Joyce and Oliver Gogarty went to visit a young widow, Jenny. As Joyce read his manuscript aloud, Jenny, at one point, retreated behind a screen to use the chamber pot. Gogarty commented, “There’s a critic for you.” ³

Joyce made nature and love common themes in each of the thirty-six poems in *Chamber Music*. In a letter, Joyce says, “when I wrote [Chamber Music], I was a lonely boy, walking about myself at night and thinking that one day a girl would love me.” ⁴ When first released, the book received some acclaim, but did not sell well.

Joyce’s second collection of poetry, *Poems Penyeach*, was published in 1927. Over time Joycian students have compiled other poetry into collections. *The Essential James Joyce* by Harry Levin (1996) and *James Joyce’s Poems and Shorter Writings*, edited by Richard Ellmann (1991), are two examples of these collections.

Over the years many composers have been drawn to Joyce’s words because of the variety of his writings. Joyce’s early works are based on the late nineteenth century models of naturalism and symbolism, whereas his works gradually became more experimental in form, style, character, and language. His
poetry is traditional in form and tone. Because of his diversity, composers of various styles of music have found inspiration in Joyce’s work. Myra T. Russel noted that over one hundred forty composers have set Joyce’s text to music. The more avant-garde musicians have been drawn to the style of *Finnegans Wake*, and the more traditional tonal and Romantic composers to his poetry.⁵

Joyce disliked most of the contemporary music of his day. As a tenor, Joyce sought music with a singable melody, and he approached his poetry from a singer’s perspective. He was attracted to the music of Purcell, especially his operas; Peter Warlock’s editions of Elizabethan lute songs were favorites of his. In 1932, for Joyce’s fiftieth birthday, a group of thirteen composers set Joyce’s *Poems Penyeach* to music, which were published by the Sylvan Press by the title *The Joyce Book*. The participating composers included E. J. Moeran, Arnold Bax, and Herbert Howells. Many of the settings are harmonically straightforward in regard to the accompaniment, but in the case of Moeran, his settings show signs of Impressionism, parallel triads, and harmonies in fourths and fifths.⁶

James Joyce had an appreciation for music, and in his youth performed as a singer. His musical abilities had a large impact on his poetry, giving his poems many musical characteristics. Joyce’s poems are metrical and phrased in a manner that created natural cadences and phrasing. His poems were attractive to many composers, including Moeran.⁷
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid.
CHAPTER 4

SEVEN POEMS OF JAMES JOYCE

1. Strings in the Earth and Air
2. The Merry Greenwood
3. Brightcap
4. The Pleasant Valley
5. Donnycarney
6. Rain has Fallen
7. Now O Now in this Brown Land

Some critics place Moeran’s music into the “cowpat” school. This derogatory term was coined by Elisabeth Lutyens (1906-1983), a British composer who was one of the first to employ the 12-tone system in her writing. She grouped composers such as Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, John Ireland, and E. J. Moeran into this niche for their tendency to favor folk song and pastoral lyricism in their work, rather than attempting serialism. Regarding this judgement, Michael Kennedy says “It is an unperceptive jibe, for it reveals inability or unwillingness to peer beneath the surface of this music into its complex emotional depths.”

The renaissance of English folk music came at a time when composers and writers, like Joyce, were moving into more experimental practices. In 1942 Hubert Foss posited:

The English musical tongue has become a real national medium again; but from its very truthfulness it
is not compelling. And, in the state of apathy towards native-born music which has been our musical heritage since Purcell, this music, lacking compulsion, has no chance of attack, adopting a defensive, almost entrenched position, while frequently the international battle has moved its centre to another front. The result is for the English composer disastrous: his virtues are not noticed, his existence not believed in...the English composer is the last person recognized by the English concert-goer.

Foss said that Moeran’s music has the “attractiveness of a tree”, meaning that this solidly written music does not command attention from the listener. Foss stated that Moeran’s work exemplified years of splendid composing. He said the critics who disagree never took the time to examine Moeran’s music before tearing it apart. Foss believed that Moeran’s music “has the power to make its hearers go on dreaming after the music has stopped.”

The music for *Seven Poems of James Joyce* was composed in 1929. Each poem was taken from Joyce’s *Chamber Music*, which Moeran had discovered while recuperating following a knee injury. The years preceding 1929 were somewhat challenging for Moeran. He was experiencing a lack of creativity and inspiration, probably due to the years spent in Eynsford where drinking and partying tended to push musical composition into a rather forgotten corner. These poems helped pull Moeran from his dry spell, producing not only this collection but a few other songs.
The poems Moeran selected display a wide spectrum of emotions and expression. Five of the seven are reflective, while *The Merry Greenwood* and *Brightcap* possess a joyful, playful character. The year 1929 saw the setting of a number of Joyce texts by many composers. In his autobiography Arthur Bliss said Joyce told him he liked Moeran’s settings of his words most of all. Bliss suspected Joyce said this to all of the composers who used his texts.⁵

Moeran’s use of dissonance is more mellow than the compositions of his contemporaries. His harmonic scheme rarely deviates from the pentatonic scale, and the overall result is a rich, warm quality, rather than surprising the listener with bizarre harmonies. Moeran’s *Seven Poems of James Joyce* are some of his finest work for voice and piano.

Geoffrey Self discusses Moeran’s use of a “parent cell” in his compositions.⁶ Self is referring to a pattern of notes, rhythms, or a particular chord that is present throughout a body of work. This technique helps to achieve a certain unity among the pieces. Self’s so-called “parent cell” may not be Moeran’s attempt at serialism, it simply could be his use of color tones throughout his compositions.

In these relatively short songs, the poems are united as a result of the treatment of love against a background of nature in its changing seasons. Moeran musically unites the pieces with the use of a minor ninth chord, which is found on the first beat of *Strings in the Earth and Air*. This “parent cell” is found in
each piece, but dominates the harmony in *Strings in the Earth and Air, Rain has Fallen*, and *Now, O Now, in this Brown Land*.

It is clear that Moeran spent much of his life in search of fulfillment. He married late in life, spent most of his time on the road collecting songs, and never really settled down. His vagabond-like lifestyle is reflected in his music. Moeran's use of added chord tones (Self's described “parent cell”) creates unresolved harmonies that provide the listener with a sense of this life of wandering.
1. *Strings in the Earth and Air*

**Text:** Strings in the earth and air  
Make music sweet;  
Strings by the river where  
The willows meet.  
There’s music along the river  
For Love wanders there,  
Pale flowers on his mantle,  
Dark leaves on his hair.  
All Softly playing,  
With head to the music bent,  
And fingers straying  
Upon an instrument.

**Range:** D3-F4  
**Tempo Marking:** Slow and liltingly  
**Meter:** 6/8  
**Form:** No distinct pattern of phrases

The first song in the set, *Strings In The Earth And Air* displays Moeran’s ability to paint a picture for his listeners. The harp-like introduction, beginning with a minor ninth chord, introduces a theme that seems to sweep down from the heavens (Figure 1). Moeran’s folk-like qualities employ simple devices which help with imagery. The voice’s opening line ascends to D4 on the word “air,” the highest pitch in the phrase. At the end of each phrase, Moeran revisits the theme of the piano from the introduction.
The interaction between the piano and the voice continues throughout the song. Moeran is very deliberate with the placement of dynamics in the accompaniment, but never gives dynamic direction to the singer. The absence of dynamics require the singer to give specific attention to the accompaniment, creating a true collaboration between musicians. *Strings in the Earth and Air* concludes with the piano softly playing the initial melody from the introduction (Figure 2).

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**Figure 1.** Measures 1-3 of *Strings In The Earth And Air* by E. J. Moeran

**Figure 2.** Measures 26-30 of *String In The Earth And Air* by E. J. Moeran
2. *The Merry Green Wood*

**Text:**  
Who goes amid the green wood  
With springtide all adorning her?  
Who goes amid the merry green wood  
To make it merrier?  
Who goes amid the green wood  
With springtide all adorning her?  
Who goes amid the merry green wood  
To make it merrier?  
Who passes in the sunlight  
By ways that know the light footfall?  
Who passes in the sweet sunlight  
With mien so virginal?  
The ways of all the woodland  
Gleam with a soft and golden fire-  
For whom does all the sunny woodland  
Carry so brave attire?  
O, it is for my true love  
The woods their rich apparel wear  
O, it is for my own true love,  
That is so young and fair.

**Range:**  
E3-E4

**Tempo Marking:**  Fast

**Meter:**  
2/4 and 3/4

**Form:**  A-A-A-A

*The Merry Green Wood* begins with a playful piano introduction, effectively capturing the essence of spring. The vocal melody is folk-like, with a repetitious “steps up” (continuous jumps of a major third) pattern. The accompaniment is soloistic and syncopated, almost as if the voice is accompanying the piano part. Moeran’s use of changing meter allows him to elongate particular words. For example, in measure 27, he moves to 3/4 and gives additional length to the word “gleam.” This requires the singer to give emphasis to this word and portray the
meaning with the timbre or color of the voice (Figure 3). In measure 31, Moeran uses step-wise triads in the accompaniment.

![Figure 3. Measures 22-28 of The Merry Green Wood by E. J. Moeran](image)

In measure 41, Moeran writes in a natural ritardando on the phrase “is so young and fair” by changing to 3/4 so that “young and fair” have the value of a quarter note each (Figure 4). Lengthening these words helps emphasize Joyce’s meaning: all of these things are for her, the young and beautiful one. As with the first piece, Moeran only places dynamics in the piano score, so the singer must decide how the text relates to these markings.
Figure 4. Measures 41-43 of *The Merry Green Wood* by E. J. Moeran
3. *Bright Cap*

**Text:**  Bright cap and streamers,
    He sings in the hollow:
    Come follow, come follow,
    All you that love.
Leave dreams to the dreamers
    That will not after,
    That song and laughter
    Do nothing move.
With ribbons streaming
    He sings the bolder;
In troop at his shoulder
    The wild bees hum.
And the time of dreaming
    Dreams is over - -
As lover to lover,
    Sweet heart I come.

**Range:**  D3-E4  
**Tempo Marking:**  Fast and gay  
**Meter:**  3/8  
**Form:**  A-A

*Bright Cap* is the second of two fast tempo songs in the collection. The accompaniment begins with a crisp, detached line which continues throughout. Moeran asks for accents and staccato throughout the accompaniment. The contrasting vocal line shows a legato melody which requires agility on several fast sixteenth passages (Figure 5). In measure 14, the voice and accompaniment cadence on an E major chord that is open voiced with a high E in the piano and a low E in the voice on the word “love.” Perhaps Moeran gave emphasis to signify the actions of love, rather than emotions. The energy of this
piece reinforces the theme of the text that it is no longer time to relax and dream, it is time to act on love.

Figure 5. Measures 5-14 of *Brightcap* by E. J. Moeran
4. *The Pleasant Valley*

**Text:**  O Cool is the valley now  
And there, love, will we go  
For many a choir is singing now  
Where Love did sometime go.  
And hear you not the thrushes calling,  
Calling us away?  
O cool and pleasant is the valley  
And there, love, will we stay.

**Range:**  C3-F4  
**Tempo Marking:**  With movement and in strict time  
**Meter:**  5/8, 4/8, and 3/8  
**Form:**  A-B

Anyone familiar with Moeran’s piano music will think of *Summer Valley* (1925), for here he reworks the prelude into this song. Geoffrey Self goes as far as to ask whether or not Moeran did not already have the Joyce poem in mind when he first composed the piano prelude.⁷ *The Pleasant Valley* is one of the more obscure in the collection due to Moeran’s use of the barcarolle rhythm adjusted to 5/8. By making this change, Moeran creates an unsettled feeling, which makes phrasing difficult. Both the singer and pianist have to decide where to lift for phrasing as there are no rests written in the entire melody (Figure 6).

In the poem, Joyce used the thrush, a bird that is known for its song-like call. Walt Whitman is noted for using the bird in his poem *When Lilacs Last In The Dooryard Bloomed*, a poem written about Whitman’s feelings over the loss of Abraham Lincoln. Whitman used the thrush’s song to symbolize inevitable
death, and by not singing the thrush’s song one could avoid death. In this poem, Joyce may have been referring to Whitman’s poem with the line “and hear you not the thrushes calling, calling us away?” Whether or not this is the case, the singer is saying that the valley is cool and pleasant, so that is where the two shall remain. It is possible that Moeran set this text in 5/8 to symbolize fighting death, and the lack of breaths in the vocal line symbolizes the fact that there is no end to this battle until death. The only breath in the score is before the words “will we stay,” which is Moeran’s way of encouraging lovers to ignore the call of death and enjoy each other.

Figure 6. Measures 3-10 of The Pleasant Valley by E. J. Moeran
5. *Donnycarney*

**Text:**

O, it was out by Donnycarney  
When the bat flew from tree to tree  
My love and I did walk together;  
And sweet were the words she said to me.  
Along with us the summer wind  
Went murmuring - -O, happily! - -  
But softer than the breath of summer  
Was the kiss she gave to me.

**Range:** E-flat 3 - E-flat 4  
**Tempo Marking:** In easy time  
**Meter:** 3/4 and 4/4  
**Form:** A-B

Beginning with an arpeggio, *Donnycarney* has a very relaxed feel and paints a picture of a summer evening. The vocal line begins rather sustained over the first two bars, and finally settles into a tempo by measure 4 (Figure 7). Moeran once again leaves all dynamic interpretation to the singer.

*Figure 7.* Measures 1-4 of *Donnycarney* by E. J. Moeran
In measure 13, the piano paints a picture of the murmuring wind with an eighth note pattern. An allargando is written on the text “O, happily” in measure 14, which leads into a ritardando written into the score due to the meter changing to 4/4. In measure 17, the piano plays an arpeggiated figure which represents the breath of summer. In the final phrase, Moeran gives the vocal line freedom on the word “kiss” as the piano sustains a chord.
6. *Rain has Fallen*

**Text:** Rain has fallen all the day.
O come among the laden trees:
The leaves lie thick upon the way
Of memories.
Staying a little by the way
Of memories shall we depart.
Come, my beloved, where
I may Speak to your heart.

**Range:** C-sharp 3 - F-sharp 4

**Tempo Marking:** Slow

**Meter:** 4/4 and 3/4

**Form:** No distinct pattern of phrases

In *Rain has Fallen* it is obvious that in the piano part Moeran was attempting to paint the sound of raindrops falling continuously. The accompaniment incorporates the parent cell on the first beat, as well as parallel fifths, which is characteristic of Moeran’s compositions. Moeran achieves a sense of the falling rain with the eighth note figures in the accompaniment. The listener gains a clear picture of a lazy, rainy day, and Moeran’s melody helps to reinforce the text. For example, in measure 6, he uses a pentatonic scale in the vocal line which adds to the density of harmony and gives more weight to the text “the leaves lie thick upon the way of memories” (Figure 8).
In the final phrase, Moeran allows the vocal line a small solo where the piano rests on beat one. The piano accompaniment has a triplet and eighth note figure that seems to paint a picture of the beloved approaching (Figure 9).
7. **Now, O Now, In This Brown Land**

**Text:**

Now, O now, in this brown land
Where love did so sweet music make
We two shall wander, hand in hand,
Forbearing for old friendship’s sake,
Nor grieve because our love was gay
Which now is ended in this way.

A rogue in red and yellow dress
Is knocking, knocking at the tree;
And all around our loneliness
The wind is whistling merrily
The leaves they do not sigh at all
When the year takes them in the fall.

Now, O now, we hear no more
The vilanelle and roundelay!
Yet will we kiss, sweetheart, before
We take sad leave at close of day.
Grieve not, sweetheart, for anything -
The year, the year is gathering.

**Range:** C3-F4  
**Tempo Marking:** Slow and very smooth  
**Meter:** 6/4  
**Form:** A-A-A’

The longest song in this collection is *Now, O Now, In This Brown Land.*

Moeran sets the poem in a manner that is true to Joyce’s original iambic pentameter. It has been mentioned by Geoffrey Self that the opening bars of this piece predict the opening of his *Violin Concerto* (1942). Self suggests Moeran not only alludes to the brown land of Joyce (which is probably implying Ireland),
but also his own inclination towards Ireland. The comparison of these two works is more obvious when examining the reduced piano score of the concerto. If this was intentional, it emphasizes the importance of these songs to Moeran.⁹

The introduction begins with Moeran’s parent cell, which continues throughout the piece. A repeated rhythmic figure creates the motion of plodding across the bleak land towards the inevitable, death. This poem solidifies that although love is dead nature continues. In the third verse (measure 33), Moeran begins with a more sustained accompaniment than in the previous pieces. By so doing, the text “we hear no more...” becomes clearer, as if the music has come to a halt (Figure 10). After the final phrase, “the year is gathering,” Moeran slowly restates the theme which the piano introduced at the beginning of the cycle, but it is drawn out over twice as many measures.

Figure 10. Measures 32-36 of Now, O Now, In This Brown Land by E. J. Moeran
CONCLUSION

Hubert Foss states that Moeran wrote a number of lovely songs that demonstrate his precise and delicate ear for original sound and for exact registration. Moeran was not a miniature painter, but he excelled in swift development of big ideas in a small space of time. Moeran’s music also has a nostalgic quality, allowing the listener to be captivated even after the song is over. In an article written in 1942 Foss said,

The nostalgic quality is healthy. It must be sought before it reveals itself. It does not display its charms in the limelight of day. It is neither topical or fashionable. It does not shout. I would not call it masterly, certainly not masterful. But its singing quality is undeniable, something to treasure.¹⁰

Peter Warlock had great respect for Moeran. He believed Moeran had proven himself successful as a songwriter. He said that “the combination of free and eminently singable melodic line clearly derived from the influence of folk-song, and his rich and subtle vein of harmony leads to the happiest results in the interpretation of poems both old and new.” Warlock claimed that at the age of 31, Moeran possessed a finer collection of works than Delius, Elgar, or Vaughan Williams at the same age. “One is amply justified in expecting that his talent will
expand during the next ten years no less certainly than did that of his illustrious predecessors.¹¹

Like many other 20th century British composers, Moeran was not judged fairly on the quality of his music. Because critics believed composers who used folk song as inspiration for their works lacked the ability to invent their own original themes, a large body of work has been overlooked.¹² Moeran was inspired by the music which is indigenous to the country he loved. His desire was to see that the voices of so many folk singers did not go unheard, and that this art form should be preserved and handed down through the generations as an heirloom.

Moeran left a legacy of singable, tuneful music that is well worth the time for a singer to examine. The relationship between the voice and piano in Moeran’s music leaves great opportunities for collaboration between singers and pianists. Teachers of singing are constantly searching for music to reinforce particular concepts and skills. Seven Poems of James Joyce provide a wonderful vehicle for exposing a singer to the British art song genre.
³ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid., 77.
⁷ Ibid., 78.
APPENDIX A
COMPLETE LIST OF VOCAL WORKS
(arranged chronologically)

Four songs from A Shropshire Lad (1916) [baritone & piano]
   Westward, On the High-Hilled Plains
   When I Last Came To Ludlow
   This Time Of Year, A Twelve-Month Past
   Far In A Western Brookland

Twilight (1920) [solo voice]

Spring Goeth All In White (1920) [solo voice]

Ludlow Town (1920) [solo voice]
   When Smoke Stood Up From Ludlow
   Farewell to Stack and Barn and Tree
   Say, Lad, Have You Things To Do?
   The Lads in their Hundreds

High Germany  (folk song collected in 1922) [solo voice]*

The Day of Psalms (1922) [solo voice]

When June is Come (1922) [solo voice]

Weep You No More Sad Fountains (1922) [solo voice]

Gather Ye Rosebuds (1922) [solo voice]

Six Norfolk Folk Songs (1923) [solo voice]
   Down By The Riverside
   The Bold Richard
   Lonely Waters
   The Pressgang
   The Shooting of his Dear
   The Oxford Sporting Blade
Two Songs (1923) [solo voice]
   The Beanflower
   Impromptu in March

Robin Hood Borne on his Bier (1923) [solo voice]

Two Songs from the repertoire of John Goss (1924) [solo voice]
   Can’t You Dance The Polka?
   Mrs. Dyer the Baby Farmer

The Sailor and Young Nancy (1924) [solo voice & piano]

Gaol Song (1924) [solo voice]

Under the Broom (1924) [solo voice]

Commendation of Music (1924) [solo voice]

Christmas Day in the Morning (1924) [solo voice]

The Jolly Carter (1924) [unison voices]

The Merry Month of Maying (1925) [solo voice]

Come Away, Death (1925) [solo voice]

A Dream of Death (1925) [solo voice]

In Youth is Pleasure (1925) [solo voice]

Troll the Bowl (1925) [solo voice]

‘Tis Time, I Think, By Wenlock Edge (1925) [solo voice]

Far in a Western Brookland (1925) [solo voice]

The Little Milkmaid (1925) [solo voice]

O Sweet Fa’s The Eve (1925) [voice & piano]

Maltworms (1926) [solo voice]*
Sheepshearing (published in 1927) [solo voice]

Seven Poems of James Joyce (1929) [voice & piano]
   Strings in the Earth and Air
   The Merry Green Wood
   Brightcap
   The Pleasant Valley
   Donnycarney
   Rain Has Fallen
   Now O Now in this Brown Land

Rosefrail (1929) [solo voice]

Songs of Springtime (1930) [solo voice]
   Under The Greenwood Tree
   The River-God’s Song
   Spring, The Sweet Spring
   Love is a Sickness
   Sigh No More, Ladies
   Good Wine
   To Daffodils

Magnificat and Nunc Dimitis (1930) [SATB voices]

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem (1930) [SATB voices]

Te Deum and Jubilate (1930) [SATB voices]

An April Evening (1930) [solo voice]*

Six Suffolk Folk Songs (1931) [solo voice]
   Nutting Time
   Blackberry Field
   Cupid’s Garden
   Father and Daughter
   The Isle of Cloy
   A Seaman’s Life

The Sweet O’ The Year (1931) [solo voice]

Loveliest of Trees (1931) [solo voice]

Blue Eyed Spring (1931) [solo voice]
Alsatian Carol (1932) [solo voice]

Ivy and Holly (1932) [solo voice]

The Echoing Green (1933) [solo voice]

Tilly (published in 1933) [solo voice]

Green Fire (published in 1933) [solo voice]

To Blossoms (published in 1934) [solo voice]

Weep You No More Sad Fountains (1934) [vocal duet]

The Lover and His Lass (published in 1934) [solo voice]

Four English Lyrics (1934) [solo voice]
   Cherry Ripe
   Willow Song
   The Constant Lover
   The Passionate Shepherd

Nocturne (1934) [voice & orchestra]

Diaphenia (1937) [solo voice]

Rosaline (1937) [solo voice]

Blessed are Those Servants (1938) [solo voice]

Phyllida and Corydon (1939) [solo voice]
   Phyllida and Corydon
   Beauty Sat Bathing By A Stream
   On a Hill There Grows a Flower
   Phyllis Inamorata
   Said I That Amaryllis
   The Treasure of my Heart
   While She Lies Sleeping
   Corydon, Arise
   To Meadows
Four Shakespeare Songs (1940) [solo voice]
  The Lover and his Lass
  Where the Bee Sucks
  When Daisies Pied
  Where Icicles Hang

The Jolly Carter (1944) [SATB voices]

Invitation in Autumn (1944) [solo voice]

Six Poems of Seamus O'Sullivan (1944) [solo voice]
  Evening
  The Poplars
  A Cottager
  The Dustman
  Lullaby
  The Herdsman

If There Be Any Gods (1944) [solo voice]*

I'm Weary, Yes Mother Darling (1946) [solo voice]

Rahoon (1947) [solo voice]

Parson and Clerk (1947) [solo voice]

The Sailor and Young Nancy (1949) [SATB voices]

Candlemass Eve (1948) [solo voice]

Songs from County Kerry (1950) [solo voice]
  The Dawning of the Day
  My Love Passed Me By
  The Murder of Father Hanratty
  The Roving Dingle Boy
  The Lost Lover
  The Tinker's Daughter
  Kitty, I am in love with you

O Fair Enough are Sky and Plain (published in 1957) [solo voice]

Rores Montium (unknown) [solo voice]*
The Monk’s Fancy (unknown) [solo voice]*  
located in the Britten-Pears library

One Morning in Spring (unknown) [solo voice]*  
located in the Britten-Pears library

Mantle of Blue (unknown) [solo voice]*

* denotes unpublished work
APPENDIX B
COMPLETE LIST OF ORCHESTRAL WORKS
(arranged chronologically)

The Mountain Country (1921) [orchestra]

First Rhapsody (1922) [orchestra]

Second Rhapsody (1924) [orchestra]

Lonely Waters (1924) [orchestra]

Overture (1924) [orchestra]*

Wythorne’s Shadow (1931) [orchestra]

Farrago Suite (1932) [orchestra]*

Symphony in G minor (1937) [orchestra]

Second Rhapsody - Revised Version (1941) [orchestra]

Violin Concerto (1941) [violin & orchestra]

Piano Rhapsody (1943) [piano & orchestra]

Fanfare for Red Army Day (1944) [orchestra]^ 

Overture to a Masque (1944) [orchestra]

Sinfonietta (1944) [orchestra]

Cello Concerto (1945) [cello & orchestra]
Serenade in G (1948) [orchestra]
   Prologue
   Intermezzo (omitted from published score)
   Air
   Galop
   Minuet
   Forlana (omitted from published score)
   Rigadoon
   Epilogue

Second Symphony (1950 - unfinished) [orchestra]
APPENDIX C
COMPLETE LIST OF INSTRUMENTAL WORKS
(arranged chronologically)

Juvenilia (1912) [string quartet]^*
  String Quartet
  String Quartet
  String Quartet
  Cello Sonata

Dance (1913) [piano] *

Fields of Harvest (1913) [piano] *

Three Piano Pieces (1919) [piano]
  The Lake Island
  Autumn Woods
  At a Horse Fair

Theme and Variations (1920) [piano]

String Quartet in A minor (1921) [2 violins, viola, & cello]

On a May Morning (1921) [piano]

Toccata (1921) [piano]

Stalham River (1921) [piano]

Violin Sonata (1922) [violin & piano]

Three Fancies (1922) [piano]
  Windmills
  Elegy
  Burlesque

Two Legends (unknown) [piano]
  A Folk Story
  Rune
Bank Holiday (1925) [piano]
Summer Valley (1925) [piano]
Piano Trio (1925) [piano, violin, & cello]
Irish Love Song (1926) [piano]
The White Mountain (1927) [piano]
Sonata for Two Violins (1930) [2 violins]
String Trio (1931) [violin, viola, & cello]
Two Pieces (1933) [piano]
   Prelude
   Berceuse
Prelude (1943) [cello & piano]
Irish Lament (1944) [cello & piano]
Fantasy Quartet (1946) [oboe & strings]
Cello Sonata (1947) [cello & piano]
String Quartet No. 2 in E-flat (unknown) [2 violins, viola, & cello]

* denotes unpublished work
^ denotes a lost work
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